

ON AMERICA'S IMMIGRATION POLICY

When discerning an issue, it is imperative that we begin with the Bible and God's viewpoint. God's Word sets a priority in the *heart*, the *internal*, before dealing with the *external*. On this issue, like many others, the attitude of the believer has not always portrayed the love of Christ, and as a result, reactions have become the viewpoint rather than loving obedience to God's Word. The Bible has much to say about the **attitude** of a believer toward strangers, aliens and foreigners.

"Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him:

for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." - Exodus 22:21

"Thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." - Exodus 23:9

The issue of immigration threatens to divide the body of Christ. While some emphasize the *loving attitude* we must have toward immigrants (and they are right), others choose to emphasize the *actions* necessary to conform with Biblical and constitutional standards. These individuals are also right. The answer is not to polarize between what God requires on the inside *or* what He requires on the outside. We must become believers who embrace both a **loving attitude** as well as **righteous actions**.

The Biblical **standards** for immigration are as clear as the exhortations to embrace a loving attitude. The most important standard is humility, for just as the Israelites were exhorted to remember that they were strangers in Egypt, so *every believer was a spiritual alien before they became a citizen of the household of God*. The Bible declares *"at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise."* (Ephesians 2:12).

Though God loved us *"while we were yet sinners"* (Romans 5:8), there were requirements we had to meet in order to be citizens of the household of God. We had to repent of our sin, receive forgiveness and surrender to Christ as Lord. This meant we were in submission to the laws of God rather than lawless autonomy. In Israel, God demonstrated His love to foreigners by protecting them from mistreatment when they sojourned within the nation, but there were external standards required before they were considered citizens with the same benefits as other Israelites.

Though Israel was itself a *nation of immigrants*, there were clear guidelines as to what was required for one to be transformed from an immigrant into a citizen. Just as there are no open borders between the world and membership in the church, so there are to be no open borders in the nation. Consider some of God's standards for immigrants who wish to receive the benefits of citizenship:

Lawful assimilation *"Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you" - Leviticus 18:26*

Learning the national language *"...thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law" - Deuteronomy 31:11-12*

Receiving only private charity *"He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." - Deuteronomy 10:18-19*

MY VIEW OF THE NEWS *continued...*

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Israel was not made up solely of natural born Jews. Others were grafted in, but it took time (sometimes generations), and an investment on the part of the foreigner. Submitting to the civil laws of Israel (assimilation), being able to hear and understand its language, as well as receiving only private charity were key standards given in the Scriptures. The charitable act of gleaning (Leviticus 19:10; Deuteronomy 24:19) and the giving of food and raiment were to be done by individuals and families. The command to give charity in the Bible is given to the individual, family or church, but not the civil government. This is because giving and receiving of benefits is a blessing to be given directly by God to individuals and must be balanced with personal responsibility. Individuals love, civil governments are to bring justice.

The United States bears some responsibility for our immigration crisis. It is her departure from her own covenant (constitution) that has helped to cause the problem in the first place. This requires an admission of guilt as well as equity in bringing a solution. Article I, Section 8, paragraph 4 of the U.S. Constitution gives Congress the responsibility "to establish a uniform rule of naturalization." Congress must make *uniform* rules for naturalization of foreigners. This means no *quotas*, no *favoritism*, and no *special welfare*. The idea of open borders, birthright citizenship, and dispersement of special benefits from civil government through tax-payer money is unconstitutional for it violates the general welfare clause. The practices of our own government, whether out of neglect or intent, has encouraged illegal immigration. This means that equity must be utilized in correcting this wrong.

The illegal immigrant bears responsibility. Crossing the borders of a nation illegally because your *intent* is right (support your family) does not make it lawful any more than someone expecting to receive salvation (sincerely) means that God will create another way other than through Jesus Christ. The concept of national borders is a reflection of the spiritual borders of the Kingdom of God. Demanding special welfare benefits and government-granted privileges without regard to lawful responsibility is wrong. Though not every illegal immigrant has the same circumstances, or bears the same amount of blame, equity must be applied based on the principles that remain the same.

My view of correcting our immigration policies might look something like this:

- 1) Secure the borders and prosecute all unlawful entries;
- 2) Put lawful immigrants still waiting for the bureaucracy of the INS on a fast track to citizenship;
- 3) Remove all quotas, special welfare, and birthright citizenship for immigrants;
- 4) The 11 million illegal immigrants in the U.S. can be put into two classes - responsible, law abiding immigrants and unlawful, irresponsible immigrants. Give the first a limited period of time to legally *begin* the process (behind those who are lawfully in line) or be deported. Hand the second group their deportation orders. *No amnesty for illegal immigrants should be given.*
- 5) Restore the original citizenship standards of being 18 years old, proof of lawful entry, living in the U.S. for five consecutive years, of good moral character (background checks), demonstrating a knowledge of U.S. history and government, and learning English.