

Psm. 11:3

Baptists For Liberty

Prov. 29:2

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Galations 5:1

NEWS LETTER

Issue #31

July/August 2015

Theme Bible verses:

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

~ Revelation 14:6-8

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We have a lot of ground to cover this issue, we've taken on the subject of Nationalism, Icons, & Idolatry and how these three things become entwined. It seemed at first a good topic with July being the month that we in the U.S. celebrate Independence day. Like most nations we break out a fanfare of patriotic pageantry, beat our chests with chins lifted high and declare why we're so proud to be a part of the nation we are and what makes us so unique and special. why we're just so awesome and better then any one else, and any one who doesn't lock step & fit the image of Americanism and greatness can just pack their bags. National pride is not unique to Americanism, though some of the verbiage, songs, flags, signs, & symbols are more unique to us.

It now would seem that the discussion of flags and iconology is particularly timely in the wake of the big news stories in July, and no doubt some of this will carry over into August.

The Supreme Court ruling regarding "Gay Marriage" the end of June has given many Christians reason to pause and question the U.S. standing in the eyes of God, with that I hope humility and honest examination of our affections for national symbols as well as "Christian" symbols will take place. May God use this issue and the articles here in to edify His people what ever nation He has placed you in.

II Corinthians 10:3-6

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

Sermon:

“Materialism: The Sin Of Stuff”

by Bro. Nathaniel Hille



“The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they (the judgments of the LORD) than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.” Psa.19:9-11.

I can say with great assuredness that I have committed this sin. In fact, I might even say, that I have committed this sin above all men I know. It has plagued my life, the life of God’s people, and has sacked many of the Lord’s Churches. It is no surprise to me that the generation of which I am a part of, is the worst to come along, because we have more “stuff” than any other generation before us.

A new sin, materialism is not. It is as old as disobedience, which stems back to the garden of Eden, and is found written upon the pages of iniquity. Materialism is nothing more than “The Religion of Covetousness”.

It is a religion that is no less dangerous and equally offensive to the LORD as Baal, Beelzebub, and Dagon. We see parents offering up their children at the altars of Materialism as the children of Israel offered their own children upon the fires of Molech (2 Kgs. 21:6;23:10; 2Chron.28:3; Psa.106:38; Jerm.7:31; 19:4-5); Ezek.16:21; 23:37,39). It is my personal opinion that Materialism is furthered by the Capitalistic Society of which we, Americans, have been brought up in. The ideology of greed, lusts, and monetary gain has but fueled this obsession with materialistic things that will one day be consumed in fires. Mildred Norman wrote: *“Anything you cannot relinquish when it has outlived its usefulness possesses you. And in this materialistic age, a great many of us are possessed by our possessions.”*

How true is this of us!? The only true possession worth having is Christ Jesus! Let this be our resolve—that all heirlooms, all keepsakes, all “hand-me-downs” though they be precious, may they not be more precious than the Gift of God! In Simon Peter’s epistles we find that the word “precious” is used 7 times:

1) 1Pet.1:7—“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:”

2) 1Pet.18,19—“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your

vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:”

3) 1Pet.2:4—“To whom [Jesus] coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,”

4) 1Pet.2:6—“Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.”

5) 1Pet.2:7—“Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.”

6) 2Pet.1:1—“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

7) 2Pet.1:4—“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

According to the Word of God, this is what is to be PRECIOUS unto us! In every instance it is recorded in The epistles of Peter, the word “Precious” finds its root in the meaning of “valuable, honour or honourable, to highly esteem”.

Notice, that there is not a single “precious” thing mentioned by Simon Peter, which can be touched with any of our five senses. All of them are of the God-given sixth sense, faith. All that which is truly PRECIOUS, is in the realm of that which is spiritual and not carnal; not of a Materialistic Nature.

D) WHAT IS MATERIALISM?: It is the religion of material things!

Material(s): defined as ‘of matter’; ‘what something is made of’ (e.g.—quilts & clothing are made of material. Different types of material (cotton, polyester, wool, corduroy, etc).

“ISM”—this ‘suffix’ makes the word into a ‘doctrine, a theory, a system...

- A Devotion To Something—‘nationalism—devotion to one’s nation
 - One’s Action or Conduct—Patriotism—seeking to make others free
 - Acts, practice, or results—Terrorism—one who terrorizes, or practices terror
 - Political or economic beliefs—capitalism, socialism, communism
 - System of faith—Catholicism, Lutheranism, Islamism, Judaism
- And there is also “Materialism” which is older than most of these which we have just mentioned.

Materialism is a devotion, action, beliefs, practice, political and economic belief and a system of faith all wrapped up into one. It is a ‘socially acceptable ism’. I am not talking about the psychological condition of “hoarding”, but the fact that you and I who are saved, are so concerned about our stuff, instead of the Kingdom of God and that which is eternal. *Materialism* is the opposite of true religion & true worship.

Jms.1:27—“*Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their*

affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

Jn.4:24—“*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”*

Acts.17:23-25—“*For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;”*

So it is quite clear that true religion, true worship of God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, is not done in anything that is of materials, but rather that which is spiritual.

II) The Fruit of Materialism: all religions have their fruit(s).

We know Christ’s religion and His fruit: Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (**Gal.5:22,23**); virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity [love]

(**2Pet.1:5-7**). These are the fruits of Christ’s religion.

The Fruits of Materialism are wealth, fame, pleasures of sin for a season. How different are the fruits of Christ’s religion from all the fruit of Materialism?

III) Examples of Materialism from the Scriptures: In the Bible we find many warnings of the dangers of materialism. No greater illustration can be given than that which Christ Jesus Himself used!

a. Rich Man: Lk.12:16-34—note—there is nothing wrong with being rich, but we are not to seek it out. This rich man had no care for eternity, but only of his ‘stuff’. Again, there is nothing wrong with ‘stuff’ except it all too often draws our affections from Christ to it.

Vv. 17—this man thought within himself—never looked yonder to glory to see what his Maker might have him do. I have heard lots of people say, “If I get lost of money, I am going to: Pay off debts, go on a vacation, build a new house, buy a new car, etc, etc.

But I have never heard in all my life anyone say, “I’m going to give God the glory.” No!

Focus is always on that which is material and not that which is everlasting or spiritual.

Vv.22—all of these things are materialistic. There is not a one of them that is spiritual.

Vv.28—“O ye of little faith”—therein lies the problem..little faith. Oh how little faith we have in God’s Word, that He would provide the daily sustenance that you and I stand in need of.

Vv.30—“For all these things do the nations [heathens] of the world seek after:...”

How many of God’s children are seeking after the very same things that the lost, the ungodly are seeking after! We ought to be ashamed of ourselves.

Vv.33,34— Here is Christ’s solution: “Sell that ye have, and give alms;” get rid of all your material possessions and then you won’t have to worry about it! Then we are to set our treasure in heaven where moth and rust doth not corrupt, for where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also. So many have put treasures here upon this earth and so their hearts never make past the material

things of carnality.

Most recently a ‘holiday’ was observed by a great majority of people in this world and particularly in our country. People went out and bought materials after materials, after materials, and they have no way to pay for any of it. I heard an advertisement for a bank on the radio promoting folks to begin to set aside for Christmass 2010 so they won’t be caught in the same predicament as 2009. I also received a communication from a finance company seeking to help folks pay off their ‘holiday’ expenses at a lower interest rate. All that was purchased were material things that folks just didn’t have the finances for anyway. And now for the next few months families will struggle because they went and worship at the altar of materialism once again.

b.Achan: Josh. 7:1-26— Every Bible student knows the story of Achan. We find in Josh.6:17,18—that God had forbidden the taking of any of the accursed items in the cities of conquest. But Achan did not believe God..he had a lack of faith and he did not fear the Lord God of Israel. Note what God’s Word calls that which Achan did take:

“...for they have even taken of the accursed thing...”—Vv.11 God calls the item a “thing”. This is what our hearts desire so much today, even as Achan’s did. We note the results of Achan’s materialism is that the whole of Israel was accursed!

Josh.6:17,18; Josh.7:11—“Israel hath sinned,...”. The sin of one man was accounted unto a whole nation! Now look around at our own nation and look at the great deal of people who today worship and sin and transgress God’s law by worshipping at the altar of materialism. No wonder our nation suffers at the hand of God Almighty as she does! She is accursed for the sin of materialism.

IV) Warnings Against Materialism in the Bible: Over and over again God warns against such subtle paganism as materialism. Yet for generations, the warnings have gone unheeded by the people of the Lord.

a. **Ecclesiastes 5:10-15 (Vv.12):** “*The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.*” Beloved, this is so true. I have received emails from people that I work for in the wee hours of the morning concerning their belongings. People today are so concerned about their ‘stuff’, which in reality, it all belongs to God and we are but stewards, and poor one’s at that.

b. **1Tim.6:6-11 (Vv.7):** “*For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*”

How foolish then is the massing of materials? For we did read in Ecc 1.5:11—“When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?”

This is a question that we all ought to ponder, what good are materials to us, except that we do behold them with our eyes.


CLOSING:

Materialism is a subtle sin! Many of us are so busy trying to “Keep Up With The Jones” that we have lost sight of the “prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil.3:14).

As I said in the off-set of the message, no one has as much “stuff” as I do. We have all committed this sin. And “stuff” has taken our eyes off of “looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our

faith” (Heb.12:1,2). May we all follow the example of the saints at Jerusalem (Acts.4:32-37) who as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.”

Oh that God might lay this upon our hearts and minds in this age that we live in, the age of Materialism! AMEN!

<p>Devotion: <i>“Blessed be the name of the LORD”</i> by Bro. Jeff Short</p>	
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**“Blessed be the name of the LORD
from this time forth and for evermore.”**
~ [Psalm 113:2](#)

This whole Psalm is one of pure devotion. From beginning to end, the Psalmist mingles prayer with praise—a concoction that sends up a most sweet aroma. After reading it, one could easily begin to meditate on the thousand mercies that attend our way every day. Every point of mercy is a condescension of the Lord who is **“high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens”** ([Psalm 113:4](#)). This Psalms exalts the Lord God with amazement: **“Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!”** ([Psalm 113:5-6](#)).

The first direction in our verse is to bless His name, **“Blessed be the name of the LORD.”** A reference to His **“name”** exists in each of the three opening verses of this Psalm. The name of the Lord speaks to us of power, authority, wisdom, etc. The mention of His **“name”** exhorts us to contemplate all of His attributes, all of His names.

A name is an identifier and a way that God reveals Himself to us. He is jealous of His name, **“I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images”** ([Isaiah 42:8](#)), and so should we be jealous of His name. In this regard, may we have the testimony of Phinehas, of whom it is written, **“He was zealous for his God”** ([Numbers 25:13](#)). Though a rose may smell just as sweet by another name, we cannot presume to change the name of God and offer to Him a sweet savor.

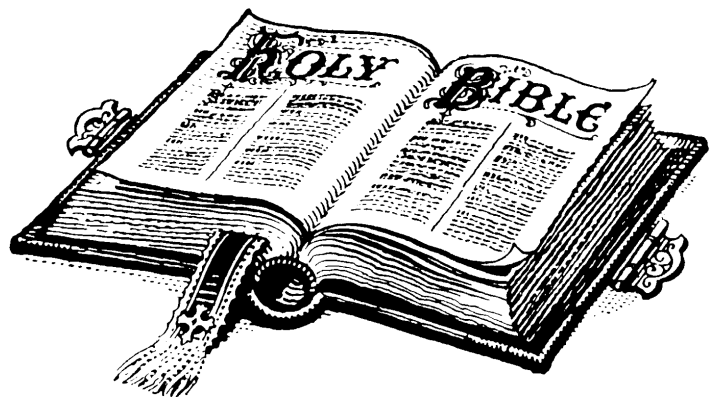
To give God a new name would be to worship a false god. We often give names to the people around us. These may be derogatory or complementary and usually reflect something that we presume about the person we have so labeled. To approach

God this way would be for the creature to find out the Creator rather than the Creator revealing Himself to the creature. This is man’s attempt to define, and thus limit God. God is not boxed in by man. He is the **“high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy”** ([Isaiah 57:15](#)).

