

# Rebuilding the Foundations

*Series: Rebuilding the Foundations*

By Russ Sukhia

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**Bible Text:** Leviticus 18:1-5; 22-30

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**Liberty Church, PCA**

11301 Liberty Rd.

Owings Mills, MD 21117

**Website:** [libertychurchpca.org](http://libertychurchpca.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/russsukhia](http://www.sermonaudio.com/russsukhia)

If you will turn in your Bibles, please, to Leviticus chapter 18, we'll begin at verse one.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'I am the LORD your God. According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances. You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.'"<sup>1</sup>

He continues in this chapter to delineate the sexual relationships that are forbidden to his people.

Verse 10.

“The nakedness of your son’s daughter or your daughter’s daughter, their nakedness you shall not uncover; for theirs is your own nakedness.”<sup>2</sup>

Verse 12.

“You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s sister; she is near of kin to your father.”<sup>3</sup>

He continues. Pick it up at verse 22.

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion. Do not

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<sup>1</sup> Leviticus 18:1-5.

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 18:10.

<sup>3</sup> Leviticus 18:12.

defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you. For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people. Therefore you shall keep My ordinance, so that you do not commit any of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I am the LORD your God.<sup>4</sup>

May God's blessing rest upon his Word. Let's pray.

*Father, take your Word now and apply it to hearts. Accomplish eternal things. Empower it. Embolden it. Use it mightily, we ask, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

I want you to imagine for a moment that you went home this afternoon and found that 20 burly men had removed the soil around the perimeter of your house or apartment, and they were beating at your home's foundation with sledgehammers. What would you do? I suppose you would call the police, first of all. Perhaps you would rouse the neighbors. Maybe if you were so equipped you would run in your house and grab your shotgun and a handful of shells. But if the police didn't come, if the neighbors wouldn't help, if your shotgun wouldn't fire, how long do you think your house would stand?

Just as a house will ultimately collapse if its foundation is destroyed, so a nation will collapse if her foundations are destroyed.

I hope to return to preaching through 2 Corinthians in a few weeks, but this morning I want to call your attention to a question asked by Psalm 11.

“If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”<sup>5</sup>

When the constitutional convention had finished its historic work, a woman approached Benjamin Franklin as he left the proceedings.

“Well, Dr. Franklin, what have you given us?”

“You have a republic, madam, if you can keep it.”

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<sup>4</sup> Leviticus 18:22-30.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 11:3.

Well we have kept it, by the grace of God, for about 225 years from the Constitutional Convention, but there is reason to believe we may not be able to keep it much longer. I believe the foundations upon which our country was built are being beaten away, as if by sledgehammers, while most of us, with plugs in our ears, are asleep in the house, wondering when we are occasionally roused from our slumber, “What’s all the racket?”

**Well, let’s begin with a very basic question. Why did God institute civil government?** Why do we have civil magistrates, courts, governors, presidents, prime ministers, parliaments, legislators, etc.?

Well, the short biblical answer is that civil government was established by God for the defense of a society from enemies without and enemies within. You might say civil government was established for justice, “to establish justice and provide for the common defense.” Thus, the civil magistrate is spoken of in Scripture as God’s servant.

Now, obviously that was true of the kings of Israel. The Lord speaks many times, for example, of “Solomon my servant,” or “My servant David.” But this was not just true of them. In Jeremiah 25:8-9 the Lord says to the rebellious people of Judah:

“Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Because you have not heard My words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,’ says the LORD, ‘and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land.’”<sup>6</sup>

Nebuchadnezzar was a pagan idolater, but he was a civil authority, and God calls him, “My servant.”

In Isaiah, Persian king Cyrus is called by God, “My shepherd.”

Turn to Romans 13. Look at verse one. Paul says:

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.<sup>7</sup>

He is God’s minister to you for good, *God’s minister*, *God’s servant*, in other words.

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<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah 25:8-9.

<sup>7</sup> Romans 13:10-4.

In England, as you may know, civil servants are still called ministers, the prime minister, for example. The late Orthodox Presbyterian pastor and professor at Reformed Seminary Dr. Greg Bahnsen put it this way:

“Civil magistrates are servants of God. God’s rule is supreme. Their rules are subordinate. Civil magistrates must be understood to be deputies of God himself, not free and independent despots who can simply do as they please.” [By *This Standard*, p. 259]

Remember Jesus’ words to the Roman governor Pilate.

“You could have no power at all over Me unless it had been given you from above.”<sup>8</sup>

Civil magistrates are delegated their authority by God.

