

AND THE PEOPLE CAME...

- Week of July 23, 2023 -

Sunday Morning Service	-----42
Sunday Evening Service	-----33
Wednesday Eve., 07/26/23 Service	-----29

AND THE PEOPLE GAVE...

- Week of July 23, 2023 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings	----- \$ 1,333.98
Children's Sunday School	----- \$ 10.00
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 07/23/23:	\$ 1,343.98

- Week of July 16, 2023 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings	----- \$ 637.00
Children's Sunday School	----- \$ 5.00
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 07/16/23:	\$ 642.00

- Week of July 9, 2023 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings	----- \$ 2,340.99
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 07/09/23:	\$ 2,340.99

- Week of July 2, 2023 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings	----- \$ 6,639.00
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 07/02/23:	\$ 6,639.00

- Week of June 25, 2023 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings	----- \$ 1,040.00
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 06/25/23:	\$ 1,040.00

Average amount of Undesignated Offerings needed for church operating expenses EACH WEEK, as a minimum = \$ 1,600.00



FRONT PORCH RESTORATION FUND -

Amount Received, Week of 07/23/23: \$ 0.00

TOTAL RECEIVED, THUSFAR: \$ 410.00

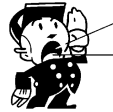
LISTEN TO -



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WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED

1. Admit that you are a sinner.
2. Admit that God says all sins must be paid for.
3. Accept the fact that Christ took upon Himself the suffering necessary to pay for all your sins.
4. You must change your mind about sin and sinning (God calls this repentance).
5. By an act of your will, accept by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, Who can save you from the penalty of sin. Then, tell God about this in a simple prayer. Believe that God keeps His promise to save you, and thank Him for His salvation.



THANK YOU For Your Continued Faithfulness In Giving!

During the early part of the pandemic, we were unable to meet in the church-house. But - that did not mean that the expenses of having a church-house were suspended. We still had bills to pay - electricity, gas, water, trash pickup, phone, internet, facility insurance, copier lease, office supplies, etc., and, praise the Lord, His people kept praying, watching online, & supporting their church with their giving.

Sadly, some people only give when they are in attendance at church - sort of like paying for "services rendered" - but the truth is that they are robbing THEMSELVES of God's blessings when they withhold their tithes and offerings and only give when they are here (see Malachi 3:10). Thankfully, most of our people have remained faithful, in so many ways, during this crisis, including financially.

WE HAVE 3 WAYS YOU CAN GIVE:

1. By mail - 23 East Wells Blvd., Sapulpa, OK 74066
2. Drop it off - call the Church Office to arrange it. 224-1924
3. Online - Go to the link below and give electronically:

<https://tithe.ly/give?c=433047>

**WE ARE GLAD WE CAN NOW GATHER TOGETHER TO PRAISE GOD & STUDY HIS WORD TOGETHER IN THE CHURCH-HOUSE!
YOUR FAITHFUL AND GENEROUS GIFTS WILL HELP US KEEP UP WITH THE BILLS AND CONTINUE OUR RENEWED OUTREACH EFFORTS!**

Church Directory

Todd W. White	----- Pastor
Debra Carlton, Mickie Shatwell, Lois Mae Floyd	----- Pianists
Derek Quinnelly	----- Greeter
Larry & Mary Byars	----- Outreach
LeAnna White	----- Custodian
GinaMarie Shufelt	----- Flowers
Seth White	----- Sound/Video
Larry Byars, David Smith, Derek Quinnelly	----- Trustees

**SOUTH HEIGHTS BAPTIST'S WEEKLY
REMINDER**

Volume XXIX

July 30, 2023

Number 30



IF DANIEL WERE AMERICA'S PRESIDENT

by Dr. W. A. Criswell
Pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas
1944 - 2002
Preached January 28, 1979

The Lord Jesus calls Daniel a prophet. He was a political ruler. He was a man of vast and tremendous influence. He was a prophet-statesman. He lived all of his life in the political world. As I began thinking about that, I turned over in my mind, what if that prophet-statesman were president of the United States? How would he do? What would it be like? What repercussion would it have in the life of our own nation?

Now as I pursue this in the Bible, we are not to compare with the present president of the United States, nor particularly to compare Daniel with any predecessor in the White House. But the message is a presentation of the continuing character of this prophet-statesman. If he were president - not comparing him with anyone else - if Daniel were the chief executive of the United States of America, what would it be like? And that is our message this hour from God's Book.

