

# Hear The Shepherd's Voice

**First Assembly of God  
Colmesneil, Texas**

**These are words you will hear in 2013**

*Unbelievable !!*

*Impossible !!*

**FREE**

**JANUARY 2013**

*How Could This Happen?  
Not Now!!*

**Volume 17 Issue 1 "A Christian Newspaper"**

**"First Assembly of God,  
Colmesneil, P.O. Box 496 Texas 75938"**

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# Two Faithful Witnesses

Message by: Leroy Surface

In the year 1970 (forty two years ago) I was preaching a revival in the city of Griffin Georgia. I had been seeking God for a correct understanding of the "two witnesses," spoken of in the **eleventh chapter of Revelation**. One night God spoke to me in a vision. I do not recall seeing anything, but I remember His words verbatim. He said to me, "*The two witnesses are a people like unto Joshua and Caleb.*" That is all He said, and I did not at all understand what He meant. I have never preached about those witnesses during the forty two years since, because I knew that the time for the mystery concerning them to be revealed had not yet come. I have told this which God said to me many times, but I have always added, "*I don't understand what it means.*" Today, I understand the words which God spoke to me.

The first time Caleb is mentioned in the scriptures is in the **thirteenth chapter of Numbers**, when he and Joshua were chosen to be two of the twelve spies which Moses sent into the land of Canaan. Most know that Joshua and Caleb were the only two among the spies who believed the promise of God to give them the land. The remaining ten spies began their report in this manner, saying, "*We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak (giants) there*" (**Numbers 13:27-28**). Caleb interrupted their report at this point to calm the people and reassure them of the faithfulness of God's promise. "*And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it*" (**Numbers 13:30**). The ten quickly shouted Caleb down, saying, "*We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we*" (**Numbers 13:31**).

**Numbers 13:32-33:** *And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.*

With these words, fear gripped the hearts of the congregation, and they wept and cried when they heard the "evil report" of the spies. They murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, "*Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! ...would God we had died in this wilderness! ...wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? ...Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt*" (**Numbers 14:2-4**).

**Numbers 14:6-10:** *And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not. BUT ALL THE CONGREGATION BADE STONE THEM WITH STONES.*

When the time came to possess the land of Canaan, the entire congregation of Israel was stricken with fear because of the evil report of the ten spies. They provoked God by saying, "*Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword,*

## "Unbelievable"... "Impossible"

By: Kirbbie L. Cowart

As we look at the coming year many of us are concerned about where we are headed as a nation. 1. We are concerned about the economy, the financial system that runs our nation. 2. We are concerned about the safety of our children at school and at play. 3. We are concerned about the safety and well being of our families; will we be able to have health insurance for them. 4. One of our deepest concerns is whether we will be able to protect and defend our families if our guns are taken from us.

All of the above concerns are worthy concerns, but as a Christian there are other things that are much greater concerns to me. When I look at this nation through the eyes of the Spirit of God, I tremble and shake all over at what God sees when He looks at America. As I look through the eye of the Word of God, I can see the pride and the unspeakable abominations that are going on in America, but sadly, most Americans are not ashamed of the abominations, and as the prophet Jeremiah said, they cannot even blush. "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord." Jeremiah 6:15

God is seeing the murder of millions of our babies in their mother's womb; He sees the adultery, the perversions, the lust and greed for "things" other than God that drives the people of America today. Not only does He see all of this, He sees the spiritual adultery of many in the churches who say that after you get saved you can live anyway you like because God doesn't see your sins anymore; you can lie, steal, and commit adultery, and God doesn't even see it, because you are under grace. They actually believe that it is a "sin" for a believer to repent, because in repenting, you put Jesus back on the cross. In other words if you sin there is no reason to repent, because you were already "forgiven" before you committed the sin. A lie from Hell! "Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?" Jeremiah 7:8-10

My concern is this, knowing that God is seeing all that is going on in America, how much time remains for the people of America, and particularly the American church, to repent before God for our sins and turn from our evil ways back to God with all of our heart and souls before the judgment of God is poured out. "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." II Chronicles 7:14

You might say, "Brother Kirby, you're under the Law and I am under Grace. God doesn't see the sin that in the world if you don't." This one thing I know; if you have been baptized into His death and have been raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, you are walking in newness of life and you will not sin. "What shall we say then?