**So the first principle concerning civil magistrates is that each one of them is in a very real sense *a servant of God*.**

The *second principle* follows logically from the first: **The civil magistrate is obligated to make decisions which are just based upon God’s natural revelation, the laws of nature, you may say, and his special revelation, the revealed Word of God.**

““You shall do no injustice in judgment,”<sup>9</sup>

“It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, for a throne is established by righteousness.”<sup>10</sup>

Which king? Any king.

“The king establishes the land by justice.”<sup>11</sup>

Which land? Any land.

“He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.”<sup>12</sup>

Who is an abomination?; anyone who either justifies the wicked or condemns the just.

**Thirdly, God did not exempt pagan nations from the claims of his righteousness. He held them accountable for moral degeneration.**

“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> John 19:11.

<sup>9</sup> Leviticus 19:15.

<sup>10</sup> Proverbs 16:12.

<sup>11</sup> Proverbs 29:4.

<sup>12</sup> Proverbs 17:15.

Well, you mean *to Israel*. No, to *any* people.

The men of Sodom and Gomorrah were not believers in Jehovah, but the Lord brought judgment upon those cities. We read:

Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.<sup>14</sup>

And why did he do that?

“Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave,”<sup>15</sup>

The people of Nineveh were pagan idolaters. They were not followers of Jehovah. But they were nonetheless going to be held accountable for violating God’s moral law written upon their hearts.

Jonah cried out as he walked through the city:

“Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown,”<sup>16</sup>

Consider God’s warning to the Israelites in Leviticus 18:

“Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you,”<sup>17</sup>

Now the fact that the Canaanites were not followers of Jehovah did not prevent them from being cast out of the land for their immorality. And years later, the fact that the inhabitants of Israel and Judah claimed that they were *still* followers of Jehovah did not prevent them from being cast out of the land when they committed similar abominations.

Fourthly, I want you to notice something. Turn to Deuteronomy four, or listen as I read from verse five. These are the words of Moses to Israel before they crossed the Jordan:

Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me; that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and

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<sup>13</sup> Proverbs 14:34.

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 19:24-25.

<sup>15</sup> Genesis 18:20.

<sup>16</sup> Jonah 3:4.

<sup>17</sup> Leviticus 18:24.

understanding people.’ For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?<sup>18</sup>

**The fourth principle I want to make note of here is that Israel’s justice was intended to serve as a model for other nations.** That is why Moses said, “Be careful to observe them. Other people will hear about these statutes and say, ‘Surely this is a great nation. It is a wise and understanding people.’ And they will in turn, then, pattern their laws after your laws and righteousness will expand.”

**Fifthly, although vengeance belongs to God, Deuteronomy 32:35, the Scriptures teach that civil magistrate is under God’s orders to carry out vengeance against those who transgress God’s law.**

The civil authority, according to Romans 13 bears not the sword in vain. It doesn’t carry a sword in vain. He is God’s minister, God’s servant, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil, Romans 13:4.

**A sixth principle we can derive from the Scripture concerning civil magistrates is that the wrath of the civil magistrate is intended to display God’s wrath upon evil doers.**

Joshua said to Achan—Achan who had violated God’s Word, you remember, and brought trouble upon Israel.

“‘Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day.’ So all Israel stoned him with stones,”<sup>19</sup>

You see, the civil magistrate in this case, Joshua, was displaying God’s wrath upon evil doers.

**Seventh: Human government, symbolized by the sword, could be *properly* exercised by the civil authority, as it was in that case, or it could be *improperly* exercised by the authority.**

For example: 1 Samuel 22. King Saul of Israel, you will remember, was envious, jealous of David, and he feared that David was aspiring to the throne, and that his throne was in jeopardy because David lived. So in 1 Samuel 22 King Saul of Israel ordered the execution of 85 priests, and destroyed the city of the priests simply because they had given refuge to David. In this case, he abused his civil authority, as it is evidently being abused today in Syria by a leader who is killing citizens to maintain his own power.

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<sup>18</sup> Deuteronomy 4:5-8.

<sup>19</sup> Joshua 7:25.

**Eighth, civil authorities who do not administer justice according to God's law threaten their entire nation with the judgment of God.** Now, we certainly see that in the drought and famine in the days of wicked King Ahab, and, as we have seen, in Sodom. We see it in Nineveh. We see it in Canaan.

