

Supreme Court Decision: A Wake up Call for the Church

Esther 4:14

Richard Tow 6.28.15

On Friday, June 26, 2015 the United States Supreme Court handed down a decision recognizing same-sex marriage¹ and stripping states of their right to decide such matters. There was celebration at the White House while Heaven wept. The White House was lite up with rainbow colors while Christians mourned another major step toward destruction for America.

In case anyone thinks this ruling is insignificant, let me read a few comments from the four minority judges who voted against this decree.

Chief Justice Roberts said, "...as a judge, I find the majority's position indefensible as a matter of constitutional law."

Justice Antonin Scalia said the majority judges were using the 14th Amendment in a way that was never intended by its writers. He wrote, "When the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified in 1868, every State limited marriage to one man and one woman, and no one doubted the constitutionality of doing so."

Justice Clarence Thomas points out a major flaw in the logic of this ruling when he says, Liberty has "long been understood as individual freedom *from* government action, not as a right *to* a particular governmental entitlement." Of course, the big money entitlement is this puts millions on the Social Security rolls who previously had no right to the money.² The message I have heard is that Social Security can't even pay for its current commitments.³ So who gives up their portion to fund this or whose taxes go up to fund it. Money is not created by a court ruling.

Thomas goes on to says the Court's "inversion of the original meaning of liberty will likely cause collateral damage to other aspects of our constitutional order that protect liberty." Further, he argues that the decision will threaten religious liberty by creating an unavoidable collision between the interests of same-sex couples and some religious organizations.

Justice Samuel Alito "At present, no one—including social scientists, philosophers, and historians—can predict with any certainty what the long-term ramifications of widespread acceptance of same-sex marriage will be. And judges are certainly not equipped to make such an assessment."

Alito also warns about future conflict with religious freedom. He writes, "By imposing its own views on the entire country, the majority facilitates the marginalization of the many Americans who have traditional ideas. Recalling the harsh treatment of gays and lesbians in the past, some may think that turnabout is fair play. But if that sentiment prevails, the Nation will experience bitter and lasting wounds."

¹Shannon Bream, Fox News, "US Supreme Court Rules in Favor of Same-Sex Marriage," <http://video.foxnews.com/v/4323775410001/us-supreme-court-rules-in-favor-of-same-sex-marriage/?#sp=show-clips> accessed June 26, 2015

² Mark Miller, *Reuters*, "Same-Sex Marriage's Big Benefit is Social Security," <http://www.dailyfinance.com/2015/06/26/same-sex-marriages-big-benefit-social-security/> accessed June 26, 2015. Also see Social Security Announcement at <http://www.ssa.gov/people/same-sex-couples/> encouraging people to apply "right away."

³ Social Security, "A Summary of the 2014 Annual Reports," <http://www.ssa.gov/oact/trsum/> accessed June 26, 2015.

And one final comment from Alito, "Today's decision shows that decades of attempts to restrain this Court's abuse of its authority have failed."⁴

Of course, no one is talking about what God may think about this decision. It is certainly a flagrant usurping of His right to define marriage—something He did in Genesis 2.

*“And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. 22 Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. 23 And Adam said: ‘This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.’ 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”*⁵

The big overstep here is the prideful and false premise that the dignity of human relationships derives primarily from the government. Doug Wardlow wrote, “It is the flawed notion that the state does not recognize and protect—but rather *creates* our fundamental institutions, rights, and relationships. And it is the false idea that no institution—not marriage, not the family, and not individual rights to life, liberty, property, or the exercise of religion—has *any* significance or meaning independent from that which the state imparts. But, as the Declaration of Independence makes clear, all people are ‘endowed by their Creator’—not by their government—‘with certain unalienable rights.’ Rejecting this principle carries a sinister implication: if the state bestows our rights, the state can take them away at its whim.”⁶ Wardlow has identified the broad danger we face as a result of this decree.