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## Two Faithful Witnesses

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that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, **Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt**” (Numbers 14:2-4). According to the scriptures, this was the tenth time the children of Israel had “provoked God to anger,” and God says, “I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, **They shall not enter into my rest**” (Hebrews 3:10-11). With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, the entire congregation of Israel, from the age of twenty years and up, died in the wilderness. What was it that made these two men different? How could they believe God when the others could not? It became evident that these men were not only “different,” but God had “put a difference” between them and the rest of the congregation of Israel. It became obvious that the blessing and protection of God was upon them. They were God’s “faithful witnesses.”

**Numbers 14:36-38:** *And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD. But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, LIVED STILL.*

**Numbers 14:21-24:** *But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.*

When the ten spies who brought the evil report died of the plague, Joshua and Caleb “lived still.” As the multitude that provoked God perished in the wilderness during the next forty years, Joshua and Caleb continued to live. Joshua, whom God appointed to lead the people across the Jordan River to possess the land, and Caleb, whom God said had “another spirit” than the ten, were the only ones to inherit the land of promise among all those who were above the age of twenty when they left Egypt. All the others perished in the wilderness.

### “The Ten” and “The Two”

While this account is wonderful, it does not explain why Joshua and Caleb were the only two who “believed God” when it came time to enter Canaan. The answer is that they had “believed” God over a year before when He spoke to the entire congregation from Mount Horeb. They “heard His voice;” they “believed God;” and they “obeyed His voice.” God brought them into His covenant of blessing with Abraham that same day. Those two, out of the hundreds of thousands of the children of Israel, received the promise of God that day at Mount Horeb (Exodus 19:5-6). God made them to be His “peculiar treasure,” the only two, other than Moses, to be so treasured by God. They lived in the wilderness as a “kingdom of priests” and a “holy nation” while the rest of the congregation murmured continually against both God and Moses. They ate the same “manna” that the congregation hated, but to them it was as “angel’s food” and “corn from heaven” (Psalms 78:24-25). They drank water out of the same rock as the others and rejoiced in God’s provision, while the others longed to return to Egypt for the “leeks and garlic” (Numbers 11:5-6). As the prophet Isaiah says, God’s “special people” are always a “very small remnant” (Isaiah 1:9). Elijah was outnumbered at Mount Carmel by the prophets of Baal by 450 to 1, where he, not they, received the fire of God on his altar. Gideon delivered the children of Israel from bondage when his rag tag army of 300 put 135,000 well trained and heavily armed warriors of the Midianites to flight. We do not walk in victory

because of our human strength, but because we “believe God” and “obey His voice.”

“The ten” who bring the “evil report” will always try to keep “the two” from being heard. As long as “the ten” are in charge, the truth of God will not be heard. There comes a time, however, when God marks a difference between “the ten” and His faithful “two.” The “ten,” are those ministers who do not believe the truth of God, but merely lean upon their own understanding and human ability. They will “perish in the wilderness” while “the faithful two” will inherit the promises. When God sent Moses and Aaron into Egypt to deliver the children of Israel, Pharaoh hardened his heart against God and increased his affliction against Israel even more, doubling their work load. It was for the space of about a year that they suffered such great bondage at the hand of the taskmasters that they actually begged Moses to leave them alone and not speak to Pharaoh in the name of God again. It was during the night that the Passover Lamb was offered in Goshen, and the death angel passed through the land of Egypt, that God “put a difference” between Israel and the Egyptians (Exodus 11:6-7). It was the day that Joshua and Caleb “stood up” for the truth of God against the message of the “ten” that God put a difference between them and all the others. The “ten” died of the plague, but Joshua and Caleb “lived still.” The multitude who “drew back” at Mount Horeb and “turned back” when it was time to enter Canaan, all perished in the wilderness, but Joshua and Caleb continued on to be the only ones of their generation to possess the land. This matter of “the ten” and “the two” has always been, and will always be. The man or woman of God need never fear to “stand alone” against any odds if they know they have heard the voice of God.

