

What Happened to Faith-Based Expressions?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. "In our sensible zeal to keep religion from dominating our politics, we have created a political and legal culture that presses the religiously faithful to be other than themselves, to act publicly, and sometimes privately as well, as though their faith does not matter to them." (Stephen L. Carter, Cromwell Professor of Law, Yale University)

1. "If we do not recover the language and practice of Christianity, if we do not discover that the kingdom of heaven is our only true home, the place that defines our most essential humanity, then not only can we not contribute to a genuine pluralism, but we will be lost in the wilderness of decayed traditions. Our greatest contribution is to try to be who we are." (Robert N. Bellah, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley)

2. Dallas Willard, PhD, C.S. Lewis Foundation Faculty Forum on the effects of restricting faith based expressions in education forums:

- a. The university is denied meaningful access to one of the primary intellectual traditions that contributed substantially to its own development.
- b. The selective definition of pluralism currently in vogue tends to promote the expression of all but religiously informed points of view, thus compromising the university's claim to serve as a genuine marketplace of ideas.
- c. The all too easy equation of religion with "indoctrination" and secularism with "education" evidences a marked double standard. Faith-based approaches to subject matter are viewed with suspicion while other forms of "indoctrination," offered in the form of passionately held secular ideologies, are readily tolerated
- d. Students are denied access to an education that adequately prepares them to function effectively within a highly diverse society, one which includes substantial, thriving, and highly influential religious constituencies.

3. The first twenty-two words of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution contain three clauses--the Establishment Clause, the Free Exercise Clause, and the Free Speech Clause: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech." The First Amendment has been interpreted to apply not only to Congress but also, via the Fourteenth Amendment, to States and their political subdivisions, including public schools; and the word "law" has been interpreted to include not only formal laws, but also government policies and practices.

B. But it is a waste of time to preach a sermon about the government restricting our use of faith based expressions in the public forum, when most Christians are already too embarrassed to use them anyway!

1. This isn't sermon lamenting government taking away our right to freedom of expression of faith; this is about you voluntarily giving it up by not using faith based expressions in your daily life

I. ARE WE ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL?

A. In an article in the bulletin March 18, 2012 entitled Foolish Judges or Negligent Christians? I wrote the following: "Before feeling outraged by the assaults on religious liberty and becoming somewhat self-righteous, consider... you have the freedom to pick up your own Bible and read and study it as often and as much as you like in your home. To what extent are you exercising that liberty? Here is another irony: some of those who most loudly protest restrictions on public prayer and public Bible study, pray and study very little at home in private. I am convinced that a Christian will accomplish far more by transforming his life with prayer and Bible study and thus salting the earth with his Christian influence, than he will by fighting city hall."

- B. Faith based expressions cannot be legislated away in a nation where Christians are determined to use them. If a government wins the battle against religious expression in public, it's because Christians have already surrendered in private
- C. Shortly before ascending to heaven, Jesus gave the Great Commission
 - 1. Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:19-20
 - 2. It was a mission taken seriously by the early disciples - Acts 2:36-39
 - a. Even in the face of opposition - Acts 8:4-5, 14:5-7, 20:24
 - c. The gospel spread throughout the world in 21 years - Col. 1:23
- D. When was the last time you explained the gospel to someone?
 - 1. Not just discussed some religious subject, but actually talked with them about their salvation
 - 2. Embarrassed by Jesus and His message? - Mark 8:38
 - 3. Afraid of appearing foolish to others? - 1Cor. 1:18, 22-23
- E. No, wait; this sermon isn't about personal work, either.
 - 1. It's about why Christians no longer talk like Christians
 - 2. No, it's not about using euphemisms or bad language, etc.

II. ARE WE EMBARRASSED TO BE CHRISTIANS?

- A. It's not that we are ashamed of the gospel; it's more fundamentally damning... we are embarrassed for others to know we are Christians
 - 1. Acts 5:41; 1Peter 4:12-14
- B. No? Then why don't we talk like Christians?
- C. Rom. 1:7-9, 16:22, 27; Eph. 1:2, 6:23-24; Phil. 1:3, 4:21; 1Tim. 1:2, 6:21
 - 1. 2Tim. 1:2, 4:22
 - 2. Peter and be at peace in the Lord
 - 3. John and my little children
 - 4. James and my brethren
 - 5. Luke and most excellent brother
 - 6. Jude and mercy, peace, and love upon all of you
- D. What happened to...?
 - 1. God bless you and keep you
 - 2. Praise the Lord for His help
 - 3. I will pray for you
 - 4. I wish you peace, joy, love
 - 5. Go with the Lord on your journey

6. Christian greetings in our correspondence; not just letters, but the new networking media and means
- E. "The denominations talk that way, and I don't want people to think I am in a denomination."
1. Grow up or go get some treatment for that paranoia
 2. God said it first; doesn't matter that denominations misuse His words