

The Difference Between Patriotism and Christian Faith

There are certainly times when our religious faith and our patriotism go hand in hand. At other times, our religious faith might cause us to seem unpatriotic.

But at all times, it's important that we distinguish between our faith and our patriotism. Blurring the lines can be dangerous.

Before I focus on the subject of this article, let me give you some different but related examples.

Let's say you're a Christian and a policeman. If you give a driver a ticket for speeding, you're doing so as a policeman who happens to be a Christian, quoting the law to the driver, not the Bible. If you share the gospel with the driver, you're doing so as a Christian who happens to be a policeman, quoting the Bible to the driver, not the law.

Any policeman can issue a ticket. Only a Christian would share the gospel.

Let's say you're a Christian and a soldier fighting terrorists in Syria. If you kill an enemy combatant, you're doing it as a soldier who happens to be a Christian. If you pray for the enemy's family, you're doing it as a Christian who happens to be a soldier.

Any soldier can kill the enemy. It takes a Christian to pray for the enemy's family.

If you're a Christian and a veteran reciting the pledge with pride, you're doing so as a veteran who happens to be a Christian. If you pursue a fresh spiritual awakening in

America, you're doing so as a Christian who happens to be a veteran.

Many veterans can recite the pledge with pride. It takes a Christian to pursue a fresh spiritual awakening.

Yet in each of these three instances, there's a good deal of overlap. The Christian policeman wants to be a good witness on the job, and as a Christian, he is committed to serve with integrity.

As for the Christian soldier, he prays for protection and for success in his mission of taking out the bad guys.

As for the Christian veteran, in his mind, love for God and love for country go hand in hand. Plus, as far as he is concerned, his beloved America is special because of its Christian roots.

You do not take off the Christian hat when you put on the hat of the policeman (or soldier or veteran). In fact, if you need to take the Christian hat off when you do your job (meaning, you cannot live by your Christian principles while doing your job), you should find another job.

Now, let's say that you're a Christian and a gun owner living in America and the government wants to take away your legally owned firearms. You will oppose the government's actions as an American who happens to be a Christian.

But will you make a separation between your faith and the Second Amendment? Will you compartmentalize the two? I seriously doubt it. Chances are that the thought wouldn't even come into your mind. In fact, you would probably call other Christian friends urging them to pray and strategize with you.

You would think to yourself as Christians, "We need to prevent this kind of dangerous government overreach, not just for our sake but for the sake of the generations to come. This is a

matter for prayer and action.”

And so you would pray, “Heavenly Father, we’re asking You to help us fight against these ungodly forces. This tyrannical takeover must be stopped. In Jesus’ name, amen!”

After all, isn’t this what our Founding Fathers did in America? Wasn’t the revolutionary war fueled by preaching from our pulpits? Didn’t the ministers help stoke the fires of revolution? And didn’t Benjamin Franklin say that, “Rebellion against tyrants is obedience to God”?

The answer to these questions is yes, indicating the ease with which we can merge our faith with our patriotism

And it can easily be argued that, at certain times in history, it is right and fitting to merge the two.

It can also be argued that now is one of those times, as the radical left, embodied in the current administration, has launched an all-out assault on our most fundamental freedoms.

But this is where we need to be careful.

On the one hand, many fine Christians are joining together to push back politically, just as those with other ideologies are pushing for their agendas politically.

We have every right to do this as Americans, but it is our faith that fuels our convictions and informs our voting. That’s why we pray for our elected officials, and that’s why we pray for God to turn the tide in our nation.

There is no separation here between our faith and our patriotism, between our loyalty to God and our loyalty to America. Let us impact our nation for good.

On the other hand, loyalty to Jesus is still distinct from loyalty to America (and on an entirely different level), and Second Amendment rights (to give one example) are not on the

level of Scripture.

Accordingly, as followers of Jesus, we are called to die rather than deny Jesus. As believers, we are not called to die rather than surrender our weapons.

There will also be different perspectives during a war, because of which there were British Christians fighting against American Christians in the Revolutionary War and northern Christians fighting against southern Christians during the Civil War.

Does that mean they were killing each other in Jesus' name, or does that mean that national issues can sometimes divide true Christians? The answer is obviously the latter.

Patriotism and discipleship obviously do not always go hand in hand.

The reality is that America is a fallen nation, just like every other nation on the planet, and as such, is part of what the Bible calls "the world." The political system is also part of this fallen world, with even our favored party mixed with corruption and compromise.

As for political leaders, no matter how heroic and strong they might be, all of them have clay feet (to use a biblical idiom) and all of them are mere mortals, here today and gone tomorrow. The Bible frequently urges us not to put our trust and hopes in them.

So, while our faith and our patriotism often overlap, there is a vast difference between the two. There is a vast difference between our loyalty to Jesus and our loyalty to a party or cause or leader, between the kingdom of God and America.

We do well to keep those distinctives in mind.

Otherwise, when the lines between Christianity and patriotism get blurred, the spirit of the world will enter our hearts.

And soon enough, we will look more like the world than like the people of God. {eoa}

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