

Wake Up! Strengthen What Remains!

By Bill Johnson



In these days of great travail in our beleaguered world and nation, I am reminded daily of God's faithfulness to those who are followers of Jesus Christ. God feeds His embattled children daily and we know it. **Little by little in our days on this earth we have learned and/or are learning that our help and hope is not in man, but in God alone; the hope of the world IS Jesus.**

Nations rise and nations fall. Even dear friends come and they fall away or they follow nature's course and they are born and they die, as we will too. There have been many so-called "heroes" that have let us down; even "big name" spiritual leaders who have shocked us by their sudden appearance in the news for having lived a double life. That has hurt us very much. Yet, even through that we are reminded that God's Holy Word has already told us not to look to man and our thoughts are drawn once again to think of David - "the man after God's own heart" - who sinned so grievously by his adulterous action against innocent Uriah and his wife Bathsheba. David's sins were found out through God's prophet Nathan - "You are the man" - breaking through David's stupor which finally drove David to repentance highlighted in Psalm 51: *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly*

from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Psalm 51:1-4

What about you and what about me? Are you in a stupor? Are you in a dullish state of denial over your spiritual lethargy? Has the bombardment of horrid daily news taken its toll, eroding your sense of God and His still small voice calling out to you? Do you need to repent? Do I? Have we foolishly been stupefied to look in the wrong places for deliverance? Where is God in our lives?

The battle is real and the battle is now. It is important that we stand up, but we need to do what we can as the Lord leads. We also need to do more and we have had to do more spiritually, right where we live.

As we see rockets blasting away into what has been long time indomitable Israel, we realize that even their powerful defense system of the IRON DOME has not been able to stop the hundreds upon hundreds of missiles launched into their once secure nation. Just as with Israel, America is not secure and that has become increasingly clear.

So, in these few pages of this newsletter, we humbly commend to you, as fellow brothers

and sisters in Christ, spiritual warnings and reminders to help us stand in these troubling times. **God help us.**

God teaches his people in afflictions. He teaches us to feel compassion toward others who are suffering. ... He also teaches us to prize our outward mercies and comforts more, and yet to dote upon them less. We are to be more thankful for them, but less ensnared by them. Next, God teaches us self-denial and obedient submission to his will. In our prosperity we are full of our own wills, and usually give God counsel as if we could tell God how it might have been better. We dispute our cross when we should take it up. By bearing a little we learn to bear more. The bullock unaccustomed to the yoke is impatient. After he is accustomed to labor, he willingly puts his neck under the yoke. God works out by degrees the delicate spirit we learned in our prosperity. One way or another, God works his children into a sweet, obedient frame. At length, God brings his children to subscribe: 'What God wills, when God wills, how God wills; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' Finally, we can learn humility and meekness of spirit. Pride naturally runs in our veins, and it is nourished by ease and prosperity. By trouble we come to know our own heart, God seeks to develop meekness in his people by affliction, then save them from affliction. [Taken from Voices from the Past, Thomas Case]

Stand Your Ground!

By David Kallman



David Kallman, of Great Lakes Justice Center, is a familiar name with many Christians throughout the state of Michigan. He is a bright, committed servant of God utilizing the immense gifts that God has entrusted to him. Our newsletter was already well on its way to being finished but when we saw this "Saturday Musings" article **we knew that we wanted our friends (meaning you) to be strengthened by it.** Dave is a Christian attorney with brains, integrity and godly convictions. This article sets the tone we want to convey to each of us as we go into the summer months which promises to be very concerning and challenging. I knew David Kallman's father, who was an Ingham County Circuit Court judge, a number of years ago. He was a man of Biblical convictions as was Dave's dear mother, Mickey!

“Refuse to adopt the language of the pretense.”

In the movie *Last Knights* (2015), starring Morgan Freeman (Lord Bartok) and Clive Owen (Raiden), an interesting exchange occurs between them. When the Minister of the Kingdom (second in command to the King) requires Lord Bartok to bring him a “gift” in order to stay in the good graces of the King, he refuses and brings him a cheap robe instead, with none of the demanded bribe money. When Raiden questions Lord Bartok about why he offended the Minister and refused to bring the required gift, he responds that the “gift” should be called what it truthfully is, i.e., a bribe.

