

FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH

“ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL”

Text: Acts 10:34-35

Introduction:

1. According to the Bible, the function of government is to maintain societal order that promotes peace and liberty (Romans 13:1-7).
2. Through the concepts of “Nature’s God,” “Natural Law,” and People’s Law,” the founders of this country sought to pattern government after God’s wisdom.
3. Foundational to this type of government was the freedom of religion.
4. The enumeration and protection of the rights of man came from a fundamental understanding of his nature.
5. As stated in the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights....”
6. What did the Founders mean when they wrote of the equality of man?
7. And, more importantly, what does the Bible teach about this principle?

- I. No Respect of Persons (Acts 10:34-35)
 - A. Peter declared a truth that had been revealed to him from Heaven – God is no respecter of persons.
 1. The Greek word used here (*prosochaleptes* [προσωποληπτης]) literally refers to “an acceptor of a face.”
 2. In other words, God does not show partiality or favoritism.
 - B. God does not judge merely by outward appearance, but by the heart (1 Samuel 16:7; Galatians 2:6).
 - C. Thus, all men are created equal:
 1. In the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6; Psalm 100:3; James 3:9)
 2. Deeply loved by God (Colossians 1:17; John 3:16)
 3. Abundantly blessed by God (Acts 17:28; Matthew 5:45)
 4. Watched over by God (Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:22-25)
 5. One day to meet God (2 Samuel 14:14; Hebrews 9:27)
 6. Righteously judged by God (2 Chronicles 19:7; Romans 2:1-11)
 - D. God commands men to treat one another equally and fairly – with no respect of persons (Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:17; 16:19; Proverbs 24:23; 28:21; James 2:1-4, 9).
 - E. The Founding Fathers sought to institute a government that respected the equality of man and treated all without partiality.
 1. “The ordaining of laws in favor of one part of the nation, to the prejudice and oppression of another, is certainly the most erroneous and mistaken policy. An equal dispensation of protection, rights, privileges, and advantages, is what every part is entitled to, and ought to enjoy.” – Benjamin Franklin, Emblematical Representations, ca. 1774
 2. “I can only say that there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of slavery.” – George Washington, Letter to Robert Morris, 1786

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- II. Equality Under the Law
- A. Though all men are created equal, it is apparent that all men are not the same.
 - B. In spite of their differences, all men will be treated equally by God.
 - 1. God has no respect of persons, but He “will render to every man according to his deeds” (Romans 2:6, 11).
 - 2. God did not respect Cain’s offering because he was disobedient (Genesis 4:3-7).
 - a. This is not respect of persons.
 - b. Instead, it is equality before the law.
 - 3. It is those who fear God and practice righteousness that are accepted by Him (Acts 10:34-35).
 - 4. Men may have different “talents,” but they will be held to the same standard of obedience (Matthew 25:14-30; cf. Mark 9:41).
 - C. Likewise, all men should be treated equally under the law and in the protection of their rights.
 - 1. “Justice is indiscriminately due to all, without regard to numbers, wealth, or rank” (John Jay).
 - 2. “Equal laws protecting equal rights ...the best guarantee of loyalty and love of country” (James Madison).
 - D. These principles were enumerated in Amendments 4 – 8 of the Constitution.
 - E. Following the Civil War, the 14th Amendment was ratified, stating: “No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”
 - F. It should be noted that the role of government is to protect equal rights, not to provide equal things.
- III. Freedom of Speech
- A. To safeguard these principles of equality, the First Amendment states: “Congress shall make no law ...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”
 - B. When equality is not protected and justice is not served, man has the right to speak up in protest.
 - 1. “In those wretched countries where a man cannot call his tongue his own, he can scarce call anything his own. Whoever would overthrow the liberty of a nation must begin by subduing the freeness of speech; a thing terrible to publick traytors” (Benjamin Franklin, Dogood Papers, written by Franklin in 1722, at the age of sixteen).
 - 2. “No government ought to be without censors, and, where the press is free, no one ever will” (Thomas Jefferson).
 - C. Of course, this is also a biblical principle.
 - D. When error is taught, the Truth must be proclaimed (Mark 7:1-9; Galatians 2:4-5; 2 Timothy 4:1-4).