I’m not so concerned about the immediate consequences of this decision, as I am where it leads us. Immediate consequences that I see are:

- (1) The wicked are embolden to assert their iniquity even more aggressively.
- (2) Young people are deceived into thinking its ok because the government has sanctioned it. Dad and Mom must just be behind the times. Perverted behavior becomes more prevalent.
- (3) Another move to redistribute wealth from godly people to ungodly people. I’m not so sure this is a human agenda; but I’m pretty sure it is Satan’s agenda. Wealth is power and he wants it used by the wicked, not the godly.

But Friday’s decision was much more than that.

- (4) It is a national sin. There is a difference between individuals committing sins and the governmental authority sanctioning that. In 1 Chron. 21 David made a decision to count the people. In judgement on that decision God sent a plague on the nation that killed 70,000 people. Why was the judgement so massive? The unrighteous decree was made by the national leader. If some soldier in David’s army had decided to count the people, it would not have been the same thing. Verse 1 pulls back the curtain on that decision and gives us some vital information. 1Chron. 21:1 *“Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.”* There are things going in the spiritual realm that we cannot see with our natural eyes. Why would David yield to that? One word: pride. Pride was behind his decision. I want to suggest that pride was behind the decision last Friday: a pride that says, “We will decide what marriage is and we will render our verdict.”

⁴ Brian Resnick, Loren Fox & Dustin Volz, *National Journal*, “Why Four Justices were against the Supreme Court’s Huge Gay Marriage Decision,” <http://www.nationaljournal.com/domesticpolicy/marriage-same-sex-gay-supreme-court-dissent-20150626> accessed June 27, 2015.

⁵ Gen 2:21-24: All Scripture quotes are in New King James Version unless indicated otherwise.

⁶ Doug Wardlow, “Supreme Court disavows truth about marriage, pits faith against law,” <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2015/06/26/supreme-court-disavows-truth-about-marriage-pits-faith-against-law.html>, accessed 6-26-15.

Isa 10:1-4 ““Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, 2 to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless. 3 What will you do in the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches? 4 Nothing will remain but to cringe among the captives or fall among the slain” (NIV). This is an unrighteous decree that takes from the godly and rewards the ungodly. This decree comes from the highest court in America and is therefore a national sin.

(5) It usurps power that belongs only to God (the definition of marriage). It usurps power that the Constitution gives to the States.⁷ And it usurps power of religious freedom that the Constitution gives to individuals. All that power is assumed by the Federal Government; and if you don't think they will abuse it, you need to read your history books.

This is a giant step toward persecution of Christians. That part is subtle, but real. The premise that our Federal Government now defines institutions and rights rather than protect the unalienable rights endowed by the Creator is a dangerous precedent.

Persecution of Christians under the Roman Empire did not happen the way many people imagine it. There were preliminary steps that set the stage for the direct assaults. For example, under Nero, lies spread that Christians were committing abominations and that they “hate humankind.”⁸ Does that sound familiar? We have been falsely accused of hating gays. Nothing could be farther from the truth. But propaganda is a powerful tool whether used in the first century or by modern media. That sentiment made it easier for Nero to scapegoat the Christians for the burning of Rome which brought more persecution. The foundational reason for persecution during the Roman Empire was this. We must all be united as one great nation. We are ok with various religions as long as you go along with our agenda. Give a little pinch of incense to Caesar and then you can run along and do your religious thing. Cults and pagans were fine with that arrangement. But Jews and Christians could not make that compromise. In 95 AD they were persecuted because they refused to pay a poll tax that was levied to support the temple for Jupiter.⁹ All you've got to do is make a little compromise and we'll all be fine. But you Jews and Christians are not cooperating. You are the problem. Do you want to know where this is headed? Read history; it tends to repeat itself.

In 1933 Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. It was not until 1941 that he began to gas the Jews. Here's how he went from point A in 1933 to point B in 1941. In 1933 Jews were forced out of jobs in newspapers and the Civil Service. Germans were told to boycott Jewish Shops. In 1934 Jews were banned from having health insurance. Jobs and health insurance were first! During the next two years they were banned from all “professional jobs.” Laws were passed that took away their citizenship. Nobody's being killed or even locked up. We just strip them of economic strength and position. In 1937 they were banned from any political or governmental role. In 1938 violence against them broke out in what is called the “Night of Broken Glass.” The violence was against them; but they were forced to pay fines. In that year Jews were forced to close down and sell their businesses. In 1941 they were forced to live in the Polish Ghettos and the first death camp was opened.¹⁰ So what is my point? If you finally see what's happening—but not until 1941, it's too late to do anything about it.