Lord Bartok further explains: “Adopting the language of the pretense only serves to ease participation in it.”

When Raiden urges, “Perhaps now is not the time to take such a hard stand,” Lord Bartok continues:

“If I ease my approach now, at what crossing will you recommend I stand my ground? When they have taken half my land? Or when it comes to a point where I have to exercise my own tyranny over those beneath me to support the bribes of those above?”

This dialogue profoundly demonstrates the divide in today’s culture wars. The progressive left increasingly demands that the rest of us lie and use language to affirm and endorse their beliefs and agenda. Recently, teachers in Texas and Indiana have been fired for refusing to refer to girls (as young as six-years old) as boys. Progressives continually use the force of law to require such subservience, i.e., hate crime laws, anti-discrimination laws, speech policies in the workplace and on college campuses, government agency regulations, etc. If you refuse to use their newly created pronouns or required speech, or if you refuse to endorse and participate in their ceremonies, they will stop at nothing to destroy your reputation, job, and business.

Should our response be one of appeasement – it’s not such a big deal, why make an issue of it? As Raiden said, “Perhaps now is not the time to take such a hard stand.” Or should we stand our ground, and insist that language and culture be based upon truth? Truth does not deny scientific fact. Chromosomes are not social constructs. The law of gravity is universally true. Truth is not whatever you perceive your reality to be. I am a 6’6” white male. If I declare myself to be a 5’6” Asian woman, that is not true no matter how sincerely I believe it. I do not have the right to deny the truth and use the force of law to compel you to treat me as a 5’6” Asian woman.

If you are required to deny science and lie and affirm that a man is a woman, is it really such a big problem? What is wrong with a school requiring your fifteen-year-old daughter to shower and use the bathroom with a biologically intact man? Why can’t the government force you to use your artistic expression to endorse and participate in a same-sex marriage ceremony? You do not want to offend anyone, do you? The extremist agenda that flows from this denial of science and truth must be confronted and

exposed.

May government compel persons to violate their consciences, and convey a message about marriage or gender that denies science, and with which they disagree? This contradicts and violates long-cherished, basic constitutional freedoms.

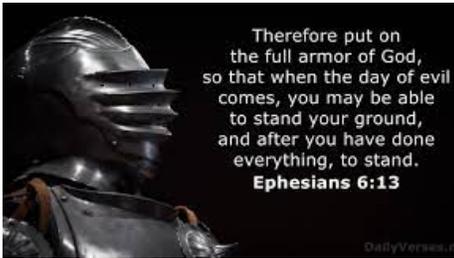
Many businesses face this issue every day. There is a big difference between generally serving all customers, and being forced to convey a message that violates my religious convictions. As Justice Gorsuch stated in his concurring opinion in the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* case, “It was the kind of cake, not the kind of customer, that mattered to the bakers.” Anytime a person is coerced and compelled by government to lie, thereby violating his or her conscience, or is required by force of law to participate in a ceremony that violates his or her religious beliefs, it is an assault on freedom against which we are required to stand.

Scientist Richard Dawkins stated, “Religion is capable of driving people to such dangerous folly that faith seems to me to qualify as a kind of mental illness.” He further said, “*You cannot be both sane and well educated and disbelieve in evolution. The evidence is so strong that any sane, educated person has got to believe in evolution.*” Therefore, according to Dawkins, if you believe in a scientific creationist viewpoint, you are insane.

I personally faced this type of hostility in my very first class in college in 1974. It was a geology class at Schoolcraft College in Livonia, Michigan. I sat in the front row (which I never do!), and waited expectantly for the session to begin at 8:00 a.m. The instructor began his introduction to the geology class and wrote the word “EVOLUTION” in large letters across the blackboard. He said we would be studying this topic for the first half of the semester, as it applied to geology. Despite the clear contradictions between evolution and the Bible, as a Christian, I had never thought much about the topic. It was not a big deal to me one way or the other, and I had never looked closely at the issue. As the new teacher got to the end of his introductory remarks, he asked the entire class of about 75

Stand Your Ground!

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students, “By the way, there isn’t anyone here who does not believe in evolution, is there?”

