

October 2014

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“Here We Stand”

Michigan pastors say they are prepared to disobey an unjust law

Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will take a stand for me against evildoers? --Psalm 94:16

With only hours to go until General Election 2014 is history, Republicans are confidently optimistic now that pollsters are locking in their forecasts for a GOP election night sweep, including a likely takeover of the U.S. Senate. Not to rain on anyone’s parade, but, this just doesn’t feel like 1980. Ronald Reagan is not on the ballot, and it’s certainly not “morning in America.” At least not according to news-writers.

Indeed, the airwaves these days are filled with dire warnings of irreversible consequences if America, the stumbling global giant and former best hope for the world, doesn’t soon sober up. Most Americans are particularly discouraged by reports of government waste and corruption; a “hacked” and potentially compromised intelligence-gathering community; porous domestic borders; a foreign-incubated virus capable of overwhelming the U.S. health care system, and a worldwide Islamic insurgence now directly threatening U.S. citizens at home and abroad. We have all become more than just a little edgy these days.

Worse (can it get worse?), economists are seeing signs of a potential collapse of the entire U.S. economy. The Feds and even Wall Street bankers are acutely aware that China and other holders of large reserves of U.S. “paper” are quietly but steadily pulling-the-plug on the dollar as the world’s reserve currency. Perhaps seeing the handwriting on the wall, a number of major manufacturers are moving assets offshore—although some say it is primarily for corporate tax savings or to take advantage of a better educated workforce—another discouraging subject.

Embarrassingly, international ranking based on math and science test scores, places American fourth grade students at #12 of leading industrialized nations. Ouch! By grade eight, U.S. students drop precipitously to #28, and by grade 12, only Cyprus and South Africa score lower in math and science than American students.¹ It’s tricky to be a world leader with a lesser-educated populace.

Although it is understandable why so many people just don’t want to listen to the “news” anymore, Christians must be careful not to adopt an attitude of *que sera sera*. Fatalism is not for followers of Jesus. Christians are not called to surrender to a fallen world but rather to be world-changers. One particular generation in modern times, did in fact, change the world.

Mid-morning, April 30, 1789, George Washington stepped out onto the outdoor balcony of Federal Hall in New York City before a massive crowd of well-wishers. After calling for a Bible and opening it to a certain passage, Washington proceeded to take the oath of office as the first President of the United States. While not all historians have mentioned the portion of scripture that Washington turned to, it has been commonly held that it was Deuteronomy 28. We can think of no scripture more appropriate to the occasion.

Chapter 28 promises blessings to a nation that will observe and obey God's laws, and warns of curses that will result from turning away. Specifically, if a nation hearkens diligently unto the voice of the Lord, God will set it above all nations of the earth. He promises to bless that nation in the field and in the storehouses, and to make that nation plenteous in goods, children, cattle, and food. God promises to make that nation the head and not the tail, lending to many nations but borrowing from none.

Does God keep His Word? Indeed He does. No nation in all of recorded history has enjoyed more blessings than has the United States of America. But, has America continued to hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord? We think not.

America has become a nation whose judges forbid prayer and the Bible in its classrooms. America leads the world in voluntary abortions. And, America chooses leaders who compel broad acceptance of sexual practices that God clearly, and emphatically, says are detestable. Can America expect to enjoy the favor of the Lord under these circumstances? Again, we think not.

For more than four decades, the Church has witnessed the inexorable takeover of all chief spheres of societal influence except for one—the Church. During each takeover, such as happened to the Boy Scouts of America only months ago, Church leaders were promised (and believed) that they would be exempt from new gay-inclusion laws all others must obey. Well, the gay-rights movement is now at the Church door.

In Houston, Texas, home to unusually large churches, including America's largest congregation with more than 40,000 adherents, voters elected a lesbian mayor—thrice. But that was before the Houston City Council ordered public facilities with restrooms to remove any distinction as to male or female for the benefit of gender-confused persons. When energized *believers* turned in nearly three-times the signatures needed to place the new ordinance on the November ballot for voters to repeal, the city responded by invalidating most of the petition signatures. The mayor even ordered five leading pastors to turn over transcripts of recent sermons, texts and emails on the subject of homosexuality for her review.

Thankfully, the outcry from Christians around the nation has been stellar—so much so—that the mayor earlier today, rescinded her demand for any recent sermons, texts, or speeches.

In Michigan this week—more encouraging news. Hundreds of pastors gathered several days ago on the steps at the state capitol in Lansing to protest a move to amend the State's Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Citing the Houston debacle (above), the pastors said that legislation in other states intending to protect homosexuals actually ended up discriminating against people of faith.

Rev. Stacy Swimp, President of the National Christian Leadership Council said, "The homosexual agenda is an anti-freedom movement which has led to the persecution of pastors and Christian business owners across the nation, whose freedom of speech and freedom of religion are being taken from them, under the guise of so-called gay rights. There is nothing civil about that!"²

"The pastors asserted that the job of the Michigan Legislature is to affirm and uphold constitutionally protected freedom for everyone—including business owners—not pass laws that grant special favors, give special status or guarantee special protections for some while coercing and punishing others." ^{ibid}

Swimp concluded, "Let there be no doubt that, if you should decide to go forward with this grave injustice, I, every born again believer I know, as well as every pastor you see here today, shall disobey your unjust law. Here we stand, Black and White together, ready to go to jail!"

Rick Forcier

¹ <http://4brevard.com/choice/international-test-scores.htm>

² Christian Newswire, nogaycivilright.com/home/pastors-press-release/, 10/24/2014