



"Law without liberty is tyranny. Liberty without law is license.  
Liberty under the law is freedom."  
—William Penn

**31-May-02**

## **Fading Freedoms**

This past Wednesday, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) announced that its agents will be given more latitude to conduct surveillance without providing reasonable proof of suspected wrongdoing. In other words, the FBI can now "monitor Internet sites, libraries and religious institutions without first having to offer evidence of potential criminal activity," according to a May 30, 2002, article in the Washington Post.

This new power, of course, contradicts the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution:

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

This is only one in a long line of freedoms that have been stolen from the American people over the past nine months since [the World Trade Center](#)

attack. Every day, in thousands of airports across the country, the same Fourth Amendment is violated multiple times as citizens are unreasonably—supposedly randomly—searched and at times their possessions seized in the name of security. Our regular mail is irradiated to kill anthrax spores, our digital mail and phone conversations are monitored by the FBI's Carnivore surveillance system, and in some places like Tampa, Florida, our pictures are taken without our knowledge and scanned by face-recognition software in search of criminals and terrorists.

When will it end? When will Americans realize that they are frittering away their heritage and God-given blessings, among which is the freest form of government this world has ever known?

The Founders of the United States understood human nature as well as any group of carnal men could. They understood that, given the opportunity, men will take as much power as they are given and reach for still more. Thus, they set up a weak federal government based on divided powers and checks and balances. In addition, they listed in the Bill of Rights (the first ten amendments to the Constitution) the specific rights of Americans. Further, they documented that the rights given in the Constitution do not deny the people rights they already have (ninth amendment) and that any powers not already listed belong to the States or the people (tenth amendment).

Sadly, the history of the United States is the story of the American citizen losing his rights and powers to the federal government. Some accumulation of power may have been necessary for America to become a great nation—part of God's plan ([Genesis 48:19](#))—but increased hegemony in the world need not have infringed on the rights of citizens at home. Certainly, in this time of terrorism, the American citizen can feel secure without sacrificing his freedoms!

For instance, one incontrovertible fact has stood out among all others over the past nine months: Most (if not nearly all) acts of terrorism against the United States and her people have been perpetrated by young Muslims of foreign nationality. However, it is politically incorrect for those responsible for our security—from our armed forces to the lowliest airport security

employee—to profile terrorists as young Arab males. So we get the spectacle of airport screeners patting down old ladies with nothing more sinister on their minds than surprising their grandchildren in Des Moines!

Of course, political freedoms and rights are not the chief aim of man, but they expedite the spread of [the gospel](#) and provide a base for the [peace](#) necessary to produce righteousness (see [1 Timothy 2:1-4](#); [James 3:18](#)). Christians should be concerned about their erosion, understanding that reduced freedoms and oppression are a sign of a nation's eventual downfall (see Isaiah 3; 10:1-4; 59:1-15; Jeremiah 5-6; Ezekiel 22; Hosea 4-5; [Amos 3:6-8](#); [4:1](#); [5:10-15](#); [Micah 2:1-4](#); etc.). This should give us further incentive to prepare ourselves for Christ's return ([Matthew 25:1-13](#))!

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[Freedom and Unleavened Bread](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Christian freedom has nothing to do with location but how we think. Like Israel on the edge of the Red Sea, we are too willing to turn back to our enslavement. Like Christ, carrying the instrument of our death (the cross), we also carry with us the instrument of our own death (our carnal minds). By imbibing on God's Word (maturing from milk to meat), we will incrementally displace our carnality, responding to God's shaping of our character to attain the Kingdom of God and membership in His Family.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Eroding Religious Freedom](#)**

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

## CGG Weekly: Fading Freedoms (31-May-02)

Freedom of religion in America is being slowly eroded rather than removed en masse. Richard Ritenbaugh presents several examples, then shows how the Bible encourages us in such times.

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