The question struck me in a way that I had never thought about the issue before, because he used the word “believe.” After considering his question, I thought to myself, “No, I don’t believe in evolution.” Without thinking, I raised my hand. The instructor seemed quite surprised. As I looked back around the room, I realized that I was the only one who had raised a hand. He came over in front of my desk, and proceeded to make fun of me in front of the entire class. He said things such as, “You must be one of those ‘Biblical creationists’ who thinks the whole world was made in six days” and “I bet you think Adam and Eve were real people.” I was obviously not happy with being the brunt of his attempted humor and started thinking about how I could possibly make my escape from the room!

He ended his attack by sarcastically saying, “Well, maybe I’ll just have to give you an hour of class so you can give us the ‘scientific evidence’ for creation.” He used air quotes around the words “scientific evidence” while the entire class chuckled. Once again, I reacted without thinking through the consequences, and accepted his challenge. I said loudly so the whole class could hear, “Great, when can I do it?” He tried to move on, and said he would set a time later. I then said even louder, “You just said I could have one hour of time to present the scientific evidence for creation, so give me the time!” He finally agreed I could have the first hour of class two weeks later.

After realizing what I had done, and that I had no clue as to what scientific evidence existed to support creation, I did the most logical thing a college freshman would do – I called home and asked my parents if

they had anything I could use! I was fortunate to have grown up in a Bible-believing Christian home, and I knew that my parents did not agree with evolutionary teaching. I remembered seeing some Bible Science Association newsletters around the house, and asked my mom if they were still there. She had kept them all. She also had the book, “The Genesis Flood” by Dr. John Whitcomb and Dr. Henry Morris. I read everything I could on the subject in the next two weeks. It was also helpful to review information from Dr. John Moore, a creationist science professor at Michigan State University at the time. My presentation included poster board visuals I prepared showing the problems with the evolutionary fossil record, past hoaxes regarding ancient man (Nebraska man, etc.), the coelacanth fish anomaly, and other evidence, with all the documentation regarding the sources of the information. In the presentation I only used scientific evidence and studies without any direct reference to the Bible. I used the full hour, and then answered questions from some of the students as well as I could.

As I started to leave the front of the class to return to my seat our teacher told me to stay there as he came back up front. I thought, “Oh boy, here comes round two of his ridicule.” Instead, he asked me where I had obtained all the information used in the presentation. He said, “I have been through years of scientific training, and I have never heard anything that you just presented. Where did it come from?” It gave me a great opportunity to give the sources again. He then asked me to prepare a bibliography so he could distribute it to the entire class, which he did the following week! He said that he was a Christian, and just never thought there was actually any science to support a creationist viewpoint. He thanked me for speaking up, and apologized for his earlier remarks to me in front of the class!

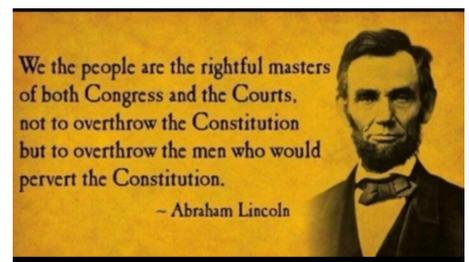
Needless to say, I was shocked by this turn of events. Some of the students later told me that they had agreed with me, but had been too scared or embarrassed to raise their hands. It was a good opportunity to have further discussion, and then get into the Bible and its gospel message. God taught me an important lesson that day. Never be

afraid to speak up for Him, and to trust Him for the results.

I was later able to use the presentation a second time because I also had a speech class that term, and was able to use the same presentation for my speech in that class. When I finished my talk, the professor critiqued my speech, gave me an A, and then asked me if I was going to be a pastor after college! I told him I did not think so, and it turned out the Lord had other plans for me. As an attorney, I have had many opportunities to represent clients involving many constitutional issues over the years. I think back on that experience from my first class in college and thank God for the opportunity He gave me. I can now see how God used it to prepare me to be ready with a defense at any time (I Peter 3:15)

Are we prepared to give a defense? Given the antagonism and obstacles we now face in our own country, it is even more important to defend the rights of all, especially those with whom we disagree. Our hard-fought freedoms can be lost as quickly as one election cycle. We must encourage everyone to embrace “true truth,” remember our past, appreciate where we are, and be vigilant in the future.