⁷ The Tenth Amendment restricts the Federal Government powers to only those delegated to it by the Constitution. All others are for the states or the people.

⁸ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity, Vol. I* (HarperOne, 1984) p. 35. Also see p. 89 of Earle Cairns' text.

⁹ Earle E. Carnes, *Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan) p. 91.

¹⁰ The Holocaust Survivors' Friendship Association, “Nazi Persecution of the Jews—A Timeline,” <http://holocaustlearning.org/uploads/resources/timeline%20of%20persecution.pdf>, accessed 6-26-15.

The pathway is more and more laws, giving the government control over your life: a healthcare system under close federal control (another decision made this week), a banking system bailed out in 2008 and brought under increased federal control.¹¹ Strip the states of their power; concentrate all that power in the federal government. If you think Friday was about Gay Rights, you missed what was really happening. It was about Federal Government Rights!

So, what do we do about all this?

Let it wake you up now, rather than later. The Church of America is a sleeping giant—so drowsy with pleasure and comfort that they can't see the handwriting on the wall. If they did, they would fill up the prayer meetings. Their priorities would take a drastic change from temporal fun to spiritual preparation.¹² There may be natural preparations that are prudent; but the most important by far is spiritual. What should Christians be doing right now?

1. Seek the Lord for wisdom. James 1:5-6 *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."* Esther was faced with a serious problem. Overnight a law was passed that gave Haman the authority to kill all the Jews on a certain date.¹³ Did I mention that a law was passed, because I want you to know that a law was passed! That's usually the way it's done. They just got it on the books so they could use it later on. But-- the destruction did not happen. Mordecai and Esther sought the Lord for wisdom and God gave her a plan that worked. She did not have to just be a victim of the circumstances. But what she did have to do was to seek the Lord.

2. Love the gays; love the politicians; love them all. All of this changes nothing about our mandate to love our neighbor as ourselves. Now loving a neighbor as yourself does not mean you condone everything he is doing. If you did that to yourself, you would be a royal mess. No, you have to recognize the things in your life that are not right, and get them right. It's no different with your neighbor. If they live contrary to the word of God, they need to repent; just like you need to repent if you're living contrary to the word of God. 2 Peter 3:9 *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."* This is our heart as well. But the pathway to life and blessing is repentance; and repentance begins with a realization that you're going the wrong way. Repentance is turning and going the right way.

3. Get as right with God as you know how to get. Put away any and everything that grieves His Holy Spirit. Get into a lifestyle of prayer and obedience. Refuse even the little compromises. That will fortify your soul against making bigger compromises.

4. Do not panic. 2 Tim 1:6-7 *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."* When I read the story of Daniel and the Lion's Den, the thing that strikes me most is the calm that you sense in Daniel's behavior. Again, an unjust law is passed (watch out for those because there may be more coming down the pike). The law tells him he must stop praying to Jehovah.¹⁴ Daniel knows the law is there. He calmly opens his window and calls out on the Lord in disobedience to the law. Even when cast into the lions' den you see no panic—just confidence in

¹¹ Banks receive an estimated subsidy of \$ 83 billion every year. They probably don't want that taken away! "The Bank Bailout Cost US Taxpayers Nothing? Think Again," by Moira Herbst with The Guardian, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/may/28/bank-bailout-cost-taxpayers> accessed June 26, 2015.

¹² Matt. 25:1-13; Eph. 5:11-16; 1Thes. 5:1-9; 1Peter 4:7.

¹³ Esther 3:8-15.

¹⁴ Daniel 6:7-9.

God's ability to take care of the situation. The Bible does not specifically say this, but Sunday School lessons often depict him sleeping through the whole thing. I think that might be right.

