

What Does the Bible Say about the Right to Privacy?

Ephesians 5:8-17

The Origin Of The Concept Of The Right To Privacy

- “The right to privacy is the time-travel paradox of constitutional law: even though it didn't exist as a constitutional doctrine until 1961, and didn't form the basis of a Supreme Court ruling until 1965, it is in some respects the oldest constitutional right. It is the right to privacy that forms the common foundation of the freedom of conscience outlined in the First Amendment, the right to be secure in one's person outlined in the Fourth Amendment, and the right to refuse self-incrimination outlined in the Fifth Amendment - despite the fact that the word "privacy" itself appears nowhere in the U.S. Constitution.

The Origin Of The Concept Of The Right To Privacy

- “The origins of the right to privacy can be traced to the nineteenth century. In 1890, Samuel D. Warren and Louis D. Brandeis published "The Right to Privacy," an influential article that postulated a general common-law right of privacy. Before the publication of this article, no U.S. court had expressly recognized such a legal right. Since the publication of the article, courts have relied on it in hundreds of cases presenting a range of privacy issues.

The Origin Of The Concept Of The Right To Privacy

- “In Constitutional Law, the right of people to make personal decisions regarding intimate matters; under the Common Law, the right of people to lead their lives in a manner that is reasonably secluded from public scrutiny, whether such scrutiny comes from a neighbor's prying eyes, an investigator's eavesdropping ears, or a news photographer's intrusive camera; and in statutory law, the right of people to be free from unwarranted drug testing and Electronic Surveillance.”
(<http://civilliberty.about.com/od/equalrights/tp/Where-Did-the-Right-to-Privacy-Origins-Come-From.htm>)

But, What Does The Word Of God Say?

- Eph. 5:8-17 - “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. 14 Therefore He says: Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light. 15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

Current Role Of Right To Privacy

- In our society, the concept of a right to privacy has taken on a significant role

Biblical Individual Rights

- The reason stealing is wrong is because God ordained that property can belong to an individual
 - Ex. 20:15 - “You shall not steal.”
 - Ex. 22:1-4 - “If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep. 2 If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed. 3 If the sun has risen on him, there shall be guilt for his bloodshed. He should make full restitution; if he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. 4 If the theft is certainly found alive in his hand, whether it is an ox or donkey or sheep, he shall restore double.”
- Privacy is for protecting what belongs to an individual, but sin is not ours to keep.

Biblical Individual Rights

- Some argue that the early disciples shared everything
 - Acts 2:44-45 - “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.”
 - Acts 4:32 - “Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.”
- Their sharing was a voluntary revocation of property rights and an attitude of willingness to share what was theirs by right.

Biblical Individual Rights

- They were not required to sell their property or to give the entire amount
 - Acts 5:4 - “While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

Biblical Individual Rights

- The marriage relationship is privately kept by the married couple
 - 1Cor. 7:4 - “The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.”
 - Heb. 13:4 - “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

Biblical Individual Rights

- Strangers do not share any rights to our mates
 - Prov. 5:15-20 - “Drink water from your own cistern, And running water from your own well. 16 Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, Streams of water in the streets? 17 Let them be only your own, And not for strangers with you. 18 Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice with the wife of your youth. 19 As a loving deer and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; And always be enraptured with her love. 20 For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, And be embraced in the arms of a seductress?”

Truth Exposes Sin

- John 3:19-21 - “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

Truth Exposes Sin

- It is a Christian's duty to uphold the light and expose the evil done in secret
 - Eph. 5:11-13 - “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.”

Truth Exposes Sin

- The right to privacy is an American concept, and in many cases, a blessed privilege.
- However, it is a contemporary American concept. The Courts of Heaven do not recognize the authority of the US Courts. God's Court is superior to the US Supreme Court.
- God's will in this matter is older and more authoritative than contemporary philosophy.
- We can reasonably conclude that if a conflict arises between God's command to expose the darkness and an American judge's ruling to maintain the darkness, God overrules the judge.

Truth Exposes Sin

- Though many think their sins are secret, they have a tendency to come to light
 - Num. 32:23 - “But if you won't do so, be warned! You will be sinning against the LORD. Be certain of this, that your sin will catch up to you!” (ISV)

Truth Exposes Sin

- Resenting the exposure does not diminish the sin
- The reason the matter is known is because the sin didn't remain secret
- What is being argued is that because it was something intended to remain secret, it is therefore justification for the acceptability of the sin when it becomes known.
- Our world has accepted this: "Well, I can't judge what a person does in the privacy of his own home."
- The secrecy of an activity has no impact on its morality, right or wrong

Truth Exposes Sin

- We cannot avoid the consequences of wrongful actions
 - Gal. 6:7-8 - “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”

Private Sins Have Public Consequences

- Achan stole from Jericho in secret, but God publicly exposed him
 - Joshua 7:10-12, 19-25
- David's private sin with Bathsheba was publically exposed by Nathan
 - 2Sam. 12:7-13
 - Psalm 19:12 - "Cleanse me from secret faults."

Sin Cannot Remain Hidden

- It will not bring us any advantage
 - Prov. 28:13 - “He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”

Sin Cannot Remain Hidden

- Attempting to hide sin hurts the sinner
 - Psalm 32:3-5 - “When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. 4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. 5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the LORD, And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”

Sin Cannot Remain Hidden

- Ultimately we will all be judged by God, who is not influenced by the US Supreme Court, nor by your notions of what you do in private. He will reveal the hidden things for the scrutiny and judgment of all
 - 1Cor. 4:4-5 - “For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.”

Sin Cannot Remain Hidden

- Nothing is private before God. There will be no argument that it was a private matter in the Judgment
 - Psalm 90:8 - “You have set our iniquities before You, Our secret sins in the light of Your countenance.”