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A Lesson From The Fall Of Kabul, Afghanistan

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"If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Galatians 3:21).

"...the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law... show the work of the law written in their hearts.." (Romans 2:14-15).

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Today, November 13, 2001, Kabul, capital city of Afghanistan, fell from the control of the Taliban regime -- after a number of years under their very strict rule -- and some remarkable things occurred when the Taliban fled the city and the soldiers of the Northern Alliance marched in.

As reported by the BBC, people went rejoicing out on foot to meet the Northern Alliance soldiers as they made their way toward Kabul. It was a time of celebration! They were free again -- at last! Lingered Taliban soldiers, Arabs who fought with them, and volunteers from Pakistan, were hunted down and shot or taken prisoner. Horns tooted, guns were fired in the air -- it was a spontaneous demonstration of joy that the galling yoke of Taliban rule had been overthrown.

It is in the particular way that some citizens of the newly liberated Kabul behaved that holds a striking lesson for Holiness folks, and indeed for all Christians: -- i. e., that righteousness cannot be legislated into people's hearts.

For years the Taliban restricted the Afghan people with some very severe taboos, some of which are identical to, or bear a resemblance to, restrictions among conservative Holiness people:-- the wearing of western-style shorts or short pants was forbidden -- women were forbidden to wear make-up, and -- no doubt as an attempt to guard against immorality, women could not leave their homes without being accompanied by a male and they had to keep quite totally covered, even their faces being hidden behind thick, well-covering veils -- children could not fly kites -- men could not shave off their beards -- none could play nor listen to music -- pictures of earthly creatures were forbidden -- theaters and movie attendance were outlawed -- none could watch TV -- playing soccer was forbidden -- participation in sports clubs was banned.

In addition, idolatry was attacked, and the huge and ancient Buddhist idols in Bamian of Eastern Afghanistan were mutilated or destroyed. Also, hundreds of Bamians were executed, who apparently revered the immense idols even though they were not Buddhists. Finally, if I recall correctly, thieves either had their hands cut off or were shot, and fornicators and adulterers were executed. No doubt there were even more rigid restrictions and taboos that were vigorously, and mercilessly enforced by the Taliban regime, but the preceding will suffice to reveal their Draconian methods.

Today, however -- after their sudden and dramatic liberation, citizens of Kabul threw off the Taliban-taboos amidst loud rejoicing:-- music was played aloud, women showed their faces, kite-flying was indulged (perhaps by some children), and men gathered round the barbers to have their beards shaved!

Now listen to this one: I heard that when the Taliban outlawed TV, one fellow who had a big Sony set took his TV out somewhere and buried it. Today, after the grand liberation from the Taliban, he went out, dug it up, set it up, plugged it in, and watched the movie "Titanic"!

The Law of the Taliban is gone -- the Lure of the West has re-entered! -- and I dare say that the Lust of the Flesh and the deeds of the devil will probably also begin to flourish openly again.

One of the mistakes of the Taliban was the effort to instill a certain form of righteousness by the Law -- on threat of severe penalties, even death. Obviously, it did not work, for the inward desires of people will live on for years -- yea until they die -- even if they are quenched and quelled in their outward expression by laws ever so harsh!

Personally, I think that the conservative Holiness movement should take a gander here -- should learn a lesson from what has transpired. Leaning heavily upon people, heaping upon them ever so many rules, regulations, taboos, and severe penalties for violating them simply will not instill righteousness in the human heart. No amount of laws, and no threat of death will make a woman, a man, a child, holy on the inside.

It is true that the Taliban missed the mark far more widely than do legalistic holiness folks. Their false religion sentenced death even upon those who witnessed for Christ in their land, and they advocated and practiced a form of hatred and cruelty so much like the devil himself that it is a wonder how any of the Moslem followers of the Taliban could convince themselves (if they did) that there was an ounce of truth in such a religion! That which was said of legalistic Israel is true also of them: "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3).

But it does seem that at least some of the deluded followers of the Taliban may have honestly hoped to create a real righteousness in Afghanistan by way of their rigidly enforced taboos. Sad! is it not? -- and the means they used are always doomed to failure.

God's Word clearly shows that it is utterly impossible for inner-righteousness to come by means of a written Law -- for such Laws, even when inscribed in tables of stone, have no power to give Life to the soul, and Purity to the heart! It is a mistake for the Taliban to try this means; it is also a mistake for Christian groups to attempt the same -- even though their written restrictions and penalties are less severe. Indeed, some rules and regulations are necessary -- for any society, either national or spiritual. But they err who hope to instill the practice of those laws into the inner beings of their people by legislation and enforcement of that legislation. When the enforcers are gone and the penalties disappear -- things will be dug up, plugged in, and indulged again!

God has a better way -- the only way -- to make men Holy Law-Abiding.

He prophesied thereof through Jeremiah: "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33).

He provided this through the death of Christ: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of

the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:3-4).

He accomplishes this through the mighty Baptism of the Holy Ghost: "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (the provision Jesus' death). Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" (the Pentecostal accomplishment by the Holy Ghost). (Heb. 10:14-16).

On Pentecost -- the time of the feast celebrating the writing of the Law on tables of stone -- the finger of God wrote the Law once more -- this time on the fleshly tables of the hearts of the 120 in the Upper Room. PENTECOST DID -- "WHAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO"!!

After the Law was written on their hearts, that fire-baptized crowd from the Upper Room didn't need a manual to live right! They didn't need any spiritual Taliban to monitor them every moment lest they indulge the forbidden! They came down from that loft and immediately ascended into the most lofty behavior ever known to the sons of Adam! They did "by nature the things contained in the law"! and by their daily walks and works they showed "the work of the law written in their hearts!"

This, my friends, is GOD'S WAY TO GET PEOPLE TO BEHAVE, LIVE RIGHTEOUS LIVES, AND WALK THE NARROW WAY TO GLORY. No other way ever has succeeded, nor will any other means of controlling the lives of people ever succeed.

Take a close look at the genuinely, sanctified saints of God:-- Why do they flee from wrong, walk in right ways, and "abstain from all appearance of evil" -- Why? Here is the answer: "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will" (Rev. 17:17) -- THAT'S WHY!

Yes, the preceding verse does speak of the power of God to make even the powers of evil obey His Sovereign plan. But think of it, friend -- if God has power to make even the devil do his will -- "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14). He Who controls all angels, all things, all devils, and all men, through the blood of Christ, has provided the means whereby He, can -- and does -- purge the hearts of His people from all sin, write within them His law, and cause them to live righteous lives!

What the Jewish Law could not do -- what the Taliban could not do -- what the most strict Church manual on earth cannot do -- HE CAN -- AND DOES!

I once heard of a preacher saying something like the following: "I marry a few, and bury a few. I am not sure that all of the folks I have married are still married, but THE ONES I BURY, STAY BURIED!" The only way that a person or a society will keep sin buried is by having the Law written on their hearts -- for when all other means fail, men will start looking for their shovel.

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