

THE PURGING OF GOD

It is unquestioned that some people wish to purge God from every aspect of public life. Christians have struggled with the idea of prayer in school, the public display of the Ten Commandments and publicly funded Christmas displays and events. At once, we disavow a personal connection to these events for we rightly observe that Christmas is really just man made, not biblical, and the Ten Commandments were for another people at another place and in another time. But still, there is something within that tugs at our sensibilities when we see references to Jehovah and his only son Jesus Christ, forcibly banished from the public square. We wonder if there is a way to stand for God while avoiding the denominational overtones that come with some of these events. A few thoughts will help to clear our thinking.

Christians must not be surprised when the world assaults God. Interestingly, it was God who approved of government and instructed Christians to obey civil ordinances. When Moses brought the children of Israel to Sinai he gave them laws of worship but also laws of civil conduct. Such laws included the regulation of debt, provision for health and sanitation and punishment for crime. Paul reminds Christians that the *"powers that be are ordained of God"* (Romans 13:1). Yet it seems that the attack on God comes from the very governments that God established. It is more precise to say that government is the tool through which God is attacked. Few government bodies (within the U.S.) actually lead the charge against God. Rather individuals use the government, especially the Federal Courts, as a mighty weapon against the public adoration of the Creator.

Jesus taught that we are not of this world and are therefore are hated by the world. (John 17:14). Peter speaks clearly of our day when *"stone of stumbling"* or 2:8) to the unbelievers the Corinthians, Paul of a Savior hanging *"nonsense"* (1 some people. One

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he describes Jesus as a *"rock of offence"* (1 Peter and disobedient. Writing to declared that the very idea upon a cross was Corinthians 1:18, ISV) to translation says: *"we*

proclaim the crucified Christ, a message that is offensive to the Jews and nonsense to the Gentiles" (1 Corinthians 1:23, GNB). Speaking of the future course of humanity Paul said, *"but evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived"* (2 Timothy 3:13). Let us not be surprised when worldly people seek to eliminate every appearance of God from society for they are offended by his goodness and cannot stand the light of his righteousness..

Christians must be the *"salt of the earth"* and make their presence known. Consider that the world is lost and needs Christ Jesus even if they are ignorant of their condition. Christians must not be afraid to declare that the church is superior to all other faiths or religions. For all our desire to be inoffensive and politically correct and tolerant, we must not dilute the message of Christ in the least. To the Apostles Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth and the light: No man cometh unto the father but by me"* John 14: 6. Standing before the very seat of Jewish authority Jesus did not bow to the convenience of the moment but spoke plainly that he would come again in power and glory (Mark 14:62). Paul was brought to the emperor's throne in Rome to answer charges lodged by the Jews in Palestine. Evidently, he spoke words of truth while there for in Philippians 4:22 he refers to the saints *"that are of Caesar's household."* In other words, Paul made his presence felt in the heart of Roman government.

But Christians must avoid any entanglement with denominations (2 John 9-11) and must oppose false teaching at every turn (2 Timothy 1:13; Titus 1:9-16; 2:1). So how can we defend our God when the issues of the day revolve around specific topics not consistent with sound doctrine? First, appreciate that evangelism is sin-driven, not issue-driven. That may seem overly precise but our goal is to respond to the true, often unfelt needs of mankind. The greater question is not whether Mobile, Alabama has a Christmas parade but whether the people in the parade are in a saved relationship with Jesus, based upon faith *and* obedience. Second, Christians must broaden their approach to culture and must not be drawn into individual issues which compromise Bible teaching. By focusing upon the hearts and minds of men rather than the legislation and laws, we win souls for Christ and *"salt"* the culture for the future. Finally, Christians must use the tools available to them to change and modify public policy. The ability to vote, to write and address government leaders and the right to speak upon the great social issues of the day are powerful tools at the Christian's disposal. There is much work left to oppose legalized abortion, legalized gambling, preferential treatment, protection and acceptance of homosexuals and the many anti-family issues now before us. Our home is in heaven and for that home we earnestly await the coming of our Lord, but while here in the body let us seek the souls of men and let us seek to salt the world in which we live. When we change men's hearts, the issues will take care of themselves.