The godhood of God is in His name and anything other than receiving His testimony concerning Himself is idolatry. This is discomfiting to the egalitarian feminists, humanists, evolutionists, postmodernists, et al. However, they have **“set themselves . . . against the LORD,”** and consequently, **“the Lord shall have them in derision . . . speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure”** ([Psalm 2:2, 4-5](#)). Except these repent of their idolatry, they will finally be made to bow at His name and be cast from His presence forever ([Revelation 20:12-15](#)).

The direction to bless is set in a perpetually present day—**“from this time forth.”** Each day is the day of blessing the name of the Lord. The birth of every new day is a reminder of the covenant faithfulness of our God, who vowed, **“While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease”** ([Genesis 8:22](#)). It should sober us to think of how we cannot today praise God yesterday. That opportunity is gone, but while it is yet today, we may praise Him.

This should be our daily activity. **“From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD’s name is to be praised”** ([Psalm 113:3](#)). **“This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it”** ([Psalm 118:24](#)). Let us continue in blessing the name of the Lord **“from this time forth and for evermore.”**



"Moral Collapse"

by Bro. Todd Bryant

I. Introduction

- a. What are we to think about the society in which we live?
 - i. What does the Bible say?
 - ii. How are we to react?
 - iii. What is our real problem?
 - iv. I hope to answer some of these questions today

II. The facts

a. Psalms 33:12

- i. Specifically, this is referring to Israel
 1. America is NOT God's chosen Earthly people
 2. America is not the apple of God's eye
 3. America has not replaced Israel
 4. America is not some supernatural chosen country of God
- ii. That said...
 1. Surely, this verse can be applied to any country
 - a. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD"
 - i. This is our true problem today
 1. Our problem is not liberal economics
 2. Our problem is not universal healthcare
 3. Our problem is not states rights
 4. Our problem IS that we have no fear of God
 - a. Like Israel during the days of the Judges, today every man is doing what is right in his own eyes
 - i. And our generation has been taught such

b. Our nation is in the midst of a moral collapse

- i. One glance at the cover of the magazines at the grocery store will prove that
 1. We glorify sin today
 - a. So way?
 - i. God judges people that are morally corrupt
 1. Pre-Flood Earth
 2. Sodom and Gomorrah
 3. Babylon
 4. Even Israel many times in the OT
 - ii. Why should we expect different?
 1. Our only hope is the number of believers in our communities – as that was the hope of Abraham before the destruction of Sodom

c. 2 Timothy 3:1-7

- i. This is our day, folks
 1. Men love sin rather than God, don't they?
 - a. Just look around at our own community!
 - i. You don't have to look as far as California – it's right here

d. Romans 1:18-32

- i. Clearly, God is not pleased with such things
- ii. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
 1. My word!!!
 2. Woe is me!!
 3. Despite what our world wants you to believe, God considers these sins worthy of eternal wrath!

III. How are we to address such a society that is in such a state?

- a. Consistently
 - i. **Philippians 2:12-16**
 - 1. We are to follow God’s Word in a crooked generation
 - a. And we are in that for sure
 - 2. **1 Corinthians 6:18**
 - a. Do we somehow think our sexual sins are less than others?
 - i. Did we read 1 Corinthians 6?
 - 1. We cannot correct others while we ourselves are guilty
 - 3. One of the best arguments of the homosexual movement today is the divorce rate among professing believers
 - a. This needs to be corrected
 - ii. **Galatians 6:10**
 - 1. In the midst of a crooked generation this remains true
 - 2. Even when their lifestyle is detestable to you, do them good
 - a. This doesn’t mean support sin – that’s not it
 - i. But, we can withhold support in a nice manner
 - 1. One of the greatest causes of Christian opposition today is he attitude of moral superiority
 - a. Again, let us remember WHY we are saved
- b. With love
 - i. **Titus 3:1-8**
 - 1. We are to address those even outside with courtesy and respect
 - a. Let us remember we are only saved by the grace of God
 - i. IN NO WAY DOES THIS MEAN ACCEPT SIN AS OK OR NORMAL
 - ii. **Galatians 6:10**
 - 1. In the midst of a crooked generation this remains true
 - 2. Even when their lifestyle is detestable to you, do them good
 - a. This doesn’t mean support sin – that’s not it
 - i. But, we can withhold support in a nice manner
 - 1. One of the greatest causes of Christian opposition today is he attitude of moral superiority
 - a. Again, let us remember WHY we are saved
- c. With the Gospel
 - i. **Matthew 28:18-20**
 - ii. **Romans 1:15-16**
 - 1. Then Paul gets into why he wants to preach the Gospel
 - a. The verses we’ve already covered

NEWS

NOTICE: The inclusion of a press release is NOT an explicit agreement with all the views expressed there in.

ABORTION:

CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE MORATORIUM OF FEDERAL FUNDS TO PLANNED PARENTHOOD

July 22, 2015
WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congressman Walter B. Jones (NC-3) became an original cosponsor on [H.R. 3134](#), the Defund Planned Parenthood Act of 2015, which would immediately prohibit Planned Parenthood from receiving federal funds. Last Tuesday, July 14, the Center for Medical Progress [released a video](#) of Deborah Nucatola, Planned Parenthood’s Senior Director of Medical Services, explaining how Planned Parenthood sells body parts of aborted babies and often violates the federal law against partial-birth abortion in order to sell intact body parts.

Yesterday, July 21, the Center for Medical Progress [released another video](#) where Mary Gatter, President of Planned Parenthood’s Medical Directors’ Council, discusses how much money Planned Parenthood receives per specimen of aborted baby tissue and how Planned Parenthood can preserve intact tissue from second trimester abortions by making the abortion procedure “less crunchy.”

Last week, when the first video was released, Congressman Jones signed a letter to Congressman Fred Upton, Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and Congressman Bob Goodlatte, Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, asking for an investigation of Planned Parenthood in light of the recent videos of Planned Parenthood leaders making arrangements to sell body parts of aborted babies.

“It is absolutely indefensible that Planned Parenthood continues to receive taxpayer dollars when they are responsible for the deaths of over 300,000 babies a year and the trafficking of the parts of these aborted babies,” said Congressman Jones. “This is nothing more than taxpayer-funded murder. I will continue to do everything I can to protect some of the most vulnerable among us—unborn children. It is a moral obligation to do so.” In May, Congressman Jones voted for H.R. 36, the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, which prevents abortions from

being performed after 20 weeks of pregnancy. Congressman Jones is a member of the Pro-Life Caucus and has supported legislation to protect the rights of the unborn throughout his tenure in Congress. (PDF of letter Congressmen Upton and Goodlatte: [7.16.15 Letter to Upton and Goodlatte.pdf](#))

IMMIGRATION:

"Sexual Violence, Immigration and Family Detention Facilities"

July 10, 2015

Contact: Rose Luna – Communications Program Director – TAASA – (512) 659-8065
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Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) hosts meeting to discuss sexual violence, immigration and family detention facilities

Austin, TX – Today the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) will host sexual assault, domestic violence, and immigration advocates to discuss the issue of detained women and children in Texas. Family detention centers have been the topic of conversation amongst human rights, legal, and immigration advocates. A detention center in Texas captured national attention as allegations of sexual abuse surfaced. “Allegations of sexual abuse while in confinement are particularly alarming, but we’re also very concerned that the confinement setting itself is exacerbating the effects of trauma and isolating victims from the health care they need to recover. Many of these women and children are in detention precisely because of the extreme violence they’ve experienced, and confining them is making it worse.” says Chris Kaiser, Staff Attorney at TAASA.

As the narrative continues, questions on the role of local rape crisis center agencies emerge. What does this mean for sexual assault & domestic violence advocates, prevention specialists, and community members? “Where’s the outrage?” says Linda A. Brandmiller, Immigration Attorney and CEO of Asociacion de Servicios Para el Inmigrante based in San Antonio, TX, “Many of the women and children detained have experienced immense trauma and are further traumatized by our system’s response to their plight.” TAASA’s Diversity Task Force invited Linda to provide a workshop to address sexual violence, immigration, and family detention facilities. Linda represents several women and children detained in a Texas facility.

Womack Supports Enforcement of Laws in Sanctuary Cities

July 23, 2015

Congressman Steve Womack (AR-3) today released the following statement after House passage of H.R. 3009, the Enforce the Law for Sanctuary Cities Act:

“As a former mayor, I understand firsthand the danger illegal immigration poses to local communities and firmly believe that cities should put the safety and security of its citizens before the

interests of those here illegally. Our immigration system undoubtedly needs reform, but there is absolutely no excuse for harboring and releasing criminal aliens and blatantly skirting federal law. This deliberate lawlessness must stop.”

Congressman Steve Womack has represented Arkansas’s Third Congressional District since 2011 and serves on the House Appropriations Defense, Financial Services and General Government, and Labor-Health and Human Services subcommittees and the House Committee on the Budget.

July 30, 2015

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Rep. Pete Olson (R-TX) today introduced legislation to restore congressional authority over immigration enforcement actions by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). In 1988, Congress created the Immigration Examinations Fee Account which removed most USCIS funding from the annual appropriation process, limiting congressional oversight of the agency. Since 2011, President Obama has issued multiple memos that weaken our ability to enforce existing immigration laws. To restore needed oversight, Olson introduced H.R. 3302, the Ensuring Congressional Oversight of Immigration Act. This bill sunsets the USCIS’ authority in two years unless extended by legislation. Original cosponsors include: Reps. Phil Roe (R-TN) and Brian Babin (R-TX).

“The Constitution rightly instilled a critical set of checks and balances for each branch of government to ensure no one branch became too powerful,” Rep. Pete Olson said. “A confluence of actions by Congress and the president have reduced this oversight process and expanded the executive branches power beyond its intended scope. Recent actions by President Obama have resulted in hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants flooding into America in violation of existing immigration laws and outside the purview of Congress. This bill is an important first step to restore the proper balance of power set forth by the Constitution between the legislative and executive branch in our immigration laws.”

The Ensuring Congressional Oversight of Immigration Act also prohibits the use of any funds, appropriated or through fees, for use of the various memos and executive actions that allow for amnesty. By issuing a sunset to USCIS’ authority, Congress can reauthorize the parts of the system that work and change those that don’t.

Pelosi + 177 House Democrats to DHS: 'End Family Detention Now'

July 31, 2015

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In a letter signed by 178 members of Congress today, House Democrats called on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to end its controversial Family Detention Program. Congressman Gutiérrez said about this letter: “I am pleased that so many of my House colleagues including our top leaders are united in telling the President and Secretary of Homeland Security that putting moms and kids in detention just

does not comport with our values as Americans. We have been making progress towards ending family detention all year, but the court ruling and the unity of Democrats on this matter make it clear that family detention is almost over. And good riddance.”

Rep. Luis V. Gutiérrez has been working closely with Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) and Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) in pushing for an end to family detention for women and children. Press releases (in **ENGLISH** y **ESPAÑOL**) with links to the letter are pasted below.

The letter ([pdf](#)), led by **U.S. Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.)**, comes on the heels of a U.S. District Court ruling late last week that the detention of immigrant women and children violated terms of the 1997 Flores Settlement, and urges DHS to “take all necessary and appropriate steps to bring the Department's practices in line with the settlement agreement and the recent court ruling.”

The letter notes the “strong evidence that such detention is detrimental to mothers and children and is not reflective of our Nation's values,” and that now “is long past time to end family detention.”

[Full text of the letter](#) is below:

Dear Secretary Johnson:

In May of this year, 136 Members of Congress wrote to you to express serious concern regarding the Department of Homeland Security's detention of thousands of mothers and children in secure, jail-like facilities. The purpose of the letter was to alert you to the strong evidence that such detention is detrimental to mothers and children and is not reflective of our Nation's values. The detained population is largely comprised of refugees fleeing violence and persecution, many of whom have serious medical and mental health needs that have been inadequately addressed in custody. You were urged to end the use of family detention. Last Friday, a federal judge issued a ruling finding that the Department's family detention practices constitute a material breach of a Court-approved class-wide settlement agreement. *Flores v. Johnson*, CV 85-4544 (C.D. Cal. July 24, 2015). Judge Dolly M. Gee found that the Department's decision to house children in secure facilities that are not licensed by any State agency to care for dependent children violated the 20-year-old Flores settlement agreement. The court also rejected the Department's request to amend that settlement agreement in lieu of remedying the numerous violations.