All of us must decide “at what crossing will I stand my ground?” We are called to stand firm in the truth. Ephesians 6:13-14. As Lord Bartok said, will you refuse “to exercise my own tyranny over those beneath me to support the [lies] of those above.” What will you do in response – give in or stand your ground? Or will you shrug your shoulders and “adopt the language of the pretense?” The choice is yours, and our culture and freedom hang in the balance.



Open Your Eyes to Red Flags

By Kimberly Cargill



I have had a great opportunity to be one of our church's youth sponsors. I have been involved for about 20 years now. At this time of the year, graduation, I always think back to when our seniors entered youth group in the 7th grade. I saw kids scared of going through the doors for the first time entering the Sunday school class. Now they have that same scared look as they are leaving the class and going into college or the workplace.

The world today is a scary place to navigate. I have talked with many parents who have shared that they have been praying for their children from birth, for their salvation and that they would grow in their faith. I think in today's world, with all the variables that we are dealing with, we need to increase and expand our prayers and guidance for our youth.

I went to Baker College in the '90s. When I look back at what the topics of discussions or issues that I dealt with were, they're far fewer than today. Coming from a Christian school and then going to a secular college, I was surprised that every example used in the classroom was alcohol. Then in the dorms, Wednesday night was bar night. I was thankful God gave me a night class on Wednesday so I didn't have to deal with that. God also gave me opportunity to help a roommate who went through a pregnancy scare. I can see now that God was preparing me for the "real" world and that He gave me the foundation that I needed in my earlier years to know my faith and to stand. He also gave me Christian parents and youth sponsors who were praying for me and lifting me up.

Now days, we are bombarded more than ever with so much more than drinking or pregnancy scares. We, as Christians, are

being attacked on all sides. No matter how old you are.

My Mom did day care for a few kids in our home while I was going up. I saw her love on these kids. She would teach them various things and she would read Bible stories **to them during reading time. It taught me that you can share God's love to kids even while reading or during other activities.** It also taught me the importance of who you choose to watch your children if you need to work.

There is also the importance of choosing the right school. There are many options to choose from and parents need to weigh all the options and costs in making that decision. No matter what school you choose, you need to be constantly aware of what is being taught to your child. You can not assume that everything is how it was when you went to school – things have changed. Now days, the curriculum is changing and I am not just talking about how they teach math. They are indoctrinating the youth and phrasing history to slant it in a different way or leaving out things from the history books. Teachers are being taught how to bring in the LGBT agenda or the Black Lives Matter agenda into the classroom.

Recently, ADA heard from a parent of a school in West Michigan that was having a week-long gay pride spirit week. "... *the high school student-led Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) held a Pride week recently at Whitehall High School. Part of that was asking students to wear the color of their choice that identified their (believed) gender and preferred pronoun, daily movies shown during lunch in the auditorium, and daily morning announcements, stating among other things that if you believe in only two genders you are wrong.*"

This is not just happening in public schools in West Michigan. The sad thing is that it is also happening in a lot of Christian schools and colleges. Last year, I remember reading a school newspaper from a Christian college talking about the acceptance of LGBT students within the college and interviewing different students. I was shocked that this so-called Christian college, that

was founded on Biblical values, had accepted this and was promoting it. Now they are accepting the transgender movement. I heard from a friend of mine that was attending another prestigious Bible college, that a couple of transgenders were running for student body president and vice-president. Christians, I beg of you to look closely at the schools and colleges that you are sending your children into. Students, while you are attending these colleges open your eyes and stand for what you know the Bible has taught you.

The other night, we honored our seniors in the youth group. We were coming to the close and we sponsors were giving some practical and spiritual advice. One of them was to find a good Bible believing/preaching church. That is so important. You need to be attending a church that is actually preaching all of the Word of God and not just the "fluffy" stuff. Where they will call sin, sin. We need to be like the Bereans in Acts 17, where they heard the word spoken by Paul and Silas and then went and did their own studying to make sure that it was in accordance with the Word of God.

We as believers, no matter your age, need to make sure we know what the Bible correctly says so we stand up and accurately defend it. If we don't know what the Bible says against these issues then we will fall for their lies. We will not see the "red flags." We need to do that with all aspects of our lives. We need to take a stand and point out the inaccuracy even if you are standing alone. Be a Daniel!

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What's Happening in Whitehall, MI?