**So to summarize** what we have considered so far, the civil magistrate is God's servant, whether or not he is personally a believer. As such, he has been delegated with a responsibility to exercise justice, extending even to the institution of capital punishment. (He doesn't carry the sword in vain). But he is not to do so *arbitrarily* or *capriciously*, but, rather, according to God's revealed standards of justice. The civil magistrate is to display God's wrath upon the wicked and he is to reward the righteous.

If, instead, he countenances, for example, the *slaying of the innocent* and *permits the wicked to go unpunished*, he is a wicked ruler who could well bring the wrath of God upon the nation. The justice in the nation of Israel was intended to serve as a model for other nations. A wise ruler of another land would pattern his laws upon those revealed to Israel.

The fact that civil laws and civil magistrates are to reflect God's revealed law is further evidenced by the requirements that God tells us that we are to set for our leaders. Before we choose leaders, we should make sure that they meet certain standards. What are those standards? Well, they must be those who "fear God and are honest, who hate covetousness," Exodus 18:21. They are to be "wise, understanding and knowledgeable," Deuteronomy 1:13.

"He who rules over men must be just, Ruling in the fear of God."<sup>20</sup>

Even the pagan king Artaxerxes recognized this before he sent Ezra back to the Promised Land.

"And you, Ezra, according to your God-given wisdom, set magistrates and judges who may judge all the people who are in the region beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God; and teach those who do not know them."<sup>21</sup>

Even the pagan king realized that if you are going to set up leaders in your land, they should be those who know and teach the laws of your God and will teach those who don't know them.

"Excellent speech is not becoming to a fool, much less lying lips to a prince."<sup>22</sup>

So when you choose a leader, he must be a man of honesty.

"It is not good to show partiality in judgment."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> 2 Samuel 23:3.

<sup>21</sup> Ezra 7:25.

<sup>22</sup> Proverbs 17:7.

So a leader is not to show partiality----to favor one group over another.

“It is not for kings to drink wine, or for princes intoxicating drink; lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted.”<sup>24</sup>

So here you are looking for a man of sobriety. You are looking for a man who is not given to wine, not given to alcohol in excess.

Open your mouth for the speechless, in the cause of all who are appointed to die. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.<sup>25</sup>

So you are looking for a man who has compassion, who will plead the cause of the poor and the needy.

Thus, when we choose leaders, whether congressmen, judges, school board members, presidents and governors, et cetera, we should seek those who are wise, understanding, knowledgeable, honest, not covetous, impartial, temperate, compassionate and righteousness, men who know God’s law, because they bear God’s sword; and they cannot properly punish the wicked and protect the righteous unless they know who are the wicked and who are the righteous.

Now this truth was evident to those who founded our nation. John Jay, one of the authors of *The Federalist Papers*, the man selected by George Washington as the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court said:

“Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers and it is the *duty*, as well as the *privilege* and *interest* of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.” [Cited by David Barton, *The Myth of Separation*, p.35]

Now why would a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court say such a thing? Because if the role of the civil magistrate is to act as God’s deputy—and that is what John Jay believed—wouldn’t you want to choose someone who knew and understood God’s Word?

Surely this is why almost every state, at the time of the adoption of our U.S. Constitution, had language in their state constitutions requiring belief in God and in the Scriptures of anyone who would be an office holder. “You can’t be an office holder if you don’t believe in God and the Scriptures,” is the way they viewed it.

For example, the original Delaware constitution, article 22.

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<sup>23</sup> Proverbs 24:23.

<sup>24</sup> Proverbs 31:4-5.

<sup>25</sup> Proverbs 31:8-9.



Every person who shall be chosen a member of either house, or appointed to any office or place of trust, before taking his seat, or entering upon the execution of his office, shall take the following oath, or affirmation, if conscientiously scrupulous of taking an oath, to wit:

I do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for evermore; and I do acknowledge the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration.

The original constitution of Massachusetts, chapter six, article one:

All persons elected to the State office or to the Legislature must] make and subscribe the following declaration, "I do declare, that I believe the Christian religion, and have firm persuasion of its truth."

North Carolina:

No person who shall deny the being of God or the truth of the Protestant religion or the divine authority either of the Old and New Testaments or who shall hold religious principles incompatible with the freedom and safety of the state shall be capable of holding any office or place of trust or profit in the civil department within this state.