It is long past time to end family detention. In light of this recent federal court ruling, we urge you take all necessary and appropriate steps to bring the Department's practices in line with the settlement agreement and the recent court ruling.

La Líder Demócrata de la Cámara de Representantes Nancy Pelosi y 177 Demócratas le enviaron la siguiente [carta](#) al Secretario de Seguridad Nacional Jeh Johnson. En la carta, los representantes Demócratas le piden que ponga fin al uso de detención familiar.

La versión en inglés con las firmas de los representantes se encuentra [aquí](#). Muchas gracias.

CONFEDERATE FLAG

CONGRESSWOMAN JACKSON LEE RESPONDS TO THE REMOVAL OF THE CONFEDERATE FLAG FROM THE GROUNDS OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA CAPITOL

July 9, 2015

Washington, DC – Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee released the following statement regarding the removal of the Confederate Flag from the Capitol grounds in South Carolina:

“The untimely death of Pastor Clementa Pinckney and eight other congregants at the Historic Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC on June 17, has awakened the moral conscience of this nation. It has caused us to see where we have been blind. For too long we have ignored the emotions and historic context surrounding this flag. It is an insult and a mockery to those whose ancestors were enslaved, lynched, killed, and disenfranchised.

“Yesterday, after an emotional floor debate in the South Carolina House of Representatives, the State House in South Carolina joined the State Senate in an overwhelming vote to remove the Confederate flag from the State Capitol. South Carolina has had a history entrenched in racial conflict. In 1860 they were the first state to leave the union and form a new nation called the Confederate States of America. The flag was raised once again over 50 years ago in act of defiance and resistance to the Civil Rights Movement.

“It is a new day for America – a new opportunity for us to improve the crippled race relations in this nation. The nine members of Emanuel AME died as martyrs. Their deaths have brought about an unprecedented change in America with states debating on the place of a hate flag sanctioned by a government institution.

“Though the flag has been removed, we have not entered a post racial society – racism and covert discrimination has not ended. President Obama’s eulogy at the funeral of Pastor Pinckney reminded us that we still have work to do to address institutionalized racist practices in this country that have become status quo.

“That is why I introduced H. Res. 342, a resolution expressing the Sense of the Congress that the United States can achieve a more perfect union by promoting tolerance and unity by taking actions to ensure that ‘government speech’ does not foster division, disharmony, intolerance through government-issued or sponsored flags, signs, images, or other symbols whether displayed in public or private.

“I applaud the 94 Members of the South Carolina House and the 36 Senators who exemplified extraordinary leadership in voting to progress our country toward a more perfect union.

“Let us continue to stand with the victims and families of Charleston, and against the public display of this symbol of hate in any state.”

Jul 9, 2015

“House Republicans Tried to Sneak Confederate Flag Into This Bill, Hoping No One Would Notice. We Noticed.”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Jim McGovern (MA-02), a senior House Democrat, led today’s floor debate for House Democrats on H.R. 6, the 21st Century Cures Act and called out House Republicans for their amendment to allow the Confederate flag to be displayed in National Parks and cemeteries run by the National Park Service.

Excerpts from Congressman McGovern’s floor speech today:

“Americans are ready to leave behind the discrimination and hate symbolized by the Confederate flag, but my friends on the other side of the aisle seem to have a different idea. Last night House Republicans introduced an amendment to the Interior Appropriations bill that simply has no place on the House floor.

“House Republicans tried to sneak this amendment into the bill late last night, hoping no one would notice. We noticed. The American people noticed and I am ashamed that in 2015, Congress would even consider a measure that seeks to perpetuate the hate and racism that the Confederate flag represents.

“Congress should not promote this symbol of hate. Now is a time for us to come together. I am proud to join my colleagues who are standing up today for all Americans united against hate.”

The full text of Congressman McGovern’s floor speech is below. [Full video here.](#)

As Prepared for delivery:

“I thank the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Burgess, for yielding me the customary 30 minutes and I ask unanimous consent to revise and extend my remarks and I yield myself such time as I may consume. Before I speak on this bill, I want to thank Leader Pelosi for leading today’s efforts to hold House Republicans accountable for their divisive Confederate flag amendment.

“It is stunning to me that my Republican friends decided to refer the Democratic Leader’s resolution to committee so that we could not have a debate. The legislature in South Carolina could have a debate, but my Republican friends in Congress ensured that we could not have that debate.

“The fact is, Americans are ready to leave behind the discrimination and hate symbolized by the Confederate flag, but my friends on the other side of the aisle seem to have a different idea.

“Last night House Republicans introduced an amendment to the Interior Appropriations bill that simply has no place on this House floor. It would undo the successful Democratic amendments adopted by voice that would have barred the display

of Confederate flags in federal cemeteries and barred the National Park Service from doing business with gift shops that sell Confederate flag merchandise.

“Simply put, while South Carolina voted this week to take the Confederate flag down, Republicans in Congress were ready to put it back up.

“Even more troubling, House Republicans tried to sneak this amendment into the bill late last night, hoping no one would notice. We noticed.

“The American people noticed and I am ashamed that in 2015, Congress would even consider a measure that seeks to perpetuate the hate and racism that the Confederate flag represents.

“Now my friends on the other side of the aisle, especially the leadership, seem to be in disarray.

“The Speaker of the House is trying to distance himself from the measure, notwithstanding that the Republican Chairman of the House Appropriations Interior Subcommittee who offered the amendment said that he did so at the request of leadership.

“The Confederate flag is a symbol of racism and a reminder of one of our nation’s darkest periods of division. It has no place in America’s National Parks.

“Congress should not promote this symbol of hate. Now is a time to come together and I am proud to join my colleagues who are standing up today for all Americans united against hate.

“I just want to say one final thing. The fact that the Interior Appropriations bill was pulled from consideration on this House floor by my Republican friends because they believed that without this pro-confederate flag amendment that they could lose up to 100 of their own members, is stunning to me.

“It never ceases to amaze me. Just when I think this institution can’t sink any lower, then something like this happens. And so I would urge my colleagues to stand with me and vote against the previous question so we can actually have this debate. A debate I think the American people would like to have.”

Congresswoman Kelly Statement on Removing the Confederate Flag from U.S. Capitol Grounds

Jul 10, 2015

“Today, South Carolina took an important step forward in healing America’s racial wounds by removing the Confederate flag from their statehouse grounds. It is historical fact that the Confederate States of America –and their battle flag – only sought to divide America. In 1865, General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant, ending the Civil War and preserving our Union. Still, yesterday, Congress failed to recognize what General Lee realized 150 years ago – that as a divided nation we cannot prosper.

I am disappointed that House Republicans refused to take action on a Democratic effort to move on from this hateful history by stalling a resolution to remove state flags containing images of the Confederate battle flag from the Capitol. It is unacceptable that representatives of our union would defend this symbol of hatred.

The Confederate flag has no place on any federal grounds. To allow that flag to hang in the Capitol dishonors the union and the millions of Americans who died for the American flag. It also dishonors the untold others who were shackled, treated as 3/5ths of a person, ripped from their families, lynched, hosed, denied an education, and treated unequally under the banner of the Confederate flag.

*“Why I Stopped
Flying The
Confederate Flag
(Years Ago)”*

by Bro. Jason Shults



Despite being born in Illinois, my family heritage is from Tennessee, deeply rooted in Southern culture. I have lived in several places in our country, but was also taught to see myself as a full-fledged son of the South – a distinction I embraced then and, with few exceptions, still embrace. I subscribed to Civil War Times (which I considered misnamed because it was the War of Northern Aggression). I love bluegrass, sweet tea and the Atlanta Braves. I try to speak politely, be a gentleman, show respect to elders and I know my history. I am a product of my family’s southern roots and displayed the Stars and Bars (the first national flag) in my apartment as a single man.

Yet, I stopped displaying a Confederate Battle Flag years ago. That choice has nothing to do with the hate-filled murder of my brothers and sisters in Christ in Charleston. That choice has nothing to do with the politically correct movement which seeks to force conformity. I am a free thinker and a non-conformist.

My decision was based on the principles of God’s Word. When a previous round of flag-banning happened years ago (this is not the first time) I had to ask myself the following questions:

- 1) Do I have freedom to display this flag regardless of what others think?
- 2) Do I have a need to fly this flag, or is it just a desire?
- 3) Does displaying this flag help me accomplish my ultimate goals?

To the first question, I could honestly answer “yes.” I live in a country that is free and allows this expression of freedom. I also

found nothing in the Bible that removed my freedom from displaying that flag as a Christian. I determined that I was, without hesitation, free.

To the second question, I understood that displaying the flag was not a requirement for my life. If I took it down, the sun would still rise. I could still go to work. My heritage would remain intact. Nothing would fundamentally change. Yet, I also recognized I would lose something. I wanted to display that flag as a reminder to myself of who I am and as a statement to others of my heritage. The idea of losing that symbol was emotionally painful. Did I need it? No. Did I want it? Yes, for a dozen different reasons.

The third question is where I found clarity. To know if displaying that flag would aid me in accomplishing my ultimate goal, I had to define that goal. Do I identify myself as a son of the South or do I identify myself with the Son of God? “Those should not be mutually exclusive,” I thought. “I am both! I am a Southern Christian.” But, if I am honest, I know there are times where those do conflict. If I have the opportunity to speak to a black man, do I approach him waiving the Southern Cross or lifting up the Cross of Jesus? If I take both, do I expect he will hear the message of love through what is (in his mind) a symbol of hate?

So, I do not believe displaying the Confederate Flag helps me accomplish my ultimate goal if that goal is glorifying Jesus Christ. I know what is in the mind of some reading this, “You have forgotten your first question! You’re still free!” That is true. But let me suggest we have a limited idea of freedom. Romans 14 teaches us that the very things we are free to do will sometimes, because of the misunderstandings of others, cause an offence to them. So how are we to express our freedom? Isn’t true freedom found in the ability to make choices? And so, if I am free to fly the Confederate Flag, I am equally as free to make the choice against it.

I understand and respect those who will make a different choice. I hope this is some help with those who thoughtfully struggle to do right. I simply asked the Lord to help me express my freedom in the way that brings Him glory and honor. Ultimately, my primary citizenship is not in a country that stopped existing 150 years ago, nor is it in this country that may not exist in another 150 years. Philippians 3:20 tells me my citizenship is in Heaven and so I’ll seek to display that citizenship wherever the Lord leads me.

VACCINES

National Vaccine Information Center (NVIC) Says New California Law Threatens Human and Civil Rights in America

July 01,
WASHINGTON--([EON: Enhanced Online News](#))--Following the June 29, 2015 enactment by Governor Jerry Brown of a California law eliminating the legal right for parents enrolling

children in school to exercise vaccine exemptions for religious and conscientious beliefs, the non-profit National Vaccine Information Center ([NVIC](#)) is urging citizens in every state to act to protect the human right to informed consent to medical risk taking in America. In violation of the [California Constitution](#), the new law denies children the civil right to a school education unless they prove they have gotten multiple doses of 10 federally recommended vaccines or a medical doctor grants a medical vaccine exemption.

“Americans should not be threatened and forced to give up a human right in order to exercise a civil right,” said NVIC co-founder and president Barbara Loe Fisher. “There is no public health emergency in California or any other state that justifies giving up our human and civil rights. These kinds of oppressive laws are a prescription for tyranny and will lead to fear and distrust of government health officials and medical doctors.”

The bill to eliminate the personal belief vaccine exemption was proposed after [measles cases](#) were reported at Disneyland in January 2015. Only [18 percent](#) of 134 California measles cases occurred in school aged children, while 30 percent of measles cases with vaccine records had been vaccinated.

“The California legislature and Governor Brown have failed California families, who do not deserve to be segregated and discriminated against based on vaccination and health care choices that parents make in the best interest of their minor children,” said Fisher. “[Doctors cannot predict](#) who will be injured or die from the side effects of vaccines, yet they deny medical vaccine exemptions to [99.99 percent of children](#) under [narrow federal guidelines](#).”

