

“SCOTUS Opinion: So What? So What’s Next?”

Romans 1:16–32

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

August 9, 2015 – Evening Sermon

I’ll be going over where we find ourselves at this point in history. As a pastor, I know that overall there needs to be a basic expositional ministry of God’s Word and that is what God’s people need. What is going on in the culture cannot dictate to the pulpit for it’s God’s Word that dictates from the pulpit. That is why the normal course is just expositional preaching of God’s Word or even when we’re doing topic we go to passages of Scriptures to develop those topics. I also think that pastors have a responsibility to be aware of what is going on these days particularly when it is crisis moments in which there are sea changes in the culture. There are things that have taken place that at least need to be addressed and the church of Jesus Christ needs to move forward knowing what it is now facing, where its ministering in its context. So you can’t let the culture dictate the pulpit but you also have to know the context in which you’re living and the challenges people are facing in the public square, in life, in their businesses etc. and what to anticipate is coming. No one wants to be an alarmist but you need to sound the alarm when the alarm is there. If you were in a building that caught on fire and there was an alarm you would pull it so that people could be aware and respond to what was happening in that building. That’s a little bit of the way I feel right now.

There was a Supreme Court decision that was made. I think it was a monumental decision with a “ruling” and the issue of an “opinion” that was made. It was basically stated that marriage was a freedom in our country that must not be denied to people who have chosen to make their identity a practice of same sex. Then we as a culture are free to redefine marriage as we so please in light of those who would choose such an identity. While of course those engaged in sexual addictions and practices that are destructive we always ought to be ready to minister to, love, and care with the love of Christ. We also have a responsibility to speak to the culture at large because of the love for our neighbors in terms of what is foundational and marriage is not a private institution of the church. It is a creation ordinance that God Himself designed and defined. Whenever you set aside any creation law of God it is always to the detriment of the individual, culture and the nation. You cannot break God’s law without God’s law breaking you. So if we love people we have to speak to it.

So how do we do it in light of that Supreme Court decision? I plan to read a passage of Scripture that I feel is appropriate in terms of where we are, in a moment and then I’ll make some remarks but I want to set this in a broader context within our nation and the Supreme Court. I find it interesting that when Thomas Jefferson read the Constitution he said he found one fearful moment as he read it and that is the ultimate tyranny of the Supreme Court as it becomes an unaccountable body of legislating law in the nation. James Madison, the architect of the Constitution, while arguing against that being the role of the Supreme Court, also saw the danger and he wrote upon it. There was a large case dealing with this called Marbury vs. Madison in which it dealt with the role of the Supreme Court.

That set the course for the Supreme Court who now issues opinions. So those of you who dwell in this US, when the Supreme Court brings a ruling on a case and then

gives its opinion in terms of law that is what it is. It's an opinion. The very next day the papers read 'same sex marriage is now the law of the land.' I do not believe that is true. I believe that in our Constitution it is an opinion of our Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is not a legislative body declaring law. It is an arbiter, an umpire ruling and making opinions about law. You the people, through your elected representatives called the Congress, are where laws are made and only there are they made. It is not by the Supreme Court. Yet we have a history where we have treated the Supreme Court as the law of the land to our detriment.

In October of 1857 there was a Supreme Court case that was issued called the Dred Scott decision and the church of Jesus Christ was not only ill prepared to respond to that ungodly, immoral decision of the Supreme Court but it chose not to respond. I would be so bold to say is of the six best preachers of the US at that time, five of them were Presbyterians. One was a good Baptist but of the Presbyterians they were all in the South and they had become so assimilated in the southern culture that when they read that case that was not rooted in Constitutional law where a man was not a man but a piece of property and affirmed man stealing, instead of making a stand Biblically they were silent and supported it because of the pressure of the culture. I believe if those ministers had been prepared to speak out in 1857 we might have saved 600,000 lives.

One man said it was a case that was wrong and while I don't agree with the way he handled it, he did not accept it as the law of the land and his name was Abraham Lincoln. He said it was a wrong law and wrongly interpreted even if one were to consider it a law. Those with Biblical insight could have identified this as man stealing, spoke to the culture and saved us from it just the way John Newton took a legislator under his wing by the name of William Wilberforce and in over 28 years he delivered England from the horror of slavery through proper legislation. We did not do that when this Dred Scott decision came up and we weren't prepared as the church nor was the leadership. Many of my brothers hid behind the "spirituality" of the church but the church only handled its matters and did not speak to the state. While the church is not the state, the church is to speak to the state. It doesn't assume being the state any more than it assumes being your family but it speaks to your family and the state from the Word of God.