Maryland:

...that no other test or qualification ought to be required than such oath of support and fidelity to this state and a declaration of a belief in the Christian religion. [constitutions cited by David Barton, *The Myth of Separation*, pp. 21-33]

Dr. Bahnsen put it this way:

The idea of a *secular state*, one which divorces its authority and standards from religious considerations about God and His will, is completely alien to biblical revelation. Indeed, it was alien to much of the ancient world in general. *All politics is the expression of a moral point of view*. All politics is the expression of a moral point of view which, in turn, is the outworking of a theological conception of man, the world and God. The modern world is no different. Its political philosophies are simultaneously political theologies and its civil rulers are often seen in a religious light. [By This Standard, pp. 257-258].

Our founders understood the principle that the civil authorities are *ministers of God*, *servants of God*. Therefore, those who *write* and *enforce* and *interpret* our laws must be familiar with God's law upon which our laws are patterned.

All civil magistrates, all civil laws will be judged on the basis of how closely they agree with God's standard of justice. God's Word is the ultimate divining rod which will

discern whether a leader of a nation was a good leader or a bad leader, whether the laws of a nation were just or unjust.

Now America has been uniquely blessed, as you know, because we were established from the beginning with the laws of God as our foundation for all civil law.

“Happy are the people whose God is the LORD!”<sup>26</sup>

What better way for a nation to invite the smile of providence upon its institutions and its culture than to align itself *from the very beginning* with the principles of justice that God has revealed in his Word, to establish itself firmly upon the foundation of God’s truth.

For the most part, then, our laws have been *just*, punishing the wicked, protecting the righteous, because they have been based upon God’s Word. Now, as you know, in our early days as a nation we had some very tragic failures in justice, most notably, refusing to outlaw the institution of slavery for the sake of unity among the states. They didn’t want to face that issue, and they let it go. They let it ride. And the result was 75 years of more slavery, until we had to pay dearly to have it removed in the War Between the States. And then there was the way we treated Native Americans, violating treaties, uprooting them, justifying the slaughter of men, women and children. A third injustice was when we refused to grant to all American citizens the right to vote.

But despite these horrendous injustices, America *did* have the distinct advantage of building most of her laws upon *a solid biblical foundation*. The very first constitution written in the US was The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut. Historian John Fisk wrote:

“Our own federal constitution is in lineal descent more nearly related to that of Connecticut than to that of any of the other 13 colonies.” [Myth, p. 87]

Now listen to this: The charge to the committee which was convened to frame those laws was to make them “As near the law of God as they can be,” which is probably why they delegated the authority to Puritan minister Thomas Hooker to do most of the writing of those laws, that Constitution.

As I wrote in my statement to the Maryland delegates when they were considering redefining marriage from a union of a man and a woman to a union of two individuals:

“The laws of a society are not derived from thin air. They are based upon *foundational principles*. The reason America’s legal system is emulated world wide is that our founders recognized that, as our Declaration of Independence put it, we are subject to ‘the laws of nature and of nature’s God,’ and they endeavored to frame our laws accordingly.”

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<sup>26</sup> Psalm 144:15.

The problem is we are living in a society that has *forgotten* or *has never heard* that the law of God, as revealed in the Bible, is the foundation for our laws.

We are operating with *a vague recollection* that some things are wrong and some things are right. Having jettisoned the Word of God, our consciences are becoming defiled, and they are now very uncertain guides bombarded, as they are with the message that there are no absolutes.

The late Francis Schaeffer recognized this in his 1985 book *The Church at the End of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. “The majority in the middle class have no real basis whatsoever for their values, he wrote, since they have given up the Christian viewpoint. They just function on memory.” [p. 19]

“I don’t know. It just makes me uncomfortable, this whole idea of killing babies. I am a little uncomfortable. I am not sure why...this whole idea of a man marrying a man, or a man marrying two women or three. I don’t know...I’m just uncomfortable with it. I am not sure why.”

He illustrated his point this way. “John Garner, the head of the *Urban Coalition* spoke in Washington to a group of student leaders. His topic was ‘Restoring Values in our Culture.’ When he had finished there was dead silence. Finally one man from Harvard stood up, and in a moment of complete brilliance he asked, ‘Sir, upon what base do you build your values?’

Schaeffer wrote, “I have never felt more sorry for anybody in my life.” He simply looked down and said, “I do not know.” [Ibid]

“Some year ago John Shad the former chairman of the SEC, (The Securities and Exchange Commission) donated 35 million dollars to the Harvard Business School to establish an ethics department. Two years later Harvard was still sitting on the grant,” according to Chuck Colson, “unable to find an ethicist to head up the department... Since faculty members react with outright skepticism to the idea of teaching ethics, their one values course at Harvard (at that point, the point at which Colson wrote this article), seeks not to convey moral truths, but tries to encourage students to *think carefully about complex issues*.” [The God of Stones and Spiders, Chuck Colson, p. 91]

“We can’t tell you what is right or wrong, but let’s *think carefully* about all this!”