Thousands of California citizens opposing the [bill](#) testified in public hearings held in the state Senate health, education and judiciary committees and Assembly health committee. However, there were no hearings in Appropriations committees and no financial analysis of how much it will cost the state to take legal action against parents, who do not comply or sue the state for denying their children a school education.

The legislation does not define what legal sanctions parents will face if they decline to give their children vaccines mandated under the law but are financially or otherwise unable to homeschool them. Under California law, parents charged with truancy can be [fined or imprisoned](#), which could result in children being placed in foster care.

The numbers of vaccinations recommended by federal health officials have [tripled since 1983](#) to [69 doses of 16 vaccines](#), and pharmaceutical companies and federal health agencies are developing hundreds of [new vaccines](#). The law will allow state health officials to add more vaccines to the required list without the vote of the legislature.

“Vaccines are not safe for everyone because we are not all the same genetically and biologically and we respond differently to

pharmaceutical products like vaccines, yet [pediatricians are denying medical care](#) to children if parents do not agree to get every government recommended vaccine,” said Fisher. “Every day at the National Vaccine Information Center, we hear from parents whose children have been [injured or died](#) from vaccine side effects. It is cruel to prevent citizens from getting a school education or medical care for exercising the human right to informed consent to medical risk taking.”

In 2011, the [U.S. Supreme Court](#) declared vaccines to be “unavoidably unsafe” and [shielded pharmaceutical companies](#) from all product liability lawsuits for vaccine injuries and deaths. Medical doctors giving vaccines have been shielded from vaccine injury lawsuits since 1986 under the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act, which has paid out [more than \\$3 billion](#) to children and adults harmed by government recommended vaccines. Two out of three vaccine injured plaintiffs are denied federal compensation.

The National Vaccine Information Center (NVIC) is a nonprofit charity founded in 1982 to prevent vaccine injuries and deaths through public education and does not make vaccine use recommendations. NVIC advocates for protection of the human right to informed consent to medical risk taking and inclusion of flexible medical, religious and conscientious belief vaccine exemptions in U.S. public health policies and laws.

[NVIC June 9, 2015 referenced written testimony](#) presented orally to California Assembly Health Committee.

[NVIC July 1, 2015 letter to California Governor Jerry Brown](#).

Contacts: National Vaccine Information Center
Barbara Loe Fisher, 703-938-0342

National Vaccine Information Center Says Proposed 21st Century Cures Act Will Endanger the Public Health by Lowering FDA Licensing Standards

July 22,
WASHINGTON--([EON: Enhanced Online News](#))--The non-profit National Vaccine Information Center (NVIC) says the proposed 21st Century Cures Act ([H.R. 6](#)) will endanger the public health by lowering scientific and informed consent standards used by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to license experimental biological products (vaccines), drugs and medical devices in order to expedite delivery to the U.S. market. Under the proposed law, drug companies could avoid conducting large randomized clinical trials and researchers would be able to test new products on humans without obtaining informed consent.

The bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives on July 10, 2015. It mandates that an additional \$9 billion be given to National Institutes of Health (NIH) to develop new vaccines and drugs and \$550 million be given to the FDA to fast track

licensure.

[“The 21st Century Cures Act is a drug company stockholder’s dream and a consumer’s worst nightmare,”](#) said Barbara Loe Fisher, NVIC Co-founder and President. “Making experimental drugs quickly available for the sick and dying, who voluntarily choose to use them, is one thing but Congress should not be greasing the skids to license experimental vaccines that government will recommend and legally require healthy children and adults to use. It is a prescription for disaster.”

The proposed law would allow drug companies to use surrogate endpoints to evaluate the effectiveness of experimental vaccines and drugs, and would permit the FDA to accept novel statistical analyses and clinical experience evidence instead of requiring drug companies to produce evidence from large randomized clinical trials. The legislation states that “if the proposed clinical testing poses no more than minimal risk,” informed consent would not be required from test subjects, but it is not clear who decides what constitutes “minimal risk.”

“Informed consent is the gold standard in human experimentation and the practice of ethical medicine, and there is no substitute for the requirement that drug companies conduct large, well designed randomized clinical trials before the FDA licenses a new vaccine,” said Fisher. “Moving numbers around in a computer is a poor substitute for actually proving a new vaccine works and does not kill and injure real human beings before it is recommended and used by millions of people.”

Congress gave the pharmaceutical industry a [partial civil liability shield](#) from vaccine injury lawsuits in 1986 and created a [federal vaccine injury compensation program \(VICP\)](#) that has awarded [over \\$3 billion](#) for vaccine injuries and deaths since 1988. In 2011, the [U.S. Supreme Court](#) declared vaccines to be “unavoidably unsafe” and removed all product liability for vaccines licensed by the FDA. The U.S. government recommends that children receive [69 doses of 16 vaccines](#) between day of birth and age 18 and all [50 states have mandated](#) dozens of doses of at least 10 of those vaccines for children to attend school.

In [2015](#), more than 100 bills were introduced in multiple states to add more vaccine mandates and restrict or eliminate non-medical vaccine exemptions. In June 2015, [California enacted a law](#) that eliminated the religious and conscientious belief vaccine exemptions for school entry despite large public protests with thousands of citizens holding rallies and testifying that the proposed legislation violates human and civil rights.

The U.S. government has forged a financial public private partnership with the pharmaceutical industry through a series of federal laws passed since 1984. The Departments of Health and Human Services, Defense and Homeland Security use federal appropriations to fund and partner with pharmaceutical corporations to build new vaccine plants and develop new vaccines that will be licensed, recommended and mandated by government.

The National Vaccine Information Center ([NVIC](#)) was founded in 1982 and works to prevent vaccine injuries and deaths through public education and to secure informed consent protections in U.S. health policies and laws, including flexible medical, religious and conscientious belief vaccine exemptions.

[Watch and read](#) a referenced video commentary on the **21st Century Cures Act published by NVIC.**

Model Resolution Affirms Marriage and Religious Liberty July 15, 2015 by Staff

Model Resolution to Affirm Marriage and Religious Liberty released by
Commonwealth Policy Center
DATE: July 15, 2015
CONTACT: Richard Nelson
PHONE: (270) 271-2713

Cadiz, KY— The Commonwealth Policy Center released a model resolution regarding marriage and religious freedom for local governments on Tuesday. According to Richard Nelson, executive director of the nonpartisan public policy group, the resolution allows local governments to go on record regarding what they believe about marriage. It also affirms that the local government respects individual conscience and religious freedom.

“Many local officials are scrambling in the wake of the the U.S. Supreme Court ruling which redefined marriage and struck down Kentucky’s marriage law,” Nelson said. “The court issued its opinion, now local governments have a chance to respond. Even though the resolution doesn’t have the force of law, it allows city councils and fiscal courts to go on record to affirm basic truths about marriage and religious freedom.”

The resolution states that the local government is resolved to “respect the rights of individual conscience as guaranteed in Article 5 of the Kentucky Bill of Rights; and... that it is neither wise nor safe for government to compel its citizens to violate their conscience”

Full text of the resolution: A Resolution to Affirm Religious Freedom and the Timeless Definition of Marriage

WHEREAS, on June 26, 2015 the U.S. Supreme Court by a 5-4 ruling, struck down Kentucky’s Constitutional Amendment defining marriage as between one man and one woman in the case *Obergefell v Hodges*; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Constitution is silent on the definition of marriage; and

WHEREAS, the Tenth Amendment reserves the rights of the states the power and authority not delegated to the federal

government; and

WHEREAS, in 2004, 118 state legislators voted to amend Kentucky's state constitution to say "Only a marriage between one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in Kentucky."; and

WHEREAS, 1,222,125 voters or nearly 75 percent of Kentuckians ratified the state constitutional amendment on November 2, 2004;

WHEREAS, Kentucky along with 30 other states amended their constitutions to define marriage as between one man and one woman.

WHEREAS, 106 Kentucky legislators signed onto a friend of the court brief encouraging the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold the Commonwealth's duly enacted marriage law; and

WHEREAS, marriage is the most basic human relationship bringing one man and one woman together into a lifelong covenantal union; and

WHEREAS, anthropology supports man/woman marriage by recognizing that men and women are different and complementary; and

WHEREAS, biology affirms man/woman marriage through the truth that human reproduction depends upon the joining of a man and woman; and

WHEREAS, sociology affirms that the children produced by the union of male and female do best when they are raised by both their biological mother and biological father; and

WHEREAS, the major religions including orthodox Judaism, Christianity and Islam affirm that marriage is between one man and one woman; and

WHEREAS, social science affirms that children statistically do better in every category when raised in married two-parent heterosexual households; and

WHEREAS, there is not a single peer reviewed credible scientific study measured longitudinally that indicates that children do better under same-sex parenting; and

WHEREAS, stable heterosexual marriages are in the government's best interest and best protection against government dependency; and

WHEREAS, the definition of marriage as between one man and one woman applies throughout all of time, to all cultures and preceded civil government;

WHEREAS, the Kentucky Bill of Rights says in Section 5: "... No human authority shall, in any case whatever, control or interfere with the rights of conscience."

WHEREAS, the Kentucky legislature enacted the Religious

Freedom Restoration Act in 2013 which says the "government shall not substantially burden a person's freedom of religion." If there is another way to carry out a compelling government interest, it must be done in the "least restrictive means to further that interest"; and

WHEREAS, many Kentuckians hold a sincerely held religious belief that they should not be forced to affirm or participate in same-sex marriage in any way; and

WHEREAS, many Kentucky business owners hold a sincere religious conviction that materially participating in a same-sex wedding ceremony, celebration, or reception, through their goods and services is sacrilegious, and therefore a violation of their conscience or sincerely held religious beliefs; and

WHEREAS, while government may recognize what is written into the laws of nature regarding marriage, it cannot rightly redefine, expand or alter the definition; and

WHEREAS, the recent imposition of same sex marriage by the United States Supreme Court poses potential infringements on the inalienable right of religious liberty; and

Therefore, be it resolved: We believe that marriage is between one man and one woman in a lifelong monogamous covenantal union; and

We affirm religious freedom is an inalienable right and guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution; and

We, respect the rights of individual conscience as guaranteed in Article 5 of the Kentucky Bill of Rights; and

We acknowledge that it is neither wise nor safe for government to compel its citizens to violate their conscience; and

We support the principle of religious freedom in that people have an inherent right to conduct their public lives according to their religious convictions.



“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” – 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

I’m not gay. That probably comes as no surprise since I’m the pastor of a Baptist church. But it’s an important point. My charge (as a child of God – not only as a pastor) is to attempt to make a disciple of every person indiscriminately (**Matthew 28:18-20**). These are my marching orders from the great Captain of our faith! The difficulty often arises when I encounter somebody that sins differently than I do. I can relate to most every sinner listed in our text. God saved me out of most of those sins. But the sin of homosexuality is one I have never struggled with. So I cannot relate.

Following the ruling of the Supreme Court, many believers have lashed out with rash comments that were less than gracious. We are commanded, *“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Colossians 4:6)*. And again, *“...let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (James 1:19)*. Sometimes, in trying to defend the Bible, we don’t follow God’s instructions. Certainly, this is one of those times.

But why? Why are believers so quick to speak hatefully of homosexuals? Firstly, most of us cannot relate to the sin. To most, the sin is unthinkable and disgusting. To most of us (since we have never been tempted in this way) we cannot fathom anybody else being tempted in such a way. Since we are quicker to open our mouths than we ought to be, we say things which ought not to be said – at least not in the manner in which they are said.

Secondly, we view homosexuality as some type of different sin than other sins. But our text clearly lists it as a sin that will lead people to hell. Without a doubt, homosexuality is a disgusting sin. But apparently, so is sexual immorality, idolatry, adultery, theft, greed, drunkenness, reviling and swindling. To God, all of these sins are disgusting. In fact, all sin whether listed here or not is a stench in His nostrils. And certainly, this a short list of sins. Even often overlooked sins such as covetousness are disgusting to God. Remember, He calls covetousness idolatry (**Colossians 3:5**).

