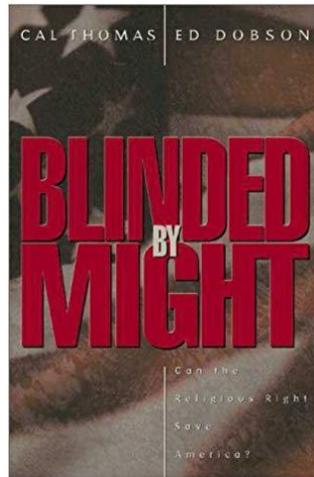


Christianity and the Failure of Power Politics



The power of Christianity to change society is not primarily through political power. Instead, the power of Christianity to change society is from the bottom up, not top down. It begins by living out the love of Christ—by loving God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength and loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. It is the love of Christ for all human beings expressed through His followers that bears witness to being His true disciple (John 13:34-35).

As we engage with our neighbors with God's love and grace—regardless of gender, sexual orientation, religion, and politics—we are best able to change one heart at a time. In other words, we best change culture by loving our neighbors with the love of Christ. This love of human beings opens the door to opportunities to share the Gospel. This is how God changed the Roman Empire in the first century. He did not change it through power politics. As a matter of fact, when Christians ascended to power politics, it corrupted both the church and the state.

Christ called us to be lights and salt to our neighbors, to our generation. We are to be the closest living example of Jesus Christ and His grace and love. We are to reflect His grace and love to our friends and enemies. This is virtually impossible in power politics—where one often ends up demonizing the other side, as well as being hypocritical about the evil in one's political tribe. It is no wonder that the world is often turned off to Christianity—in light of how some Christians act. Moreover, I would argue that one reason marriage has been redefined (gay marriage) is because Christians have redefined it into merely compatibility and fellowship. It should not be surprising that divorce rates among Christians are not much different than the world's, given that the attitude of many Christians are barely distinguishable from the unbeliever when it comes to marriage, finances, giving to the needy, work, family, politics, and for many today even church (fewer Christians even go to church).

Of course, it is always easier to try to change America through power politics. It is easier to ignore our neighbors, blame the poor for their problems, and demonize the liberals as we sit at our TVs and computers having little to no contact with anyone except those in our

political/religious tribe through electronic media. It is easy to decry abortion and call the liberals baby killers than it is to take the time to help those who need help and discipling. It is easy to live in a cave with the Bible on one side of the opening and the American flag on the other side and feel very self-righteous as we look down on the sinners, the marginalized, and the outcasts of society. It is easier to look down on minority kids living in poor neighborhoods than to take time to mentor and disciple them. It is easier to watch Fox News all the time and decry breakdown of society than to take the time and energy to get to know and befriend our neighbors, including the liberals, but especially those who could use your help. It is so easy to run down big government and breakdown of society and not lift a hand to help anyone who is different. It is so easy to be a self-righteous cheerleader for one's favorite political talking head.

On the subject of power politics, Cal Thomas, who worked for Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority, writes much more elegantly and precise than I do. If you get a chance, his book "Blinded by Might" is worth reading. Here is an excerpt from the inside jacket:

When Ronald Reagan won the 1980 presidential election by a landslide, conservative Christians discovered what could happen when they flexed their electoral muscles. Suddenly, faith and politics seemed a promising match—and before the eyes of the astonished media, a new movement called the Moral Majority and its leader, Jerry Falwell, rocketed from obscurity to national prominence. The Religious Right was born. Today with luminaries including Pat Robertson, James Dobson, James Kennedy, and Ralph Reed, the Right remains a powerful political force. Yet, despite nearly twenty years of vigorous and sophisticated activism, it has failed in its mission to end abortion, eliminate pornography, restore the shattered American family, and usher in a better world built on "traditional values."

Why?

Few know the answers better than Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson. Former insiders with the Moral Majority, they share never reported information on a movement they helped shape in order to show why it could not—and did not—succeed. And they tell what it will really take to stem the ungodliness that is sweeping our nation.

"Whenever the church cozies up to political power, it loses sight of its all-important mission to change the world from the inside out," writes Thomas. In blurring the lines between politics and Christianity, the Religious Right had traded the only power that can truly change America—the Gospel's power to transform hearts—for the methods of a kingdom that is of this world.

What, then, is the alternative? Given such critical issues as abortion and gay activism, are Christians to simply disengage from the political process? Hardly.

Uninvolvement is not the answer, say the authors, but a shift in perspective. As Christians, they insist we must realize that God's agenda does not rise or fall with

political causes; and that we must rediscover our most potent influence is not the ballot booth, but lives that extend God's grace in the home, in the workplace, and in all spheres in culture.

In His Majestic Grace,

Pastor Don