**You see, if we remove the laws of nature and of nature’s God as the foundation of our laws, the obvious question is: What do we put in their place?**

Our founders recognized that we were “endowed by our creator with certain unalienable rights.” If we *excise our creator* from the equation, what happens to those rights?

“If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Psalm 11:3.

When Maryland's first lady, Judge Katie O'Malley, spoke to the *National Conference on Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Equality* in Baltimore in January, she indicated, according to *The Baltimore Sun*, January 31<sup>st</sup> of this year, that she and her husband would like to see religion removed as an influence in civil government. Speaking of the bill that was just passed Friday to redefine marriage that passed in the Maryland House of Delegates, she said,

"We are all very diverse, and that's what makes us strong, but religion should never play a part in what the laws of our state are, and that's what we're trying to convey to religious leaders who are opponents of the bill that believe that for some reason---for some reason--religion has some role to play in this, and, quite frankly, we believe that it doesn't."

[Martha Mossburg, *The Baltimore Sun*, 1/31/12]

**It is a striking statement.** Think about it. If what we believe about God--- if what we believe about what is right and wrong, moral and immoral, good and evil, just and fair, as revealed in his Word, if that is to have *no part* in framing the laws of our state, **then what is the basis for determining justice?**

I was struck by the fact that the Maryland House bill that redefines marriage as between two individuals maintains, get this, the bill maintains *all the rest of the restrictions that seem to be taken directly from Leviticus 18*. It stipulates in the law at great length, an individual may not marry that individual's mother. He may not marry that individual's daughter. He may not marry the individual's sister, grandmother, brother's daughter, sister's daughter, et cetera, et cetera. **And the question is, of course, "Why not?"**

If we are so presumptuous as to redefine marriage as between two individuals rather than between a man and a woman and we remove, in effect, "The laws of nature and of nature's God" as the foundation of our laws about marriage, how will we respond to those who in another few months or years, after the dust has settled, will campaign to redefine marriage as between two *or more* individuals or between *an adult and a consenting child* or between *individuals of the same or different species*?

"If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"<sup>28</sup>

I hope you recognize that redefining marriage is *only one* of the ramifications of departing from God's Word as the foundation of our laws. Perhaps you have heard about the lawsuit that was... I guess it was decided, Barry told me, by a federal judge in California. The plaintiff's were seeking the freeing of the Orca whales at Sea World in San Diego, arguing that they are enslaved, which is a violation of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

Now let me remind you: The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment says

"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States..."

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

I think it is fair to say that they were talking about *human beings* there.  
Now I didn't suppose the judge was going to rule in favor of the plaintiffs and apparently he didn't, which is good, but my point is:

**If the Word of God is no longer the foundation of our laws, we no longer have any solid basis for a belief in our uniqueness as humans.** The question may well be asked: "What right do we have to own pets or operate zoos or enslave cattle or chickens or sheep or goats?"

**Without the foundation of God's Word, how are such determinations to be made?**

"If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"<sup>29</sup>

Now this day was *not unforeseen* by our founders. They realized a time might come when we as a people departed from God's Word. They realized a time might come when we were no longer a moral, virtuous citizenry when we were no longer led by the Word of God, but by our own opinions.

Franklin said, "Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters." [p. 247, Barton]

Noah Webster, called America's School Master for his text books, his spellers, his catechism, his history books, dictionaries, was as solid in the revolution. He served nine terms in the Connecticut General Assembly. He was one of the first to call for a Constitutional Convention. He wrote, in his *History of the United States* in 1833:

"The moral principles and precepts contained in the Scriptures ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and laws. All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible." [Webster's *History of the US*, p. 309; cited by Barton, *Myth* p. 125]

Jefferson asked, "Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed from them their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God, that they are not to be violated but with his wrath?" [Ibid, p. 246]

Washington said, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports." [Ibid, p. 245]

Our second president, his vice president John Adams wrote, "Statesmen may plan and speculate for liberty, but it is *religion and morality alone* which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand. The only foundation of a free constitution is pure virtue." [Ibid, p. 245]

Our governor and our first lady may want to remove the influence of religion from government, but the US Supreme Court saw it differently when the court declared,

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

“Religion, morality and knowledge are necessary to good government and the preservation of liberty and the happiness of mankind,” in an 1892 decision, *Church of the Holy Trinity*. I am not sure they would say the same thing today. [cited by Barton, p. 248]

**Let me address three things before I close.** *First of all*, for those who are uncomfortable listening to what you might describe as a *national sermon* or even a *political sermon*, let me cite the words of the colonial pastor Jonathan Mayhew of Boston, from his sermon: “Concerning Unlimited Submission to the Higher Powers.”