How then are believers to respond to such a thing? First and foremost, we must be Biblical. This entails not only clearly stating the Biblical position of such a sin, but also stating the remedy for that sin. To denounce a sin as damning without

offering the truth of the Gospel is cold hearted. To have the remedy for a disease while refusing to share it is unthinkable. Jesus died for the sin of homosexuality. Secondly, we must share this Good News lovingly and mercifully with great hope that God will use it. Let us never be like the Prophet Jonah who refused to preach because he knew God was gracious (**Jonah 4:1-2**). Lastly, let us be sure we are faithful in Biblical marriages. One of the best arguments of the supporters of the recent ruling is that heterosexual marriages end in divorce some 50% of the time. Like it or not, that is a fact. Though two wrongs certainly don’t make a right, this statistic needs corrected. We’d do well to get the log out of our eye before removing one from somebody else’s (**Matthew 7:1-5**). Certainly, our words would carry more weight.

IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL

July 21, 2015

Pompeo, Cotton Urge Disclosure of Complete Iran Nuclear Deal

IAEA tells the lawmakers that two inspections arrangements regarding Iran’s past military work will remain secret

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Mike Pompeo (KS-04) and Senator Tom Cotton (R-Arkansas) on Friday had a meeting in Vienna with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), during which the agency conveyed to the lawmakers that two side deals made between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the IAEA as part of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) will remain secret and will not be shared with other nations, with Congress, or with the public. One agreement covers the inspection of the Parchin military complex, and the second details how the IAEA and Iran will resolve outstanding issues on possible military dimensions of Iran’s nuclear program.

According to the IAEA, the Iran agreement negotiators, including the Obama administration, agreed that the IAEA and Iran would forge separate arrangements to govern the inspection of the Parchin military complex – one of the most secretive military facilities in Iran – and how Iran would satisfy the IAEA’s outstanding questions regarding past weaponization work. Both arrangements will not be vetted by any organization other than Iran and the IAEA, and will not be released even to the nations that negotiated the JCPOA. This means that the secret arrangements have not been released for public scrutiny and have not been submitted to Congress as part of its legislatively mandated review of the Iran deal.

Parchin is a critical linchpin in the Iranian nuclear program that has long-been suspected of both long-range ballistic missile and nuclear weapons development. In 2011, the IAEA suspected that the facility was used to conduct high-explosive experiments as part of an effort to build nuclear weapons.

Even under the woefully inadequate *Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act*, the Obama administration is required to provide the U.S. Congress with all nuclear agreement documents, including all “annexes, appendices, codicils, side agreements, implementing materials, documents, and guidance, technical or other understandings and any related agreements, whether entered into or implemented prior to the agreement or to be entered into or implemented in the future.”

Pompeo said: “This agreement is the worst of backroom deals. In addition to allowing Iran to keep its nuclear program, missile program, American hostages, and terrorist network, the Obama administration has failed to make public separate side deals that have been struck for the ‘inspection’ of one of the most important nuclear sites—the Parchin military complex. Not only does this violate the *Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act*, it is asking Congress to agree to a deal that it cannot review.

“The failure to disclose the content of these side agreements begs the question, ‘What is the Obama administration hiding?’ Even members of Congress who are sympathetic to this deal cannot and must not accept a deal we aren’t even aware of. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to stand up and demand to see the complete deal.”

Cotton said: “In failing to secure the disclosure of these secret side deals, the Obama administration is asking Congress and the American people to trust, but not verify. What we cannot do is trust the terror-sponsoring, anti-American, outlaw regime that governs Iran and that has been deceiving the world on its nuclear weapons work for years. Congress’s evaluation of this deal must be based on hard facts and full information. That we are only now discovering that parts of this dangerous agreement are being kept secret begs the question of what other elements may also be secret and entirely free from public scrutiny.”

Iran Nuclear Agreement Review

Testimony John Kerry Secretary of State
Opening Remarks Before the Senate Foreign Relations
Committee

Washington, DC, July 23, 2015

Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Cardin, members of the committee and friends and former colleagues. We really do appreciate the chance to discuss with you the comprehensive plan that we and our P5+1 partners have developed with Iran regarding the future of its nuclear program. And let me emphasize to everybody here this isn't just the United States of America. These are other nuclear powers: France, Britain, Russia, China. They have a pretty good understanding of this field and of the challenges, and I appreciate the way in which they and Germany, which was the plus-one, all came together, all contributed, all were part of this debate. So you're not just looking at what this table negotiated; you're looking at what the international community, the P5+1 under the auspices of the

United Nations, negotiated, and they're not dumb. They're experts, every one of them, in nuclear technology and ratification and verification, are smart people who spent a lifetime at this, and they've signed off on this agreement.

Now I'm joined by two cabinet secretaries whose help was absolutely invaluable in reaching this deal, and I thank all of you for the role that Congress played. I was privileged to be the chairman of this committee when we passed the Iran sanctions effort. And we all remember the debate, we passed it unanimously, and it played a very significant role in bringing Iran to the table and in helping to make it clear that we needed to bring about a serious and productive negotiation with Iran.

Now, from the day that those talks began, we were crystal clear that we would not accept anything less than a good deal, and we defined it up front as a deal that closed off the four pathways to a bomb, the two uranium pathways, the one plutonium pathway, and the covert pathway. So we set our standard, and we believe we have achieved that standard. After almost two years of very intensive talks, the facts are all really crystal clear that the plan that was announced last week in Vienna is, in fact, a deal that does shut off those pathways and provides us with guarantees, through the lifetime of the NPT and the participation of Iran, that we will know what they are doing.

Now, the Chairman mentioned in his opening comments some phrase about unless we give Iran what they want. Folks, they already have what they want. They got it 10 years ago or more. They already have conquered the fuel cycle. When we began our negotiations, Iran had enough fissile material for 10 to 12 bombs. They had 19,000 centrifuges up from the 163 that they had back in 2003 when the prior administration was engaged with them on this very topic.

So this isn't a question of giving them what they want. I mean it's a question of how do you hold their program back, how do you dismantle their weapons program, not their whole program. Let's understand what was really on the table here. We set out to dismantle their ability to be able to build a nuclear weapon, and we've achieved that. Nobody has ever talked about actually dismantling their entire program because when that was being talked about, that's when they went from 163 centrifuges to 19,000. Everybody here at this dais knows what the options are for actually stopping that. It's called military action, because they're not going to stop it otherwise. They've already proven that. They proved it during all those years.

So under the terms of this agreement, Iran has agreed now to remove 98 percent of its stockpile voluntarily. They're going to destroy 98 percent of their stockpile of enriched uranium. They're going to dismantle two-thirds of their installed centrifuges, and they're going to take out the existing core of an existing heavy water reactor and fill it with concrete. Iran has agreed to refrain from producing or acquiring highly-enriched uranium and weapons-grade plutonium for at least 15 years, and if they began to do that, Ernie Moniz will tell you, we will know it

immediately.

Iran has also agreed to accept the additional protocol, and the additional protocol is an outgrowth of the failure of the North Korea experience, which put in additional access requirements precisely so that we do know what Iran is doing, and they have to ratify it before the UN sanctions are lifted at the end of this process. They have to have ratified – they have to pass it in the Majlis. They've agreed to live by it from day one. They're going to live by the additional protocol. In addition, there are additional transparency measures we can go into in the course of this hearing.

Now, if Iran fails to comply, we will know it, and we will know it quickly, and we will be able to respond accordingly by reinstating sanctions all the way up to the most draconian options that we have today. None of them are off the table at any point in time. So, many of the measures that are in this agreement are there for – not just for 10 years, not just for 15 years, not just for 20 years, not just for 25 years, of which there are measures for each of those periods of time, but they are for life, forever, as long as Iran is within the NPT. By the way, North Korea pulled out of the NPT; Iran has not pulled out of the NPT.

Remember that two years ago when our negotiations began, we faced an Iran that was enriching uranium up to 20 percent at a facility that was secret and buried underground. And they were rapidly stockpiling enriched uranium and had installed nearly 20,000 nuclear centrifuges. They were building a heavy water reactor that could produce weapons-grade plutonium at the rate of enough to produce one or two bombs a year. And experts assess that the breakout time then, as a result, the interval required to rush to be able to produce enough fissile material for one nuclear weapon, was about two to three months. If this deal is rejected, we return immediately to this reality, except that the diplomatic support that we have built with all these other countries, that we have accumulated, would disappear overnight.

Let me underscore. The alternative to the deal that we have reached is not what I have seen some ads on TV suggesting, disingenuously. It isn't a "better deal," some sort of unicorn arrangement involving Iran's complete capitulation. That is a fantasy, plain and simple. And our own intelligence community will tell you that. Every single department of our intelligence community will reinforce that to you. The choice we face is between an agreement that will ensure Iran's nuclear program is limited, rigorously scrutinized, and wholly peaceful, or no deal at all. That's the choice.

The fact is that there are 189 nations that live by the NPT: 5 of them are, as we know, the main nuclear powers of the UN, and 184 of them are non-nuclear in power. But they live by it. And we have lived by what the IAEA does with respect to ensuring the surety of what all of those 184 nations are doing, including 12 that enrich.

Now, if the U.S. Congress moves to unilaterally reject what was agreed to in Vienna, the result will be the United States of

America walking away from every one of the restrictions that we have achieved, and a great big green light for Iran to double the pace of its uranium enrichment, proceed full speed ahead with a heavy water reactor, install new and more efficient centrifuges, and do it all without the unprecedented inspection and transparency measures that we have secured. Everything that we have prevented will then start taking place, and all the voluntary rollbacks of their program will be undone.

Moreover, if the U.S., after laboriously negotiating this multilateral agreement with five other partners, were to walk away from those partners, we're on our own. Our partners will not walk away with us. Instead, they will walk away from the tough multilateral sanctions regime that they have helped to put in place. And we will have squandered the best chance we have to solve this problem through peaceful means.

Now, make no mistake. President Obama has made it crystal clear that we will never accept a nuclear armed Iran. He is the only president who has developed a weapon capable of guaranteeing that. And he has not only developed it, he has deployed it. But the fact is that Iran now has – we all don't like it, but whether we like it or not, Iran has developed experience with a nuclear fuel cycle. They have developed the ability to produce the fissile material for a bomb. And we can't bomb that knowledge away, nor can we sanction the knowledge away.

Remember, sanctions did not stop Iran's nuclear program from growing steadily to the point that it had accumulated enough fissile material to produce those 10 nuclear weapons. By the way, they didn't choose to produce them. Unlike North Korea, that created a nuclear weapon, and exploded one, and pulled out of the NPT, Iran has done none of that. The truth is that the Vienna Plan will provide a stronger, more comprehensive, more lasting means of limiting Iran's nuclear program than any alternative that has been spoken of. And to those who are thinking about opposing the deal because of what might happen in year 15 or 16 or 20, remember: If we walk away, year 15 or 16 or 20 starts tomorrow, and without any of the long-term verification or transparency safeguards that we have put in place.

Now, over the past week, I have spoken at length about what exactly this deal is. I also want to make clear what this deal was never intended to be.

First of all, as the chief negotiator, I can tell you I never uttered the words "Anywhere, anytime," nor was it ever part of the discussion that we had with the Iranians. This plan was designed to address the nuclear issue, the nuclear issue alone, because we knew that if we got caught up with all the other issues, we'd never get where we needed to to stop the nuclear program. It would be rope-a-dope, staying there forever, negotiating one aspect or another.

And the highest priority of President Obama was to make sure that Iran couldn't get a nuclear weapon, so we were disciplined in that. We didn't set out, even though we don't like it – and I have extensive plans that I will lay out to you, if you want them, about

how we're going to push back against Iran's other activities, against terrorism, its support, its contributions to sectarian violence in the Middle East and other things. All of those are unacceptable. They are as unacceptable to us as they are to you. But I got news for you. Pushing back against an Iran with a nuclear weapon is very different from pushing back against an Iran without one. And we are guaranteeing they won't have one.

So, we are working very closely with the Gulf states. Just today, in Saudi Arabia – Ash Carter was there yesterday – the foreign minister said that Iran's nuclear deal appears to have all the provisions necessary to curtail Iran's ability to obtain a nuclear weapon. That's Saudi Arabia. The Emiratis are supportive. The foreign minister of Iran is going to be in the Emirates this weekend.

