



"Democracy and socialism have nothing in common but one word, equality. But notice the difference: while democracy seeks equality in liberty, socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude."

—Alexis de Tocqueville

14-Aug-09

Is There Hope For Equality?

Perhaps the greatest of all social ideals is equality. In the West, it is generally held that Christianity is responsible for placing a high regard upon human dignity. Some also hold that Christianity established concepts of equality based upon what the Bible says in [Galatians 3:28](#), "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." However, note that oneness is not equality. This verse cannot support the concept of equality in Christ Jesus.

Many wars, especially revolutions, have been and continue to be fought to achieve this ideal. Believing that one is not held to be equal with others within a community stirs resentments because people believe they are every bit as "good" as those they believe are being treated with more respect and deference than themselves.

No war has ever achieved this ideal, and no war ever will. The American Revolution was fought because the colonists were being treated as though their welfare did not matter as much as the Royalist's welfare of those in Britain. The French Revolution was fought because the ire of the common population of France against the cruel imbalance of treatment of them as compared to the treatment of the governing elite exploded in bloody anger against those oppressing them.

Equality is something Americans strive for. The Declaration of Independence states, "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created *equal*, that they are

CGG Weekly: Is There Hope For Equality? (14-Aug-09)

endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" (emphasis added). While it is true that [God](#) deals with us with fairness, men, despite their high ideals, often do not deal with each other in anywhere near an equal manner.

In fact, partly because the population is so ethnically diverse, it seems as though this motivates a need to seek it for community life to be possible. In one sense, America is still a nation of immigrants, even though some families have been here for many generations. When our ancestors arrived here, they often had to cope with the fact that their new neighbors were actually old enemies of the nation they emigrated from.

Consider for a moment how much resentment exists against the Mexicans in our time, especially toward those considered to be "illegals." Anybody can give a variety of reasons why this resentment is felt, but those resentments will create an imbalance of attitudes and treatment. Many immigrants arrived on our shores in waves emanating from one country after another. At times, most of the immigrants were Irish; at another time, most were German; and at another, they were Italian or Eastern European. Regardless, each group had to face and overcome resentment and imbalances in treatment at the hands of those already here and established.

One of the most memorable speeches in this nation during the past fifty years was Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. Its central theme was an appeal to Americans to end discrimination by judging, accepting, and treating others as equals. This still has yet to be achieved, and it never will as long as [the world](#) remains as it is.

In fact, even though the American Revolution was fought to produce equality with other nations of this world, slavery existed within this nation from its beginning. When the Constitution was framed, slaves were not equal with other Americans even though they were citizens. They were not permitted to vote. Slavery was an issue in the Civil War, the bloodiest war in American history. Following that war, even though slaves were legally free due to the Emancipation Proclamation, they were not free in the minds of many of their fellow Americans. Inequality continued to prevail.

Inequality and its fruit, discrimination, will continue to prevail as long as [Satan](#) is the god of this world ([II Corinthians 4:4](#)) and mankind is dominated by its carnal nature. The spirit of this world produces hatred, contentions or rivalries, jealousies, wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, and [heresies](#) ([Galatians 5:20](#)). Equal treatment of others is impossible as long as the minds of men are motivated by that spirit, which will always find ways of justifying discrimination on the basis of its self-centered drives.

CGG Weekly: Is There Hope For Equality? (14-Aug-09)

In addition to that, one must also consider that God's Word clearly reveals that He does not deal with all equally. Some are more equal than others even with Him! For example, [Romans 9:13](#) says, "As it is written, ' [Jacob](#) have I loved, but Esau I have hated.'" Verse 15 then adds, "For He says to [Moses](#), 'I will have [mercy](#) on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.'" The subject of this entire chapter proves that not everybody is chosen at this time to be saved. God is discriminating for and against some according to His purposes.

Moreover, Jesus did not treat everybody equally either. For example, He deliberately chose only twelve apostles and devoted much of His ministry directly to them. He often took them—and only them—aside to explain things more perfectly. Why did He do this? Why did He not include more in His inner circle? Why did He not choose thirty men rather than merely twelve? Was He discriminating against others by focusing on the twelve?

In addition, we find judgments made in the Old Testament by the God who became [Jesus Christ](#). For instance, why did He strike Uzzah dead when he put out his hand to save the ark from striking the ground after the oxen stumbled, when [David](#) was at least equally guilty, having ordered or at least permitted the ark to be transported in the wrong manner? Uzzah died a shocking death, but the equally guilty David continued living.

On another occasion shown in II Samuel 24, David took a forbidden census of Israel, then realized he had sinned in doing so. Even though he had repented, God brought a severe punishment against all Israel, in which 70,000 men died as a result of David's [sin](#)! God continued to allow David to live.

The point of this is not that we should not strive to treat all as equally as lies within us. We most certainly should. However there will be many occasions in which God has acted according to His [wisdom](#) either in our or others' lives, and those things will seem to be unfair and discriminatory because we do not know all the facts that caused the judgment to be made in that manner.

Christians will be hated with greater intensity in the not-too-distant future, and perhaps to our eyes it will seem as if God does nothing. They will be unfairly discriminated against in all manner of cases. The world will openly revile us, even though they do not know us personally and have nothing against us specifically except that we are Christians. We will be hated just because we are Christ's. Even now, some, despite being well qualified, cannot get a job simply because of their desire to keep the [Sabbath](#). We are already feeling the unequal treatment. It will get worse.

CGG Weekly: Is There Hope For Equality? (14-Aug-09)

Equality in this world will ever be an unrealized dream. We must accept this reality as part of the cost of [faithfulness](#) to Christ. "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer [persecution](#)" ([II Timothy 3:12](#)).

- John W. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Examples of Divine Justice](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

John Ritenbaugh warns that presumptuous sins carry far greater penalties than those committed out of weakness. No sacrifice can be made for sins done deliberately. A person who sins presumptuously deliberately sets his will to do what he knows is wrong. Nadab and Abihu, Ananias and Sapphira, and Uzzah, all totally aware of the penalties for what they were contemplating, arrogantly rebelled against God's clear and unambiguous instructions. We need to realize that it is impossible for God to act unjustly, and soberly reflect on God's mercy and grace as a prod to repent.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Unity and Personal Responsibility](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The most prestigious international organization dedicated to peace on earth is the United Nations, but such a name can be true only in the most vaguely hopeful way. Nations and the people who comprise them are tragically disunited. John Ritenbaugh shows what we must do, personally and individually, when calamitous events—in the world and in the church—are taking place.

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