



Church Newsletter

First Baptist Church of
Niles

Volume 2/Issue 7

WHAT WE ARE DOING? AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO?

IN THIS ISSUE

WELCOME

Welcome to Volume 2 of the FBCN Newsletter or the "current new normal" editions.

This week's reading will be Psalm 83 (ESV), Titled, O God, Do Not Keep Silence.

A Song. A Psalm of Asaph.

O God, do not keep silence; do not hold your peace or be still, O God!² For behold, your enemies make an uproar; those who hate you have raised their heads.³ They lay crafty plans against your people; they consult together against your treasured ones.⁴ They say, "Come, let us wipe them out as a nation; let the name of Israel be remembered no more!"⁵ For they conspire with one accord; against you they make a covenant—⁶ the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites,⁷ Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;⁸ Asshur also has joined them; they are the strong arm of the children of Lot. *Selah*

⁹ Do to them as you did to Midian, as to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon, ¹⁰ who were destroyed at En-dor, who became dung for the ground.¹¹ Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, all their

princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,¹² who said, "Let us take possession for ourselves of the pastures of God."

¹³ O my God, make them like whirling dust, like chaff before the wind.

¹⁴ As fire consumes the forest, as the flame sets the mountains ablaze,¹⁵ so may you pursue them with your tempest and terrify them with your hurricane!¹⁶ Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek your name, O LORD. ¹⁷ Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever; let them perish in disgrace, ¹⁸ that they may know that you alone, whose name is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth.

A Psalm of Asaph. Who is Asaph? Asaph is the name of three men in the Old Testament, of whom one is the reputed author of Psalms 50 and 73 through 83. He was one of David's three chief musicians, the other two being Heman, and Ethan or Jeduthun, and we first hear of him when the ark was taken to Jerusalem (I Chronicles 15:16-19). He conducted with cymbals the music performed in the tent where the ark was housed (I Chronicles 16:4-5, I Chronicles 16:7, I Chronicles 16:37), while his two coadjutors discharged the same office at Gibeon (I Chronicles 16:41-42). In I Chronicles 25:1 ff. we are told that four of his sons were

appointed to conduct under him detachments of the great chorus, the families of Heman and Jeduthun also furnishing leaders, and all took part at the dedication of the temple (II Chronicles 5:12). A., H., and J. were called the king's seers (I Ch. 25; II Chronicles 35:15), no doubt an official title of rank or dignity. The "Sons of Asaph" are mentioned in later times. They formed a guild, and played a prominent part at each revival of the national religion.

Join us for a virtual prayer meeting on Wednesdays at 7:00pm.

Wednesday Bible Study ([Click Here](#))

Meeting ID: 899 2251 1230

Password: 409807

One tap mobile

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"They must count the cost, and be prepared to live lives of privation, of toil, and perhaps of loneliness and danger. They will need to trust God to meet their need of sickness as well as in health, since it may sometimes be impossible to secure expert medical aid. But if they are faithful servants, they will find in Christ and in His Word a fulness, a meetness, a preciousness, a joy and strength, that will far outweigh any sacrifice they may be called upon to make for Him."

-The Overseas Manual of the China Inland Mission Overseas Missionary Fellowship (1955), p. 4.

In my thoughts and prayers this week I was challenged by the above quote which moved me to think about the current crises that the world is currently enduring and what part should I play in it as a Christian? Everyday we hear, see and read accounts of people proclaiming their rights. In my days of working with Christian youth we became aware of an atmosphere of "privilege" creeping into the lives of the youth group. Coming from a homogenous middle to upper class environment we tried various ways to expose them to the "real world" some of which bordered on the fringe of insanity. But we were trying to make them understand and develop the impact they would have on society when they graduated to adulthood. One such exercise was to read and discuss the book, "Have We No Rights?," by Mabel Williamson.

In her chapter titled "Ordinary Safeguards of Good Health" she closes with the following. "This is not a chapter on missionary health. It does not purpose to instruct you in the rules of hygiene. Rather it inquires into attitudes. Is the missionary to be as particular as he can about everything (fussy, some may call it), or should his faith be great enough so that he overlooks the rules of the doctors? Or perhaps, are there times when the one attitude is desirable, and times for the other?