### “God’s Jewels”

**Malachi 3:15-18:** *And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.*

**Exodus 19:5:** *If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.*

The Hebrew word, translated “peculiar treasure” in Exodus 19:5, is the same word that is translated “jewels” in Malachi 3:17. God promised to “make up His jewels” of those who “feared the LORD, and thought upon His name.” The Hebrew word translated “thought,” in the above verse, is the same word that is translated “esteemed” in Isaiah 53:3; “...he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” There are those who “fear (deeply reverence) the LORD,” and “highly esteem His name,” even when they are surrounded by those who despise Him. There are those who “draw near” to God while the multitude “draws back;” and there are those who “enter in” when others “turn back.” There are also those who “obey His voice” when others refuse to even hear His voice. They may suffer “for His name’s sake” today, but there is coming “another day,” and “that other day” is at hand. God calls it, “...that day when I make up my jewels.”

Jesus spoke of “that day” in John 16:23-27: “**In that day** ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. **At that day** ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.” “That day” began on the Day of Pentecost when God poured out His Spirit on

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## Two Faithful Witnesses

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the hundred and twenty. As Joshua and Caleb were a "very small remnant" of the congregation of Israel who "believed and obeyed God," so were the hundred and twenty to the nation of Israel in "that day." The wonderful blessing God had promised to the entire nation was only fulfilled upon the hundred and twenty Jews who "obeyed Him." Peter confirms, in **Acts 5:32**, that it is only "them that obey Him" that the Holy Ghost is given to, which confirms the promise God gave to the children of Israel at Mount Horeb in **Exodus 19:5**; "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine." God's "peculiar treasure" is made up of those "jewels" He has poured His Spirit upon. Moses became one of those at the "burning bush;" Joshua and Caleb, at the "burning mountain" (Mount Horeb); and the hundred and twenty on the Day of Pentecost. Each of these three examples, were God's "jewels;" together, they are His "peculiar treasure," His "kingdom of priests," and His "holy nation." This was manifest by the presence and power of God that was with them and upon them. God will once again in these last days, "make up His jewels" when He "pours out His Spirit" in great power upon a faithful remnant of the church. They will be His last day witnesses.

### God's Last Day Witnesses

**But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.**

**Acts 1:8**

**And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.**

**Revelation 11:3**

Compare these two verses: the first is speaking to the hundred and twenty "believing" Jews just before God poured His Spirit upon them at the Day of Pentecost; the second is speaking of the last day "witnesses" that will preach the gospel to the Jews during the time of their great tribulation. These verses are saying the exact same thing to two different groups of people; one in the beginning of the church age, and the other at the end. We can know what God will do for His "witnesses" in this last generation if we know what He did for the hundred and twenty in the first generation of the church. They were anointed with the Holy Ghost to fulfill the great commission Jesus had given them; "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (**Mark 16:14-15**). The last day outpouring of the Holy Ghost will be upon a faithful "remnant" of the church; a "remnant" that understands that "Jesus is The Christ" whom God sent into the world to "make an end of sins" through His death at Calvary (**Daniel 9:24-25**). This is the "everlasting gospel," and they will preach it to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (**Revelation 14:6**). Once again, the world will see God's "peculiar treasure"

## "Unbelievable" & "Imposable"

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Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed

ure" among men; they will be His "jewels," a "people above all people." As a "kingdom of priests" and God's "holy nation," they will bring the final fulfillment of the great commission, and carry the gospel back to the Jew in Jerusalem from whence it came. During the time of great tribulation, they will literally "invade" the nation of Israel with the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Jew. They will be the ministers of the "two witness" ministry; **Revelation, chapter eleven**.