First of all - If Daniel Were President of the United States, the White House Would Be Filled with Temperance and Charity and Dedication to God, and in No Wise Compromised with the World. The king appointed those four young Judeans, seed of the royal family, to be fed daily with provisions from the king's table and to drink the wine that he drank. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's food, nor with the wine that he drank. And he said to Melzar, the prince of the eunuchs, "Prove us, try us, I beseech thee, ten days, and let them give us vegetable soup to eat" (Daniel 1:11-12). I like that - "Let them give us vegetable soup to eat," translated here "pulse." Vegetable soup to eat and water to drink—I like that. Only thing I would have liked better is, "And give us milk to drink." Give us vegetable soup to eat and water to drink.

Then Melzar took away the portion that the king had thought to feed them from his table and the wine that they should drink, and gave them vegetable soup to eat and water to drink. And at the end of the ten days, they were fairer than the rest. And at the end of the three years when they were brought before the king, in matters of wisdom and understanding and everything that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all of the sages and the wise men of Babylon (Daniel 1:13-20).

If Daniel were president of the United States, there would be no liquor in the White House, nor would there be any approach to drinking on the part of the president. This is in keeping with the Word of the living God. The last chapter of the Book of Proverbs says:

"The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. What, my son? And what, the son of my womb? And what, the son of my vows? It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes to drink strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of the afflicted" (Proverbs 31:1-2,4-5).

And in that same marvelous Book of Proverbs, in chapter 23:

"Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babblings? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed drinks. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup; when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder (Proverbs 23:29-32).

There is no curse in America greater than the curse of the increasing habits of our people to drink liquor; the carnage on the highways; the breaking up of families; the snapping of wedding rings; the orphaning of children. The loss of work and labor in

(continued inside)

our factories and in your corporations due to the consumption of liquor is unthinkable in a nation that ought to be wise in the ways of the Lord: that’s the first thing. If Daniel were President of the United States, there would be no liquor in his cabinets, no beer in his iceboxes, and no serving of liquor at any of a White House function - if Daniel were President of the United States.

Number Two: ***If Daniel Were President of the United States, He Would Have a Cabinet, Without Exception, of Men Who Walk in Humble Fear and Reverence Before the Lord, and They Would Make Their Decisions as unto God and as If They Had Inquired at an Oracle of the Almighty.*** In the second chapter of the Book of Daniel, the king has been troubled by a tremendously effective dream. It disturbed him, but he couldn’t recall it. He gathered his wise men and said, “Tell me the dream and its interpretation,” and they said, “You tell us the dream, and we’ll tell you the interpretation.”

“No,” said the king, “you’re a bunch of charlatans—thinking you can take a dream and tell its interpretation—if the same divine wisdom isn’t given you to tell me what the dream is. Now what is that dream?” and they said, “No monarch in the history of humanity ever inquired a thing like that of the wise men,” and the king said, “You tell me that dream or all of you are going to be executed.” And of course, Daniel and the three Hebrew children were members of that corps of wise men in the king’s court (Daniel 2:2-13).

What did Daniel do? Daniel went to his house, and he made the thing known to his cabinet of friends. If he were President of the United States - he told Hananiah about it. Hananiah means “God is gracious.” Finally, it comes out in our language as “John.” If your name is “John,” your name is “God is gracious.” He told Hananiah about it, he told Mishael about it—Mishael, “no one is equal to God,” and he told Azariah about it—Azariah, “God, Jehovah is mine helper.” And those four—Daniel means “God is my judge”—those four went to prayer, and they desired mercies of the God of Heaven (Daniel 2:17-18).

Wouldn’t it be marvelous if the President of the United States, before great national decisions were made affecting us and the future of our children, if they made it a matter of prayer? That would be Daniel if he were President of the United States. Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel (Daniel 2:19). God always tells His servants what He is going to do - always. God never does anything without first revealing it to His people. When the Lord was to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, the Lord God said, “Shall I do this and not tell Abraham, My servant?” And the Lord God told Abraham what He was going to do (Genesis 18:17-21). And in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Numbers, we’re told that God reveals all that He is going to do to His prophets (Numbers 12:6).

Here, the Lord reveals to Daniel the whole course of human history to the end of the age. God always tells us what He is going to do. Centuries before, He told us about the coming of His Christ Messiah. And now for these years, He has outlined the coming of our reigning Lord, when He descends in glory upon

this earth [I Thess. 4:13-18]. God always reveals to His people what He is going to do. And if Daniel were President of the United States, in supplication and in prayer, God would reveal the heavenly wisdom, what he ought to do, and what God is going to bring to pass - if Daniel were President of the United States.