The Lord of the harvest has sent us forth. *A dead laborer, or even a sick one, is not much use.* It is surely our duty to take all sensible precautions, and whenever possible to use the safeguards to health with which modern science has provided us. We have no right at all to disobey the rules of hygiene just because we happen to feel like it. But on the other hand, when those among whom we are ministering, people whose training is different from ours, who have no conception of modern hygiene, out of the love in their hearts provide us with things to eat and drink, surely then is the time to say with Paul, "asking no questions for conscience' sake" (I Cor. 10:27). Surely, in cases where adhering strictly to the rules of hygiene would hinder the fulfilling of our commission, we can trust the One who sent us forth to look after us." Mabel Williamson, *Have We No Rights?*, (Moody Press, Chicago 1957) pp. 30-31

So why is this laying heavy on my mind? Because I am seeing the same idea of "privilege" being touted by fellow Christian adults across our country some 20 years later. And I wonder where have we gone wrong in our discipleship? The word respect and the principle of dying to oneself seem to have lost their meaning. I wonder how that is undermining our testimony and our impact on the unchurched/unsaved millions in our world? Looking at the surrounding verses from I Cor. 10:27 mentioned earlier, we get instruction on how we are supposed to act.

²⁷ If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. ²⁸ But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience— ²⁹ I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience? ³⁰ If I partake with

thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks? ³¹ So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. ³² Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, ³³ just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved." 1 Corinthians 10:27-33.

A new Huffington Post poll finds most Americans consider wearing a mask near others a sign of respect and a matter of public health,

I recently read an article titled, "Face Masks: The New Sackcloth?" The correlation makes perfect sense. What was a sackcloth? It was an itchy fabric made of goat's hair donned as an indication of repentance, mourning, inability, and humility (e.g. 1 Kings 21, Esther 4, Isaiah 37, Lamentations 2, Joel 1, Daniel 9, Revelation 11).

Facemasks in and of themselves, like sackcloth are uncomfortable and hot especially during the summer months and they don't do much to boost our egos even if they are designer masks.

What might make the wearing of facemasks tolerable is that when we put them on we consider the inward posture of our hearts. What sackcloth did in biblical times was to give those who donned them a better sense of the whole person. It prevented them from dividing the spiritual from the physical the way we do. They were willing to humble themselves when they saw that God's mercy was their only hope. The outward physical expression helped to shape the inward man.

We speak of wanting to know God's will or purpose for our lives and yet I wonder if we are praying to know God's will or purposes in this Pandemic. God always wants us to be humble. *If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. 2 Chronicles 7:14.* We know the Lord wants to humble us; and if we are honest we know that he is humbling us through this Pandemic. As proud and free Americans to willingly cover our faces takes humility. Just the thought of wearing a mask at worship and not being able to sing is abhorant. Yet again, in biblical times, the donning of awkward and embarrassing attire in public was an expression of prayerful submission and dependence before God.

From an article in a 1950's *Newsweek Magazine*, Margaret Halsey wrote an article titled, "What's Wrong With Me, Me, Me?" In it she strongly warned about America's preoccupation with self and their "search for identity" which was bound to fail as she reasoned that one's identity is made through hard choices, work and *commitment* to others.

Focusing on those last three words, "commitment to others," I refer back to the word respect and dying to oneself mentioned earlier. If we just look at one aspect of restrictions and requirements that is being asked of us, the wearing of face coverings. Why is that so hard? I've seen and heard the excuses of why wearing a mask goes against a person's constitutional rights.

"Costco Karen," for instance, staged a sit-in in a Costco entrance in Hillsboro, Oregon after she refused to wear a mask, yelling "I am an American ... I have rights."

A group called Health Freedom Idaho organized a protest against a Boise, Idaho, mask mandate. One protester

said, "I'm afraid where this country is headed if we just all roll over and abide by control that goes against our constitutional rights."

As one protester said, "The coronavirus doesn't override the Constitution."

As John E. Finn, Professor Emeritus of Government, Wesleyan University wrote this past week, "It is not always clear why anti-maskers think government orders requiring face coverings in public spaces or those put in place by private businesses violate their constitutional rights, much less what they think those rights are.

They mistakenly believe that mandatory masks violate the First Amendment right to speech, assembly, and especially association and mandatory masks violate a person's constitutional right to liberty and to make decisions about how to manage their own health and bodily integrity.

The First Amendment protects freedom of speech, press, petition, assembly and religion.

All constitutional rights are subject to the government's authority to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community. The authority conferred upon the states by the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution is called the "police power."

Police power describes the basic right of Governments to make laws and regulations for the benefit of their communities. The Supreme Court has long held that protecting public health is sufficient reason to institute measures that might otherwise violate the First Amendment or other provisions in the Bill of Rights."

It doesn't matter what you believe about wearing masks — *it matters what those around you believe about wearing masks*. Because we aren't being asked to wear masks to protect ourselves, we are asked to wear masks to protect

others. So when people see you not wearing a mask, those who agree with you might think you are smart and free. But those who believe the reasons government officials and scientists give us for wearing masks, those people look at you and think — "that person doesn't care if I die."