The scriptures speak of these "two witnesses" as being the "two olive trees" (**Revelation 11:4**). These are not fulfilled in two individual men, but as the "olive tree" has many branches, so there will be "many witnesses" in that day. The apostle Paul speaks of God's olive tree as having two kinds of branches. The "natural branches" are those Jews which have received Jesus as "The Christ," and the "wild branches," are those Gentiles that have been grafted into the good olive tree through faith in Christ (**Romans 11:17-24**). Perhaps the "two witnesses" are made up of both Jews and Gentiles who have been made "one in Christ" (**Galatians 3:28-29**). One thing we can be assured of, however, is that these are the ones God will use to "move the children of Israel to jealousy" (**Deuteronomy 32:21**). Paul speaks of this in **Romans 11:11**, saying, "...salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them (the Jews) to jealousy." It will be a "jealousy" brought on from seeing the blessing of Abraham fulfilled in these witnesses, which causes them to say, "God promised that blessing to us, yet we see it fulfilled in Gentiles who have never been God's people." Isaiah prophesied of this "jealousy" in **Isaiah 63:19**; "We are thine: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name." Moses even sang about these "Gentiles" in the closing verse of his song; "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people" (**Deuteronomy 32:43**). Literally translated from the Hebrew, Moses said, "Rejoice O ye Gentiles, His people." These will be the witnesses to the children of Israel that Jesus is "The Christ." Their "witness" will not be with words only, however, but the fact that "Christ liveth (**Galatians 2:20**)" in these Gentile believers will be proof enough to the surviving Jews that Jesus is their Messiah. In **Zechariah 12:10**, God says, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son...." Thus the "salvation of God (**Acts 28:28**)" will be brought to the Jew in Israel during the time of their "great tribulation," which Jesus says, is "such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (**Matthew 24:21**). God will pour out His Spirit upon the remnant of Jews as their eyes are opened to "look upon Him whom they pierced," and they will all rejoice in Jesus, Jews and Gentiles together, as God utterly destroys the nations that fight against Jerusalem. The last words of the Song of Moses speak of this wonderful outcome to those who understand; "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people" (**Deuteronomy 32:43**).

from sin." **Romans 6:1-7**

**My concern is that many so called Christians in America think that sin is no big deal. They say that God understands that everyone sins all the time, and that that is why He has given us Grace to live under. The apostle Paul says, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (**Romans 6:14**). What the American church believes is, "Sin shall not matter: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." There is a tremendous difference between the two. Sin still carries a death sentence. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die..." **Ezekiel 18:20****

**My concern is that if there is not a turning back to God, you will hear more words in the NEWS Media like: "Unbelievable", "Impossible," and "Martial Law"**



# NEED A RIDE? WE ARE COMING YOUR WAY.



We will be running our School Bus and Van on Wednesdays and Sundays

## First Assembly of God of Colmesneil, Texas

It will more than just the old Sunday School as usual we are calling it "Advance Chrisitan Development". We will be addressing the proplem that the youth and young adult are facing today. It will be FUN! FUN! for the student to learn that there are answers too life issues.

Our new 2013 classes will begin this month with Brother Cowart teaching a class on divorce and marriage recovery and alcohol, drug recovery. It will not be a counseling program but a study right out of the Bible to show you that you can be made free from alcohol and drugs and you can be healed of a broken heart. It will be a FUN TIME with Brother Cowart. Remember from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm Call to register for these classes. **409-837-4496 or 832-401-5773 cell.**

Our Sunday worship service will start at 10:30 am and end at 12:00 am. With we now have CHILDREN CHURCH at that time.

Sunday Night starts at 6:00 pm- We are believing for miracles and healing on Sunday night. If you need someone to pray for you come expecting a miracle.

CUT OUT

*First Assembly of God-Colmesneil, Texas*

P.O. Box 496, Colmesneil, Texas 75938, (409)837-4496

### TRIP RELEASE FORM

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Minor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
HOME Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Father's Work \_\_\_\_\_  
Mother's Work # \_\_\_\_\_  
In case of Emergency please notify:

### Medical Information

Please list any health conditions that may limit the activities of the above mentioned minor: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list minor's allergies \_\_\_\_\_  
Please list any prescribed medications the minor may be taking: \_\_\_\_\_