By ADA Staff



In May, we caught wind that in a neighboring town, Whitehall, the high school principal was promoting the school's Gay-Straight Alliance in celebrating different LGBTQ+ topics every day for one week. This included encouraging students to wear specific colors on specified days in order to show support for LGBTQ+ ideology. This is psychological warfare, specifically targeting our children and teens.

If a Christian group sought to have the school promote a week-long emphasis to inculcate the student body in the tenets of the Christian faith, I can safely say it would not be allowed. Yet their special week-long emphasis to promote LGBTQ+ ideology is a similar endorsement of a belief system, one not based on science or fact. Students are taught to deny biology and are coerced into using false pronouns that not only defy the rules of grammar, but more importantly undermine one's freedom of speech and conscience.

It is not the place of taxpayer funded schools to endorse conformity to a set of beliefs regarding sexual lifestyles. Parents — not school systems — have the authority and responsibility to teach their children about sexuality and gender according to their values.

Our youth need truth and nurturing, not deception and to be used as pawns in this revolution. Numerous studies have shown that the vast majority of children who experience gender confusion will ultimately accept their true biology if left to their own devices and not pushed into a transgender identity. When we recognize the increased instances of depression, suicidal tendencies, and drug/alcohol/abuse problems among this group of people; when science does not support the beliefs and promotions of this community; wouldn't we be better off to support the confused individuals with lov-

ing truth instead of "comforting" them with a lie?

Encouraging these children to build their identities around sexual and gender confusion will only lead to pain and misery for them. Genesis 5 says, "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them..." As His "image bearers," every human being has equal, inherent value and worth in God's eyes. We ought to be affirming these kids as *God made them* — not as their young, easily-influenced and malleable "feelings" have convinced them they are.

You don't have to live in Whitehall or have children in the school system to be concerned about the students who are being exposed to this LGBTQ indoctrination. As Christians, we need to be salt and light!

Although this event took place, we were encouraged to hear of parents standing up and pushing back against the event and the school's support of it. As a result of their outcry, the principal, although not apologizing, at least admitted that he should not have "appeared" to endorse the event. However, Whitehall parents report that school district leadership does not seem to be taking their concern seriously.

The event in Whitehall did have one good result: it inspired parents to dig into their children's curriculum, attend school board meetings, and try to have an influence on the direction of their community's schools.

These parents want education for their kids, not social engineering. They want classrooms to be free of political opinions, LGBT ideology, and indoctrination. They want a school system that doesn't create division between parents and children. And they are not backing down!

We encourage you to learn from their experience! Your community's school leadership needs to know that you're paying attention and that they're not going to get away with slipping LGBT or Critical Theory or any other type of propaganda through parents like you.

Serving up Propaganda

By Lisa Van Houten



It's blatantly obvious that the Left wants our children. From LGBT cartoons to Drag Queen story hours, there's a concerted effort to brainwash kids. Woke corporations are also joining forces with these social revolutionaries, using their clout to push LGBT ideology.

One of the latest co-conspirators is Kellogg's. Partnering with GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation), Kellogg's is releasing a new cereal called "Together With Pride," to promote "Gay Pride Month" in June. The sugary, rainbow cereal geared toward kids, features all of the Kellogg's cartoon figures from Tony the Tiger to Snap, Crackle, and Pop on the box, with \$3 from the sale of each box going to support GLAAD. A caption on the box states: "We believe that all young people and those young at heart deserve an environment where they can grow up to be their best selves. That's why we've joined forces with GLAAD ... and support a more accepting world for LGBTQ youth."

Most troubling of all, Kellogg's is pushing children to accept transgender ideology, encouraging kids to deny who God created them to be, and telling them that their gender isn't rooted in biology, but is a personal choice. **A special feature on the cereal box asks children to choose their pronouns** with options like "he/him," "she/her," and "they/them," which refers to being "non-binary." Kellogg's also offers blank spaces in case kids want to make up their own gender pronouns, because now that's a thing in our culture which has thrown off the restraining forces of morality.

Let Kellogg's know you won't support a company that is seeking to indoctrinate our children and grandchildren. Call Kellogg's at: 269-961-2000.

What's Growing in Your Garden?

