

A Sacred Right

He bought and paid for the land. He held the deed. He paid his taxes. But when he wanted to use the land for growing crops, the EPA said, "NO!" That's the story, some 30 years old, of the man who bought the farm where I grew up.

That incident opened my eyes to the concern of property rights. Ironically, for over 35 years, I had no land to call my own.

I am a preacher and it is as a preacher that I share these thoughts.

Although the message of the Bible has to do, first of all, with eternal things, it also speaks to the concerns of this life. One of those concerns is property rights. The eighth commandment tells us we are not to steal. That commandment recognizes the right of any person to hold private property and expect that it will not be violated by anyone - including the government.

The Bible records several instances where one individual stole from another individual. But there are also instances where the "government" took property to which it had no right. In one case, a king wanted a certain piece of property for his own use. The property belonged to a farmer who was unwilling to sell. But through deceit and false accusation, the king had the farmer killed and then took his land. Judgment was passed upon that greedy king for what he had done.

To my knowledge, nothing that drastic has happened in Pennsylvania! Still, one cannot ignore the fact that Western law is firmly grounded in the laws and commands of Scripture.

Why do we fight for the right to hold land and use it as we see fit? Why is it wrong for others - anyone - to step in and take control, if not outright ownership of someone's property? Because the right to hold property is given by the Creator Himself.

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