### RELEASE STATEMENT

First Assembly of God of Colmesneil has my permission to transport:  
\_\_\_\_\_ From My Home to First Assembly of God  
(Minor's Name) Colmesneil, Texas and to any church active in Tyler County. (Date) \_\_\_\_\_, I understand all precautions will be taken to ensure the safety and health of the above minor while in the custody of Church personnel. I also, being the parent or legal guardian of the above named minor, do release First Assembly of God from any liability in the administering of emergency first aid care and hereby give my permission to have the above named minor admitted to the nearest hospital/emergency clinic in the event of an accident or illness.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent or Legal Gurdian)

Witnessed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

CUT OUT

CUT OUT

CUT OUT

CUT OUT

# GOD ASKS YOU TO HEAR

*Leslie Jordan*

Often you have heard it said that our God does not change, true? It is true, and one of the areas in which He will not change is in that He expects to be heard. God expects you to hear things as He said them originally, don't lessen or stretch his words. For instance let's look at a couple of verses in the book of Mark. There are many other areas we could go to but we will consider these for today.

**Mark 4:9, 23, 24, "And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.**

If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear:"

Just as in each of these three verses we are asked to hear Him when He speaks to us. In this chapter of Mark are parables of the mustard seed, the light under a bushel, the sowing of seed, many such parables. We are reminded of the cares of this world and the good guidance and help our Father wishes to bestow upon his children. His help is near and always available, His love is constant. But you can block the help and love and you can keep from knowing it in your life. Do you listen for His voice?

When you read your Bible or take time for prayer are you expecting to hear from the Lord in answer to your prayer? Do you take time to wait a bit and give the Lord time to answer you? So often people take a quick minute to read or pray and only use time to give god their thought or opinion, rather than wait for his thought. The word of God is referred to as the living word of God, because it is a living word. Every time you read He has a fresh word for you. Nothing else is like the Bible, it is new every morning, and He is new every morning. Just as He is everlasting! Who is like our God!

Should you be new to reading the Word of God it may seem a bit daunting to you, hard to understand. Do not be intimidated or fooled by what people may say. When you do not quite get it, read the verse again and be sure to read the surrounding verses. Usually it is best not to take a verse by itself but rather in the whole context of the chapter. The three verses we have chosen to talk of here are best taken along with the entire chapter. That way you know what is being spoken of. Too often today we hear and even try to learn things in chopped clips of information. Sometimes it takes more than a clip. Always it takes more for good understanding of anything important.

So then, for your walk today, talk to the Lord, read his Word, and take time to consider and to hear from him. Following these things just do as he guides you and He will bless your life. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

AG News  
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Cities increasingly restricting basic religious liberties  
Wed, 02 Jan 2013 - 1:46 PM CST

## The Roessigers

Not so long ago, local government officials usually agreed that members of churches brought benefit to - or at least didn't harm - their communities with their prayers, Bible studies and evangelistic activities.

But an alarming number of municipalities now take a hostile approach toward Christians exercising their First Amendment freedoms. In various cases around the country, followers of Christ have been threatened, fined and even jailed for such protected liberties as discussing Scripture in a living room or talking about Jesus on a public sidewalk.

In October, the city of Venice, Florida, dropped charges against Shane and Marlene Roessiger, a couple accused of having an unauthorized "house of worship" in their home. Although only six to 10 guests showed up for Friday night prayer and Bible study meetings at the Roessigers, the city contended that the gatherings violated an ordinance requiring houses of worship to be on at least two acres of property.

"This is a trend we're seeing across the country, with local code enforcement going after small religious group meetings in homes," says Kevin T. Snider, chief counsel of the Pacific Justice Institute, which represented the Roessigers.

Snider believes there is underlying ill will by various local governments against people of faith, particularly Christians.

"That animus is usually by one person in code enforcement or on the city council," Snider says. "It used to be that people who were anti-religious kept their views to themselves. Now they feel emboldened."

Venice threatened the Roessigers, who are Pentecostals, with \$250 daily fines for holding the meetings. In October, on advice from the city attorney, the Venice Code Enforcement Board voted 6-0 to dismiss all charges and penalties.

