

March 2013

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We Must All Hang Together

Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God." --Daniel 6: 5

Fifty-six men affixed their signatures to a treasonous document listing 27 specific grievances they had with King George III of Great Britain. George was being notified that forthwith, he was no longer their king. It was understood that their demand for a quit claim deed would put a price on their heads. Following the final signature, Benjamin Franklin, with customary gallows humor, was heard to say, "We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."

A latter-day American ruler is, likewise, in the minds of many stakeholders, leading the nation to a place that will ultimately demand Divine judgment. Should he too be placed on notice?

In the vernacular of the founders, it could be said, "He (the king) is bullying the *Boy Scouts of America* to admit homosexuals into their ranks and the U.S. Supreme Court to rule in favor of homosexual "marriage." Similarly, he has ordered military chaplains to perform "gay" nuptials and has instructed his civilian cabinet to ignore federal DOMA laws. And, he has eviscerated freedom of conscience by mandating universal prescriptive coverage for contraceptives and abortifacients. Non-compliant insurance providers (employers) are threatened with fines exceeding tens-of-thousands of dollars-per-day until they capitulate.

The king is also attempting to expel from the United States, a German couple who home-school their children. They were originally granted religious asylum by a lower court but the king wants them to leave at once. They face imprisonment and loss of their children if they are forced to return to Germany where Christian home-schools are illegal. Further, he is placing numbers of Muslims with known ties to Islamic terrorist organizations, in sensitive intelligence positions while providing millions in sophisticated weapons systems to countries run by "The Brotherhood," whose leaders call Jews *pigs*¹ and who have pledged not to rest until all Jews have been put to the sword.

Frankly, some are concerned that dialogue like this will surely invite much trouble for the Church. Others fear that remaining silent will serve only to ramp up the persecution of the saints. Both dread the same thing—PERSECUTION.

An article first appearing in *Open Doors International*, however, suggests that persecution does not necessarily hinder the work of the Church. Follow are selected excerpts:²

"Ruth Graham shares a convicting story about a Christian who had just arrived in a free country from years of persecution. He was appalled at the seeming casual commitment to Jesus and materialistic contamination of these Christians. And he said so. Some time later he returned to visit the friend to whom he had spoken so bluntly when he first arrived. He asked if his friend remembered what he had said, the bitterness of his criticism. The friend remembered. The man stood silent for a few moments, reflecting. The friend tensed for a second attack.

"I have come to apologize both for what I said and the way in which I said it," he said simply. "I was merely afraid. I did not know how dangerous freedom could be. It has been a year now. And I am worse than those I criticized." Then he added a significant statement: "It is more difficult to live the Christian life under freedom than under repression."

"Iranian Christian leader Luke Yagnazar lives in the United States. He concludes, 'It is more difficult to be a Christian in the USA than in Iran. There you are either a Christian or not!' [Ditto for Pastor Samuel Lamb in Southern China who says]... "We have physical persecution but you have materialism. Your lot is harder because we know what we are spiritually fighting. Many times you don't." "Another Chinese church leader adds, 'Once you are chasing after money there is no time and energy for church affairs... And the government knows that materialism will destroy the church faster than persecution can. I tell my co-workers in China that the biggest enemy we're facing is no longer Communism, it's *materialism*.'" (emphasis added)

"A Chinese believer who experienced much suffering for her faith expressed it this way: 'We are constantly reminded that we are in a spiritual warfare. We know whom we are fighting for. We know who the enemy is. And we are fighting. Perhaps we should pray for you Christians outside China. In your leisure, in your affluence, in your freedom, sometimes you no longer realize that you are in a spiritual warfare.'... "On arriving in the USA, Mrs. Ha from Vietnam shared that she is no longer afraid of suffering and persecution. 'What I fear now,' she adds, 'is that living in freedom will cause coldness and losing the power of the Holy Spirit.'"

"Ugandan pastor, Kefa Sempangi documents his family escaping death by the narrowest of margins. After studying at an American seminary he states: 'In Uganda, Penina and I read the Bible for hope and life. We read to hear God's promises, to hear his commands and obey them. There had been no time for arguments and no time for religious discrepancies or doubts. Now, in the security of a new life and with the reality of death fading from mind, I found myself reading Scripture to analyze texts and speculate about meaning. I came to enjoy abstract theological discussions with my fellow students, and, while these discussions were intellectually refreshing, it wasn't long before our fellowship revolved around ideas rather than the work of God in our lives...

The biggest change came to my prayer life. In Uganda I had prayed with a deep sense of urgency. I refused to leave my knees until I was certain I had been in the presence of the resurrected Christ... Now, after a year in Philadelphia, the urgency was gone. When I prayed publicly I was more concerned to be theologically correct than to be in God's presence. Even in private my prayers were no longer the helpless cries of a child. They were spiritual tranquilizers, thoughts that made no contact with anything outside themselves. More and more, I found myself coming to God with vague requests for gifts I did not expect."

Near the end of this lengthy article a Romanian pastor, Dr Paul Negrut, says that "What makes the difference is how we respond to persecution and how we respond to freedom." He notes that during times of pressure, "Christians are forced to seriously grapple with basic questions because they have to be sure their faith is worth dying for."

Karl Rove and establishment Republicans are in the news this week because they are leaking comments to the press suggesting that the "Party" is interested in winning elections down the road, and carrying a torch for traditional marriage, unborn babies, and border security isn't getting the job done. Rove is suggesting that it is possible that the GOP candidate for President in 2016 could well support homosexual "marriage."

Before coming down too harshly on Mr. Rove, is it possible that we are doing the same thing in our churches and in our personal relationships? Are we more consumed with filling empty seats on weekends than making disciples of men? Do we pass up opportunities to witness to a neighbor or to speak the truth in love because it could be injurious to the relationship? Are we too distracted to cry out to God in prayer?

Let's just say that even if we didn't see "white water" ahead, it's still a good idea for us to "hang together."

Rick Forcier

¹ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/richardbehar/2013/01/11/news-flash-jews-are-apes-and-pigs-so-why-is-egypts-morsi-the-elephant-in-americas-newsrooms/>

² Excerpted from several sites noting original source attributes as *Open Doors International*, 2011.