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ARE YOU READY FOR "WHAT IF"?

Dear Friends,

This may well be the most important letter I have ever written. Do not take what you are about to read lightly. Though I will not call this a prophecy from God, I will call it a warning of what could possibly happen.

In 1963, school-sponsored Bible reading in the United States was ruled unconstitutional. Since then, more and more regulations have been established that blatantly remove a Christ-influence in our society. No doubt you are well aware of the legal rulings which have forced many courts to remove all postings of the Ten Commandments. Many cities now prohibit the open display of nativities at Christmas.

Though voters in numerous states have voted to ban homosexuals marrying each other, judges have overturned those bans. In effect, each of those judges is saying, "I don't care what the majority of the citizens of this state want, I, a single individual, choose to rebel against the holy standards of Almighty God and exercise my position as an officer of the court to tell the citizens they have no choice but to accept behavior that God has called an abomination."

Believe it or not, wearing a cross is now considered by some as a "gang symbol." The following story appeared in numerous news reports on television and radio stations. I have copied and pasted what was posted at www.10tv.com on June 16, 2014,

COLUMBUS, Ohio - A Columbus man says Bar Louie on Park Street asked him to leave because he wouldn't tuck the small cross he was wearing inside his shirt. Jeff Russell says he doesn't wear his small cross necklace often but he says it has special meaning. "It was a gift from my mother many, many, years back. It is probably about 15-years -old," said Jeff Russell.

He says his necklace has a different meaning at the Bar Louie. "(As) soon as I walked in, someone came up to me and said, 'you tuck this in or you have to go,'" said Russell. He says he thought it was a joke, so he went towards the back of the patio area and then says a manager, along with a police officer, came over to him. "He said, 'unfortunately there have been some shootings and troubles at other bars and they view any type of Christian cross as a gang sign' and that if I didn't tuck it in I had to leave," Russell explains.

10TV reached out to Bar Louie on Park Street and a man, who identified himself as a manager, says restaurant policy dictates that excessive jewelry be tucked in. When 10TV asked about whether or not the restaurant viewed it as a gang symbol, we were told to contact their parent company, the Fortney Company. The Fortney Company did not return our calls Monday evening.

Russell says no one ever used the term, "excessive jewelry" to describe his necklace and says he's concerned that a cross is being banned. "There was never mention that this was excessive jewelry. I was specifically told that it was viewed as a gang sign and you either tuck it in or you leave. If this is a gang sign, then I'm proud to be a part of it and this is just beyond ridiculous."
(NOTE: I saw a picture of Jeff Russell wearing the cross; the vertical bar is one inch or less, and the horizontal bar is less than one inch. He was wearing a very small cross.)

Along with the stories I have mentioned, there are numerous other examples of Christian freedoms being taken from us. I use the term "Christian freedoms" because the freedoms of other religions are not being similarly attacked. But to me, there is one, single incident that took place in April, 2013 which should cause us as Christians in the United States to be *extremely* concerned. This event was reported by news agencies throughout the country. Out of the many reports, I have copied and pasted the one which appeared at www.radio.foxnews.com on April 24, 2013:

The U.S. Military has blocked access to the Southern Baptist Convention's website on an unknown number of military bases because it contains "hostile content" — just weeks after an Army briefing labeled Evangelical Christians and Roman Catholics as examples of religious extremism, Fox News has learned. The Southern Baptist Convention is the nation's largest Protestant denomination known for its support of the pro-life movement and its strong belief in traditional marriage.

Southern Baptist chaplains reported that SBC.net had been blocked at military installations around the nation. An Air Force officer told Fox News that when he tried to log on to the website he received a message that his Internet usage was being logged and monitored for trying to access a blocked site.

The censorship was made public after an Army officer tried to log onto the denomination's website and instead — received a warning message. "The site you have requested has been blocked by Team CONUS (C-TNOSC/RCERT-CONUS) due to hostile content," the message read. Team CONUS protects the computer network of the Dept. of Defense. The SBC's website was not blocked at the Pentagon. It's unclear what the "hostile content" might have been. The SBC is pro-life and opposed to same-sex marriage. "So the Southern Baptist Convention is now considered hostile to the U.S. Army," the officer wrote in an email to the American Family Association.

Sing Oldham, spokesman for the SBC, told Fox News he had been in touch with the Dept. of Defense and had serious concerns. "This is deeply disturbing," he told Fox News. "While the Deputy Chief of Operation of the US Army has assured us this is a random event with no malicious intent, the Army must run this to the ground to assure that this is the case."

However, Fox News has received reports from across the country of Southern Baptist chaplains unable to access the website. "If the government blocked any

portion of the SBC.net Web site for any purpose, that would be an unconscionable breach of trust with the American public," Oldham said. "The First Amendment exists to protect the church from governmental censorship of or infringement upon religious speech and the free exercise of religion."

The Dept. of Defense confirmed to Fox News late Wednesday that the SBC website had been blocked — but not intentionally. "The Department of Defense is not intentionally blocking access to this site, said Lt. Col. Damien Pickart. "We are working diligently to investigate what might be causing access issues for some of our service members and to correct the situation as quickly as possible."

The AFA sent out an action alert urging its members to contact the Pentagon and ask them to "stop the military's alarming trend of hostility towards faith and religious freedom in our military." "Most disturbing to him (the Army officer) was the fact that the military labeled his personal religious faith as 'hostile' to the U.S. Army," AFA spokesman Randy Sharp told Fox News.