By Lisa Van Houten



One of my favorite pastimes is gardening. I love to see flowerbeds burst forth with blooms; I plant my seemingly lifeless dahlia tubers and then wait months to be rewarded with magnificent flowers; I rejoice when I see bean sprouts break through the soil and little yellow blossoms appear on my tomato plants, knowing that soon I'll enjoy the fruit of my labors. During these weeks of long summer days when the sun rises early and sets late in the evening, in my spare time you'll often find me in my vegetable and flower gardens waging a seemingly never-ending war with weeds. As I write this, I'm looking at one flowerbed that I neglected last year. The weed, Creeping Charlie, crept in and in the busyness of life I never took the time to rip it out. Now, the whole bed is infested with that miserable weed as it covers and chokes out the perennials planted there.

I often think how much sin is like a weed. It's far easier to stop its effect if it's ripped out before it has a chance to take root and spread. Creeping Charlie is so invasive that leaving behind just one fragment of the plant can reproduce another. If we let sin creep into our hearts and minds it, too, grows and spreads until it chokes our spiritual life. *"For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."* Galatians 6:8

Battling sin in our lives is part of the pursuit of holiness. As Christians we are to root out sin and live distinctively from the world. "Be holy, for I am holy" God tells us. (1 Peter 1:16) Yet "holiness" has become a dirty word to many Christians. **Christians' lives often mirror those of our secular neighbors rather than the Image of God we are called to reflect.** Many American Christians are addicted to the world's enter-

tainment, are consumed with laying up treasures on earth, and treat Sundays as "fun days" rather than the Lord's Day. We live in an age when "the church is emulating the world, where it is no longer distinguishable from our pleasure-oriented culture" Pastor Allistair Begg writes.

We pursue worldliness and shun holiness – instead of the other way around. The pursuit of holiness seems old-fashioned to the modern church. In a podcast I heard recently, a listener asked the question: "Is it hypocritical for my pastor to watch adulterous affairs on Netflix and oppose them in church?" Shouldn't the answer be obvious? Yet to many Christians, it's not. And, of course, that applies to all Christians, not just pastors. Are we conforming to the Word or to the world?

Holiness is not legalism. It doesn't just apply to sexual sin, our use of media, and our outward behavior. "Holiness is a matter of the heart and not merely a matter of conduct," writes famed theologian D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. "It is not only a person's deeds that count but their desires." Striving for holiness means striving to have the mind of Christ in all of our thoughts, actions, desires, relationships.

We cannot straddle the fence. "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). As author Tim Challies reminds us: *There is a stark contrast here between two opposing options: We can love the world, or we can love God, but we cannot love both. We can follow and obey the world, or we can follow and obey God, but we cannot serve two masters. Only one will own our heart, only one can claim our ultimate allegiance. That choice lies before us. ... To love the world is to value what unbelievers value, to foster ungodly desires and attitudes, to indulge in what is delightful to those who refuse to delight in God.*

Those who love the world naturally succumb to worldliness. Worldliness is a failure to renew our minds by the Word of God so we can live in a manner pleasing to God. It is the failure to think and live in distinctly

godly ways. It is the failure to become who God has called us to be through the gospel.

Just as with my garden, holiness must be cultivated and worldliness rooted out – the two can't co-exist. As Challies also writes: "while godliness requires tenacity, worldliness takes only apathy. Whereas we can easily coast into worldliness, we will not attain the least godliness without persistence." It's an ongoing battle against the weeds in our life trying to choke out our love for Christ. And it's a daily nurturing of the good seed which God has planted in our lives by being faithful in prayer, devotions, and living in communion with the Lord.

May John Owens plea be ours as well: "On Christ's glory I would fix all my thoughts and desires, and the more I see of the glory of Christ, the more the painted beauties of this world will wither in my eyes and I will be more and more crucified to this world."

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."
(1 Corinthians 7:1)

Holiness and serious Christian living are not popular in this world, but they are our duty, required by God. God's demand that our lives be holy is not a stifling and burdensome requirement of His people. It is the gracious and loving call of God to His children to share in His holiness. In obeying, we show ourselves to be like our Father, who Himself is holy.

There is no middle ground between Christ and holiness on the one side, and the world and sin on the other. Yet the world's lies of wisdom, wealth, and pleasure can pose a real temptation for the Christian. It takes effort and concentration on the believer's part, as well as the grace of God, to reject the habits of his past life.

