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“Sidewalk counselors serve as angels standing at the gates of hell”

Pastor imprisoned for pro-life witness at abortion clinic writes letter from jail

News from the Trenches

(Editor’s Note: On March 20, a judge ordered the Rev. Walter Hoye, a Baptist pastor from Berkeley, to spend 30 days in jail for violating Oakland’s restrictive ‘bubble law,’ crafted specifically to keep pro-life sidewalk counselors away from women entering abortion centers. Rev. Hoye wrote this missive from his cell at the Santa Rita Jail in Dublin.)

It is Thursday, March 26th, 2009 and I am sitting on the top of the second of fifteen bunks in Housing Unit 34 East of the Santa Rita jail in Dublin, California. Here my thoughts turn towards my brothers, men of the cloth, men who are called and sanctified by God the Father. Men who are preserved as the bondservants of Jesus Christ. Men who serve as the holy burden bearers of God’s word. Men who are the watchmen on the wall.



Imprisoned pastor Walter Hoye pens encouraging letter to pro-lifers from his cell.

It is now in the spirit of the prophet Ezekiel I write to my fellow watchmen on the wall. Ezekiel’s name in Hebrew means, God makes strong, hardens. Ezekiel’s name not only describes his character, but also his assignment. Ezekiel’s divinely inspired and ordained assignment was both unpopular and unwelcomed. Ezekiel’s assignment stood against the prevailing wisdom of his day that called for the leaders of Israel to play it safe and avoid unpleasant topics of conversation. In Ezekiel 3:10-11 the Lord God commands Ezekiel to receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears. And go, get to the captives, to the children of your people, and speak to them and tell them, Thus says the Lord GOD, whether they hear, or whether they refuse.

Notice Ezekiel’s assignment was to speak God’s word whether or not the people wanted to hear it. This is relevant to us today as the Apostle Paul warns us that in the last days perilous times will come, (2nd Timothy 3:1) that some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons (1st Timothy 4:1). To be sure, Ezekiel’s assignment was a hard assignment. It required him to risk losing any support he

may have had from the people and those who ruled over the people. Ezekiel’s assignment required a bold commitment to the Lord God. For me what comes to mind is Luke 14:26, where the Lord Jesus makes it clear the requirements of discipleship.

In Ezekiel 3:16-19 the Lord God continues describing Ezekiel’s assignment. Verses 16-19 say, Now it came to pass at the end of seven days that the Word of the LORD came to me (Ezekiel), saying, Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, You shall surely die, and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.

Ezekiel’s assignment is further elaborated on in Ezekiel 33:1-9. It is clear from the sacred text that being a watchman meant Ezekiel was personally held responsible for the people he ministered to. It was Ezekiel’s God given duty to warn the people of any danger, impending or otherwise. Furthermore, any failure to issue the warning would make him accountable to God for any suffering or misfortune that consequently resulted. Brothers,

the Bible plainly says their blood will I require at your hand.

My fellow watchmen, today I believe we all have the same responsibility as Ezekiel. Like Ezekiel, we too are watchmen on the wall. Like Ezekiel if we fail to warn the people of impending danger their blood will be on our hands. Like Ezekiel we are to warn the wicked of God's eternal judgment, hoping that the wicked would turn from his or her wicked ways.

Just as Israel faced the challenge of forsaking the wholly abominable sin of sacrificing her children to the burning, white hot molten arms of Moloch (Leviticus 18:21) and wholeheartedly embrace God's righteousness, we today face the horrors of abortion. Abortion is better described as legalized murder, pre-natal murder or as we know it in the African-American Pro-Life Community, womb lynching.

Brothers, in Black America alone every 72 seconds a black baby is murdered in the womb of his or her mother. This holocaust is genocidal to the point that today a black child has less than a 50% chance of being born. According to the 2006 U.S. Census, Black Americans are below the replacement level. In other words, death in Black America outpaces life. Abortion alone accounts for three times more deaths in our community than HIV/AIDS, Violent Crimes, Accidents, Cancer, and Heart Disease combined. There is no question pre-natal murder, abortion, is the number one issue in not only Black America, but in all of America today.