"Freedom has been defined as the right of enjoying all the privileges of membership or citizenship, the right or the power to engage in certain actions without control or interference. The Bible says we (Christians) have freedom in Christ, and that is for freedom that Christ has set us free (Galatians 5:1) We have this freedom if we remain in (believe, adhere to and obey) His word. But what, exactly, is this freedom that we have in Christ? Even apart from Christ, mankind has a natural freedom to make decisions and choices and to think and say anything he wants. Our freedom in Christ must be a different kind of expression of freedom."

~ James R. Aist

When one speaks of freedom as an American they are using the Constitution as the foundation of their arguments. It is understandable that non-believers, atheists, Jews, Muslims and Hindus would choose the constitution over the Christian Bible. However, for someone who believes in the perfection of the Bible and upholds the Constitution as the supreme law of the land. It makes no sense whatsoever. The Constitution has proven itself flawed, in need of amendment and worse, Biblically errant. It is after all, a man-created and inspired document and not a God-breathed document.

So as Christians what are we to do? What actions should we be taking? What should we be saying? The New Coronavirus has forced many Christians out of their comfort zones into the real-life implications of how to balance their Christianity with being a law-abiding citizen of the United States. This isn't in itself a bad thing, as a matter of fact, it should cause us to dig deeper into the

type of reaction required of us. Looking at Romans 13:1, “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.” It appears to me that many Christians I know are living or espousing a grey agenda. By this I mean they are attempting to meld biblical commands with social or governmental directives. I believe Revelation 3:15 & 16 describes this state of being perfectly, “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.” We know that this was written to the Laodicean Church but it applies to us today. I believe Adam Clarke summarizes it best. “In a word, they were listless and indifferent, and seemed to care little whether heathenism or Christianity prevailed. Though they felt little zeal either for the salvation of their own souls or that of others, yet they had such a general conviction of the truth and importance of Christianity, that they could not readily give it up.” The Laodiceans were fence sitting with a leg on either side of the fence. In other words, they were hedging their bets by being non-committal to either side. I was a member of a church where the sermons were preached in such a way that no matter what you believed the message rang true and all sides of an issue were satisfied.

We are in the midst of this Pandemic, so how do we behave? What do we believe? Are we to be faithful to God at the expense of obeying the law? We are living in a time when many Christians are probing the subject of civil disobedience without giving that name to it. They are choosing sides and without realizing it, they are using their religious beliefs or what they determine are their beliefs and marrying them with secular law.

The bottom line for Christians is this: Even if you believe that the fear surrounding COVID-19 is not justified, that fear is still real. And Jesus didn't

insult or belittle people who were afraid. He went out of his way to walk with them. Jesus went out of his way to show — in his flesh — that their lives mattered to him. He fed people, even though they'd get hungry again. He healed people, even though they'd get sick again. He raised people from the dead, even though they'd die again. He cared for them in practical ways that showed his love for them. He didn't mock those who were afraid. He relieved their fears.

So as a Christian, you should be wearing a mask — even if you do think they are useless because scripture backs this up — scripture commands those who are strong to take care of those who are weak. Scripture teaches believers to voluntarily limit our freedoms for the sake of others. Scripture instructs that we should obey local authorities. Our evangelistic training instructs about becoming “all things to all people” in order to proclaim Christ.

It all boils down to this. As Christians

“...God has ordained the two governments, the spiritual which fashions true Christians and just persons through the Holy Spirit under Christ, and the secular government which holds the Unchristian and wicked in check and forces them to keep the peace outwardly.... Therefore care must be taken to keep these two governments distinct....” Martin Luther, *On Secular Authority: How Far Does the Obedience Owed to it Extend?*, Harro Hopfl, translation, *Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 1993) pp. 10-12.

“We have established that there are two governments to which mankind is subject. ...the spiritual kingdom of Christ and civil government are things far removed from one another. ...[Secular] government and the spiritual and internal kingdom of Christ are quite distinct.”

John Calvin, *Calvin on Civil Government*, Book IV, Chapter 20, Harro Hopfl, translation, *Luther and Calvin on Secular*

Authority (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 1993) pp. 47-49.

R.C Sproul wrote the following,

“The great theologian Augustine said that government is a necessary evil, that it is necessary because of evil. And most theologians in the history of the church have said that human evil is the reason even corrupt government is better than no government at all. The function of government is to restrain evil and to maintain, uphold, and protect the sanctity of life and of property. Given this function, the Christian understands that government is ordained of God, and so Christians, first of all, are called to respect whatever it is that God institutes and ordains.