There are many other cases I could point to but I'll point to a second one where we were ill prepared in the evangelical church in January of 1973, the Roe v. Wade decision. Again they were declaring a person not a person and that was the unborn in the womb. Since then we've lost 60 million lives and still counting. Because we were not ready we now live in a coarsened culture where we now have abortion clinics that exist to kill the babies in such a way that they have also become like Fritos chop shop to carve up a stolen car to give the parts away to someone, bargaining for how much they can get.

Don't think these things have no impact. Every generation influenced by Christianity saw its responsibility to make sacrifices for the benefit of the lives of those in the coming generations, for that was our whole building campaign about five years ago. You responded to it because you thought Biblically and you were willing to sacrifice for coming generations. You now live in a culture that sacrifices the coming generation just to add five years to our own lives, instead of us sacrificing for the coming. So we lost the sanctity of life and one's personhood where you're made in the image of God.

Let me say we weren't ready. Now to some credit anyway, God brought conviction and we went back to the Book and realized that a person is a person when they are conceived and not just when they take that first breath. We went to the Scriptures and understood why God put protection for the unborn in the Old Testament. We have since engaged in a ministry to undue an ungodly opinion that was a legal fabrication under political pressure in 1973, just the way it was in 1857. It was a legal fabrication that was conformed to public opinion at the time. The church in 1857 was afraid of the culture shapers of its day and did not seek and in 1973 we weren't ready to speak. Thankfully many evangelicals have found their footing on this matter with crisis pregnancy ministries, adoption ministries and entering into the public square to argue for the sanctity of life.

Now we have another such decision in 2015. That decision consigns children to fatherless and motherless homes that totally turn marriage into an absurdity – covenantal, conjugal, heterosexual, monogamous marriage. It cannot stop at same sex marriage for there is no frame work to stop it at same sex marriage. It will continue to descend into marital chaos which will be family chaos which will be cultural chaos. So how will we respond and what will we do in those moments? How should we respond? I confess I have struggled with this because I'm not sure what model to use.

I feel a little bit like Israel when they went away to battle and I'm not saying America is Israel but when Israel used to be able to walk around Jerusalem and sing the songs of Zion now are off into Babylon surrounded by all this paganism. Jeremiah records how do we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land. I almost feel like I'm in a strange land. Francis Schaeffer warned of the slippery slope into the secularization of this country to a post Christian nation. He was right in that is what happened but he was wrong in thinking it was going to stop at post Christian because we're beyond post Christian for this is a neo-pagan culture. We have abandoned the sanctity of life, of marriage, of family and all of those things to go back to the barbarianism, the vandalism and sexual anarchy of our forbearers. There is no other way to paint it but there.

We have legally attempted to codify it and culturally embraced it. We used to be a current community shaper in how we loved sinners, truth and the Gospel but we're not one anymore. The salt has lost its saltiness and we have shrouded the light. There are many reasons why we're no longer shaping the culture. We have been marginalized and much of it has been due to the way we have embraced pastor-celebrityism, church growth pragmatism and almost anything and everything while trying to hold to evangelical truth but we have lost what it means to be the church of Jesus Christ, the embassy of the Kingdom in this world. Therefore world has spun right by us into neo-paganism and barely tips its hat to us because we no longer provide the influencers in the academic, political and media community. We have become an oddity, a museum that is tolerated.

So how should we respond to that? I know this is hard to understand where we live and I am so grateful for where I live but if you travel the breath of this country don't by any means think that Christianity is a majoritarian position nor even by common grace Biblical world and life view is not the majority opinion. Just ask any professor at any college for they will tell you that the percentage of the students that they get in their freshman classes that less than a handful would believe in anything called absolute truth. Relativism, humanism and secularism are now the religion of the day. We live in a secular, narcissistic, humanist culture. We are grateful for those places where it hasn't

come to full fruition. We no longer have freedom ordered by law but we now have freedom governed only by what gratifies me. Our new bill of rights is unfettered, personal gratification primarily in sexual eroticism. That is the warp of the culture we live in today.

We can be angry at sin all we want to but we should not be amazed that the world lives like the world when the instruments of grace are no longer pouring the power of grace into the culture. We give our one note Gospel message that plays right into the narcissistic culture and it's really all about you, instead of the full throated Gospel where salvation is a free gift that cost you everything including you, as you now surrender your life to Christ. Because we have lost that we have lost the saltiness and because we've lost that we have shrouded the light.

