

America – The American Church's Idol

By: Daniel Orona

If the title of this article isn't attention grabbing enough for you, the topic will be. It's time that we as the American church realize that we have replaced Christ as first in our thought, with the concept of America. It's not uncommon to go to church and hear the Star Spangled Banner, America the Beautiful or God Bless American sang from the platform. In doing so those believers proudly proclaim their American heritage and faith in a country that they believe is the greatest in the world. Historical atrocities committed by America aside, those living in the country have been blessed to be able to freely worship and go about their own lives as they see fit. I will never deny that, but I will also say that we should not look at ourselves as "American" Christians, but rather as simply Christians and followers of Christ. How quickly we forget what Paul told us in Galatians 3:26-29

"26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male of female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Recognizing this then why do we separate and lift ourselves up over Christians in other parts of the world? Thinking of the border crisis, how many of us would open our doors to the immigrants that are fellow believers in Christ? Few if any. Paul said in Romans 5:6-8

"6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us."

Scarcely would we discomfit our own lives to help our American brethren in need, let alone the immigrant of another country who is also a believer. There are people of every nation and tongue that believe and all of them are our brothers and sisters in Christ and we need to treat them as such. If they are in need we should according to the leading of the Holy Spirit, do what we can to meet their needs. Let's not forget what Christ said in Matthew 25:41-46.

"41 Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels' 42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me. Then they also will answer Him, saying Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You? Then He will answer them saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

You shall know them by their fruits. The acts that Christ talks about are all acts of love and selflessness, but the American church has strayed from this basic principle in general. Not every believer is this way and not every congregation of believers is this way. I know a church in the town that I grew up who provides new shoes for any student that wants them. That is demonstrating the love and the act that I'm discussing. But as a generality the church has delved more into the American political landscape than into the pouring in and growth of believers, which is its purpose.

Rather than focus on the development of young believers, we focus on social governance by lauding our beliefs over people who do not hold the same belief. Don't think that for one second there was not prevalent homosexuality in Rome during the time of Christ. The difference is that Christ didn't address what was considered a social norm at the time, but rather focused on the heart of those around Him

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that they may come to a better life and be reborn in the Spirit through Him. He never concerned Himself with the Roman governance at the time, but rather focused on the Jewish people who were the church at that time. The only comment was to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's to give us an example to pay our taxes. Paul took this further with Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:3-5

3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. 5 And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competed according to the rules.

We are to follow the laws that are set forth and not give in to the political landscape of any country we live in. Jesus even said in the parable of the sower how the thorns are the cares of this world and how it chokes the seed where it cannot take root. Similarly we should not be surprised when the secular government decides to do things according to secular thought. Our focus rather than these cultural wars should be our commission. How can anyone come to the knowledge of Christ when they are not shown the love that He has for us. Psalms 1:1-3 says:

1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings further its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

Here the Psalmist talks about not standing in the way of sinners meaning don't try to stop them from sinning and don't be the hindrance as they work their way to the cross. But what we see ourselves doing is sitting in the seat of the scornful fighting in self-righteous judgment, culture wars in a secular setting, particularly when it is believed to be core Christian ideals of anti-abortion and anti-homosexuality as examples. The Christian loses one hundred times out of one hundred when trying to argue in the court of popular opinion in a secular world. Rather than sitting in judgment we should focus on the what the church's real purpose is around the development of Christians and acting as the love of God. Jesus Christ showed grace to sinners when He was here, but we respond in judgment because we are afraid to lose what we deem is the heart and soul of our nation.

For over 200 years the American Christian has had an outsized voice in the shaping of our nation. In spite of the separation of church and state, the American Christian Church has been able to pass laws focused on their beliefs from everything to sanctioning slavery to infringement on rights of LGBTQ individuals. But as immigration and the moral center change from Christianity, Christians find their voice muted and lash out against authority under the guise of freedom, but really it's a misunderstanding of Scripture and the application of Scripture. This concept of a Christian America has taken the place of Christ in our thoughts and in our hearts and fighting tooth and nail for its values has become more important than the acts of love and grace we are commanded to show others. The unjust ruler did this. He was forgiven by his king and then held the debts against those that owed him. Ultimately it was him that was thrown into outer darkness with weeping and gnashing of teeth. Christ said that the law and the prophets are found in loving God with all that you are and loving your neighbor as yourself.

Rather than fighting the culture wars in a secular setting, let's focus on Christ and His Word and how we can pour ourselves into other Christians according to the leading of the Spirit. Let's also focus on how we can show the world a Christ that is loving and full of grace and forgiving in the same manner that we have found him. We should never ask others to conform to our beliefs when they don't know Christ. It is

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Christ that brings change in the individual as the High Priest using the Holy Spirit to execute His will. We are no different than our brethren across the world. America is going to pass whatever laws it wants, but it shouldn't matter to the Christian who is in power or what laws are passed or what things the nation does. Our hope is in Christ and ultimately He belongs on that pedestal and not a singular nation. It's time that we begin to think of Christianity as our common denominator and not our nationality.