Number Three: ***If Daniel Were President of the United States, the President Would Learn from the Word of the Lord That All of the Continuing Future of Every Ruler and of Every Nation Lies in the Imponderables of Almighty God*** (Psalm 22:28). We define the future in terms of armies, and navies, and physical might and power. But God says the future of the world and of its people lies in His omnipotent and almighty hands, and those who rule do so in the sufferance and under the surveillance of the Mighty God who presides over the hosts of heaven and earth. When we read history, we suppose and we think that the world is ruled by a Genghis Khan, or a Tamerlane, or an Alexander the Great, or a Julius Caesar, or a Napoleon Bonaparte, or an Adolph Hitler; that’s what we think. God says the whole world and its executive and its destiny is in His almighty hands.

So when the king Nebuchadnezzar, when he dreams a dream of a tree cut down and just the stump abiding, Daniel says, ***“This is the interpretation, O King, this is the decree of the Most High, that you may learn that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will. You are going to be driven out and be without your mind and be like an animal.”*** Then Daniel pleads, ***“O King, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee. Break off thy sins by righteousness and thine iniquities by mercy”*** (Daniel 4:24-27). It need not happen to you. None of the judgments that fall upon this world need fall upon our executive and our people, God would protect us.

But at the end of twelve months after that, Nebuchadnezzar was walking in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and as he walked he said—and listen to him, ***“Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, that I have built it, and for the honor of my majesty? Look!”*** And while he said it, there came a voice from heaven to Nebuchadnezzar, saying, ***“The kingdom is departed from thee”*** (Daniel 4:30-31). And they drove him out. He lost his mind, his reason, and he lived like an animal with the wet of the dew of heaven, and his hair grown like eagle feathers, and his nails like bird’s claws (Daniel 4:33).

And at the end of seven years, in which he had lost his mind, he says, ***“Mine understanding returned unto me, and my reason returned to me, and I lifted up my voice and blessed the Most High, and extolled and honored the God of heaven”*** (Daniel 4:34-37). And the Lord gave him back his throne, his kingdom, and his people.

If Daniel were President of the United States, there would be daily recognition that all of the blessings that come upon me, and all of the blessings that come upon our people are from the gracious hands of the Almighty God. It is He that makes us to live, to prosper. It is He that blesses the work of our hands; and let the nation - let the nation lift up its voice in praise and honor

and adoration to the great “Lord God who ruleth in the affairs of men” (Daniel 4:17) - if Daniel were President of the United States.

If Daniel Were President of the United States, He’d Be a Prophet-statesman Who Could Read the Handwriting on the Wall. Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine. And they called in their concubines that they might drink with them. They were having a drunken, sexual orgy. And not only that, but they desecrated the vessels of the Lord God that had been taken out of the house of the Lord at Jerusalem.

And the king, ... and their concubines, and the princes, drank and reveled. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and iron, wood, and stone.

And in the same hour, there came forth the fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote over against the lampstand upon the plaster of the king’s palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. And his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, and the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against the other (Daniel 5:3-6).

And when Daniel stood before the king:

“This is the writing that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. And this is the interpretation thereof: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting. PERES; a form of UPHARSIN, Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and the Persians” (Daniel 5:25-28).

And ***“In that night Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans was slain”; and the kingdom was given to the Medes and the Persians*** (Daniel 5:30-31). The handwriting on the wall - a prophet-statesman, Daniel, could see it.

America cannot endure in drunkenness, and debauchery, and sexual orgies, and promiscuity. IF IT CAN, GOD DOES NOT LIVE! And a statesman like Daniel could see the handwriting on the wall and say, “We’re going to get right with God, we’re going to have a great turning to the Lord, we’re going to have a great revival intervention from heaven, or we’re going down that same path of decadence, and drunkenness, and debauchery, and destruction as has characterized all the other civilizations that have preceded us.”

I cannot but think of the great Roman Empire. The nation that endured longer - by far longer - than any other nation has ever endured. Rome - Rome seemed to be invincible. Century after century after century, it governed the entire civilized world. Then something happened to Rome: not from the outside, not estroyed by a great conquering horde, from say, Mongolia. ***But it came - it disintegrated from WITHIN.*** It collapsed of itself. It became an open prey to any marauding, invading group, like the Visigoth and the Hun. It corrupted.

