

WHERE ARE WE HEADING? (PART 4)

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If you are wondering why the title of this article says, “Part 4,” there was a three-part series of articles written in December 2012 under the title, “Where Are We Heading?” That series dealt with the rapid descent into wickedness that has been occurring in our nation and the world in recent years. There were many statistics brought out in those articles to illustrate the point. The first article covered the loss of respect for the sanctity of life, as evidenced by the treatment of the unborn, the elderly, weak, and feeble among us. The second and third articles were focused on the loss of respect for the sanctity of marriage and the family, evidenced by the prevalence of divorce, cohabitation, illegitimacy, and promotion of the acceptance of homosexual behavior and “marriage.” The third article also dealt with the overall rise of unbelief in our nation in the past twenty years. Now, exactly two years later, this article is to serve as an update, to further expose the accelerated pace of the changes occurring in our society as iniquity abounds more and more.

Same-sex marriage

From where we are in 2014, it is hard to believe that less than 12 years ago, every marriage in the United States was between male and female. And two years ago, there were “only” 10 states plus the District of Columbia that had legalized same-sex marriages. Then, on June 26, 2013, the United States Supreme Court declared the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) to be unconstitutional. DOMA had defined marriage as a union between one man and one woman (i.e. the same definition as God’s in the beginning). Since that time, several federal appeals courts have cited that ruling and declared numerous state constitutions and laws banning same-sex marriages to be unconstitutional. Next, on October 6, 2014, the United States Supreme Court officially decided not to hear any cases on that issue, effectively forcing same-sex marriage to become legal in almost every state. As a result, there are now 35 states plus the District of Columbia that allow it. And another 6 states are about to join that list. Last month, same-sex marriage also became legal in South Carolina, even though a solid majority of the citizens of this state oppose it.

Calling evil good, and good evil

Although this abomination has effectively been forced upon the entire nation, those who have been forcing a *behavior* defined by God to be sinful to be accepted on equal plane with God-ordained marriage are not satisfied with their “victory.” The agenda is now to make it illegal to oppose or even speak against homosexual behavior, notwithstanding the freedom of speech and freedom of religion granted in the Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution. For example, several lawsuits have been brought by same-sex couples aimed at forcing florists, bakers, photographers, and wedding venue owners to go against their conscience and accommodate their “marriages.” In most cases, judges have sided with the homosexual plaintiffs. Efforts have begun to require officiants to also perform same-sex marriages in violation of their religious beliefs. Also, in October of this year (a mere two months ago), the city government of Houston, Texas issued subpoenas to a group of local church leaders to turn over any sermons dealing with homosexuality, gender identity, or the city’s mayor (Annise

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Parker, who is a lesbian). These subpoenas were later withdrawn under pressure, but we should not be so naïve as to believe that this issue will not resurface and spread, as public opinion is being driven in that direction. For instance, in a Harris poll released on October 30, 2014, two-thirds of respondents favored federal legislation to bar employers from discriminating against workers on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and 55% were opposed to exemptions for any employers, *including churches*. To summarize, we are now reaching a point where the majority of our countrymen agree that the federal government should require even churches to hire homosexual and transgender employees regardless of their beliefs. Could the United States of America actually see the day where churches are forced to do this, and even be forbidden from preaching against those practices? That is where we are heading. We recall God's stern warning in Isaiah 5:20: "*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*"

Transgender agenda

Gender identity appears to be the next major battleground for those seeking to bring every form of wickedness into mainstream society. On Thursday of this week, December 4, 2014, the Minnesota State High School League voted to allow "participation for all students regardless of their gender identity or expression in an environment free from discrimination with an equal opportunity for participation in athletics and fine arts." In other words, if a biological male identifies "himself" as female, "he" may participate on the female athletics team, and the same for girls who identify themselves as boys. There are many implications to this, not just for those whose consciences oppose this, but also in the realm of privacy, as members of the biological opposite sex would have full access to locker rooms and showers, and such. There is no allowance for any athletes in public Minnesota high schools to oppose this.

Summary

Sadly, we are witnessing the rapid secularization of our society, with a concerted effort to force the acceptance of immoral and sinful behaviors upon those who object on religious grounds. The threat we are now facing, is not merely being vexed from day to day, seeing and hearing this wickedness among us, but also having what we believe and teach to become *illegal*. There have been times when God's people had "trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb 11:36-38). Christians today need to be praying diligently about where things are heading in our world today: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; *that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty*. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior" (1 Tim 2:1-3).