5. Expect to be used by God. "...*who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*" (Est 4:14).

I have found the most challenging times in life to be the ones we most likely see the hand of God at work. The early church lived in challenging times. They lived with persecution. They also lived with the power of God at work in their lives. God is able to make all grace abound for you and me. The odds were against Elijah when King Ahab and Jezebel were in power. They made laws favorable to the Baal worshippers and contrary to the godly. In disobedience to the law, Obadiah took 100 godly prophets and hid them in a cave (1 Kings 18:4). Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal and won. Daniel got thrown in a lions' den; but he came out unscratched. The three Hebrew children got thrown in the fiery furnace; but they came through that without even the smell of smoke. Our greatest hour may be right around the corner!

Pray

OUTLINE
 Supreme Court Decision: A Wake up Call for the Church
 June 28, 2015

I. Supreme Court Decision Recognizing Same-Sex Marriages (June 26, 2015)

A. Minority Judge Comments

1. Roberts: "...as a judge, I find the majority's position indefensible as a matter of constitutional law."
2. Scalia: "When the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified in 1868, every State limited marriage to one man and one woman, and no one doubted the constitutionality of doing so."
3. Thomas: Liberty has "long been understood as individual freedom *from* government action, not as a right to a particular government entitlement." Thomas says the Court's "inversion of the original meaning of liberty will likely cause collateral damage to other aspects of our constitutional order that protect liberty." He also argues that the decision will threaten religious liberty by creating an unavoidable collision between the interests of same-sex couples and some religious organizations."
4. Alito: "By imposing its own views on the entire country, the majority facilitates the marginalization of the many Americans who have traditional ideas. Recalling the harsh treatment of gays and lesbians in the past, some may think that turnabout is fair play. But if that sentiment prevails. The Nation will experience bitter and lasting wounds." "Today's decision shows that decades of attempts to restrain this Court's abuse of its authority has failed."

B. The Big Overstep

Doug Wardlow wrote, "It is the flawed notion that the state does not recognize and protect—but rather *creates* our fundamental institutions, rights, and relationships. And it is the false idea that no institution—not marriage, not the family, and not individual rights to life, liberty, property, or the exercise of religion—has *any* significance or meaning independent from that which the state imparts. But, as the Declaration of Independence makes clear, all people are 'endowed by their Creator'—not by their government—'with certain unalienable rights.' Rejecting this principle carries a sinister implication: if the state bestows our rights, the state can take them away at its whim."

C. Consequences

1. Wicked Embolden to assert iniquity more aggressively.
2. Youth Deceived into thinking it is ok because the government approved it.
3. More redistribution of wealth from the godly to the ungodly.
4. God's Judgment on the *National Sin*.
5. President-setting usurping of Power by Federal Government

II. Giant Step toward Persecution of Christians

A. Persecution under Roman Empire

Preliminary steps leading up to direct assault: Lies that Christians "hate humankind"—then Nero fire

Just cooperate with government: 95 AD Jews/Christians refused to pay tax levied to support Jupiter temple.

B. Persecution under Hitler

1. 1933 forced out of Newspaper & Civil Service Jobs. German boycott Jewish shops.

2. 1934 banned from Health Insurance.
3. 1935 Lost German citizenship
4. 1936 -37 Banned from all "professional" jobs, or working any political or gov. role
5. 1938 Night of Broken Glass (violence) and forced to sell businesses.
6. 1940 Warsaw ghetto sealed off in Poland
7. 1941 First death camp

III. What to do about it?

- A. Wake up Now rather than later
- B. Action to Take
 1. Seek God for Wisdom
 2. Love the Gays; the Politicians; All
 3. Get as Right with God as you know how to get.
 4. Do Not Panic
 5. Expect to be Used by God

QUESTIONS

1. What do you think the significance of the Supreme Court decision to recognize same-sex marriage is?

2. What is the difference between a government that recognizes and protects unalienable rights "endowed by their Creator" versus a government takes it upon itself to create/endow rights and relationships? Why is this issue perhaps the most important issue at stake?

3. What consequences do you think this decision may have?

4. Do you think the preliminaries to direct persecution recorded in Roman and German history have any application in America? How does the passing of laws that increasingly empower government endanger liberties?

5. What do you think Christians should do in response to this ruling? To the general state of America?