

Dilemma of American Christians

11-13-16 PM

The New Testament spends a great deal of time dealing with controversies that were particular to the cultures of the time. In 1 Thessalonians 1-2 we see two examples of such issues. In 1 Thessalonians 1:6-9 we see how the Greek Christians had to deal with issues particular to their problems. We know that for them, turning away from idolatry was hard, and it impacted them to the degree that even eating meats sacrificed to idols were a problem (1 Corinthians 8:4-7). Then in 1 Thessalonians 2:14-15 we read about the issues Judean brethren experienced. How many times do we read in the New Testament about the invalidity of circumcision in Christ? How many times is the problem of whom we eat with mentioned?

Today brethren in different cultures still face distinct issues. Our third world brethren are overwhelmed with poverty, and must live in a global economy that emphasizes the wealth of others; dealing with envy and covetousness is a constant struggle. Our African brethren have to face problems with Polygamy and witchcraft that we do not. So what are the particular struggles of American Christians? We can consider three areas: Conflicted rights, worldly desires, and worldly understanding.

Conflicted Rights

The American mindset of rights is that we have rights as citizens, and that no one can abridge these rights. No other nation quite has the mind towards rights that we do. We have a right to an abortion (Roe v. Wade). We have a right to a divorce without cause (no fault divorce law). We have a right to drink and get drunk (21st Amendment). We have a right to sexual promiscuity (as defined by our right to privacy). Finally, we have the freedom to disrespect our leaders (1st Amendment).

The dilemma is this: these rights do not exist in Christ. A Christian cannot engage in abortion (Mark 10:19). A Christian cannot divorce without cause (Matthew 19:9). A Christian cannot drink or get drunk (1 Peter 4:3). A Christian must abstain from sexual immorality (1 Thessalonians 4:3, 1 Peter 4:3). A Christian must honor their rulers and not speak evil of them (Romans 13:7, Acts 23:5).

When we become a Christian, we surrender rights we had in the world to obtain a citizenship in the Kingdom (Colossians 1:13). Too often, we begin confusing liberties. In Christ, liberty is about serving others, not ourselves, which is contrary to the American sense of liberty (Galatians 5:13-17). In this sense, to be a Christian means we cannot be an American. Being in the Kingdom of Christ means we ONLY exercise His rights.

Worldly Desires

As Americans we have more wealth than any other. As well, we have more leisure time than any others. In Christ, this creates a greater accountability to Him. In Luke 12:13-34 we see God condemn a man who found himself wealthy. God said he was cursed because he only saw his own prosperity. As Americans, we tend to constantly look to the future for greater prosperity. In

Christ, we are warned not to expect the future to turn out as we plan (James 4:13-17). Too often, Americans live in tomorrow, but Christians are to live in today (Matthew 6:34).

Empty Knowledge

Finally, as Americans we are blessed with an enormous and available education system. At the same time we are also blessed with an enormous information media system. But the dilemma is that this often becomes a means to promote false knowledge. Our American knowledge base is founded on the idea of *materialism*, that is, only things visible are real. Thus, our basis of information (from the school system to the history channel) is founded with a denial of supernatural / spiritual realm, a denial of a divine justice, and a denial of a true revelation. Paul dealt with this problem in 1 Corinthians 1:18-26 and again in Romans 1:20-23.

Why consider this particular dilemma of American Christianity? Because being aware prepares us to overcome. We need to know our weaknesses living in a great country and living with great resources. We need to remind ourselves constantly that our true citizenship is above; we are Christians rather than Americans.

Philippians 3:20

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