The Gospel of grace comes with two rivers. River number one is redeeming grace when people are being evangelized and discipled by the power of the Gospel of grace. River number two is the insights and the blessings of the Gospel that flow in common grace into a culture as we speak the truth of God's creation law into the culture – the sanctity of life, rest, work, sexuality in the context of marriage defined as one man, one woman committed for one life. We declare to the culture that they don't have to make their own identity for that's a fool's errand for you have been given an identity. You are made in the image of God. When you come to Christ you have a whole new identity where you are in Christ and Christ is in you and that is your Hope of glory. It is that ministry that we must be called back to.

So why would be angry at the world when the world acts like the world because the only thing that every restrains an individual or a culture from acting out on its depravity and descending into its depravity is the presence of redeeming grace and common grace and we have dammed up both those rivers. Therefore they are not flowing in the culture. So on the one hand the answer is that we need to stay on message, on mission and in ministry but we can't do it as business as usual because we have not been doing business well as usual.

So recently I wrote a blog on 'why I am outraged.' I am not outraged because the world is the world or because sinners promote sin. I am outraged because of what has happened in my country after all of the blessings of God's kindness and providence over decades upon decades and it has happened in my watch. I am outraged at what I'm about to hand off to my children and my grandchildren but that outrage doesn't lead me to anger against people, it leads me to lament. When it leads me to lament it needs to lead me and I pray you along with me, to repentance. So where do we start? On the one hand I feel like I was living in Jerusalem and I have squandered it away so that now I'm in Babylon.

So how do we live as exiles in a nation? Exiles don't mean that we go sit in a corner. Exile means that we engage. Jeremiah told the people to go plant gardens and build houses, marry, have children. You be a blessing to that city, to that nation, not because you adopt their world and life view but because you bring with love the truth of a Biblical world and life view to that culture. So live for Me not in a corner but in that culture. Be in the world but not of the world.

Recently I've gone back to study that great Reformation that swept Scotland in the 16th century. By the 17th century the state had stepped in to take over the church. At a chapel in Scotland our forbearers wrote the solemn league of covenants and signed it

literally with their own blood. On the very table they signed this covenant was the very place they were prepared for burial because they were put to death for saying their allegiance was to Christ for He alone has the cross and the crown for our lives. The state will not dictate what we believe and how we live for our Savior who died for us on the cross.

I feel very uncomfortable talking about the persecution of the church in the United States because if it is, it's a soft persecution right now. If you want to see the real deal go to the sands of the Mediterranean, Assyria, North Africa, or northern Uganda. I have seen real persecution one time in my life in the 1980s in Uganda where God's people stood strong for Christ under the onslaughts of the Nubian secret police of Idi Amin and Obote. I was there when the machine gun fire went off in the mid 80s. Now I've seen the great revival that has swept Uganda. So I by no means want to call what we live in today persecution but on the other hand I think you need to know what's coming.

So I will ring the alarm bell without being the alarmist and without overstating the facts. I want to read the entire text of a nation bereft of grace and when a nation or a culture is bereft of grace, what happens to it when the church of Jesus Christ does not bring the river of redeeming grace and common grace? Let's look at Romans 1.

Romans 1:16-27 says [16] *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [17] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

[18] For the wrath of God is revealed (notice the present tense) from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. [19] For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. [20] For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. [21] For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God (as He revealed Himself in creation) or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. [22] Claiming to be wise, they became fools, [23] and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things (this is idolatry – false worship of man-made gods).

[24] Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, (does the act of immorality of heterosexuality bring judgment in a culture – yes, but its prevalence is the evidence that God has already brought judgment – the acts themselves are God's judgment, giving them over to it) [25] because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature (humanism) rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

*[26] For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; [27] and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing **shameless** acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. Now they go to another exchange and that exchange is now the normalization of the abnormal sexually. So the first judgment from God was of sexual promiscuity of natural sex. The second judgment is the sexual perversion of*

unnatural sex and shamelessly embraced by the culture. When you break God's Law it will break you physically, spiritually and emotionally. No law passed by any nation will ever undue it.