So, I would suggest respectfully that we are going to continue to press Iran for information about the missing American, about the immediate release of Americans who have been unjustly held. And there isn't a challenge in the entire region that we won't push back against if Iran is involved in it. But I will tell you, it wouldn't – none of those challenges will be enhanced if Iran gets a nuclear weapon.

So, the outcome cannot be guaranteed by sanctions alone. I wish it could, but it can't be. And, by the way, it also can't be guaranteed by military action alone. Our own military tells us that. The only viable option here is a comprehensive, diplomatic resolution of the type that was reached in Vienna. And that deal we believe – and we believe we will show it to you today and in the days ahead – will make our country and our allies safer. It will ensure that Iran's nuclear program remains under intense scrutiny forever, and we will know what they are doing, and it will ensure that the world community is united in ensuring that Iran's nuclear activities will remain wholly peaceful, even as we also stay united in pushing back against its other activities in the region which we object to. We believe this is a good deal for the world, a good deal for America, a good deal for our allies and friends in the region, and we think it does deserve your support.

"Do We Serve Idols?"

by Bro. Doyal Thomas

"And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool,

after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings: and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." (Exodus 32:1-6)

Oh, the religious false joys that come to people when they engage themselves in the worship of idols! When God is disowned, the imaginations of man are triggered by the evil that lurks within his darkened heart. Triggered into action; into activity; into abominable conduct as his fleshly efforts take over and produce a work that is putrefying in the eyes of a Holy and Righteous God.

It is abominable because every act of idol worship shows afresh that man is, and has been since his fall in Adam, a creature who is totally depraved and void of righteousness, or of making right judgments or assessments.

Idol worship holds in contempt; despises; belittles the precious Blood of the Sacrifice of God - the sacrifice of God's Son, the Man, Christ Jesus. He is God's Sacrifice, and to fail to acknowledge Him, and to trust in Him is to despise Him. That is, to despise Him is to hold Him and His work as insufficient or as incomplete.

Denying His sufficiency is turning one's back upon Him. It is not necessary to publish abroad, nor to publicly declare that the Blood is not sufficient for denial to exist. If this were the only means of denial, relatively few indeed could be accused of such an heinous crime. Most people, then and now, would not so openly decry God as to say they do not believe Him. Yet, by action, man has, and does deny Him just as blatantly as if they announced it in every publication, upon the airways, and by every other means of communication that exists upon the earth.

In many, in fact, in most religious bodies this denial of God is practiced continually. Every system of works which man has subscribed to as Satan devised them give ample evidence that such is the case. An examination of these systems of works will verify the accuracy of this statement. Honest appraisal of what men say and teach will unquestionably show that this is so.

God, in His Absolute Being has spoken to man, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and has declared that He has decreed the salvation of His people. As the prophet Jonah was brought to see and to acknowledge, he declared that "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9). And the Apostle Paul was directed to proclaim in Ephesians. 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

The Bible so vividly sets forth that a man's relationship to God is wholly without merit on the part of man, but is dependent upon the goodness of God. That grace has been bestowed when none was deserved; that mercy has been extended when none was called for; that peace has been given when no peace could be earned or claimed, is without a doubt, the doctrine of the Bible.

Yet, in the face of this abundant and overwhelming evidence, man continues to cry, "but this is also needful". As the Judiazers who followed after the Apostle Paul and his missionary companions as they ministered to the saints of God in the churches in the province of Galatia would say, "That it is needful for them to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses". No outright denial of the grace of God as Paul had proclaimed it, but they insisted on an addition to this free grace. Works, if you will, that polluted the sweetest teaching that God sent to His elect; that He had undertaken their cause and has accomplished their salvation. These Judiazers, by their perverted gospel were holding in contempt the Blood of the Sacrifice of God.

An examination of the scriptures that were given as a text for this sermon will show that Israel was no different in substance, nor in practice from what we see demonstrated on all sides as we look around professing christendom today. Everywhere you look, you see the same evil.

Notice that while Moses was apart from them (as Christ is presently apart, in body, from His churches today) the people gathered themselves together for a meeting. What came out of that meeting was their imaginary methods of worship. They spoke to Aaron contemptuously, demanding of him that gods be made whom they could worship.

Aaron knuckled under to the pressures that were placed upon him. He, the duly appointed undershepherd who was charged by Moses to care for the flock in his absence, gave in without a struggle in order to please the people in their corruptions. How sad, yet how typical. We give up, and become men pleasers, and are not fit to serve Him who has called us into His glorious service. For every excuse imaginable, we so often walk unworthy of further service. Oh, may we trust Him more, and serve Him in a more acceptable manner. Lord, help us to love You more.

Aaron now takes the lead in the awful, dreadful display of idolatry. He instructs the people. He devises means that are designed to satisfy their lustful desires. He molds; he engraves; he beautifies; he cleans up and makes it all seem to be respectable in order that all may participate with clear conscience in so vain and terrible an act.

The gold is cast into a molten image. Then he uses the graving tool upon the image. Observe, that religious systems devised and

practiced by dreadful, depraved man has now a pattern established. That the outcome of these efforts is to be gods to Israel there can be no doubt. They themselves demanded gods to be made; to go before them, that they might follow these gods.

The making of these gods was a progressive" process, if you will. Material was gathered, and it was good material, right? Construction was undertaken, and the work was solidly planned and organized, right? Respectability was given to the outcome as allurements and beauties were added to the "device" or "system", right?

What could possibly be wrong with all this? It was done in the name of gods; it was made under direction of Aaron; it was of quality material and ingredients; it was made beautiful and acceptable in appearance. Surely anyone who could find fault with all the good and notable efforts must be just a fanatic of some kind. What could possibly be wrong with all these methods of accomplishing the worship of gods? Who among us can not be drawn into this refined, dignified, outward appearance?

Listen, child of God. Hear the commands that God gives to His people concerning this very thing. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth below, or that is in the water under the earth". (Exodus 20:4)

How many things in our lives and in our practice can be counted as images, or likenesses? Do we excuse ourselves with the flimsy and vulgar declarations that "it seems to be all right"? We generally do not have any literal "golden calves" in that form in our churches and in our lives. But we have them nevertheless in other forms. And these forms are just as corrupt and vile as if they were indeed molten of real gold and graven with a real graving tool so as to render them acceptable or all right in our own estimation.

Beloved, be not deceived, for God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. If we insist upon man made systems and practices that are idolatrous, we shall indeed reap the corruptions that are produced. Our churches will suffer in that their testimony will be corrupted and worshipers will be deluded into believing that what man does, so long as he is "sincere" and does it honestly will be acceptable with God. Antinomianism will prevail, as I fear it now is prevailing in many of the Lord's churches.

How often have we heard, "But preacher, we have always had organizational procedures that have been founded upon old Baptist traditions that were good enough for our fathers". Or, "Surely the need is apparent for Mission Boards, and Sunday

School Boards, and brotherhoods, and WMU's, and whatever else the 'system' has devised for promoting the activities of churches".

And what about Santa Claus, and the Easter Bunny, and Christmas trees, and pictures of the Lord, and bazaars, and pool tables, and gyms, and gimmicks, and inducements and etc., etc., etc.? I ask you, what about all these? And I answer, are they scriptural? Of course they are not. Then, on what possible basis can you say that they are acceptable? How can ANYTHING that is not scriptural be acceptable?

It surely cannot be denied that ample evidence is presented in God's Book that all manner of unscriptural practices are used, yet without a shred of evidence that renders them or their use to be acceptable and scriptural when they are not.

None of God's people can be called upon to prove that all such practices are unscriptural, though they can certainly be proved. The burden of proof, from the Scriptures, is therefore upon the instigator and practitioner of these abominations. Let just one word of Scripture be advanced that justifies such ungodly practices and I will yield, and confess "thus saith God". But until such scriptural proof is presented, I must declare before God and man that it is wrong and may I be delivered from it.

Now, to give some further indications of how these practices began, look again to the six verses of scripture (Exodus 32:1-6) and read how Aaron, when he saw it, built an altar. Is the building of this altar authorized? God did not command it. You answer. Further, Aaron made proclamation. Did God make proclamation? You answer. This proclamation declared that tomorrow is a feast to the Lord.

Look here, dear reader. Moses was upon the Mount Sinai for forty days to receive of God the commandments concerning the Law, the Tabernacle, and all that God would command concerning the sacrifices, the priesthood, the worship service, and acceptable service to God. Read Exodus chapters 25 thru 31. And all these events that we read of in chapter 32 occurred while Moses was there, on the mount, with God.

Israel had been miraculously and abundantly delivered from Egypt on the 15th day of the first month (Exodus 12:2) following the night of the Passover observance in Egypt. Now, thirty days later would have been during the midst of the second month, and forty days from their deliverance would have dated the making of the "golden calf" and the corresponding proclamation in, or during the third month of the revised Jewish calendar.

In studying Leviticus, chapter 23, it can be observed that NO "feasts" are denoted in either the third or fourth months. Thus, Aaron's "proclamation" was, in itself, and in its entirety, completely out of order. Consequently, any activity that comes

out of, or is predicated upon an unscriptural basis or foundation can never be scriptural.

Can proclamation be made by the satanic system we know as Romanism (papalism) ever render Christ-mass anything more than the paganism of Babylon? Can Mission Boards, etc., be rendered scriptural when they are not, even though "proclamation" is made by the Southern Baptist Convention? In fact, can the existence of THESE TWO SYSTEMS (AD 300 and AD 1846) be rendered scriptural? No matter how many 'proclamations' are made, they, and all other systems of men, are unscriptural.

Don't approach me with the hang-dog look of a pious religionist and whine that these systems are all right, and that we should embrace them, at least until something better comes along. I declare to you, and to them, that a better "something" has come along. In fact, it precedes these systems by all the ages of eternal past. It is called the Word of God. Lord, please grant that we should embrace Thy Word. Pray, Father, remove from us these defilements that we may the better worship and serve Thee.

"And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play" (Verse 6).

After all the unauthorized activities of devising, making, beautifying, proclaiming, and deluding was over, then practice of idol worship was put into force. "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." (Eccel. 7:29)

Burnt offerings were made upon an alien altar, before a pagan, foreign god; an idol. How this does belittle, and scornfully reproach our Lord and Saviour! How this is detestable and contemptible in the sight of God. For burnt-offerings to be made in this manner is to cause the stench of rotten and putrefying substances to ascend toward God in open affront to His Own well Beloved Son, and our Sacrifice.

Burnt offerings denoted the complete willingness of Christ to suffer in the stead of His beloved elect. His complete devotedness unto God the Father in this marvelous assignment of sacrifice and sufficiency as one who is our Reconciler is shown forth in fullness of acquiescence unto the Divine and Sovereign Will.

To have Him to be so mocked is dreadful even to consider. Yet these practitioners of idolatry were delighted to do so, in that they thought it was all right. Were they not taught by Aaron that it was acceptable? Did not Aaron make proclamation?

Following the "burnt offerings", the people also brought "peace offerings". After having openly and willingly defied God,

they now come with peace offerings. How awful is the picture here presented. After the abomination of alien "burnt offerings", now come the worshipers with their "peace offerings", as though they are still in full fellowship with God. Peace offerings denoted that fellowship existed between a God who had been propitiated by the death of His Son, and an offending people for whom He has died.

Can there be no limit to what corrupt man will do? Is there no shame among humanity? To belittle God is one thing, but to manifest such audacity as to approach Him afterward with a smile upon one's face, and infer that fellowship is still sweet is unthinkable. Yet, so they did. And so do men at this very present hour.

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." (I John 1:3)

Child of God, it does not matter if we claim to have fellowship with God and with His people. What matters is, do we? Can we humiliate our Saviour and still claim to walk with Him? "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" "What communion hath light with darkness?"

The result of this idolatry of Israel is now shown by what follows. After the "worship", the people were rendered joyous, apparently, for their actions indicated such. They sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

What they had done, they had done in the name of worshipping their gods. Thus, their human zeal was satisfied, and their consciences were aflame with goodness and righteousness. They had "done their duty"; they had met their "obligations" to serve gods. Now, whatever followed would be all right for they had been doing their "worship".

