

CHRISTIAN LIFE REPORT

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CELEBRATE LIFE

by Joe Bob Mizzell

Abortion stops a beating heart

Like many of you, I watched a lot of commercials provided by politicians before the November 2, 2010, election. Most of them blasted each other, sometimes calling the opponent a liar, thief, cheater and swindler. If all the accusations are true, it is no wonder we have bad government.

I can remember only one candidate for office saying he opposed abortion. Now, I know many of our fine candidates oppose abortion and will tell you they oppose it, but very few put it on the tube. Is it no longer popular to be for life?

My heart was broken when a pastor's wife called to tell my office that an Air Force husband was forcing his wife to have an abortion. I know it goes on all the time because there were 10,882 abortions in Alabama in 2009, the latest date for which we have a record. You might think that is not bad compared to New York where most recent reports show 120,554, but even one is too many in either state.

The Southern Baptist Convention has designated January 16, 2011, as Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. Life is important, all the way from conception to the cemetery. We are God's people, people that Jesus gave His life for, everyone is important to God.

In a world that does not value life, children are abused. Child abuse is increasing in America. In this great country over two million children are abused each year, over 1300 of them die and over 100,000 children are sexually molested in America each year.

In the United States, about 6 million women become pregnant per year. Each year, nearly 1.2 million American women have an abortion to end a pregnancy. The most common reasons women consider abortion are: birth control (contraceptive) failure, perceived inability to support or care for a child, to end an unwanted pregnancy, to prevent the birth of a child with birth defects or severe medical problems, pregnancies resulting from rape or incest, and perceived physical or mental conditions that may endanger the woman's health.

Almost 30% of pregnant teens choose to have an abortion and 60% of them have the permission of

their parents. It is sad that in America nearly half of pregnancies are unintended, and four in ten of them are terminated by abortion. Twenty-two percent of all pregnancies end in abortion. In the 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision, the Supreme Court ruled that women, in consultation with their physician, have a constitutional right to have an abortion in the early stages of pregnancy. Since that date it is estimated that at least 54,000,000 abortions have been performed in America.

Genesis 1:26 tells us that God made man in His own image. That makes life sacred and that involves serious personal, moral, spiritual, medical and legislative implications.

All Southern Baptists should celebrate life on January 16, but we must not stop with one Sunday, we must celebrate life every Sunday and every day. If we do not take care of the unborn, our devaluing of life will continue to the elderly. As a nation will we decide that it is all right to deny food, water and medicine to hasten the death of an elderly person? When we take life before birth, what will stop us from taking life in old age or even allowing people to die with dreaded diseases such as cancer. Christianly is our last stand against paganism, we must set the standards.

We are reducing the number of abortions in America. Not nearly fast enough, but slowly the numbers are coming down. Why? Because of the ministers who are addressing this sin from the pulpit. Finally, evangelical ministers have come up to the plate and have stood strong against this terrible sin. Other organizations including Save-A-Live have made positive gains in helping mothers to recognize that person in their bodies is a real human being and it is worthy of living a life on earth. With the help of ultrasound equipment women now recognize the baby within them.

Thank God for your help! Please make Sanctity of Human Life a part of your worship January 16, 2011.

*(Mizzell is director of Christian Ethics/
Chaplaincy Ministries, Alabama
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*The articles in this issue were gathered from various sources
The opinions in the Christian Life Report are not necessarily the opinions of the Christian Life Commission*

Elections or Indictments...Putting an End to Corruption

by Gary Palmer

In testimony before the National Gambling Impact Study Commission, former Senator Paul Simon (D-IL) stated that gambling "... has more of a history of corruption than any other industry."

The October 4th indictments of eleven individuals, including four Alabama state senators, on charges of public corruption related to gambling legislation is an example of what the late Senator Simon meant. When you look back at the relationships between politicians and gambling interests, what you find is a long and sordid history of public corruption.

Certainly, one of the darkest events in Alabama happened because of gambling corruption in Phenix City. Public officials, starting at the local level in Russell County all the way up to the Alabama Attorney General, aided and abetted this corruption. It took the cold-blooded murder of Albert Patterson by Russell County Chief Deputy Sheriff Albert Fuller to clear out the gambling interests who had bought favor with state and local governing officials.

Many people of Alabama have forgotten the story of Phenix City. Of course, those recently indicted are innocent until proven guilty, but these indictments certainly should be a wake-up call. When it comes to gambling, it seems inevitable that public corruption will come with it. During the 1800s, gambling-related public corruption became so widespread that practically every state outlawed lotteries and all other forms of gambling. That is why Alabama's State Constitution has such a clear, strong stance against gambling. That is also why for almost 100 years, legal casino gambling was limited to Nevada.

Unfortunately, in the 1980s and 1990s, more and more states turned to lotteries and casinos as revenue to alleviate massive increases in state spending. As gambling once again spread across America, so did gambling-related corruption.