So what can we do?

First and foremost we must speak regularly and boldly from our Sunday morning pulpits, from our mid-week Bible studies and from our small group meetings on the weekend against abortion. We must inform, educate and activate God's people to take public stands against the sin of legalized murder in America today.

Secondly, we must install Post Abortion Counseling Education (PACE) Programs in our churches, parishes, temples and synagogues. We must clearly communicate the love, mercy and grace of God, in tangible ways, to the men, women and families that are horribly scarred and burdened by the guilt and shame of participating in the murder of their own child. The God we serve is willing and able to forgive and restore the broken lives of our people. This message of God's unconditional love and acceptance must ring loud and clear in every house of worship today.

Thirdly, we must break all denominational barriers and stand together against every attack on our constitutional rights. We must not be afraid to face the consequences of our peaceful, non-violent resistance to evil. Once Satan discovers our limit or the extent to which we will stand firm on the Word of God, he will push us to that limit or to that extent over and over again until we compromise our convictions and/or our relationship with God.

America is our country. Many have died, from every color and creed to guarantee our favor of freedom in America today. Such sacred sacrifice must not be forgotten. Such freedom must be cherished and as our circumstances demand, even our blood must join the blood of those that fought, bled and died that their posterity would be free. Finally, we must never forget that abortion kills a baby, an innocent human being, the product of a human father and a human mother. It is my prayer my life will honor and recognize the lives of the men and women who came before me, reflect the will of God upon me and reveal the Son of God in me.

To the Body of Christ I send you my love and affection. It is my desire that you work with and pray for your leaders. Because abortion is such an evil, I am asking all of us to seriously consider prayer and fasting. Luke 2:37 and Mark 9:29 come to mind as I reflect on the power of prayer and fasting. As such, every Christian ought to participate in the 40 Days for Life campaign. This wonderful movement of God is nationwide, even expanding into other countries and deserves our feet, our hands and our hearts.

Near and dear to my heart is the Walk For Life West Coast team. It has been my blessing to walk with so great a cloud of God's witnesses. Every heart and home that calls on the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob should bless this event with their presence and prayers. I am especially looking forward to the day when African-

American Pastors and Priests will lead their congregations with banners and signs in the walk for the sanctity of life.

There are many, many ways to support the Pro-Life movement. As I write there are far too many organizations that I personally endorse and gladly work with to mention. Please let it suffice for me to say that the pro-life movement stands in need of all of God's gifts and talents. Now, more than ever the Pro-Life movement needs all of God's children working together for good. It is time for us to share our resources and lock arm in arm in the power and might of the Holy Spirit and bring to past an end to abortion, embryonic stem cell research, euthanasia and human trafficking, anywhere and everywhere these evil practices exist. Life in the image of God is sacred, holy and must be both protected and provided for.

Finally, my brothers and sisters in Christ, I want to say a word about sidewalk counseling. As the last line of defense, sidewalk counselors serve as angels standing at the gates of hell. Every church should be engaged in the training of those called by God to serve Him in this capacity. A sidewalk counselor must remain prayerful, peaceful and above all non-violent. If you cannot commit to these three requirements DO NOT become involved in sidewalk counseling. Inherent in the ministry of sidewalk counseling is the danger of arrest and incarceration. This ministry IS NOT for the faint of heart. This ministry is also not only for women alone. I look forward to the day when men will serve as leaders, men reaching men and women reaching women.

To both my fellow watchmen on the wall and my dearly beloved brothers and sisters comprising the Body of Christ, I hope and trust this letter will find you in the will of God. Please know that I love you and am grateful for all of your love, prayer and support. I can assure you that I am being held up by your gracious, and merciful petitions on my behalf to the throne of God.

As you pray for me please think of my wife. Lori has been and is a faithful helpmate. She is literally bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. Lori is in every sense of the Word of God my Proverbs 18:22 as her presence in my life is a direct reflection of God's favor.

Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.

May God bless you all!

Walter B. Hoye II

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