

Macedonian Call

July 2022



In a section on their website labeled “America’s Biggest Issues,” The Heritage Foundation has posted the following article titled “Religious Free-

dom: What’s at Stake If We Lose It.” I believe we seldom consider the connection between the loss of religious freedom and the constant push by left-wing radicals and LGBTQ activists for everyone in this nation to willingly accept, as normal, the lifestyles of people who identify with that community. So, I thought the article would be beneficial in helping us see that there is a connection. The article reads as follows: “The first amendment to the United States constitution begins, ‘Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ...’ Fast forward almost 250 years and religious freedom is one of the most pressing issues in American culture today. Let’s take a look at some of the concerns surrounding this debate. First of all, what is religious freedom? Religious freedom is more than the ‘freedom to worship’ at a synagogue, church, or mosque. It means people shouldn’t have to go against their core values and beliefs in order to conform to culture or government. Religious freedom protects people’s right to live, speak, and act according to their beliefs peacefully and publicly. It protects their ability to be themselves at work, in class, and at social activities. Ok, that sounds good, but does such ‘freedom’ allow people to do whatever they want under the cover of religion? Well, that answer is no. The Supreme Court has said the federal government may limit religious freedom – but only when it has a “compelling interest” to do so in order to protect the common good and limit people’s ability to harm others. Here’s how that applies to the most common allegation in religious freedom cases today – charges of discrimination. Should florists, photographers and bakers be forced to provide their services for same-sex weddings and celebrations that violate their religious beliefs? Well, let’s flip the question. Should a lesbian graphic designer or printer be forced to create a flyer for a religious group’s rally opposing same-marriage? In both cases, the answer should be no. There are plenty of other bakers that provide cakes for same-sex weddings and there are

other graphic artists a religious group can hire.

Additionally, in neither example is a person or group being denied a service because of who they are – it’s because of the specific service they are requesting. In these cases, there is not a compelling interest for the government to interfere. That is very different from Jim Crow laws that mandated segregation based on racial supremacy. These laws prevented all individuals and businesses, regardless of their personal beliefs, from opening their doors and providing their services to African Americans. These laws enforced widespread discrimination and denied African Americans basic necessities. The government absolutely had a compelling interest to interfere. And that’s why the answer to this next question is very important...does religious freedom mean religious people get special rights? No. Religious freedom prevents the cultural majority from using the power of the state to impose their beliefs on others. This protects everyone—religious and nonreligious alike—from the government becoming so powerful that it can tell people what to think and how to act. Conscience has been considered the individual’s most sacred right. *A government that intrudes on conscience will not hesitate to intrude on our other freedoms* (italics mine). Additionally, forcing individuals and faith-based organizations to choose between living out their religious beliefs or serving their neighbors actually harms our communities. Did you know that an estimated 350,000 religious congregations operate schools, pregnancy resource centers, soup kitchens, drug addiction programs, homeless shelters, and adoption agencies? These efforts serve 70 million Americans each year and the value of their services are estimated at over a trillion dollars annually. Ultimately, everyone benefits from religious freedom. It covers all people equally—Christians, Jews, Muslims, agnostics, and atheists. Religious freedom preserves America’s diversity, where people of different faiths, worldviews, and beliefs can peacefully live together without fear of punishment from the government. Efforts to repress religious freedom is not just an attack on individual liberty and human dignity, but on the very foundation that has made America strong.” ~ Happy July! Pastor Randy



A Note From Susan

“Blessed Assurance”

The text of this hymn was written in 1873 by a prolific hymn writer named Fanny Crosby. Despite suffering blindness since early infancy, this “Queen of Gospel Song Writers” penned some 9000 hymns. In a lifetime that spanned every US President from the death of John Adams to the birth of Ronald Reagan, she championed education for the blind, campaigned against slavery, and dedicated her latter life to rescue mission work, bringing the hope of Christ to alcoholics, the homeless and the unemployed in the slums of Manhattan.

This is how the hymn came about: While visiting her friend Mrs. Joseph F. Knapp, Fanny was asked to listen to a melody she had just composed. She played it and then asked Fanny “What do you think the tune says?” “Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine” was the reply. Then drawing on her own storehouse of scriptural knowledge continued:

“Oh what a foretaste of glory divine,
Heir of Salvation, Purchase of God,
Born of His spirit, washed in His blood”.

In a short time, this sacred song was written by the two women and the year was 1873. Over 100 years later it is still sung over the world confidently telling out the testimony:

“This is my story, this is my song,
“Praising my Saviour all the day long”

Once you belong to Him, your relationship with God can never be severed. You are His son or daughter forever. You have been purchased by God through Jesus Christ. You are an heir of salvation. You’ve been born of His Spirit and washed in His blood. And those the Father has given to the Son, “No one can snatch them out of His hand.” Hallelujah! What blessed assurance. ~ Susan



A Note From Ashley

As we enter the month of July, the month of celebration of the independence of the US, I think it is important to highlight what Christ and the apostles had to say about our relationship with the government.