What did it look like in corruption? If you were to carefully to read the history of Rome, and finally come to that day when it decayed on the ***inside***, and you looked at that decay, and you

looked at that people, what were they like when they fell into such decay? Well, that’s very simple. All you need to do is to read about them, and in my humble opinion, there are two characterizations of the Roman Empire when it decayed and became a prey for any marauding group -

Number One: It Became a Welfare State. The people were fed by the government, and they lived upon the largess of the government. And in order to placate the idle and unworking population, the government, more and more and more and more, fed and fed and fed the people.

It’s a strange thing, this welfare. The reason you have it is because of the spineless, political appeal of the men who run for office. ***“You elect me, and I’ll give you this, and this, and this, and this, and this.”*** The politician has nothing to give. They don’t make money - the government doesn’t make money! When the politician gives and gives and gives, he has to do it by printing money. So he prints money and he prints money and he prints money! You call it federal deficits. They print money and print money and print money, and they give it out, and they give it out, and they bestow it to these minorities, and to these loathsome drones, and these deadbeats and panhandlers - and the whole world will cry for workers and producers - but they don’t work and they don’t produce! And the whole nation falls into disintegration and corruption and despair! THAT is the welfare state, and that was Rome! ***“Feed us, feed us, feed us, give it to us!” and the government responded to placate the throngs.***

A second characterization of Rome when it fell: the handwriting on the wall was an astonishing thing. Not only did they turn the empire into a welfare state, everybody seeking to get all that they could out of the government - food stamps, all kinds of welfare checks without working and slaving and producing—the second thing is an astonishing thing. ***They Demanded of the Government Entertainment, More Entertainment and Still More Entertainment.*** That’s why the Coliseum is there, that’s why the gladiatorial combats, that’s why the Hippodrome, and that’s why the amphitheaters all over the Roman Empire: ***to entertain the people.***

Dear me, I think when I say these things, I think when I read these things that I am speaking of modern America! ***“Entertain us! Entertain us!”*** And you know, entertainment has a funny turn to it - it always has a tendency to go down and down and down. As in Rome, it became bloody: awesome in its combat. Isn’t that a strange thing, how entertainment has a tendency to go down? The language becomes more vile, the scenes become more violent, and the morality of the people is simply lost in the morass of seeking something that would be a little more thrilling.

You would think I were talking about America, but I’m talking about Rome! The language - they have a little of it out here in Pompeii. If you really knew what Pompeii was like, you’d call it a brothel, the whole city. Isn’t that strange? Those beautiful portrayals of life in the Greek theater finally comes down to the violence and the blood of the Roman Coliseum. **You’d think I was talking about America.** The thing gets more violent; it gets

more sexually orientated; it gets more pornographic. The whole literature of the people becomes more sordid. ***That's the handwriting on the wall!***

And if you had a prophet-statesman Daniel in the White House, he'd be lifting up his voice, pointing out and trying to pull us back to those Puritan virtues that made our nation great: to work, to produce, to have a part in the building up of our country, and to walk, and to speak, and to look at things that are elevating and godly and Christian - if Daniel were President of the United States!

If Daniel were President of the United States, he would be reading this Book - studying it: poring over its pages.

“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by the Scriptures the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that God would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem” (Daniel 9:1-2).

And, of course, I haven't the beginning of time to follow after. Daniel pored over the prophetic Word, and as he pored over the prophetic words, he learned God's intent for His people. ***If we had a Daniel in the White House, that's what he'd be doing: poring over the prophetic Word, asking, “And what does God say? What does God say?”***

If we had fifteen hours, we might listen to what God says. As Daniel, as President of the United States, pored over the Holy Scriptures and the Prophets, what would he find? Ezekiel chapter 38, Ezekiel chapter 39 - **Russia! Russia! Russia!** - All of those Armageddon prophecies of Russia. What would he read? In the ninth chapter of the Book of Revelation, the king of the East comes with **two hundred million** of his soldiers. What nation over there could produce an army like that of two hundred million men? He's talking about **China**.

If we had a Daniel in the White House, he'd be sensitive, beyond any way to describe it, of the growing power of Russia and of China. The churches are destroyed in China. If there is any part of it, we can hardly find it. And of course, the atheistic, communist challenge to God Himself is never in cessation by government policy, by every ruthless means by which they can crush out the truth of the Almighty God. If we had a Daniel as President of the United States, he'd be sensitive to these who would destroy, strangle to death, the voice of those who name the name of the Lord.