“It is evident that the affairs of civil government may properly fall under a moral and religious consideration...for although there be a sense and a very plain and important sense, in which Christ’s Kingdom is not of this world, his inspired apostles have nevertheless laid down some general principles concerning the office of civil rulers, and the duty of subjects, together with the reason and obligation of that duty.”

When his sermon was published (by popular demand) he expanded on this in his preface:

“I beg it may be remembered that all Scripture is ‘profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, for instruction in righteousness.’ Why, then, should not those parts of Scripture which relate to civil government be examined and explained as well as others?”

[Cited in The American Covenant, Marshall Foster and Mary-Elaine Swanson, p. 14-15]

**Secondly**, we call this sermon *Rebuilding the Foundations*, but although we have said a lot about the foundations being destroyed, we haven’t said too much about *rebuilding*. Well, we *are* going to get there. This is the first of a brief series, and we have much more to consider.

**Thirdly**, far more than they need good government, people need Jesus Christ. They need the gospel. An unbeliever blessed to live in a nation favored with laws patterned upon Scripture will perish just as surely as an unbeliever living in a nation with unjust laws. As surely as America as a nation needs to repent, even so each and every one of us as individuals needs to repent. That is exactly what Jesus said, Luke 13:3.

“...unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”<sup>30</sup>

What does it mean to repent? It means to see yourself as a sinner, and hate what you see, to despise it, to realize it is vile. There is corruption inside of me and I don’t like it. I see Jesus in his beauty and in his purity and holiness, and I want to ask him to forgive me for this sin. I believe that he died upon that cross and rose again from the dead, that he bore my sins in his own body upon the tree, and I cry out to him, “Lord, be merciful to me and save me,” just like the thief on the cross, who said,

“Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Luke 13:3.

<sup>31</sup> Luke 23:42.

We need to *repent and believe*. America needs to repent and believe, but it starts in our hearts. God, be merciful *to me* a sinner.

Friend, have you come to Jesus Christ yourself? Have you laid hold upon him as your Master and King and Savior yourself? Have you been born from above? Do you have new life in Christ?

If not:

“Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near.”<sup>32</sup>

Read his Word.

“...faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”<sup>33</sup>

Start with the gospel of John, a wonderful place to start. Read it and say, “Lord, if this is true, please show me. Reveal it to me. Open my eyes. Give me sight. Take away my blind eyes. Take away this heart of stone and give me heart of flesh.”

You come to God that way on your knees asking him to reveal himself to you, and He will.

Let me close with the words of Jonathan Witherspoon, the Presbyterian preacher, the president of what became Princeton, the only minister who signed the Declaration of Independence, the man who had a part in the training (according to David Barton of Wall Builders) of “one president, one vice president, three Supreme Court justices, 10 cabinet members, twelve governors, 60 congressmen, plus many members of the Constitutional Convention and many state congressmen.” [Myth of Separation, p. 93]

Here is what he said.

“God grant that in America true religion and civil liberty may be inseparable and that the unjust attempts to destroy the one may in the issue or in the end tend to support the establishment of both.” [Ibid]

That should be our prayer.

Let’s pray together.

*Oh Lord, you have said in your Word the wicked shall be turned into hell in all nations that forget God. Lord, it certainly seems that we are moving in that direction, if we are not already there. And so we pray for your mercy upon us as a people. Lord, we pray for holiness in this land. We pray for righteousness, and we pray that each of us would recognize that we have sinned. “All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned*

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<sup>32</sup> Isaiah 55:6.

<sup>33</sup> Romans 10:17.

*every one to us own way.” We have all sinned in sexual ways. We have sinned in our minds, in our thoughts. Father, we have sinned in theft, in covetousness, in putting other gods before you. “There is none righteous, no not one.” Have mercy upon us, Lord. May we as a people rise up and say Your Word is the foundation of our laws. May we cry out to you and to our leaders to reestablish your Word as our foundation. We ask it in Christ’s name. Amen.*