We are not called to be separatists that passively watch the government to do as it pleases. The goal of the church should be to bring America back to God, to bring the world back to God. One mode to accomplish this is by utilizing the checks/balances of the US government to legislate a moral society. We have seen a prime example of this in the potential overturning of Roe v. Wade in the Supreme Court. While there hasn’t been an official decision made, we can see what activism is truly able to do. The church and the government have the potential to complement each other. But it also has the potential to clash. In

John 18:36 Christ said his kingdom is not of this world. We know that our citizenship is ultimately in heaven. When Paul wrote to the church in Philippi, he said that for Christians, “our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20). We currently have dual citizenship.

Our physical bodies bind us to this world and our souls will not truly be fulfilled until we enter eternity.

Our perspective should always remain focused on heaven. And when the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man ultimately collide we know which side we belong to. With dual citizenship we were created with the unique responsibility to share the love/truth of Christ with non believers

The second aspect of our relationship as Christians with the government is that we should always remember that the role of the government is to restrain evil.¹

Chip Ingram reminded the youth and I of this in our current Sunday School Study called *Culture Shock*.

Romans 13:3–7 and 1 Peter 2:13–14 provide the most thorough treatment of a government’s purpose. Under God, governments are given the authority to use force for the purpose of punishing evil and rewarding good. We are responsible to vote for, advocate for, and support politicians that will restrain evil.

The government is ordained by God to accomplish this and the Church is “called to make authentic disciples, resulting in internal transformation of lives, values, and morals”.² We are asked to preach, teach, and model the message of redemption (Matt. 28:18-20).

To review our relationship with the government should be one based on dual citizenship, and a responsibility to vote for moral leaders that will restrain evil. The final aspect of this relationship is a reminder that the governing authorities are put there by God.

This is evident in Romans 13:1, “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.

Summer Bible Study Series

Contagious Community: Living Beyond Yourself
Wednesdays at 6:30 pm



**All men are invited to join us
for our annual Low Country
Boil July 30th @ 5:00 pm
in the Fellowship Hall!**

The authorities that exist have been established by God.” We have to remember that God has placed each and every politician, judge, police officer where they are for a reason. They could be there to test us, and they could be there to help us. As we celebrate this month of Independence, let’s remember what we are called to do! -Ashley Therrell

¹Ingram, Chip. *Culture Shock: The Church & Politics Part 1. Video Series.*

².... Pg. 209



Students 7th—12th grade

July 18th & July 25th

Share the love of Christ in our Community!!



Children 1st—6th Grade
Wednesdays @ 6:30 pm

**Fantastic Friday
July 15th @ 2pm
Splash Pad in
Lincolnton**



A Note From Brad

Life Began in a Garden

Unlike many catch phrases, this one is true. I’ve gardened or tried too many years now and believed God started mankind there to teach us. You can just plant and never work it. Weeds take over. Insects devour it. Soil becomes hardened. It amounts to nothing. I’ve started with good intentions then become distracted by work, travel, laziness, etc. No good growth. Usually there’s only been a meager harvest. I hate to say it, but I’ve had gardens like this. To have a good garden takes continuous work. There’s tilling, hoeing, battling insects and fertilize. You have to make it a priority, take time above other things to work it. Growth and harvest are the rewards and it looks good too. The lesson from the garden is that my work with Christ is the same. When I neglect it the “weeds” come. It takes work, prioritization above everything else. It reminds me of what a wonderful tool for Christian growth Sunday School is. God’s Word works the soil of my heart, cuts out weeds, draws me to Him. The fellowship with everyone fertilizes my heart and helps me to grow in my work for Christ. Come to Sunday School! Let’s grow in Christ together!

~ Brad Beam, Sunday School Director



A Note From Pastor Joe

Happy 4th! July 4th is always exciting. Elaine and I have never gone to big July 4th parties and celebrations. We usually celebrate with family or a small group of friends. Either way I always enjoy this holiday because of its significance. Think about what we have as a result of our freedom. Freedom to live as we choose, worship as we choose, socialize as we choose with whom we choose, work as we choose, get an education how we choose and where we choose, vote as we choose, etc., etc. We have been, and continue to be blessed. Think how unhappy we would be without these freedoms. How sad it would be if all decisions were made by our government. Where we live, how we live, how we worship, who we worship, where we worship, or even if we would be allowed to worship! No matter how we celebrate this July 4th holiday, let’s all make sure we take time to praise our heavenly Father that we are Americans and ask Him to use us to bring revival to this great nation that desperately needs it!! Three cheers for America! ~ Pastor Joe



We will not have our weekly Bible study for the month of July. We will resume the study on Thursday, August 11th

**ECLM Tuesday, July 12th—8:30 am
Lunch Following at a local restaurant**



JOY Trip to the Farmers Market in Asheville & Lunch at the Moose Café July 28th @ 10am

You are invited to join us for Sunday School each week at 9:45 am. Classes are available Nursery through Senior Adults!!

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE.



Sunday, July 10th Hector & Prudence Loughran, missionaries to Indonesia, will share in the morning service. Following the service join us for a covered dish lunch in the Fellowship Hall in their honor.

**Mission Trip - July 15th — 22nd
Keep everyone in prayer that will be going on this trip to Vermont.**