Here is a brief summary of some of the corruption investigations: in 1989, two prominent West Virginia state senators were sent to prison for taking gambling bribes; in 1991, nineteen Arizona legislators were videotaped taking gambling bribes in return for their votes on a gambling bill; in 1992, seventeen South Carolina legislators were convicted on gambling-related corruption charges; in 1995, fifteen Kentucky legislators were either convicted of or pleaded guilty to gambling corruption charges; in 1996, the Missouri Speaker of the House was forced to resign after he came under federal investigation for gambling corruption; in 1997, the Louisiana senator who chaired the senate committee overseeing gambling was convicted

and a member of the Louisiana House serving on a similar committee resigned for taking gifts in exchange for using his influence to help video gambling enterprises controlled by two organized crime groups.

The list goes on because more investigations into gambling corruption have taken place in other states in the last few years, including a major investigation of Pennsylvania's elected officials.

In some states, such as South Carolina, the gambling industry emerged in its worst form – video gambling parlors. These joints opened up all over that state to such a degree that there were more places to gamble in South Carolina than there were in Nevada. That was where Alabama was heading until Gov. Bob Riley launched a task force to shut them down.

Alabama has a history of corruption that runs deep and wide in the political infrastructure of this state and it isn't all related to gambling.

In 1992, Republican Governor Guy Hunt was convicted for the misuse of campaign contributions and removed from office. He was later pardoned after being proved innocent. An investigation during the brief administration of Jim Folsom, who succeeded Hunt and was in office for only about two and a half years, resulted in the conviction of one of his administration staff and two state senators. Former Governor Don Siegelman was convicted of corruption related to campaign contributions to support his lottery. Following that, the chancellor of the Alabama two-year college system, the president of the Alabama Fire College, two state representatives and a state senator were all convicted on corruption charges. Two former state chairmen of the Alabama Democratic Party are currently in federal prison for corruption related to the Jefferson County sewer bond scam. Consequently, Alabama ranks as one of the worst states in the nation for public corruption.

One possible reason there is so much public corruption in our state government is that the corrupt activities often occur away from the legislator's home district. Many legislators come from areas where there is little, if any, scrutiny of their actions. And for many elected officials, there is practically no local media to hold them accountable.

Voters need to be better informed about what their elected officials are doing because, in the end, the best method for cleaning up Alabama politics and government is through elections – vote the corrupt politicians out. We should not have to rely on federal investigators to do it for us.

(Palmer is president of the Alabama Policy Institute, Birmingham, Alabama)

2011 Special Sundays

January 16 — Sanctity of Human Life

February 13 — Racial Reconciliation

March 20 — Substance Abuse Prevention

July 3 — Citizenship & Religious Liberty

August 7 — Social Issues

September 18 — Anti-Gambling

October 9 — World Hunger

November 13 — ALCAP

Saved! Saved! Saved!

by Franklin L. Kirksey

Recently, the word “saved” was in the headlines. This word was used as it relates specifically to the story of 33 Chilean miners, known as “los treinta y tres” (treh-een-tah ee tres) or “the 33”.

Paul explains to those in Ephesus, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

We will attempt to unpack the meaning of the word saved.

I. An Unwelcome Announcement

On August 5, 2010, an unwelcome announcement came about the blocked mine shaft in the San Jose copper and gold mine near Copiapo, Chile. Something precious was lost. 33 Chilean miners lost contact with the outside world a half-mile above. 700,000 tons of rock collapsed and sealed them off. For seventeen days their friends and family did not know if they were dead or alive. No doubt there was misery for those above the ground as well as those almost a half mile below the earth’s surface. Many people involved in this tragic situation felt helpless, hopeless and hapless.

However, on August 27, the rescue team on the surface heard tapping on the drill and received the following note attached to the drill when it was pulled up, “Estamos bien en el refugio, los 33” – “We are fine in the shelter, the 33 of us.”

Remember they are still trapped a half-mile below the surface of the earth. In a very real sense they were still lost. Lost is a sad word indeed. Dr. Luke records three parables of Jesus in the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel that bears his name, namely, stories about a lost sheep, a lost silver coin and a lost son. Some refer to this chapter as “God’s lost and found.” In each case rejoicing comes upon the rescue or recovery of each lost thing.

II. An Unselfish Agreement

Chilean President, Sebastian Pinera, recounts, “We made a promise to never surrender and we kept it.” This elaborate rescue effort cost at least \$20 million. President Pinera enlisted the assistance of the United States. Clint Cragg, principal engineer with the NASA’s Engineering and Safety Center at the Langley Research Center, and 20 other engineers designed the rescue capsule. In addition, three health care professionals from NASA provided expert information related to issues of extended separation faced by astronauts. Literally, people from all over the world made a contribution in various ways to this endeavor. Mr. O.L. “Pat” Patterson of Mobile, Alabama, sent the following information. Allow me to share it here in part:

“Schramm Inc. of West Chester, Pennsylvania, built the drills and equipment used to reach the trapped miners. Center Rock Company, also from Pennsylvania, built the special percussion drill bits used to reach the miners. UPS, the US shipping company, delivered the 13-ton drilling equipment from Pennsylvania to Chile in less than 48 hours. Crews from Layne Christensen Company of Wichita,