## FIRST ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Colmesneil, Texas

### Service Time:

Sunday Worship 10:30 am  
Sunday Evening 6:00 pm

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Leroy Surface  
Calvary Outreach  
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## AG PASTOR TARGETED

For the past 31 years, on Tuesday and Friday nights, Assemblies of God pastor and evangelist Paul S. Gros has gone to Bourbon Street in New Orleans to share the gospel with revelers. His wife, Mireya, accompanies him many times, and members of various churches, including Vieux Carre Assembly of God, where he has pastored since 2009, also go along.

But a year ago, the city passed a speech ban that prohibited congregating on Bourbon Street "for the purpose of disseminating any social, political or religious message between the hours of sunset and sunrise."

"I suspect someone in city government decided this was cramping the party style, and anything that might hurt the party atmosphere needed to be eliminated," says Joseph E. La Rue, legal counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom, which represents Gros.

Although the French Quarter pastor shared his faith in Jesus in a nonconfrontational way, in May a city police officer told Gros he could be arrested if he continued evangelizing after dark. So Gros, on the recommendation of ADF, confined street preaching to daylight hours while the organization challenged the law in court. If arrested, Gros could have faced six months behind bars and a \$500 fine.

However, La Rue says the law is so outrageous even the liberal American Civil Liberties Union filed suit after ADF did.

In September, a federal judge issued a temporary restraining order preventing the city from enforcing the law until its constitutionality is determined. In the meantime, Gros, who is recovering from liver cancer, has returned to evangelizing in the evenings.

Typically, Gros carries a 9-foot cross with 2-inch-tall LED lights containing short, scrolling gospel messages. He also uses a megaphone on occasion in an effort to convince raucous carousers to repent and accept Jesus as their Savior.

"Religious speech is just as important and just as protected as any other type of speech, at any time of the day," La Rue says. "The city of New Orleans has said if you are going to talk about Jesus after dark, you're a criminal. The very idea that government can tell us you can't say 'God bless you' is ridiculous."

## CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS

While the expanding plethora of local ordinances is problematic, researcher William Jaynes argues that additional laws protecting prayer and Bible reading may be the solution.

"The great danger is that people are coming to the conclusion that our Constitution is subject to varying interpretations and therefore they are restricting religious rights," says Jaynes, a senior fellow at the Witherspoon Institute in Princeton, New Jersey.

Jaynes, who also is an Assemblies of God evangelist, has been instrumental in ensuring that the Bible is taught statewide in public schools in nine states. He also helped construct a constitutional prayer amendment that 83 percent of Missouri voters approved in August.

The amendment, passed earlier by overwhelming majorities in the Missouri Senate and House, ensures that public school students can pray over their lunch in a cafeteria and read their Bibles during recess or study hall. More broadly, the amendment guarantees the right of citizens - including elected officials - to pray and to acknowledge God in public settings and on public property.

Jaynes sees the recent spate of city officials trying to curtail religious expression as the fallout from the Supreme Court declaring sponsored Bible reading and organized prayer off limits in public schools half a century ago.

Curtailments have accelerated in numerous school districts, so that now students in some places are suspended for uttering, "Praise the Lord," or even for bringing a Bible to school.

"Subsequently, school administrators who are anti-Christian bigots seem to have more leeway to declare certain freedoms as impermissible," Jaynes says. Whether through ignorance or abuse, enough principals and superintendents are engaged in restricting rights to keep most Christian teachers and students intimidated about talking about their faith in public schools, Jaynes says.

"It's amazing how our society protects the rights of people to say four-letter words, but not to utter a five-letter word: Jesus," Jaynes says.

## Crow-Smith

In Phoenix, The Rutherford Institute tangled with officials over distribution of free water by an Assemblies of God member motivated by compassion. Dana Crow-Smith handed out bottled water on a public sidewalk in 112-degree heat in July and engaged willing passersby in conversations about their religious beliefs.

A city official with the Orwellian title of "neighborhood preservation officer" approached Crow-Smith, who attends Deer Valley Worship Center in the suburb of Peoria, and told her she had to possess a \$350 mobile vendor's permit to give away water. The Rutherford Institute informed the city that such action violated Crow-Smith's First Amendment right to freely exercise religion.

In October, Phoenix City Council members struck down the ordinance prohibiting distribution of free water in public.

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