Thoughts for personal/family worship on 1 Peter 1 & 2, from Family Worship Bible Guide – see enclosed response card for ordering information.

Whose Barn Is It?

By Steve Huston



Imagine inheriting a barn that held extremely fond memories for you. More than mere nostalgia, care-free and happy days of hard work and hard play run barefoot through your mind, bringing a smile to your face and a forgotten peace to your mind. Upon inspection, though, the report reveals that the siding is full of holes, in need of paint, and the framework is termite-ridden. Your heart breaks at the thought of a wrecking crew coming in or the idea of allowing time and the termites to take their natural course of action.

The cost would be immense; but if you were willing to give up everything and pour your resources into this beloved structure, it might just be possible to save it. Of course this would mean that it would become your home, your workspace, and a place that, out of necessity, more memories would be made and passed on to your children. What an exciting prospect!

You've come to terms; you're ready. What if, then, a contractor came along and told you he could make it as good as new by just fixing the holes and putting on a fresh coat of paint? What if another came along and said he would put on new steel siding and the repair would be a mere fraction of the cost? Only a fool would find relief in such solutions. What about the rotting framework? "THAT is no solution - only wasted time, effort, and resource," you would shout to those who offer only a cosmetic answer to what is an internal danger to your well-loved barn.

Dear Reader, that precious, inherited barn is our nation; the termite-infested framework is our sinful core; the fresh paint and cosmetic repair is political and social action; and the new steel siding is any other form of government – like socialism/communism. **I pray you can see that any ac-**

tion void of repentance is no real action at all.

The need for repentance, virtue, and holy living cannot be overstated; ancient Israel learned it and our founders believed the Biblical example and admonitions regarding it.

George Washington, in his first inaugural address stated, "...the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained." Of course Solomon said it first, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

The "Father of our country" hadn't changed his mind on these matters seven years later, stating in his farewell address: "*Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who should labour to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and citizens. The mere Politician, equally with the pious man ought to respect and to cherish them.*" Recognizing that even education itself cannot save a nation, "*Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that National morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.*" Looking to the wise man again, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

More than historical rhetoric, this shows the heart of our nation at its founding. We recognized the need for virtue and Christianity. Throughout our history we knew the need of and gave calls for "days of humiliation" and repentance. **Without true brokenness and repentance our inherited barn will fall!** No matter what good outward actions we take, if we do not humble ourselves before the God of all creation, confessing that He is right and we have sinned only against Him, our beams will continue to rot and be eaten through. We will collapse from the inside out.

Perhaps the best way to describe this vital need is to quote from Dr. Beeke's Family Worship Bible Guide, when speaking of Nehemiah and Ezra's efforts to rebuild Jerusalem. "**Just like the walls of Jerusalem provided physical protection, so the precepts of God provide spiritual safety. Rebuilding the walls without returning to the Word of God would be foolish.**"

"... except you repent, ye shall all likewise perish." - Jesus

It is not so much a person or a party that is the cause of our troubles; it is the heart of this nation. It is the desperate need for repentance. More than political activism, more than social activism, more than anything, we need the Holy Spirit to stir up an activism in our soul that leads to holiness; you understand that by holiness I mean godly, righteous living according to the precepts of Scripture.

In repentance we not only humble ourselves realizing that God's way is the only way, we know that He is our only Hope and our dependence is completely on Him; therefore, we are frequently directing our prayer heavenward. In brokenness we seek His face and His will, knowing His love for us. In each of these areas we are sanctified daily, turning from anything that hinders our relationship with Him. Have we put our trust or hope in anything other than the Savior?

Look at this nation and see where we have taken it. The real question is, "Whose barn is it?" Is it our barn to continue doing as we please with it, fighting with others as to how we think it should be sided or repaired? Or is it God's barn? If so, we need to humble ourselves, trusting in His covenantal reconstruction; pray for His guidance; cling to the Truth; and take the responsibility of repentance seriously. It IS the Lord's barn and we are His workmen.

Repentance reminds us that we have a greater inheritance than this beloved barn. For those who are in Christ will receive "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you," 1 Peter 1:4

May We Be Dandelions

By: Chris Johnson



As I write, the sun is shining, the birds are chirping, and I'm looking at the dandelions growing in my yard. Growing, I might add, although I mowed them down only yesterday. Yet, here they are, resilient as ever.