He Would Also Be Sensitive to What God Says about Israel. “Thus saith the Lord of hosts,” in the second of Zechariah, ***“After the judgment hath He sent Me to the nations that have spoiled you, for,”*** says God, ***“he that touches Israel, toucheth the apple of My eye” (Zechariah 2:8).*** He never deviates from that. ***“I will bless them that bless you,”*** says the Lord. ***“I will curse them that curse you,”*** says the Lord in Genesis 12:3.

Isn't it a strange thing that little country over there has no more people than you have here in this metroplex? And when you write

its name, you can't even write it on the country, it's so small. You have to stick the name out in the Mediterranean Sea. And there are something like four billion people in this earth, four billion of them. And yet, headlines and headlines and newspaper articles and all kinds of discussion in our magazines, focusing on that little country over there. Little old tiny country, no bigger than this metroplex, but the whole earth focuses its attention over there. That's God. It will always be that way. ***“He that touches you touches the apple of My eye.”***

Isn't the most remarkable thing in these prophetic words, ***“I lifted up mine eyes, and a man with a measuring line, and asked him, Where are you going? And he said, To measure Jerusalem, its breadth and its length.”*** And the angel stopped the young man and said, ***“You can't measure Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be inhabited as a town without walls for the multitude of the people. And I, said the Lord, will be a wall of fire around her” (Zechariah 2:1-5).***

Last night, I was reading Spurgeon as he was preaching about the second chapter of Zechariah. Spurgeon lived in the last century (1800s), and Spurgeon said, “I don't understand how this can be.” Spurgeon said, “The angel stops the young man, saying, ‘Do not try to measure Jerusalem. You cannot do it. It is without walls. It is gone beyond its walls for the multitude of men. And I am going to be a wall around it.’” And Spurgeon said, “I don't understand that. Jerusalem is a little place over there, a little city over there surrounded by a wall, and that's all. And it's under the government of the Ottoman Empire. It's under the government of the Turks. And how it could ever be a big city beyond those walls, I cannot understand,” said Spurgeon. But the prophet said it, and Spurgeon said, “I believe it will come to pass.”

Why, my brother, I've been over there seven times. You couldn't begin to get Jerusalem in those walls. It is so grown and still growing and expanding until there is more of it on the outside than there is on the inside. God's Word comes to pass!

And the Lord says, ***“The Lord shall inherit Judah His portion in the Holy Land, and shall choose Jerusalem again” (Zechariah 2:12).*** It shall be the center of the government of the great King, and the Lord Himself shall build His throne there, and out of Jerusalem shall go the decrees and the laws that shall govern all mankind. A Daniel in the White House, President of the United States, would be aware of what the prophet says.

You know, just to show you how the prophet will say a thing, and it will take two thousand five hundred years for it to come to pass. Look at this prophecy from Zechariah: ***“The Lord will judge, the Lord will sit in judgment upon all the people. God will do it.”*** Now, you look at the prophecy. ***“Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their sockets, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth” (Zechariah 14:12).***

I saw a little of that when I was in Hiroshima, where the first atomic bomb was burst over the heads of the people. But I wasn't there at the time. And last night, I was reading in this prophet Zechariah, and a man who was there in Hiroshima when that

bomb burst, he said, ***“I saw people who had been standing on their feet,”*** and he said their eye sockets were empty holes. He said that the terrible repercussion from that bomb melted the fluids in their eyeballs, and their eyeballs ran down their cheeks, and they stood there with empty sockets, where their eyes ought to be. It's unbelievable.

Every word of these prophecies shall come to pass. Even Jesus said, ***“Not a jot, not a tittle will fall by the way” (Matthew 5:18).*** And when these things begin to come to pass—great God! Let us lift up our heads.

And that leads me to the last: ***If Daniel Were President of the United States, He Would Be a Man of Quiet Confidence, Resting in the Lord.***

“When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave glory and thanksgiving to God, as he had always done” (Daniel 6:10). And of course, they accused him and they threw him into the den of lions.

Over there in the hallway where my study is there are two pictures of Daniel in the lions' den. And he stands there in quiet confidence, God's guardian angels above him, and a light from heaven shining upon his face, and those hungry, carnivorous lions at peace and in quiet all around him. O God, that I could be like that! How ever the storm, the trouble, the tribulation, and the offset and the onset, whatever - to be quiet and rest in the Lord!

