

536 Keeping the Law

“Where [there is] no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy [is] he” (Proverbs 29.18, KJV).

Before the London Marathon took place recently, an unusual announcement was made: that discussions had taken place between the Race organisers and representatives from the environmental protest group Extinction Rebellion (ER), with the great news that the protesters had not only kindly agreed not to disrupt the Marathon, but would actually help to protect the race from other trouble makers!

On reflection, that Race agreement with the ER protesters is rather sinister, for it comes down to being a not-so-subtle protection racket! ER, as with other environmental pressure groups of our day, seek to further their cause by disrupting “normal” life for everyone else. Their argument is that such disruption is the most effective way of getting their message out, and that they are merely expressing their “human right” of peaceful protest for the ultimate public good. When it came to the London Marathon, ER’s ability to disrupt the Race led to the ER supporters duly gaining self-virtuous “Brownie Points” for themselves and their movement, for not only undertaking not to mess up the event, but even to join in with its stewarding. At the same time, that stewarding gave them official recognition, and surely sets a precedent for other interest groups for the future: “Make disruption threats, and watch the authorities cave in and welcome us aboard!”.

We see similar disruption by the few of the activities of the many by supporters of Just Stop Oil (JSO), and animal rights protesters at the recent Grand National. Recently in Birmingham the RAIR Foundation reports that during Ramadan, “the authorities’ efforts to address the rampant problem of illegal street trading ... were met with vehement opposition and violence from the Muslim community ...”. Here again is disruption of the many by the comparative few, with deliberate flouting of “the law of the land”.

The common thread from these few examples is that causing disruption and/or breaking the law is becoming more common in British society, even being applauded at times as being “virtuous”. With the help of the internet, social media, lobbying and regular TV appearances, small or large numbers of protesters with “a Cause” can now easily bring disruption to others on a large scale, and gain valuable TV publicity too. Policing such protests is time-consuming and expensive, to say nothing

of the squashing of the “human rights” of the many to live their lives without disturbance. The imminent Coronation is the next “juicy prospect” for disruption, law breaking or even attack, over which our prayers are strongly needed for all concerned.

At stake therefore is the acceptance by all of the prevailing rule of law in any society – truly, “he that keepeth the law, happy [is] he” (Proverbs 29.18b, KJV), and so too is the society “happy”, assuming of course that the laws in place are acceptable to Almighty God. When casual dismissal of the law gathers pace, as we are now seeing in Britain, anarchy in one form or another is not much further down the slippery slope.

Thankfully we have precedents and principles in God’s Word to help us with these matters, beginning with the children of Israel. Moses, with his brother Aaron as his mouthpiece, was the divinely-appointed leader, and the laws and rituals for the people were divinely-given (egs., Exodus 3.10,13-15; 4.1,10-16;12.1-14). Sometimes the people were compliant under Moses, but often they “murmured” against him and even came close to stoning him (egs., Exodus 15.23-24;16.2-3; 17.3-4; 32.1-10 / Numbers 14.1-5). The authority of Almighty God, His appointed leaders and the laws He had given were frequently ignored, so idolatry, mutiny and anarchy often drew near.

The congregation in the Nazareth synagogue that day “were filled with wrath” against Jesus, and tossed law aside as they prepared to “cast him down headlong” from that cliff (from Luke 4.28-29). Later, away with law and justice once again as the multitude chanted “Crucify!” (Mark 15.11-15). Then we can think of the suffering undergone by Stephen, and by Paul and his companions at the hands of frenzied, lawless mobs (Acts 7.51-60 / Acts 13.44-45,50-52;14.1-7,19;16.19-24;17.5-9,13;19.23-29,34;21.27-36;22.22-24;23.9-12. What a list! – Acts 9.15-16 ...).

We see from all this that worldly crowds, mobs, protesters and multitudes tend to be bad news as far as the Lord God, His laws and His Christ-redeemed people are concerned; and, going wider, bad news also for any peaceful, law-abiding society, which makes the need for us to pray for those in authority as crucially important as ever in these slippery-slope times (egs., Luke 20.22-26 / I Timothy 2.1-6 / I Peter 2.13-16).

But thanks be to God, before long, by God-given faith in Christ and in His shed blood, we will all be in that other “great multitude ... saying,

Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give the glory unto him!" (from Revelation 19.6).

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