

FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH

THE RULE OF LAW

Text: Daniel 6

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 and his God-given rights.
5. Both the exercise and protection of these rights require laws and their enforcement.
6. Yet these laws must be applied and administered with fairness and equality.
7. Again, the Bible sets the standard in this regard.

I. Public Duties

- A. Thomas Jefferson declared that man "has no natural right in opposition to his social duties."
- B. Indeed, freedom comes with great responsibilities – duties both public and private.
- C. Public duties include:
 1. The duty to respect the right to life of others
 2. The duty to respect the liberty of others
 3. The duty to respect the property of others
 4. The duty to keep the peace
 5. The duty to provide for one's own
- D. Because men fail at their responsibilities, laws must be enacted and enforced to protect liberty and society.
 1. James Madison wrote: "Liberty may be endangered by the abuses of liberty as well as the abuses of power."
 2. God warned of this same truth (Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16).
- E. The source for these laws must be the Word of God. { *"The law of Nature stands as an eternal rule to all men, legislators as well as others. The rules that they make for man's actions must ... be conformable to the law of Nature – i.e., to the will of God"* (John Locke). }

II. The Rule of Law

- A. John Adams succinctly stated this principle in a 1774 essay printed in the Boston Gazette: "A government of laws, and not of men."
- B. This principle is illustrated in the law of the Medes and Persians (Daniel 6).
 1. Daniel was elevated to a position of great authority (6:1-3).
 2. Due to jealousy, those leaders under his authority sought some means to have Daniel demoted (6:4-5).

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3. To do this, they flattered King Darius, convincing him to enact a law forbidding prayer to anyone but him (6:6-7).
 4. According to the laws of the Medes and Persians, once enacted it could not be altered – even by the King (6:8-9, 12, 15).
 5. As a result, when Daniel prayed to God he was punished by being cast into a den of lions (6:10-17).
- C. This principle is also seen in the story of Esther (1:19; 8:8).
 - D. This principle states that the law is supreme – meaning that all men are obligated equally to it and constrained by it.
 - E. “No one is above the law.”
 - F. Of course, this is what God desired for His people, the nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 17:14-20).
 - G. James Madison wrote: “Equal laws protecting equal rights... the best guarantee of loyalty and love of country.”

III. The Universal Gospel

- A. In the spiritual realm, God is supreme and His law is binding upon all.
- B. In the present age, this means that all men are accountable to the Gospel of Christ.
- C. It is available to all (1 Timothy 2:1-4; 2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 22:17).
- D. It is to be preached to all (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47).
- E. It is to be obeyed by all (Acts 17:30-31; 20:21; Titus 2:11-12; cf. Isaiah 2:2-3).
- F. It is to be the standard for all (John 12:48; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9; 1 Peter 4:17).
- G. In the spiritual realm, “No one is above the Gospel.”

Conclusion:

1. The Rule of Law helps to ensure equality and justice in society.
2. John Jay, first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, stated: “Justice is indiscriminately due to all, without regard to numbers, wealth, or rank.”
3. Under the Gospel of Christ, salvation is available to all.
4. And, by the same Rule of Law, judgment will occur when Jesus returns.