

A WORD ON WORSHIP

REVIEW OF MESSAGE FROM JUNE 28, 2015

BY PASTOR ANDREW KIKKERT, SUNRISE COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Habakkuk 1:2-4

“How long, O Lord, will I call for help, and You will not hear? I cry out to You, “Violence!” Yet You do not save. Why do You make me see iniquity, and cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; strife exists and contention arises. Therefore the law is ignored and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore justice comes out perverted. “



Every Christian wrestles with two problems: Why doesn't God answer my prayers sometimes? And, why does God allow the evil to prosper while the righteous suffer? What is the purpose of God when sin is celebrated by a nation and yet, from our position, it seems God sits in the distance not hearing the cries of the righteous? We especially wrestle with these two questions when they converge on us personally. When an evil person is harming us or someone we love, and we pray, but God does not answer, it is especially tough.

The prophet Habakkuk wrestled with these sorts of questions. He is unique among the prophets in that he did not, in his written message, speak for God to the people, but rather spoke to God about his struggles over these basic human questions. Why does God allow evil to go unchecked, especially when the righteous cry out to Him for justice?

Habakkuk took his questions and complaints to the Lord and worked through them in prayer, waiting on God for answers. When you wrestle with doubts on difficult issues like the problem of evil, you must proceed with caution. Some wrongly withdraw from God and His people into their own world of depression and pouting. Others angrily pull the plug on God entirely and go their own way into the world, convincing themselves that God must not exist or He wouldn't allow the terrible things that go on every day in this evil world. Still others hang on to their faith, but it becomes a mindless, anti-intellectual, subjective experience where they just don't think about disturbing questions.

That's what Habakkuk did. He kept crying out to God for an answer, and when God's even more difficult answer came, he stationed himself at his guard post to keep watch until the Lord would speak and reprove him (2:1). God's second answer to Habakkuk included the great verse, "The righteous will live by his faith" (2:4b). When Habakkuk comes to his final prayer in chapter 3:1-19 he doesn't have all the answers, just as you and I often do not have all the answers to why issues of pain and suffering have come upon us. We cannot fully understand the ways of the sovereign God, just as Habakkuk did not understand God's ways. But he had grown in understanding and he could by faith pray with joy, knowing that God was his salvation and strength.

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Supreme Court disavows truth about marriage, pits faith against law

OPINION BY DOUG WARDLOW FOR FOX NEWS WWW.FOXNEWS.COM/OPINION.HTML

Friday (June 26), the U.S. Supreme Court disavowed the truth about marriage that diverse cultures and faiths around the globe have embraced for millennia: that marriage is a union between a man and a woman.

Why has this fact been recognized so universally and for so long? The answer is simple: the truth about marriage appears unmistakably in the complementary design of man and woman. Unique among all others, only the intimate relationship of man and woman can create a new life. And a new life born of a committed man-woman couple finds its natural home in the embrace of its natural parents, giving rise to the family—the fundamental building-block of society.

Friday, the Supreme Court averted its eyes from what is self-evident. It overlooked the abiding connection between marriage and the creation of new life, and ignored marriage's unique role in connecting children to both their mother and their father. It also cast aside the will of Americans in 31 states who, recognizing the singular importance of man-woman marriage, voted to affirm it in their state constitutions.

Disregarding both the truth about marriage and the people's freedom to affirm that truth in law, the Supreme Court held that states may no longer lift up one-man, one-woman marital unions for special protection.

The court's decision is built on the premise that, as a matter of constitutional law, the dignity of human relationships derives largely from government recognition and approval.

That premise promotes a dark and dangerous principle. 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.

That should concern anyone who cares about our first freedom: religious liberty. A person's faith involves their relationship with their Creator and thus demands their

highest allegiance. But now the Supreme Court has mandated a new definition of marriage that contradicts the core religious convictions of tens of millions of Americans. The ruling pits faith against law, forcing Americans to choose between their God and their government.

This conflict will play out in battles and skirmishes large and small, in courts of law and courts of public opinion. As a result of the Supreme Court's ruling, we can expect many more lawsuits against individuals and business owners who refuse to participate in the celebration of same-sex ceremonies because doing so would violate their deeply held religious convictions.

We can expect more prosecutions of people of faith like Barronelle Stutzman, the owner of Arlene's Flowers in Washington State, who declined to create floral arrangements for a same-sex ceremony because doing so would violate her sincere Christian beliefs. The state and the ACLU hauled her into court for allegedly violating Washington law, and she may now have to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in attorneys' fees.

The Supreme Court's ruling also puts the coercive power of government on the side of those who support the new “any two persons” definition of marriage, legitimizing the forceful suppression of conflicting faith-based views. It is not a stretch to say that we can therefore expect increasing hostility against anyone who expresses or attempts to live out their faith in public.

The Supreme Court cannot, of course, alter the true nature of marriage. Marriage is and always will be the union of one man and one woman for life, regardless whether the government incorrectly applies the label of marriage to other kinds of relationships.

But Friday's ruling inscribes in our Constitution an entirely new and incorrect definition of marriage that contravenes the self-evident purposes of the institution and contradicts the core convictions of countless people of faith. The Supreme Court's grave error compels Americans to take sides in an unprecedented conflict between faith and government coercion. The People's collective response will determine the future of religious liberty in our Nation.

Doug Wardlow is legal counsel with Alliance Defending Freedom, which filed a friend-of-the-court brief in the marriage cases at the U.S. Supreme Court.