

Bankruptcy of Church and State: When Clergy Is Blind and Justice Isn't

America's political and religious establishments are broken. Washington fails to provide the answers needed to solve the economic and political crises facing us at home and abroad. The church fails to exhibit the moral guidance necessary to hold a collapsing culture together. The nation is rapidly losing faith in both institutions, evidenced by declining approval ratings.

The political process in Washington is overheating in partisan gridlock while our churches are becoming increasingly ineffective and indifferently cold to the ongoing culture wars. Both institutions are insolvent to the fiscal and spiritual indebtedness they have incurred upon the nation. Neither can produce the economic capital or spiritual stimulus to jumpstart the economy or usher in revival.

Legislative issues are taking on greater moral ramifications. What were once considered moral issues discussed from the pulpit are now being politicized and aggressively commandeered by special interest groups with their radical social agendas. Civil rights are being sacrificed in the name of social justice upon the altar of special rights. Justice may be blind, but social justice has 20/20 vision. Equality before the law is becoming persecution under the law. The new persecution of the church will be in the form of prosecution of the church.

All the while, there seems to be little pushback from the clergy to preserve their institution's voice as the spiritual leaders and moral guides for the nation. Complicity and compromise, on the other hand, seem to have replaced the

spiritual backbone of America's preachers. The clergy in America are, in most part, blind to the prophetic times in which we live and clueless to the spiritual solutions that will solve the troubles confronting a despondent nation. America's sheep are being scattered due to the incompetence of hirelings who run at the first sign of political or cultural confrontation.

When government attempts to legislate morality apart from a spiritual relationship with God, moral rebellion will be the law of the land. When the church pontificates truth without exemplifying reality, her institutions will be rejected as charlatans. They both will soon be tossed aside, leaving the nation ripe for rebellion and anarchy. When the church loses its vision, where is the light to penetrate the moral and political abyss? When complicity robes the clergy, political leaders line their pockets in greed as the nation drifts aimlessly in a vacuum of ethical relativism.

This lesson is oft repeated but seldom learned. Unchecked principles by nature tend to run their own course. Thus history repeats itself. The first 11 chapters of 1 Samuel are but one of many such instances. Four hundred years out of Egyptian bondage, the nation of Israel faced a fundamental transformation in its government—from a godly theocracy overseen by holy priests to a humanistic monarchy dictated by a self-serving king, Saul.

Israel experienced redistribution of its wealth; there was a cry for globalism to become like all the other nations. A morally bankrupt but politically correct clergy produced a climate of judicial legislation. As the menorah slowly flickered out in the tabernacle, the Ark of God's presence was whisked from the nation. The Ark of the Covenant that preceded the nation into the Promised Land—on the shoulders of holy anointed priests—was now suddenly snatched from her midst by the hands of uncircumcised Philistines. It was Israel's darkest hour.

Inside the Ark were the Ten Commandments—the spiritual, civil and economic foundations of the nation. The Ten Commandments were no longer found in her schools, in her courthouses, in the town square or in her churches.

Sound familiar? How could the glory of God have departed the nation in this manner?

The glory of the Lord departed the nation because the priesthood was compromised. Eli, the high priest, became fat, lazy and blind. As he lost his vision, so went his usefulness to the nation. His uncircumcised (not in covenant) sons, Hophni (*strong*) and Phineas (*mouth of a serpent*), stole from the tabernacle offerings and committed adultery with the women who assembled at the outer gate. A complicit clergy cannot reproduce covenanted sons.

America has weak spiritual sons who cannot lead another awakening as our founding spiritual fathers once did because we've had a generation of complicity by the clergy with governmental intrusion into the church. Four hundred years ago, America's forefathers left the political slavery and religious oppression of Europe for a new promised land—400 years ago! Now America, like Israel, has followed the same principled path to the same self-destructive destination. Will we make the same self-centered mistakes as they did or choose repentance over rebellion?

The Bankruptcy of America Begins

In July 1954, the spiritual bankruptcy of America's clergy set in as the U.S. Senate passed an unconstitutional amendment to a tax overhaul bill. It was the Johnson Amendment, introduced by then Senator Lyndon B. Johnson who was angry at two wealthy Texas businessmen who used their 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization to campaign against him.

Without a minute of senatorial debate regarding its constitutionality, a simple amendment that stated, "501(c)(3)

organizations are absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office," opened the floodgates of hell upon an unsuspecting church whose organizations were delineated under the 501(c)(3) category by the IRS. Johnson's legal aide later admitted the amendment was only intended to silence two wealthy businessmen not churches, but the damage was done.

The IRS soon picked up on it and began a 50-year Gestapo-style reign of intimidation and fear upon America's churches and clergy. In exchange for their political silence in the pulpits, America's clergy were sold a bill of goods labeled "tax exemption" by the IRS—something already granted the church constitutionally.

Fortunately, under the leadership of Alan Sears, founder of Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) in Scottsdale, Ariz., last year over 1650 pastors in all 50 states continued a five-year national campaign, called Pulpit Freedom Sunday, to overturn the Johnson Amendment, challenging its constitutionality by recording a politically motivated sermon and sending it to the IRS. So far, not one pastor has been audited. Thank God for these courageous pastors and the 2,200 allied attorneys of ADF.

With the clergy's complicity and silence secured in 1954, Satan's propaganda machine began running wide open and unchecked. In 1963, prayer and Bible reading were taken out of public schools. The pulpits remained silent—it was a political issue. In 1973, the Supreme Court decided that unborn Americans had no civil rights and upheld a woman's special right to have an abortion. The pulpit remained silent—it was a political issue. Fifty-five million abortions later, in June the Supreme Court will decide if God knew what He was doing when He created the institution of marriage to be exclusively between one man and one woman. So far, the pulpit has remained silent—it's a political issue. We will need more than 1650

pastors out of 300,000 churches in America if we are going to turn the tide and see revival.

What is America's solution? The same as it was for Israel in Eli's day: There was one barren woman who knew how to pray a prayer of desperation. Her name was Hannah—which means *the grace of God*. Not only did Hannah grab the horns of the altar, she touched the heart of God. Her prayer—one woman's prayer—saved the nation and brought the greatest revival in Israel's history. In the midst of all the political and spiritual unrest of Israel, God answered one woman's prayer. He gave her a son, a man child, named Samuel who would later anoint David as king. As his first act as king of Israel, David restored the Ark to its rightful place and brought the greatest spiritual awakening in their history—the tabernacle of David.

Second Chronicles 7:14 says, “If my people,” not “if my preachers,” or “if my politicians”! It says, “If my people ... will humble themselves and pray.” The answer to America's problems is the same answer it has always been throughout history: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

I believe the greatest opportunity for America to experience another Great Awakening is here. But we must meet the four requirements for revival: humble ourselves, pray, seek the face of God and repent of our wicked ways.

Dan Cummins is the pastor of Bridlewood Church in Bullard, Texas. His website is .