Romans 1:28-32 says [28] *And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. [29] They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, [30] slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, [31] foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. [32] Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval (you might call that Supreme Court opinions) to those who practice them.*

It's an interesting way this text starts, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God..." Why? I love the Gospel so why do you say I'm not ashamed of the Gospel. Why don't you just say I love the Gospel? Why does he say it that way? I love my wife Cindy but I can't ever remember a time I said 'I'm not ashamed of Cindy.' If I did and she was nearby it would probably be the last time I'd say anything.

What is the answer to a culture that descends into socially approved depravity? It is a people who come to a shameless culture not ashamed of the Gospel. The answer to a culture that embraces depravity culturally, legally, judicially in all of its forms, are God's people in that culture who are not ashamed of the Gospel. You can rest assured that a culture who shamelessly embraces rebellion against God, even those glorious creation ordinances of sexuality, family and marriage in life, will try to make you ashamed of the Gospel.

Paul is on his way to Rome and he is announcing 'I'm coming and I've got a note I'm going to play on the Gospel trumpet. It's the Gospel and I'm going to play it clearly, loudly and thoughtfully, not arrogantly, boisterously but clearly I'm not ashamed of the Gospel.' That's the answer for you. Do I want another Supreme Court justice to be appointed with more sense? Absolutely, but that's not the answer. It is God's people unashamed of the Gospel and from that Gospel flows two rivers – the river of redeeming grace that changes lives and the river of common grace that attempts to love our neighbors even though they don't yet love Christ, by speaking truth in love to that culture.

I want to highly commend to you my dear friend Os Guinness' books, The American Hour and A Free People's Suicide. One of the things I tell every missionary is to understand the culture. I am trying to give us an understanding of our present culture. To understand it I believe you have to see a bigger context. You live in a nation in which your forbearers were unbelievably effective. They weren't the majority 18th century but they were unbelievably effective.

Here is what God has done providentially for this nation. Number one God has brought something that gave birth to this nation called the Reformation and the Gospel Awakening of the 18th century with preachers like Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield, Samuel Davies and others. That Gospel Awakening from 1735 to 1765 probably is the most powerful thing that gave birth to this nation. Then came a second great awakening after the effects of the first one had been lost and the country had descended back into depravity by the end of the 18th century and the church had become dominated with the heresy of Unitarian Universalism. Then God raised up another group of great preachers

and churches and a second great awakening that basically ebbed and flowed from 1785 all the way to 1880. We have been living off of the capital of those two awakenings.

In the context of that the church spoke not only to individuals about redeeming grace but they spoke to the culture at large. I want to be clear. We are not in a culture war. The culture is a battlefield. We are in a spiritual war and the power of the weapons of the Spirit and the Gospel must be brought to bear by going to people to win them to Christ, disciple them and speaking to the culture. That we love people enough to speak to matters of public policy, lovingly, persuasively and thoughtfully.

It is no accident that when our Declaration of Independence was read in Britain the parliamentarian stood up and said "Cousin America has run off with a Presbyterian parson." Jonathan Witherspoon's hands are all over thirteen of those delegates. The reasons Thomas Jefferson is restrained from leading us off into the chaos of the French Revolution which he so much admired and that great brain he had, was because of the influence of George Washington, John Adams, Samuel Adams and John Witherspoon upon him as they sat down with him on that first draft of the Declaration of Independence. In other words, they were not only winning people to Christ but your forbearers were engaged in public policy and the public square.

So we won our freedom and the key date is July 2, 1776 which was the day they approved it, it was published on July 8 and signed on July 4. So we won our freedom on the foundation of the Declaration of Independence. France did the same thing but they descended into utter chaos and anarchy. Why? They didn't take step two but we did. You then go from 1776 to 1787 and then we ordered our freedom. It wasn't a freedom of libertinism but it was a freedom of liberty under law. We put in place a covenant as a people. It was called the Constitution of the United States of America. So we won our freedom with the Declaration of Independence and note the four references of God's kindness and providence to this nation. Then we ordered our freedom in 1787.

But how do you pass it on to generation after generation? There was a third step. Os says we sustained our freedom. I would say we mobilized and matured our freedom. We made sure that was done through the third document, the Bill of Rights. The most important part of the Bill of Rights are the six freedoms in the first amendment. The most important of those freedoms in the first amendment is the first freedom that the nation will not make any laws to establish a national church nor will they make any laws to debase it, debar it, disregard it, or to retard its free exercise.

