

Why Christians Should Be Great Patriots

Many in our country today, Christian and non-Christian, have lost their way on the issue of respect for our authorities and our country. Every other Monday night, I have the deep privilege to associate with a marvelous patriot. Frank is a past international director of Toastmasters and is in the club of which I am a member. He delivers stirring speeches on patriotism from memory at 90 years plus. Frank flew numerous missions over Belgium and France after the Battle of the Bulge broke out. As he would say, "Lt. Frank, ready to go to war as a glider pilot in Operation 'Varsity' [Invasion of the German Rhineland] with a flak vest, a steel helmet, a pistol, a carbine, four hand grenades and the copilot's seat in a CG4A glider." He would miraculously survive machine-gun fire while pinned down by a German gunner after landing his glider. Listening to Frank, a brother in Christ, has made me take a deep look at my own journey of understanding patriotism. I've landed on the truth that Christians should be great patriots.

Sadly, some of the sharpest, most mean-spirited criticism, complaining, judgments, sarcasm and gossip comes out of the mouths of those who name Christ as Savior. Often these words are pointed at those in authority and our country. It is as though our president and others in leadership can't be human today. The simplest error in pronouncing a name or remembering a detail results in their being the butt of hyper-sarcastic jokes, and far too large a number of Christians fall right in line with the world. The truth is, our words expose our heart (see Matt. 12:34). If you find yourself in this crowd, the question you have to ask yourself is, "What does this do to my testimony?"

Jesus prayed to the Father that the disciples would not be taken out of the world, but rather that they would be in the

world and kept from the evil one who rules it. One of the greatest paradoxes of the Christian life is fully exposed in John 17:15: Christians are to be in the world, but not of the world. We are to raise children, respect authorities and be involved in our educational systems, business enterprises and public affairs. In particular, the Scriptures give us pointed direction about our attitude toward authorities: "Make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for everyone, for kings and for all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty, for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior" (1 Tim. 2:1-3).

At a distance, patriotism might make it appear that we are just like many nonbelievers in the world, but up close, when our values are challenged and our character is tested, people must see that our standards for living and our citizenship are not of this realm (Phil. 3:20). However, Jesus's prayer was we would be kept from the evil one while in the world. No matter how different we are as Christians, our charge will be to infiltrate the world's culture by being light and salt, and yes, that means government also. However different the body of Christ is from other groups in the world, the church will never be sequestered physically or practically from the world. It will be intertwined in the very fabric of society.

We are brought into the kingdom of God to bring His kingdom to this earth, right where we live in the United States: "The kingdom of God does not come with observation. Nor will they say, 'Here it is!' or 'There it is!' For remember, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21). We are God's agents of redemption in the lives of men. Jesus came to set the captives free (see Luke 4:18), and when He ascended to heaven, He gave that calling to His disciples. We now have this calling, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we will carry on His work (John 14:12) in the U.S.

I graduated from Oral Roberts University and later worked in

administration there. President Roberts' vision for the school was that his students would go into every person's world. Practically, he envisioned students going into business, medicine, law, the arts and, of course, government.

We are charged by Jesus Christ to bring the kingdom of heaven to the U.S. and the world. My friend Frank has helped me demythologize patriotism and just be Christian about it. We must pray for our leaders and country. We must be all in supporting our country and seeing the kingdom of heaven come here. Yes, we must be great patriots. {eo}

Tim Cameron is the author of *The Forty-Day Word Fast and, most recently, 40 Days Through the Prayers of Jesus.*