This little annoyance of nature reminds me of some of the things I've been reading lately, including Adam's curse that plagues us still of "thorns and thistles," but more so the history of the early church that I've been looking at with my son lately. He's six and I thought it would be good for he and my eight year-old daughter to have a sense of the deep roots of our faith. So I procured a church history book geared towards students, though still a little advanced for him, and we started flipping through it.

I realized pretty quickly that I was going to have to explain the word "persecution" to him. It started, of course, with Paul's persecution of the early church and the martyrdom of Stephen; then it went on to the apostles, then the figures of the post-apostolic church: Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Cyprian, and those are just the ones whose names we know. It took almost 300 years before Christianity *wasn't* defined by persecution and martyrdom.

Our spiritual ancestors were used for candles and fed to lions for entertainment and this torture was done publicly to dissuade the growth of the church, yet the faith exploded, like the dandelions in my yard.

When I cut one down, I plant 100 more.

Persecution of Christians is not a thing of the past, of course. Canadian pastors have been imprisoned for following scripture's command to worship together rather than the government's Covid regulations, and this pales in comparison to what happens in places like China, Iran, and North Korea.

In China, according to the Council on Foreign Relations, there around 100 million protestants, with fewer than 30 million attending the Communist government approved registered church. The CFL reports that *"The number of Chinese Protestants has grown by an average of 10 percent annually since 1979. By some estimates, China is on track to have the world's largest population of Christians by 2030."* This is in spite of government resistance to church growth, made plain in the sentencing of Pastor Wang Yi to nine years in prison.

Iran is also experiencing an "explosion" of church growth, some estimating by 5% per year, and numbering near one million adherents, up from a mere 500 in 1979. Open Doors says that for Christians in Iran, *"Secret churches are often raided, and their leaders and members have been arrested and given long prison sentences for 'crimes against national security.'"*

Open Doors estimates that North Korea is home to about 300,000 Christians who worship in underground churches, but asks for prayer for the more than 50,000 Christians held in detention centers and prison camps.

As we pray for our brothers and sisters around the world, we ought also to study their example of endurance. Until now, there hasn't been a time in our nation where being a Christian hasn't been an advantage in most circumstances, but now we seem to be entering a time when a Christian faith is a mark against you. Of course, we don't know what the next decades will hold, but when we look at our culture's trajectory and the implications of its worldview, we can imagine having to endure atrocities – or at least annoyances - because of our faith, as Christians around the world do now. And because of the lack of attention we've paid to the suffering of fellow believers around the world, past and present, we can almost not even imagine going through it ourselves.

May we be dandelions. May we share the good news of the gospel in the midst of malignance and persecution, may we remember that we serve Someone who conquered the world by dying.

My yard butts up to a hayfield, and the dandelions in that hayfield get a chance to grow a lot taller before they're once more cut down to size. As a kid, I remember picking dandelions on two foot stems, amazed at their size. We can draw a lesson from this too.

The dandelions always grow tall enough to stick their heads up above the grass, or crab grass, or alfalfa or whatever they're growing in. If they didn't, the wind wouldn't catch their fluff, and the seeds wouldn't be carried away to take root in some poor schmuck's yard.

So again, let us be dandelions! Let us grow in our faith, and in knowledge, and in wisdom. Let us grow our relationships, our families, and our businesses. With our fruits (or seeds, to maintain the metaphor) where they can be seen by all, we'll flourish while we can. When we're cut down, we'll spread the Truth.

Who knew such an annoying weed could be such an inspiration?

Check out our "Decency Minutes" on American Family Radio (afr.net):

Two of the most encouraging words found throughout the Bible are the simple little words, **"but God."** For example, in Genesis, Joseph says: *"you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good."*

As we look around at the turmoil and strife within our nation, we can easily lose sight of the fact that God's plan is unfolding. Evildoers are striving to impose Marxism and undermine the Constitution and the rule law. However, Psalm 49 says: *"They are like sheep and are destined to die. ... But God will redeem me from the realm of the dead."* So, when day after day we're bombarded with bad news, we find hope and joy in the Lord – no matter what the future brings. As II Chronicles 20 reminds us, *"Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's."*