

LIBERTY PARK INN®

A Syndicated Column

Name: Pastor Jailed In Phoenix

By: David Henry © 2012

“Did you hear about the pastor who was jailed in Phoenix,” John asked?

“No. I didn’t. Why was he jailed,” I asked?

“He was holding a Bible study in his home.”

“That can’t be right, John. We don’t put people in jail for that.”

“They do in Phoenix,” John replied. “Pastor Michael Salman was sentenced to jail for 60 days, three years probation, and fined over \$12,000.”

“That’s unbelievable,” I responded.

John continued, “The issue surrounds the question whether or not his home Bible study legally constitutes a church. If it does, is his private residence then required to follow the zoning laws that were established for churches? The City of Phoenix says ‘yes’ and the pastor says ‘no.’ Apparently, this conflict went on for several years until the government filed criminal charges against him for zoning violations. They went to trial and the pastor lost.”

Just then Neil entered the lobby.

“Hi, Neil,” I said. “We’re just discussing the pastor who’s in jail in Phoenix.”

Neil responded and said, “As an accountant, I wonder about the property taxes. Did the government collect them? If this is a ‘church’ as the government is alleging, then shouldn’t the property be tax exempt?”

“Yes, of course,” I agreed.

Neil continued, “If they’ve been collecting taxes on this property I would consider that to be evidence that the government knew all along this was not a church.”

“That’s an interesting observation,” I said.

Just then, Aaron came in from behind and said. “You have a good point there. I’m an attorney and I can see the potential of a lawsuit being filed against the government in this case. There are several groups that

specialize in this area of law and they win a lot of their cases.”

“Really,” Neil asked?

“Yes,” Aaron replied. “The government may have just opened up the proverbial can of worms with this one. The taxpayers could end up paying millions of dollars in legal costs and even more if the pastor wins a judgment against them.”

John added, “I’ve heard that a lawsuit has already been filed, but I don’t know what it’s alleging.”

“Well, if he doesn’t win the lawsuit, he should at least get his property tax refunded to him,” I commented as I saw Chaplain Bill enter the lobby.

“Hi. We’re discussing the pastor who’s in jail.”

“Since I’m an ordained minister,” Chaplain Bill replied, “I find this case disturbing. But on the other hand, as a Christian I guess I shouldn’t be too surprised. Persecution against Christians usually comes from the government or religious leaders.”

Neil interrupted, “I have to ask the question, why is the government telling us what to do with our private property anyway? I know a lot of people who are fed up with the expensive and often unnecessary requirements forced on them by our zoning laws.”

“But don’t we need zoning laws for our safety,” John asked?

“No,” Neil replied. “Private industry can establish building codes that will provide safety without government interference. These zoning laws are essentially implying that we’re too stupid to provide adequate safety by ourselves. So we need to be told what to do like we were little children so we won’t hurt somebody. That’s insulting! Why should everyone be punished for the sins of a few?”

“I’ll tell you what’s really hurting us. It’s our government that has gone beyond its legitimate authority. That’s what’s hurting us.”

“I can see you really feel strongly about this, Neil,” I commented.

“I do,” Neil replied. “Hey, in 1775 Patrick Henry was visiting a small town in Virginia and saw a man tied to

a whipping post being beaten in the town square. When he asked one of the local citizens what this man had done to be beaten so severely he was told that the man was a pastor who refused to get licensed by the government. A few days later this pastor died from his beatings.

“This incident caused Patrick Henry to write the famous words, ‘Give me liberty or give me death,’ which became the rallying cry of the American revolution.”

“You don’t think that kind of thing could happen again, do you,” I asked?

“Yes,” Neil replied. “I have a friend who’s so concerned about this possibility that he got his passport recently and he’s actively looking for a new home and job outside of the United States.”

“Now that you mention it,” I replied, “it’s surprising how many guests have told me they were armed and were preparing for possible war against our own government.”

“I don’t know what you think about this,” Neil added, “but there seems to be a striking parallel between what was happening back in 1776 and what is happening in our country now.

“It seems like we have come full circle in this nation. In 1776 we fought for our freedom and won. But over the years, our government leaders have gradually stolen the constitutional rights that our founding fathers fought and died for. So now we are pretty much right back where we started.”

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For years our religious freedoms have been slowly dwindling away in this country. Hopefully this outrageous action by the government in Phoenix will help to wake up the American people enough for them to demand that our leaders follow our constitution.

Liberty Park Inn® is a syndicated column about issues and current events featuring conversations in an imaginary hotel. You may contact the author through his website at www.libertyparkinn.com.