They sat down to eat and to drink. Their sitting down following false worship is filled with gluttony and excess as was evidenced by their participation in the debauchery and orgies that are recorded. Their reveling and drunkenness was heard by Moses and Joshua as these two servants of God returned to them from the mount. Joshua believed that the sounds were the sounds of warfare, as though an attack had been made upon Israel during his and Moses' absence.

Moses, however, having been appraised by God of the activities, replied that it was not the sounds of an invading army, nor the sounds of anguish of a people being attacked.. Instead, it was the "sounds of them that sing do I hear". (Verse 18).

The rising up of the people from their eating and drinking was to their "rising up to play". Surely, this rising up to play implied

their debauchery and merrymaking. But further, it implied their willingness to play at worship. How indicative of people now who merely "play church". After all the activities of false worship that placates the mind and pacifies the conscience are accomplished, playing follows.

Is it so among God's people today? Alas, among many peoples and churches it is so today. Little is done among idolatrous people without naming the name of Jesus. Though it is often a mockery, yet His Glorious and Holy Name is put forth, as though that would lend credence to such as men do in His name. "For many will say in that day, Lord, have we not done many marvelous works in thy name"?

Do you practice the worship of idols? Do I? Is the place where God has made gracious provisions for your labor become more important to you than His Person? Is your status in this life overshadowing your love for His countenance? Does the desire for the acclaim of men, (even family) stand foremost in your mind so that your first thoughts are man ward, rather than God ward?

Are you giving undo attention to mammon? Do you plan so that your own lusts and desires will be provided for, giving no attention and little thought to laying up treasures in heaven? Do you desire to relish your rewards in this life?

Beloved, no single paper can be presented that will call proper attention to the horror of this subject. It is fearful. It is heinous to commit such absurd crimes against a Righteous, Just, Holy, Jealous God. Yet men persist in the folly of worshipping idols, be they in whatever form.

Please continue to read beyond verse 6 of Exodus 32, through Chapters 33 and 34, so that you may be caused of God to realize the terrible results of these crimes. See how God plagues His people for their haughty, stiff-necked, and obstinate behavior. Refrain from falling prey to such evil, that it may be well with you and that you may have long and happy days before God.

In conclusion, please notice I Corinthians 10:6,7,14. "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry."

In speaking to the church at Ephesus, Christ declared, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." (Rev. 2:4) And to the church at Smyrna, "I know thy works, and tribulations, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews,

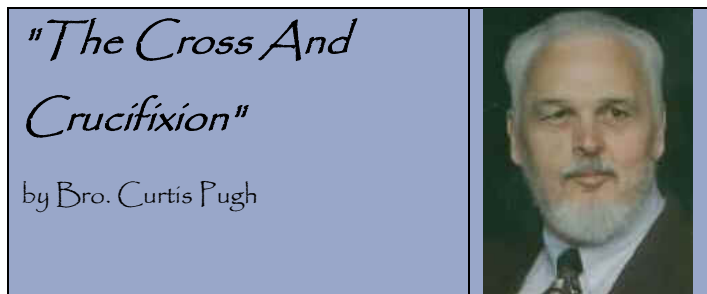
and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." (Rev. 2:9)

Have we left our first love, as did Israel when they demanded, "make us gods"? Have we become synagogues of Satan in which all the defilements which that deceiver has brought before us occupy us to our shame?

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve that thou mayest see." (Rev. 3:18)

Do we serve idols? Dearly Beloved, I fear that all too often we do indeed serve idols.

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."



We do not doubt that the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Lamb, was nailed to a wooden instrument of death which was set upright in a hole in the ground. He was left there to die. Neither do we doubt His burial and resurrection. What we do doubt are the baseless Catholic-pagan traditions - false ideas - that have grown up around this event. While we expect to be opposed by some because of this article we feel compelled to tell what we have learned on this subject. My Bible says: "And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots," (Matthew 27:45). Are you willing to take an honest and deeper look at what the Bible actually says here? If not, cease reading now as you will likely only become angry at both the message and the messenger. If you are thus willing, read on as this preacher has tried to share what he sees to be the truth on this matter.

First of all, notice the word "crucified" in the above verse. It comes from Latin. This Anglicized word was first used sometime in the 14th century according to the Merriam Webster Online Dictionary. If that is true, then all earlier translations of the Bible into English must have used a different word. "Crucify" and its kindred words did not exist then. This Latin word brought over into English means to fasten to a cross. But does the Bible teach that a cross was involved in the death of Christ? What does the Bible teach? Did the Romans ever use or always use two-beamed crosses? Are the Catholics right? Were the old painters who have portrayed a two-beamed cross right? Or did

the Romans use a simple upright stake? Why does it really matter how Christ was killed? And why do some Baptists oppose the use of cross symbols in their homes and meeting houses today? Why do some Baptists make it a point to have nothing to do with crosses?

Coming into use relatively late – in the 14th century – obviously means that these Latin-based words were not used by earlier English speakers and writers. How did they come to be in English, having a Latin origin? Many words from different languages have been brought into English. This was done through usage. For example our word "booze" comes from the Dutch no doubt through contact with that nationality and language. Who, we ask, would have used these Latin-based words back in that time in jolly old England? The answer seems obvious. Latin has been the language of the Catholic Church since its development sometime after A.D. 300. We know how they came to be used in Catholic England. Here is how. King Henry VIII (28 January 1457 – 21 April 1509) pulled the English Catholic churches out from under the control of Rome. After proclaiming himself the head over the English churches, the English clergy continued using the same old (Catholic) church words. The words cross and crucify are two of those old church words that the King James Translators kept. They wrote about their continued use of old church words in their introductory material. This introductory explanation of how and what the translators did in their translation work formerly appeared in the front of all King James Bibles. In that important part of the King James Bible, the translators told how they were not so scrupulous as other translators and kept the old Catholic words such as church (instead of congregation) and baptism (instead of washing – more accurately rendered dipping). While they only gave two examples, they kept other old church words also, cross and crucify being two of them. They were Anglicans (also known as Episcopalians or Church of England) and their mother was Roman Catholicism. When they came out of Romanism, they brought a considerable amount of Romish baggage with them – crosses included!

Was Christ's cross a simple upright pale or pole or was it made of two or even three pieces of wood somehow fastened together as most people think? And does it matter? If so why? These are all important questions, we believe. They are important if we would worship God in an acceptable way. We say this because the Lord Jesus said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," (John 4:23-24). We want our worship to be acceptable to God. We want to be "true worshippers" and not false ones. Therefore the truth is important. Pagan lies are not acceptable to God! Remember Cain's sin! Cain was not punished by God for worshipping a false god. Cain's sin was the false worship of the true and living God. Shall we follow Cain and do as we please and call it worship or shall we worship God "in spirit and in truth"? The last quoted verse above says we "must" worship in spirit and in truth if we would worship God. Worship is a purely spiritual matter and must be according to truth to be acceptable to

God. After all, God is not “worshipped with men’s hands,” (Acts 17:25).

The first avenue of research that we will pursue is archaeology. The Romans hung multiplied thousands of people on pieces of wood, leaving them to die. This mode of execution was followed throughout the Roman Empire over hundreds of years. Sometimes they impaled their victims. This would necessitate the use of a simple upright piece of timber. Other times they fastened them to wooden uprights. In both instances they were left hanging to die a slow and painful death. But here is an amazing fact! Get this! There is not a single ancient Roman “cross” ever found by archaeologists anywhere in the world! Think of that! You would think there would be a multitude of crosses, skeletons and other evidence as to how crucifixions were carried out. The following is an amazing quote from a Jerusalem-based online newspaper, The Times of Israel: “It is therefore an odd fact that archaeological evidence of this punishment — crosses, for example, or perforated skeletons — has never been found anywhere in the world, with one exception: the stone box containing Yehohanan’s remains.” (Source: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/in-a-stone-box-a-rare-trace-of-crucifixion/>). That article goes on to point out that the young Jewish man, Yehohanan, who was crucified likely had his hands tied to the cross as there is no evidence of his hands having been nailed. What is even more interesting is that his feet were not nailed one atop the other as portrayed in religious paintings. Rather his heels were placed one on each side of the upright pole and a huge nail or spike driven through each heel from the side. Thus his feet were fastened one to each side of the “cross.” So archaeology is not of much help to us since it provides only one example of a crucified body. However, it does show that in at least one instance the mode of crucifixion differed from that portrayed by Catholic-tradition-influenced painters. We know from the Bible that the “hands” of the Lord Jesus were nailed to the cross in some fashion, but whether to the sides or front of the upright is unknown. One thing for sure: we ought not to accept carte blanche the claims of Rome and the paintings of men influenced by her!

In this study we would do well to learn the meaning of the Greek words translated as “crucify” and “cross.” After all, the Greek words are the inspired Words God moved upon holy men to write. The two Greek words translated “cross” and “crucify” are related. First let us look at the word “Crucify” which comes from “stauroo.” That word, according to the universally accepted Methodist scholar James Strong, gives the primary meaning as “to stake, drive down stakes.” The secondary meaning is “to fortify with driven stakes, to palisade.” Most Americans are familiar with early day palisades or forts built by placing tree trunks upright in the ground. That is the idea here except it would refer to single upright posts. Only after giving these meanings does Mr. Strong introduce the word “crucify” into his definition based upon the old church word usage. However, Mr. Strong is well known to follow tradition in some instances rather than staying strictly with original meanings. Our point being: we must always be careful not to take the words of men, but to do our own research. By the way, the King James translators consistently

translated “stauroo” as “crucify.”

Next let us look at the word for “cross.” The word for “cross” is “stauros” - just one letter short of the word for “crucify” as shown above. This word denotes an upright pale: nothing more. Church of England Greek scholar W.E. Vine has done admirably well in pointing out that there is no etymological reason – no reason in the words used – to think that the Christ’s “cross” was anything other than a rough upright pale or post. In his dictionary he devotes considerable space to proving this. His action puts Mr. Vine quite at odds with his church since Anglicanism is replete with crosses! The evidence must have been compelling to cause such a scholar to go against his own church in this matter.

Whether or not Christ’s cross was square hewn or not is unclear. Personally I doubt that the Romans expended much labor or much expense on preparing “crosses.” History tells us that Crassus crucified 6,000 of Spartacus’ followers. It is doubtful if his soldiers took time for the manufacture of “T” shaped crosses in that event. Very probably in some cases conveniently located living or dead trees were used. Roadside trees or trees located in other public places served their purpose well. After all, their purpose was to make a public display of their brand of violent justice. They wanted to instill fear of their authority in the peoples they subjugated. They were not seeking to make a beautiful monument or an attractive public edifice when they executed people in this way.

What does the Bible specifically say about the thing on which Jesus died? Five times the Bible says the thing upon which Christ was crucified was a tree. Those five places are as follows. **“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree,”** (Acts 5:30). **“And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree,”** Ac 10:39). **“And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre,”** (Acts 13:29). **“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree,”** (Galatians 3:13; see also Deuteronomy 21:22, 23). **“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed,”** (1Peter 2:24). Now a two-beamed cross and a tree are not the same thing. Who will dare say they are?

There are two Greek words that are translated “tree” in our King James New Testaments. One word, “dendron,” is found 19 times in the Greek New Testament and always means a tree whether living or dead. It is always translated that way in our King James Bibles. It is thought to have come from the Greek word for oak. But the word that is used in the above five quoted verses speaking of the tree upon which Christ was nailed is a completely different word. It is “xulon” and is found 19 times. It is translated ten times as tree, five times as staff, three times as wood and one time as stocks. We know what a tree is – generally thought of as tall and straight. A staff of course is a long more or

less straight heavy walking stick used also as a weapon. The word wood refers to expensive wood such as boards and containers made from such things. Stocks were notched straight wooden beams fixed to come together as one so as to hold the feet of prisoners secure as in Acts 16:24. So we have it then: the word “xulon” means a straight piece of wood. The word “stauros” (translated cross) means an upright pole or paling. What does all this prove? It means there is no reason in the words used in the Bible to cause us to think Christ was nailed to a two or three beamed cross. None whatsoever!