That's how we kept maturing our freedom so that we saw how stupid it is for us to have a Declaration of Independence and have 12 percent of our population under the bonds of man stealing chattel slavery. Then we saw how stupid it was that a woman who is made in the image of God cannot enjoy the legal rights of voting and owning property. There was that constant maturing of freedom that took place. The reason our freedom matured and was handed off to generation after generation was because of the Bill of Rights and the first amendment which is now being reinterpreted from the free exercise of religion to the free worship and private belief of religion and in the public square you can only do and say what we approve.

If you don't believe that is true then ask the man who just was fired in Atlanta, the fire chief or go ask the man who has been counselling inmates in Kentucky who was just told that he could no longer counsel if he was going to call sexual activity sin and he had been doing this ministry for over 20 years. In other words, the government is now telling

him what he can believe, say and not freely exercise. So here are these moments that we won our freedom, ordered our freedom and with the Bill of Rights it then moves forward. That is why the church is not taxed.

I do want to say that I'm not speaking for our elders. Our elders will guide and guard this church and right now they are working on documents to try and make sure that our ministries are appropriately directed and guided in the coming days. I will tell you that I will never be a part of paying any tax from this church to this government. I do not want them to tax me. It's not because I'm looking for you to have tax exemption for your giving. I know what my forbearers knew and that is once you have the power to tax you have the power to control. I do not want one tax dollar to be given to Briarwood and I do not want to give one tax dollar from Briarwood to the government of this United States. That is absolutely crucial. They understood the free exercise of religion. Taxation is control. We are not tax exempt because we're philanthropic but I hope we're philanthropic for we give in various ways in this church to help others. We are tax exempt because the government does not have the right to control the church.

So here we are in a different day in which the state government is now taking a ruling and they are already giving courses in the Department of Justice for what they are going to do. This is what I think is going to happen. I believe that this Supreme Court decision is now going to move into the culture in which sexual choices are going to become a civil rights issue. Do I believe homosexuality is biologically determined? No I don't for there is no scientific evidence. In fact it has been totally disproven and even if you're a Darwinian evolutionist how in the world could it possibly populate itself from generation to generation. It is not a genetic marker. It's a choice. By the way, the inclination is the same inclination I had to sexual sin. It's a sin nature issue. The answer is the power of the Gospel and I want to bring the Gospel to people. That is what we're called to do.

In the meantime, you will be pressured to abandon the Biblical ethic that sex is between a man and woman in marriage. Natural sex outside of marriage is sin as well as unnatural sex outside the Biblical definition of marriage. Where will the pressure come first? It will come to social conservatives. Social conservatives are going to melt just like the mist on a summer morning because they have no world and life view to hold onto. Traditionalists will melt. The next thing will be against believers in the public square – in their vocation and job. That is why we are trying as a church to prepare you, protect you and disciple you so that you will be able to stand for Christ in that day. I believe that day is coming unless we have Christian lower magistrates who will say to their superiors 'unjust laws do not have to be obeyed.' We have seen some that have done that – judges, governors and mayors.

If that doesn't happen then you're going to face the pressure in the workplace and that has already happened for all you need to ask are the bakers, wedding photographers and florists. The next place will be our institutions, our schools, our adoption agencies and our hospitals. One might be thinking I'm an alarmist but just ask the sisters of the poor. If the arm of the government in addressing issues of sexuality, life, marriage and family that our institutions like the ones I've just mentioned, will be called to conform. So we need to be ready at that point. Then it will come to the churches and then the pulpits.

I think we're already past the social conservatives. We're already seeing it in the lives of believers in the workplace and we're already seeing it in our institutions and it is increasing and growing very clearly. We have already heard one of our senators stand on the floor of the senate and say very clearly, "if religion teaches the bigotry of anti-sexual activity in terms of same sex then it has no right to have a freedom in our nation." That will gain steam. You can't get angry, you just have to love. You have to speak the truth. You can't speak the truth without love and you can't love without truth. When the culture does this you need to be ready.

What will happen in the church? Here is what I think will happen in the church. Mainline Protestantism is history. We don't have a culture that values going to church and that was the only thing that keeps mainline Protestantism alive because it doesn't teach or preach anything that's Biblical for it's already been secularized in terms of its message. Now there is no reason to go there because it's not the thing to do, to show up at church in the culture anymore. So they will disappear as a mist as well.

I think in the evangelical church you'll see three responses. Response number one is isolation. There will be various theological rational but there will be isolation. They will do marriage their way and make creation ordinances church ordinances. We'll go to our little ghetto and do these things right and hopefully we can win some people every once in a while by how well we're doing it, but we're not going to love our neighbor and speak the truth in the public square. There will be a withdrawal and an isolation and those churches are doomed. One, the culture won't let you exist. Two, there won't be any reason for you to exist.