I close with one other who says that. In the last letter, and the last chapter, and the last words of Paul before he was executed, he says, ***“At my first answer no man stood with me, only God. And the Lord who stood with me, and strengthened me, will deliver me out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom; to whom will be glory forever and ever. Amen” (I Timothy 4:16-18).***

Why, Paul, what do you mean? In a few days or minutes, he'll be executed. His head will be cut off. And he knew that he was going to be executed, for he said in the same chapter, ***“I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand” (II Timothy 4:6).*** What do you mean when you say God delivers you out of the mouth of the lions, and God shall deliver you from every evil work, and will take you to heaven someday? What do you mean, Paul?

Just that - just that. “The time of my departure is at hand. The executioner is at the door. The block has been set. The ax is raised. But the Lord delivers me out of the mouth of the lion and shall preserve me into heaven. Isn't that a great way to be? Quiet in the Lord, going to die the next minute; ***Maranatha, achri hou elthe: I'll see you in the morning.*** I'll see you in the throng, in the presence of the great King of glory, to whom be honor and majesty forever and ever. Here, walking with the Lord; there, seeing His face.” ***O God! What a wonderful way to live; walking in the way of the Lord, pilgrimaging from this earth to the***

world that is to come!

And if it's today, glory be to His name. If it's tomorrow, honor and majesty to the blessed King of glory. And if it's ten years from now, may the Lord be magnified in my testimony and my life. Always in quiet confidence, resting in the Lord, our windows open toward that new and heavenly Jerusalem. Isn't that a glorious way to be? Just at quiet and at peace in the Lord; that is Daniel, God's prophet-statesman.

And that is our appeal to you this day; to be a fellow pilgrim with us, to walk with us. We have set our faces - our windows are open toward that beautiful home called the New Jerusalem, and it is our commitment to walk with the Lord until the nail-pierced hands that open the gates of grace, open for us the gates of glory. Come and be numbered with us.

Lord, put my name in that roll, and when it's called, let me be there and answer my name. Put my name among those who belong to that dear church, and we are going to walk together, and work together, and pray together, and glorify God together in love, and grace, and rest, and quietness until God shall present us to Himself in heaven. Oh my brother and my friend, there is no commitment you could ever make in your life, there is no thing to which you could ever commit your home and rear your children so preciously sweet as to walk in the way of the Lord.

Do it.

“Pastor, the two of us are coming today.” Welcome you two.

“Pastor, my wife and these children of ours, we are all coming today.” Welcome, welcome.

Or just one somebody you - to give your heart to Jesus, or to come into the church by baptism, or by letter, however God would say the word, press the appeal, make the decision in your heart, and when we stand now in this moment, stand walking down that stairway, walking down this aisle, “Here I am, pastor, here I am.”

While we stand, and while we sing, you come. ■



SNARES OF THE MODERN CHURCH: CULTURAL ACCOMMODATION AND MORAL RELATIVISM

There are two specific snares facing today's church: ***Cultural Accommodation and Moral Relativism.*** Anchoring ourselves in the timeless truths of Romans 12:2 and I Peter 1:14-16, we'll discern how these challenges might be subtly affecting the professing Church and unveil the enduring wisdom of Scripture in navigating these issues.

Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, admonished the early believers, saying, ***“And be not conformed to this world: but ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove***

what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (***Romans 12:2***). His primary readers of this epistle, early Christians living in the heart of the Roman Empire, were constantly confronted with the seduction of cultural norms that often stood in stark contrast to their faith.

Today's church indeed finds itself grappling with the challenges of cultural engagement. It is undeniable that the church should and must engage with its surrounding culture, for we are not called to be an isolated fortress, unresponsive to societal contexts. Yet, the snare lies in uncritical cultural accommodation, where the lines between engagement and assimilation become blurred.

Consider, for instance, the realm of worship music which has seen dramatic shifts in recent years. While it is certainly appropriate and indeed desirable to have worship music that resonates with the contemporary audience, a discernible trend is the adoption of a style that mirrors secular and irreverent music. The focus often shifts to catchy tunes and showy performances, and most of the time at the expense of sound doctrine, not to mention the reverence and awe that are due to God in worship. This kind of accommodation tends to lead people astray by obscuring the primary purpose of worship—to exalt and honor God.