Kansas, and its subsidiary Geotec Boyles Bros. worked the drills and machinery to locate and reach the miners and then enlarge the holes to ultimately rescue them. Jeff Hart of Denver Colorado was called off his job drilling water wells for the U.S. Army’s forward operating bases in Afghanistan to lead the drilling crew that reached the miners. Atlas Copco Construction Mining Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, provided consulting on how to make drilling equipment from different sources work together under differing pressure specifications. Aries Central California Video of Fresno California designed the special cameras that were lowered nearly a mile into the ground sending back video of the miners. Zephyr Technologies of Annapolis Maryland, made the remote monitors of vital signs that miners wore during their ascent. NASA Engineers designed the ‘Phoenix’ capsule that miners would be brought to the surface in, and provided medical consulting, special diets and spandex suits to maintain miners’ blood pressure as they’re brought back to the surface. Drilling Supply Co., Houston, was also involved. In addition, we must remember Canadian-based Precision Drilling Corp. and a South-African company, Murray & Roberts, drilled backup rescue shafts in case the American rig failed, which it did not.”

Igor Bravo, owner of a geo-technical monitoring company, who is also a believer, sought ways to meet spiritual needs of the miners. Bravo, a member of the First Baptist Church in Santiago, Chile, called his pastor, Luis Cortez, for assistance. Cortez appealed to Radio Harmonia, a Christian communication enterprise, who donated MP3s containing music and messages from the late Adrian P. Rogers (1931-2005), pastor emeritus of Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tennessee. From another source in Copiapo, Bravo was able to obtain thirty-three Gideon New Testaments and two entire copies of the Bible that fit the restrictions of the “palmona,” an instrument used to transport items from the surface to the chamber. “Palmona” is a Spanish word meaning “pigeon” or “dove.”

Christian Maureira, national director of Campus Crusade for Christ International in Chile, also sent the miners an MP3 copy of the Jesus Film and an audio version of the Bible.

One of the miners, José Henríquez, a strong believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, became a spiritual leader of the group who conducted Bible studies daily. Some refer to him as “The Pastor.” According to some news reports two miners came to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Henríquez asked for an evangelical pastor to minister to the miners and their families. Ivor Bravo heard about this request and contacted the Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Chile for assistance. The last week in September Bernardino Moral, director of the union’s Social Testimony Network located an available pastor almost two hours away. After a brief exchange, Marcelo Leiva, pastor of Vallenar Baptist Church in Vallenar, agreed to go.

According a news article, Jose Henriquez sent the

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following message to Maureira, "Thank you for this tremendous blessing for me and my coworkers. It will be good for our spiritual edification. I am fine because Christ lives in me. We have prayer services at 12 noon and 6 pm." Reportedly, in the letter, he quoted Psalm 95:4: "In His hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to Him."

Rescue workers opened the shaft wide enough, enabling Manuel Gonzales, a mine rescue expert and Roberto Ros, a paramedic with the Chilean Navy, to make their way down into the chamber. Upon arrival they were able to determine the well-being of the miners.

The Chilean rescue mission was expensive but consider the cost of God's mission as revealed in John 3:16-17, where Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." At another time Jesus said, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:4-6, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

III. An Unprecedented Achievement

On the streets of Chile you could hear this chant of celebration. Chi-chi-chi! Le-le-le! Chile! Chile! Chile! Each time a miner emerged there was a sense of jubilation. Florencio Avalos was the first miner to surface and Luis Urzua, a shift foreman, was the last, thus ending a sixty-nine day ordeal.

Bob Pawson, of Daphne, Alabama, a Gideon with the Baldwin Central Camp, sent the photo of a miner coming out of the rescue capsule named "Phoenix" holding a Gideon New Testament. I found a photo of another miner, named Alex Vega, the tenth man to exit the rescue capsule also holding a Gideon New Testament, as he reclined on a stretcher.

By October 13, 2010, all 33 miners made their way up a newly drilled half mile shaft to see the light of day. It was marvelous! Some might attribute this achievement to the practice of capitalism or to the prowess of human cooperation. However, we know that these men emerged from the mine according to the purpose of Almighty God our Creator. Paul the apostle reminds us in Acts 17:28a, "For in Him we live and move and have our being." Some referred to God by saying, "He was the 34th."

(Kirksey is pastor of First Baptist Church, Spanish Fort, Alabama)

FACTS & ISSUES

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BULLYING

30%, or more than 5.7 million teens involved in school bullying – either as a bully, the target of bullying, or both
13% of students in grades six through 10, reported bullying others
11% of those students reported being the target of school bullies
6% says they bullied others and were bullied themselves
www.familyfirstaid.org/bullying

CRIMINAL COSTS OF GAMBLING

According to a U.S. Justice Department report, Alabama ranks 4th in the nation in public corruption. In addition, *The Birmingham News* reports that convicted former Birmingham Mayor Larry Langford is alleged to have made hundreds of trips to a bingo casino and won over \$1.5 million on allegedly "fixed" machines.

"Pocket Points on Electronic Bingo: What Alabama Needs to Know"
Alabama Policy Institute — www.alabamapolicy.org



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