

## THE ROOTS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Reference: **miscellaneous Scripture**

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The words freedom and liberty are related words and most often we use them on an interchangeable basis; but some argue that, in a more technical sense, there is some difference between those words:

\_\_\_\_\_ is a word we sometimes use to describe a nation's emancipation and **independence** from another nation. On Saturday we celebrated our nation being freed from tyrannical English rule.  
Reference: **Isaiah 5:20** (see screen)

\_\_\_\_\_ is a word we sometimes use to describe our **individual freedom** to do as we please until what we want to do interferes with someone else's freedom i.e. our **rights** as an individual.

Liberty is part of God's being

Reference: **II Corinthians 3:17** (see screen)

### First Amendment to the United States Constitution

**"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or 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."**

The first part of that amendment is called the "\_\_\_\_\_ clause." "Congress shall make no law respecting an **establishment of religion...**"

The next immediate phrase in that amendment is called the "\_\_\_\_\_ clause." "...or prohibiting the **free exercise** thereof"

President Jefferson mentioned a "wall of separation between church and state." That's where the common phrase "\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_" originated.

### Article VI to the United States Constitution (third paragraph)

*The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several state legislatures, and all executive and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the several states, shall be bound by oath or affirmation, to support this Constitution; **but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.***"

Thomas Jefferson called religious liberty “*the most inalienable and sacred of all human rights.*”

**Question:** Was Jefferson right? Is religious liberty a divine right? Is religious liberty a biblical concept?

**ONE** - Religious liberty respects the fact man was created in the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.

Reference: **Genesis 1:26** (see screen)

Being made in the image of God means we are made in His likeness in the sense we have some characteristics and attributes that are \_\_\_\_\_ to Him.

### The Preamble to 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 inalienable rights**, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Inalienable rights (natural rights) are those rights we receive from \_\_\_\_\_ by virtue of the fact we were created in God’s image. .

**TWO** - Jesus Himself \_\_\_\_\_ religious freedom.

Reference: **Matthew 19:16-23; Matthew 23:37** (see screen)

**THREE** - God changes human hearts, not \_\_\_\_\_.

Fiat means an authoritative order, command or decree.

Reference: **John 6:63; John 8:36** (see screen)

Reverend Roger Williams gave a most profound theological reason for religious freedom. He argued that since faith (salvific faith) is a free gift from God then **it cannot be forced upon a person**; therefore, we must maintain a strict separation of church and state so as not to intimidate or force people into accepting a particular religious position. Government has no control about what happens in someone’s \_\_\_\_\_.

Reference: **John 8:36** (see screen)

**Question:** What can we do about losing religious freedoms?

- Be \_\_\_\_\_ to God no matter how serious things get.
- Be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ consistent with a biblical world view.

- \_\_\_\_\_ organizations that fight legal battles defending our constitutional rights.

Some examples are: **ACLJ** (American Center for Law and Justice), **Liberty Counsel**, Focus on the Family’s political affiliate – **Family Policy Alliance**, **Alliance Defending Freedom**, **U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops**, **Family Research Council**, **Faith and Freedom Coalition**, **Concerned Women for America**, **Becket Fund for Religious Liberty**, **Center for American Liberty**, etc.

- Understand we are going to suffer the continued \_\_\_\_\_ of a nation that has turned against God.

Reference: **Psalms 9:17** (see screen)

**Excerpt from Southern Baptist Convention’s doctrinal statement "The Baptist Faith and Message" 2020:**

### XVII. Religious Liberty

God alone is 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. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom, no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. 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. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. 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, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

**Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.**