Ron Crews, executive director of the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty, told Fox News that Southern Baptist chaplains on military bases around the nation have been unable to access the website. "It's a concern for the Dept. of Defense to block the website of one of the major evangelical denominations in the country," Crews told Fox News. "The Southern Baptist Convention has the largest number of chaplains in the military representing Southern Baptist soldiers and churches. Those chaplains need access to their denomination's website."

An Army Reservist contacted Fox News and said he tried to log onto the site and an "Access Denied" message appeared on the screen. "Your request was categorized by Blue Coat Web Filter as 'Religion,'" the message read. Richard Land, president of the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission denounced the censorship and demanded that Southern Baptist soldiers be provided access to the site. "This is outrageous," Land told Fox News. "Southern Baptists make up a higher percentage of the all-volunteer military than in the general population. It's outrageous that our website would be blocked for Southern Baptists serving in the military and defending the freedom to access websites." Land said the military censorship was part of a "disturbing trend." "They need to unblock the website and find out who is responsible," he said. "That person needs to be fired."

Pickart told Fox News the Dept. of Defense "strongly supports the rights of service members, to include their ability to access religious websites like that of the SBC." "With Internet technology constantly evolving, the Department is working to ensure that service members have access to an open Internet while preserving information and operational security," he said.

Religious liberty groups were outraged by the block and called for an immediate investigation. "This is another example of the growing hostility toward evangelical Christians in the armed forces," Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Jerry Boykin, executive vice president of the Family Research Council told Fox News.

"Ironically, the very people who are sworn to support and defend the rights provided in the U.S. Constitution are being denied the right to exercise those rights individually."

The American Family Association feared it was further evidence of what they called religious hostility within the Pentagon. "This is one more example of the Defense Department leadership allowing hostility towards faith and religious freedom in our military," Sharp told Fox News. "The growing list of offenses is overwhelming and Secretary Chuck Hagel should no longer ignore it." In recent days, the Army has come under fire after an officer sent an email to subordinates labeling the AFA and the Family Research Council as "domestic hate groups."

When this event was made public, military personnel around the world reported that they were able to access the web sites of other religious organizations, but not the Southern Baptist web site. A military spokesman later declared that the SBC web site had been blocked, "because it contained malware." Whether malware actually existed or there was a computer error in the military's system, the bottom line is this: the government blocked access to the web site.

Now let's consider the "what if." What if the day comes that calling homosexuality a sin is declared against the law? Then, what if the government blocks access to every church and ministry web site where homosexuality is identified as sin? Some reading this might think, "Oh, that could never happen." But you may be unaware that other nations hostile toward Christianity have blocked access to Christian web sites. Not only that, all email coming and going from the country is monitored and if certain words (possibly such as "Jesus" "Christian" "Bible") appear in the emails, the government flags those emails and may secretly begin investigating their citizens who are sending and receiving them.

I am not prophesying that such a thing will happen in our nation. But what if it did? We take for granted our unlimited access to church and ministry web sites that enable us to listen to sermons and watch church services. What if next week all access to those sites was suddenly blocked; what would you do? If you were to lose the ability to listen to all the preachers who feed you the meat of God's word, what would you do?

When I go to a web site I do not simply listen to the sermon; I will download and save the sermon to a portable, external hard drive. That way, even if I am not connected to the internet, I will have access to that sermon regardless of what computer I am using. Quite frankly, it would be a good idea for all who are reading this letter to do the same. Personally, I believe it would be a good idea to download and save all the audio and document files of the ministers from whom God has directed you to be spiritually fed.

I am not stating definitively it happened this way, but what if God allowed the blocking of the SBC web site to be a warning to all Christians of what is coming in the United States? We now know that our government has the potential to keep all citizens from accessing web sites it deems "harmful." The way our Christian freedoms have been taken from us at an alarming rate, what if...?

Some reading this letter may feel intimidated at the thought of having to learn to use a computer. But you could go to a library, download sermons to a portable hard drive and

then transfer them to a personal MP3 player (I use a 160 gigabyte iPod Classic. So far I have over 6,400 sermons and songs on it, including the entire Bible in audio format, and still have about 60 gigabytes of space remaining.) An electronics salesperson at stores such as Best Buy, Office Depot, etc, can explain this process; it is not difficult. Plus, there is probably someone in your church who can help you get started doing this on your own.

I am not trying to be an alarmist in this letter. At the same time, how many of us want to sit back someday thinking, "I wish could still listen to sermons by..." I pray we never experience such censorship in the United States. But if we do, I want to be ready. The Bible declares we are not ignorant of Satan's devices (2 Corinthians 2:11). I encourage you to pray about what I have shared and act as God leads you.

No matter how unsettling these things may seem, they are pointing to one thing: The return of Jesus is on the horizon...Hallelujah! Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might and remember what David wrote, *Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. (Psalm 55:22)*

In His Grace,



Have you ever wondered why it seems so difficult for some Christians to stop certain habits or behaviors? The sermon I am offering this month goes into specific detail about the battle every Christian faces, no exceptions. Not only that, but I explain how to live in victory over every single habit or behavior that is not reflective of the nature of Christ in a Believer. I cover some issues in this sermon that few preacher ever want to address. The sermon title is, "What You Feed Will Grow," and you can order a CD of it below.

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_____ Please send me CD of the sermon, "What You Feed Will Grow."

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