The second response will be those who want to be approved and applauded by the culture so they will accommodate their doctrine of sexuality, marriage and family. They won't do it with the confession. They won't change the confession first but they'll change their practices first. They will deny their confession by how they practice membership, church discipline, shepherding and discipling. So you will have the accommodationists on one side and the isolationists on the other.

Thirdly, I am so praying that a revival will come to that which is left – a revival that will produce Gospel-saturated, prayer-embracing, God-glorifying, Christ-centered, Bible-shaped Christians who come into this culture the way Paul went into Rome. The next thing you know there are people in Caesar's household converted. I am praying that a movement among the evangelical church that grapples through these things comes out on the other side and says 'we're going to speak the truth in love.' You will be told 'Hey Briarwood you're on the wrong side of history.' That will only work if your desire is to be approved by the world. Our desire must be that we're approved by God. It's not the right side of history that we want to be on, although we are for I've read the last chapter, we want to be on the right side of theology, the truth of God's Word and our mission, message and ministry of truth and love.

So as we embrace this, where do we go? I think that the ministries we have at this church are so crucial. What I'm about to say is not an endorsement but an observation. When that last question came out of 'does God speak to you' to Senator Cruz, I told him that my wife had to sit me down because I started to shake and one might have thought I had gone Pentecostal. He answered "God speaks to me every day when I read His Word." I was just thrilled in my heart. Now whether he should be President or not I'll leave that up the Lord and the voters for that's not my job to endorse or promote but we

need at every level of our government, our academic institutions and the media, people who know Christ, think Biblically, hear Him in His Word when they read it and are regularly under the preaching of it so they are not shaped by the world but shaped by the Word of God.

We need to engage in and do is to number one get back to the basics – prayer and the Word. You have not because you ask not. We need to get back to the basics of personal evangelism. Event evangelism is useless if you and I are not personally talking to people about Jesus. Events have their place but they cannot replace personal evangelism. Then we need to engage in a fresh and new way. It's about small group disciple making and Biblical worship that has weight and distinction to it where God is the center of our coming together as we rejoice in our Triune God. We have to have a church that is no longer populated by those of us who would be much more committed to our personal agendas than the mission that Christ gave to the church. I think we're absolutely convinced that our personal agenda is His mission instead of being able to work with one another on mission in ministry.

We ask that the Lord would enable us to do that and if we do then those kinds of people will be produced that go to the academy, Wall Street, Hollywood and the governing places to be salt and light because they are rooted in churches that are discipling, training and growing them up in the grace and knowledge that is found in Jesus Christ. I guess where I am is where Paul couldn't wait to get to. After he developed this glorious Gospel that he wasn't ashamed of for 11 chapters, he then said from Romans 12:1-2, *[1] I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. [2] Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Don't let the right side of history press you into the mold and by God's grace here is a church where Jesus is exalted, the Triune God is glorified and sinners can come with the Gospel that heals them as we welcome sinners and we become a morgue for sin. We become a welcoming center for sinners and we become a deathtrap for sin as the truth is given in love. I honestly don't know of another assembly of people I would rather walk forward with than you. I want to be honest about what is facing you and I have to confess I'm a little bit excited about it because the Bible tells me that in the latter days men will hold to devious doctrines, doctrines of demons and do all kinds of things and I'm in it. That means He's coming but maybe He has one more Gospel awakening to pour out here. So here we are Lord, send us. Let's go. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together. Thank You for the Lord Jesus, our Redeemer, our Savior, our Lord who is Lord of all. I don't want to be like many of my brothers now in the ministry that look with disdain upon this country for Father You have done a lot of things here. It's amazing what You have done. I don't think we're so unique as a country I just think Your Providence is unique so I want to thank You for it. I want to ask You to forgive me for any way that I have been a part of losing all those footholds and beachheads that have been established by those that have gone before me but I would not let that lament paralyze me. I thank You that You forgive and renew us.

So God we need a Gospel awakening and that means we need a revived church so bring the fresh winds of Your Spirit prophesying O Lord by the power of the Spirit over dry bones and may bone be put upon bone and sinew upon sinew. May You raise up an army again that will conquer this nation as well as others with the glorious Gospel of grace that forgives, redeems and transforms for I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.