

Baptist Distinctives Part 6 – Religious Liberty

Religious principles were at the heart of the founding of every one of the thirteen colonies. Baptists were in the forefront of the establishment of religious freedom in early America. The Liberty Bell, brought to American in 1751, was inscribed with Lev. 25:10 “. . . Proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants.” It was John Leland, a Baptist minister, who confronted James Madison and insisted on the first amendment to our Constitution to guarantee religious liberty.

Our *Baptist Faith and Message, 2000* continues the tradition of supporting religious liberty. Note the following excerpts from article XVII on Religious Liberty:

God alone is the Lord of the conscience, and he has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate . . . Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends . . . A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men . . .

As believers, it is our responsibility to:

- Understand true freedom comes from Christ, Rom 6:18-23; 8:1-2; Gal 5:1-6.
- Seek the truth of God’s Word that insures true freedom, Jn 8:31-32.
- Support of civil government and elected officials, Rom 13:1-7.
- Pray for all those in authority over us, 1 Tim 2:1-7.
- Continue to uphold the “self-evident” truths of “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” from the *Declaration of Independence*.

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