If you and I had never been told about such a two-beamed device or seen a picture painted by some man who lived hundreds of years after Christ's death, the idea of a two-beamed cross would never enter our minds just from reading the Bible. There is just no Bible evidence at all for that Catholic idea which was later popularized by Renaissance painters. (These Renaissance painters, coming as they did out of the Dark Ages, also painted a long haired, fair complexioned, blue eyed Jesus, female angels and portrayed Daniel's three friends dressed in long tight hose and other garments such western European men of their times wore. The facts are these: in spite of the paintings, Jesus was a Sephardic Jew and they are of dark complexion, dark hair and eyes. Angels are always spoken of in the Bible as masculine. And Daniel and his friends did not dress like King Henry VIII of England!)

So someone asks, where did the two or three beamed cross idea originate? While a great host of authorities could be cited, we furnish just one paragraph from *The Encyclopedia Britannica*: “From its simplicity of form, the cross has been used both as a religious symbol and as an ornament, from the dawn of man's civilization. Various objects, dating from periods long anterior to the Christian era, have been found, marked with crosses of different designs, in almost every part of the old world. India, Syria, Persia and Egypt have all yielded numberless examples, while numerous instances, dating from the later Stone Age to Christian times, have been found in nearly every part of Europe. The use of the cross as a religious symbol in pre-Christian times, and among non-Christian peoples, may probably be regarded as almost universal, and in very many cases it was connected with some form of nature worship. (*The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., 1910, Vol. 7, pg. 506). Since the cross as a symbol predates both Christianity and the Roman Empire, it cannot be of Christian origin. That is certain! It does indeed symbolize something, but not the death of Christ!

There is no doubt that the cross is an idolatrous or pagan symbol, found universally around the world. It is even found in the pagan symbolism of Native American “Indians” before contact with Europeans. So how did this pagan symbol become associated with the death of Christ? In about the third century, practicing pagans, having been sprinkled, were accepted into Catholic churches. They brought with them many idolatrous ideas. In order to make these pagan converts and keep them happy in their newly found “Christianity” the Catholics borrowed all sorts of their pagan customs and practices. They brought these things into their “worship.” Later, many of these pagan things,

such as the cross, were brought over into Protestantism by the so-called Reformers. Unhappily, a great many Baptists have succumbed to this deception from their Catholic and Protestant neighbors. Does it matter whether or not Baptists understand that the liturgical “cross” is God-dishonoring paganism? Does it matter whether Baptists understand that there is no biblical evidence for the liturgical cross of the Catholics? We think it does. More importantly we believe God thinks it matters for He warned us about the very real danger of idols of all sorts. And to give the unscriptural cross a prominent and honored (venerated) place in our meeting houses and in what is supposed to be the purely spiritual matter of worship we think is nothing less than evil. Surely the children of God who know the Word of God – God's “precepts” - will say with the Psalmist, “Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way,” (Psalm 119:104). We can only wonder at professing Christians who love false ways, especially when the truth and worship of God is concerned. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen,” (1 John 5:21).

“The Commission is Forward Focused”

by Bro. Todd Bryant

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”— Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. Though the world may deny this, it remains true. He said it. There is coming a day when all creatures will confess Jesus to be Lord (Philippians 2:10-11). No matter the position a person may hold on this earth, it is below the authority of the King of kings. Jesus alone has all authority. When He works through His people, it is His work. When He is pleased to add to His churches, it is His saving power. When missionaries are sent forth, it is His authority which sends them. The Lord said to Isaiah, **“so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it”** (Isaiah 55:11).

Having all authority, Jesus looked at His infant church and said, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”** Though they had baptism which began with John, they were to go forward. Though they had sat at the feet of Jesus, they were to go. Though they had seen the risen Christ with their own eyes, they were to go. Without a doubt, the things which they had seen were to drive them. The things which they were taught were to be relayed to those they were sent to. But, clearly the focus of the Commission was to take the things they had been taught forward to the ends of the earth. At best a failure to go calls the

faithfulness of any group into question. If we don't show up at our secular job, we can expect to be fired. If we aren't taking forth our marching orders as a congregation, we have little reason to call ourselves a church of the Lord Jesus Who gave these instructions.

We are to go in order that we might **“make disciples of all nations.”** Unquestionably, this is the duty of every church and every church member. Multitudes are dying in their sins around us. The communities in which churches are planted are full of those which are dead in their sins (Ephesians 2:1). We have been entrusted with the soul saving message of the Gospel (Romans 1:16). Oh that our passion for lost souls would get us into the highways and byways of our communities. **“Go”**, He said. Let us be reminded that merely showing up for church 3 times a week (or less) is not fulfilling so much as the first part of the Great Commission. We must ever be zealous to **“Go”!**

Perhaps for just a moment we should remember one of the major problems that led the Pharisees down the wrong path. They declared their authority to be greater than Jesus' when they said, **“We have Abraham as our father”** (Matthew 3:9a). Note Jesus' response to them – **“...God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham”**(Matthew 3:9b). What was their focus? Clearly, their focus was history. They declared, “we are accepted because of our pedigree” or “we have the history to prove we are God's children”. Now, certainly they did have a lineage all the way back to Abraham. This was not questionable. However, this history had nothing to do with their present rejection of their Messiah. And, it certainly did not trump it! They focused on the past. Jesus focused on the future.

Let nobody misunderstand. I do not mean to imply in any way that the past is unimportant. Certainly, it is. Even our ordinances point to the past. Baptism points back in time to the resurrection of Jesus. The Lord's Supper clearly points back in time to the death of our Lord. The message of the Gospel points back to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). These blessed truths drive us...forward. You cannot drive a car while focusing on what's behind you. The occasional glance is certainly beneficial as you may be getting rear-ended. However, the focus of good driver will be what is ahead of him.

Perhaps Paul, having been a Pharisee, knew the dangers of focusing on the past. To the Philippian saints he said, **“Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained”**(Philippians 3:12-16).

Paul was forward focused. It was important to forget **“what lies behind”**. This is not to say completely forget it in every sense of

the word. However, he is saying don't let it become your focus. Don't become obsessed with it. How often does a church speak of the “glory years” when things “used to be” so much better than they are today? How often I have heard people say, “I remember when this church building used to be full”. Perhaps we should ask why it isn't today. Is it because God isn't saving people? Certainly, that is not the case. I do not doubt there are many false professions today. However, not all are. Has God **“from these stones raise[d] up children for Abraham”**? Do we take any of the blame when our churches are dying? If we aren't “making disciples” in our communities, we are directly to blame.

We must **“press on toward the goal”**. Again, Paul was forward focused. And, he said if we are **“mature”** we will be as well. A church that is focused on the past is a church that is soon to die. The lifeline of a church is the Great Commission. If this generation doesn't **“make disciples”**, this generation can expect no fruit since they have not labored. If this generation doesn't **“make disciples”**, it will be the generation that closes the doors of the church.

Several times our service is likened to a race. Paul told the Corinthian saints, **“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it”**(1 Corinthians 9:24). Similarly, the writer of Hebrews wrote, **“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us”** (Hebrews 12:1). As he neared death, Paul said of himself, **“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”** (2 Timothy 4:7). This repetitive use of a race should give us some bit of pause. There is much to learn here.

My wife and I recently ran a half marathon. Much training went into it. We spent months in preparation of it. For those that do not know, a half marathon is 13.1 miles. Even an avid runner cannot just go run 13.1 miles. It takes a lot of dedication to build up to that distance. We had participated in a numbers of shorter runs (5K, 8K and 10K). In these, we were generally able to keep a rather fast pace for the entire run even if we slowed a bit near the end. However, a half marathon is much longer than any of these. We had to learn to watch the clock and our pace. We had to stay hydrated. We even had to learn to eat carbs during the run (a thing I couldn't imagine). I say all that to say this – a half marathon is not a sprint. You must focus long term and train accordingly. You must stay steady. You must focus on the end, not on the immediate moment.

The life of a church is much this way. Some churches choose to sprint immediately when they are formed. This may lead to immediate growth. However, it may or may not be the kind of growth you want. If a church employs unscriptural means to reach their community, they may take on dead weight rather than adding disciples. The Gospel must always be the means with which we reach our communities. This may be relayed through various mediums to different groups in the community. But the message never changes. Another church may never run at all. In

overreacting to the sprinting church, this church may declare itself faithful because of its lack of running. However, you cannot finish a race in which you are not a participant.

If we liken the life of a church (and individual members) to a race, we can glean a few important points. First of all, the church must be dedicated to the goal in front of them. The making of disciples must be a focal point. Without a doubt, Jesus could have said many things before He ascended into Heaven. He clearly felt the most important thing was to give His church her marching orders. **“Go...make disciples”**. Secondly, a church must train to do this. This involves both corporate and private study around the Word of God. You cannot make a disciple if you are not one yourself. “Disciple” in the Greek simply means “learner” or “student” or “follower”. We must be a follower of Christ to lead others to be followers of Christ. Thirdly, a church must stay focused on the future. Nothing in the Great Commission looks back. **“Go...make disciples...baptizing them...teaching them”**. This all looks forward. This certainly is the only way to run a race.

One of the most startling teachings of Jesus is the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30). In this parable, a man left three of his servants in charge of portions of his property while he went on a far journey. He gave one 5 talents, another 2 talents and the last 1 talent. These talents were distributed based on each man’s ability (Matthew 25:15). The first two servants (with 5 and 2 talents respectively) labored and earned their master a 100% return. They were rewarded accordingly. However, the final servant didn’t labor. He hid the talent he was given in the ground. He seemingly had great confidence in the master for he said,

“Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed...”(Matthew 25:24). This servant understood the ability of the master but, oddly, chose not to labor with the talent. Could not this be likened to a church which had been given instruction but failed to labor in it? Have we not been given the Gospel to take to every person? Have we not been told to **“make disciples”**? We may believe in the ability of the Master but this doesn’t negate our instructions to **“Go”**. We must be forward focused.

It should be pointed out that this servant suffered loss for his refusal to work. **“But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away** (Matthew 25:26-29). The master confirms the servant’s confidence in him. However, he spins it a different way. The servant had sat on the master’s ability and used it as a reason to hide the talent. The master, however, says his ability should have encouraged the

servant even more to labor with the talent he had been given.

If we, as churches (and members individually), have confidence in the Lord’s ability, let us **“Go”**. Church planting should be the desire of every congregation. It is the forward, positive movement that is instructed in the Great Commission. If we aren’t following the Lord’s instructions in the Great Commission, we needn’t fool ourselves into believing we are faithful. We, like the servant in the parable, are **“wicked and slothful”** if we aren’t laboring in the instructions that Christ has give to His churches. We are, at best, questioning His authority. At worst, we are rebellious to it.

Perhaps one may declare the importance in looking back to find proper truth and practice. Now, if this one means looking back to the example of the early churches and Christ, this is a valid point. These truths are recorded in God’s Holy Word. If, however, one means looking back to the previous generations for truths and practice, this can be detrimental. This approach most always leads a church into traditionalism. If it’s recorded in the Bible, it’s God-given truth. If it isn’t, it’s man-made and should never be made to be requirement. We must ever be mindful of what is a preference and what is a Scriptural declaration. History would definitely be beneficial if we didn’t have God’s Word. However, we do have the Bible. Remember, **“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work”**(2 Timothy 3:16-17). To put it bluntly, we don’t need history to declare doctrinal truths to us. We have God’s Word. When we place history at the level of Scripture, we are no better than the adherents to Romanism.

Even in our focus on good doctrine, it is a forward focus. We study God’s Word so that we may **“contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints”** (Jude 3). We learn proper theology so that we may better **“run”** or **“go”** or **“contend”**. So, even in the teaching ministries of our church, we must ever stay focused on the Commission that Jesus gave to His churches. We must focus on doctrine so we can properly **“Go”**.

There are dangers if our focus is primarily on heredity or history. Perhaps the greatest danger is that we will become complacent with the very instructions Jesus has given us to do. Frankly, if we aren’t seeking to **“make disciples”** as we have been ever so plainly commanded to do, what business do we have calling ourselves a church of the Lord Jesus Christ? If we aren’t going forth, we are in rebellion to the Head of the church and the very command that He has given us to do. If our focus is merely on the past, then we aren’t focusing on the future. If we aren’t focusing on the future, then we aren’t running the race. If we aren’t running the race, we are failing in carrying out the Great Commission. If we aren’t carrying out the Great Commission, we can expect our churches to die.

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