For God's sake we are called to be model citizens. We are told to bend over backwards to honor the king or be obedient to the civil magistrates. That doesn't mean a slavish obedience to the civil magistrates. There are occasions on which Christians not only may but must disobey the civil magistrates. Anytime a civil government requires a Christian to do what God forbids or forbids them to do what God commands, then the person must disobey. But our basic posture toward government, according to the New Testament, is to be submissive and obedient citizens of the state. We are also given the duty of praying for earthly governments that they may fulfill the tasks God has given to them.”

Finally. One often hears that the Bill of Rights was based upon God-given rights. In 1954, Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren alleged the following comparison: “I believe the entire Bill of Rights came into being because of the knowledge our forefathers had of the Bible and their belief in it: freedom of belief, of expression, of assembly, of petition, the dignity of the individual, the sanctity of the home, equal justice under law, and the reservation of powers to the people...” Earl Warren, quoted in Jim

Nelson Blacks book, *When Nations Die: Ten Warning Signs of a Culture in Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1994) p. 253.

“Except for home sanctity and equal justice, I would challenge the reader to find anything in the Bible that resembles Warren’s list, let alone anything described as a right. How could the Bill of Rights have been based upon God-given rights when much of what is contained in the first ten Amendments is antithetical to God’s morality? To declare that the Bill of Rights are God-given is another futile attempt to Christianize the Constitution. The Scriptures provide no evidence of God-given (or unalienable) rights. Even life and liberty are not rights, but rather responsibilities delegated by God. Of course, rights are much more popular than responsibilities. Everyone, including homosexuals and infant murderers, demand their rights, but few are interested in fulfilling their responsibilities.

The Puritan idea of rights and liberty was quite different from what the framers had in mind: John Winthrop [first governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony] ... reminded his fellow-citizens of Massachusetts that a doctrine of civil rights [as in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights] which looked to natural or sinful man as its source and guardian [as in the Preamble] was actually destructive of that very liberty which they were seeking to protect. True freedom can never be found in institutions which are under the direction of sinful men, but only in the redemption wrought for man by Jesus Christ. Christ, not man, is the sole source and guarantee of true

liberty.” C. Gregg Singer, *A Theological Interpretation of American History*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company 1964) p.19.

In the end, the object of citing examples that continue to remain at the forefront of our everyday news cycle is to challenge us to use our voices. We are to model Christ in our “words” and “actions.” We are to rally around the cause that is dear to our hearts, the proclamation of the gospel. We don’t need banners or a crowd. The most effective way is changing a life one by one. As Christians we need to stop fence-sitting and stop sermonizing on our personal beliefs by using a man-based system in an attempt to defend our spiritual beliefs. America- the land of freedom and opportunity! The land where everyone’s rights are respected! We pride ourselves, as Americans, on the fact that everyone has the right to live his/her own life as he/she pleases with the caveat that it doesn’t infringe on the rights of someone else. Your rights...My Rights...Whose rights?

Who or what are you going to follow?

Will it be Genesis 1:1, “*In the beginning, God*” or “*We the People*”





PRAYER LIST

- ✓ Continuing Prayers for loss: All the families that have lost loved ones this past year. Remember those who have recently lost loved ones due to COVID 19.
- ✓ Continuing Prayers for physical needs: Rita McManus, Maria Hatfield, Erwin and Elizabeth Lickman, Gloria-Lynn Fernandez, Betty Matson, Ronaldo Claveria
- ✓ Continuing Prayers for our Ministry Needs: The Pastoral Search Committee, Pulpit Supply, Our Deacons, Financial support
- ✓ Continuing Prayers for our Sister Ministries: BIEM Ministries, Orchard Church, Pastors Davis, Billow, Eddy, Vitel
- ✓ Continuing Prayers for Spiritual Needs: Leonard Hatfield, Carol Pelfrey's family, Daniel Ruhlman, George Bizadellis

- ✓ Continuing Prayers for: The spread of the Gospel, Our Government, Our Nation, Our Community, Our Neighbors, Our Families, Pray for our members that have lost employment and for those who still have jobs and need to interact with others on a daily basis. Pray for those still working that God will protect. Lift up all our health professionals and their families who are on the front line of this pandemic especially Mylin and Errol Lardizabal and Liza Mitchell.

NEW

- ✓ Erwin Lickmann is requesting prayer for decisions to be made regarding the future living arrangements for himself and Elizabeth. A decision needs to be made soon as Elizabeth's health and mental faculties are failing. Also the sale of his condominium.
- ✓ Alex Figueroa, (relative of Al Nuzikowski) Final year medical student coming to Chicago for a second opinion regarding necessary eye surgery.

If you have prayer requests or updates on your family, we encourage you to submit them to the Newsletter email address at the end of this newsletter.

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