Likewise, we see a similar pattern of uncritical cultural accommodation in the lives of professing believers in the adoption of modern trends and fashion. The drive to be relevant and trendy may result in a casual approach to holiness and modesty. While there is nothing necessarily inherently wrong with these things in and of themselves, the danger lies in losing reverence and adopting an overtly casual attitude towards the things of God.

Similarly, cultural accommodation can creep into the preaching of the Word, where the pressure to be inclusive and politically correct dilutes the bold proclamation of biblical truths. Sermons may subtly shift from declaring the uncompromised truth of God's Word to delivering messages that align more closely with popular societal beliefs, sidestepping difficult or contentious issues in the process.

In a similar vein, the Apostle Peter instructed, "***As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (I Peter 1:14-16)***. Here, Peter was exhorting the early Christians, dispersed and living amongst pagan cultures, to not be swayed by the moral codes of the world around them but to uphold the holiness of God in their conduct.

The snare of moral relativism has become an increasingly pervasive issue in the contemporary world. It presents itself in subtle and not-so-subtle ways as society embraces the notion of 'personal truth' and subjective morality, often cloaked in appealing terms like tolerance, inclusivity, or enlightenment. This presents a significant risk to the church, as it could lead to the adoption of a morally relativistic stance.

One clear illustration of this is the emergence of the "woke" movement, which does nothing but propagate a divisive mindset that urges everyone to embrace other people's differences in moral and social behavior as acceptable. In its drive for diversity and inclusivity, it overlooks or even dismisses the timeless moral absolutes laid out in Scripture.

Take, for instance, the issues of abortion and homosexuality. These topics are frequently discussed in society and in the church with increasing latitude. In the quest to embrace inclusivity and avoid offense, there can be a tendency to downplay or reinterpret clear biblical teachings on the sanctity of life and the biblical design for human sexuality as mere "differences of experience," either personal or collective. As a result, the moral relativism that is characteristic of the "woke" movement has led to the acceptance of grossly immoral behaviors.

The danger here is profound. We run the risk of conforming to the "former lusts in our ignorance", modifying our ethical and moral standards to match society's shifting moral landscape. The outcome is a form of Christianity that mirrors the surrounding culture more than it reflects the character and commands of God. This capitulation to moral relativism silences the distinct call to holiness that Peter reiterated.

The timeless wisdom embedded in Romans 12:2 and I Peter 1:14-16 offers invaluable guidance to navigate these modern snares. They remind us of the imperative to retain our distinctiveness as followers of Christ, even while engaging with our cultural context. They call us to resist the allure of shaping our ethical and moral standards to the world's ebb and flow but to anchor them in the unchanging holiness of God. As we journey forward, these passages serve as vital compass points, guiding us to engage with the world without losing our distinctive Christian identity and moral integrity.

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NEWS OF INTEREST TO CHRISTIANS

☐ ***CHRISTIANS ARRESTED FOR MASKLESS OUTDOOR SERVICE AWARDED PAYOUT FROM LIBERAL COLLEGE TOWN BUT DESPISED BY MASK-LOVING CITIZENRY*** - The following is excerpted from "Christians arrested," Fox News, July 20, 2023:

"A liberal college town in Idaho is paying \$300,000 to three Christian churchgoers who sued the city after being arrested for not wearing masks at an outside service during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The city of Moscow announced this week that it would settle with Gabriel Rensch, as well as Sean and Rachel Bohnet, who brought a case against city leaders in March 2021 that alleged their rights under the First and Fourth Amendments were violated when they were arrested at an outdoor 'psalm sing' conducted by leaders from their church in September 2020. Moscow, home to the University of Idaho, is a town of approximately 25,000 people about 80 miles south of Spokane, Washington.

... A magistrate judge later dismissed the city's case against

them, and U.S. District Court Judge Morrison C. England, Jr., wrote in his Feb. 1, 2023 memorandum and order denying the city's motion to dismiss that the 'plaintiffs should never have been arrested in the first place, and the constitutionality of what the City thought [its] code said is irrelevant.' ... Rensch told Fox News Digital that he has nevertheless become a pariah in his predominantly liberal community since the arrest and subsequent settlement. Rensch says members of his community have accused him of being 'an idiot' who does not 'love his neighbor' and have urged him to 'take your money and run' since the payout.

