

# Flag Burning

This week, President Trump signed an executive order prohibiting the burning of the U.S. flag under certain circumstances, specifically when such acts would incite civil insurrection or riots. This order underscores the seriousness of public actions that stir division and threaten peace. As Christians, we are called to weigh not only our rights but also the consequences of our actions, especially when they made lead others into strife.

## Scriptural Parallels to Symbolic Acts

The Bible provides examples of symbolic destruction. In the Old Testament, King Hezekiah destroyed the bronze serpent that Moses had made because the people had turned it into an idol *“He removed the high places and boke the sacred pillars cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it.”* 2 Kings 18:4. The brazen serpent had originally served a good purpose, but when it became an object of worship, it had to be destroyed. Numbers 21:8-9.

Likewise, enemies of Israel often desecrated what was sacred to the nation. When King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Jerusalem, *“He burned the house of the Lord and the king’s house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire.”* 2 Kings 25:9. Such acts were designed not only to conquer but also to humiliate, eroding the people’s identity and unity.

In the New Testament, Rome’s standards and Caesar’s image carried political and religious weight. Early Christians faced pressure to burn incense to Caesar, an act of loyalty to the Roman Empire. Refusing to do so often brought persecution. John described this kind of idolatrous demand in Revelation: *“He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.”* Revelation 13:15. The early church understood that symbolic acts could either honor or dishonor God and society.

## Christian Principles and Public Order

While the Bible does not address flag burning directly, it teaches principles that apply.

- Respect for Authority. *“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.”* Romans 13:1. When national symbols are desecrated in ways that provide

unrest the act undermines authority and damages the peace God desires for His people.

- Freedom from Responsibility. Paul reminds us, “*all things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.*” 1 Corinthians 10:23. Even if someone argues that flag burning is an expression of free speech, Christians must ask whether it builds up or tears down society.
- True Allegiance. Ultimately, “*our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.*” Philippians 3:20. National symbols are temporary, but they matter because they reflect order, unity, and peace in this world. Yet our highest loyalty is to Christ.

In conclusion, the executive order signed by President Trump highlights a truth the Bible has long affirmed; public actions that incite anger, division, or rebellion are not harmless, they threaten peace. Just as the Israelites were warned not to worship the bronze serpent, and just as early Christians refused to bow to Rome’s idol, we too must think carefully about the meaning behind symbolic acts.

Burning the flag is not simply the destruction of cloth; it is a deliberate rejection of national unity and an invitation to unrest. As Christians, we are called to be peacemakers, upholding respect and order in society. The words of Jesus remind us: “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*” Matthew 5:9.

As members of Christ’s church, we should support measures that preserve peace and discourage actions that divide. While our ultimate citizenship is in heaven, we honor God when we respect authority, promote unity, and seek peace within the nation where we live.

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