☐ ***COUTTS AND THE RISE OF PRIVATE TYRANNY*** - The following is excerpted from "Coutts," The Post, Unherd, July 20, 2023:

"Last month [Nigel Farage], the former Ukip and Brexit Party leader, had his account unceremoniously terminated by his financial institution, the London-based Coutts. Initially, Coutts claimed that the move was based purely on 'commercial' considerations, having to do with Farage's failure to meet a requisite 'financial threshold'. Yet as the firm's internal deliberations have revealed, the decision to de-bank Farage had almost entirely to do with his political views and associations.

In a meeting last November, Coutts's reputational-risk committee counselled against 'continuing to bank' Farage given his 'publicly stated views that were at odds with our position as an inclusive organisation'. Farage's crimes include his use of 'globalist' as a pejorative; his 'useful idiot admiration' for Vladimir Putin; his retweeting of Ricky Gervais lampooning gender ideology; and his meeting with vaccine-sceptical tennis champ Novak Djokovic. De-banking, and the freezing of digital assets and transactions, form a relatively new strategy for suppressing dissent in supposedly non-coercive market societies.

... It was first deployed in the wake of the Jan. 6 riot in Washington, when PayPal blocked a Christian crowdfunding site that facilitated fundraising for detained protesters. ... The following year, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government invoked Canada's Emergency Act to de-bank truck drivers involved in an anti-vaccine-mandate uprising. ... The de-banking of Farage is thus an especially glaring case of what I call private tyranny: the unjust and often-systematic coercion that suffuses our lives as workers and consumers. ... Precisely because it takes place in a 'private' sphere, this form of tyranny can't be challenged in court or at the ballot box. It's a game of power politics where one side lacks the power to play while the other is set up to win."

☐ ***UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST URGES CHURCHES TO HELP "PREGNANT PEOPLE" GET ABORTIONS*** - The following is excerpted from "United Church of Christ," The Christian Post, July 17, 2023:

"The United Church of Christ overwhelmingly passed a resolution calling on member congregations of the liberal mainline denomination to help 'pregnant people' get abortions. At the 34th UCC General Synod earlier this month, delegates passed the measure denouncing the U.S. Supreme Court's June

2022 Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization decision and calling for the denomination to support abortion access by a vote of 611 in favor, 24 opposed and 13 abstaining. The Supreme Court ruled 6-3 in Dobbs that abortion is not a constitutional right, overturning the 1973 decision Roe v. Wade. The decision also allowed several states to enact restrictions and bans on the procedure's legality in most circumstances.

... The [denomination's] resolution also urges the United Church Board Ministerial Assistance to 'provide emergency grants to any UCC Medical beneficiaries and other eligible applicants to cover out-of-pocket costs and travel costs incurred by accessing care not available in their home state.'"

☐ ***EX-GAY MAN COULD FACE JAIL TIME, MASSIVE FINES AFTER SHARING JOURNEY TO JESUS*** - An ex-LGBT activist who is reportedly facing potential prison time in Malta after sharing his testimony of leaving behind a gay lifestyle to follow Christ is battling for his freedom in court. Matthew Grech joins CBN's Faithwire to provide an update on his case, the legal ramifications, and why he's fighting back.

Legal problems began when Grech shared his story of leaving the LGBTQ lifestyle and finding Jesus with a local outlet. He said there were two presenters with PMnews Malta who wanted to know more about the nation's crackdown on so-called conversion therapy and his take on the matter.

Malta in 2016 became the first European Union country to ban attempts to "change, repress or eliminate a person's sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression," leading to fines or even jail time. "Last year, I was invited to share my story on a program and answer questions about so-called conversion practices," Grech said. "And I mentioned an organization ... that supports men and women who leave LGBT and an organization that promotes a biblical sexuality." Just days later, he said three people reported him to the police and accused him of breaching the law. Suddenly, he was in legal trouble.

"I had to go to the police and I exercise my right to be silent," he said. "And the police pressed charges against me." Grech, who is back in court this week and is reportedly the first person in his country to be prosecuted in such a way, continued, "If I'm found guilty, I could spend five months in jail or I could ... pay a fine of up to 5,000 euros ... just for really exercising my freedom to be a Christian and to support others who want to move away from unwanted LGBT identities or desires." In the end, he said he's grateful for the support of Christians across the globe who have offered support and prayer. Grech said he's confident he will be victorious in court, but even if he's not, he has no plans to give up hope or to cede to the state.

ABSENT FROM THE BODY...

...PRESENT WITH THE LORD:

Our Pastor and entire church family offers our prayers and love to the family of Mrs. Marietta Byars, who unexpectedly left this life and entered her eternal home Sunday, July 23, 2023.