

# CHRISTIAN LIFE REPORT

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## In Defense of Freedom

by Darryl Wood

In the later years of his life, my father undertook a daily ritual. He flew an American flag outside the house. When asked why he took up this habit, he responded, "Because a lot of people died to give me the right." What he didn't say was that he, too, fought to defend that freedom during World War II as a tank commander in Europe.

Possibly no American appreciates freedom more than a combat veteran. Every American, however, should value it. Receipt of freedom requires that you offer something in defense of it.

Perhaps the perspective of Christian citizens toward freedom sets a proper tone for the defense of all liberty. Paul said, "You were called to freedom; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." (Galatians 5:13)

Paul, of course, addressed the spiritual freedom citizens of God's kingdom enjoy. What does the acceptance of Christian freedom teach that can be applied to the defense of your country's freedom?

**Guard Freedom Actively.** Political freedom remains a fantasy for many in this world. Government in some countries exists not to protect citizens but to take advantage of them. A free nation, then, cannot be taken for granted.

How can you guard freedom? Express gratitude to those who serve in our military. A friend of mine never passes a soldier in uniform without stopping to say, "Thank you for your service."

Guard liberty by supporting dedicated, unselfish elected public officials. Encourage good people to run for office. Pray for elected leaders regularly. And thank God for the blessing of life in a free country.

**Use Freedom Responsibly.** Do you sense that some people see freedom as a "blank check" to do

whatever they please? Freedom comes with a "catch." It never releases you to trample on the rights of others.

Responsible citizens respect and obey the laws of the land. Laws are not intended to restrict you from meaningful living. They protect you and others from the loss of freedom.

**Champion the Purpose of Freedom.** The Declaration of Independence set forth a unique concept. Government exists to release people from fear and promote their well-being. This purpose arose out of the experience of American colonists with an arrogant king who ignored their needs.

Whether political or spiritual, freedom serves the same purpose. Paul called Christians to apply freedom through sacrificial service to others. Free citizens, then, promote people regardless of their situation in life.

July 4, 1973, found me in Israel on an archaeological excavation. We Americans on the site felt sorry for ourselves. At the end of the day we whined about missing out on celebrations at home that included watermelon, homemade ice cream, and fireworks.

An Israeli archaeologist, also an army colonel, overheard us. He chastised the group. "The Jewish people went for centuries without a homeland," he said, "because our forefathers forgot the importance of protecting freedom. Now we have to build a nation from scratch."

His words struck deep. Christian citizens should treasure the central values of freedom. That prepares us to present a hearty defense of freedom.

*(Wood is pastor of Vincent First Baptist Church, and a member of the Christian Life commission)*

*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*

# Don't Ask, Don't Tell

by Burney Enzor

In 1992, when President Clinton was seeking his first term, I was asked, "Will you leave the service if homosexuals become a part of the military?" I said thoughtfully, "No. Somebody has to defend our country and somebody has to take God's Word to our troops." That was true for me then as a seasoned chaplain; however, I am not sure I would have been as eager to join, when I was a young preacher, had homosexuality been openly legal in the military. I believe many of our best men and women will leave the military or will not join if homosexuality is made legal. Congress passed Section 654 of U.S. Code 10 making homosexuals ineligible for military service. President Clinton improvised a regulation known as Don't Ask, Don't Tell which did allow homosexuals to come into the military. They would not be asked their sexual preference nor could they express it openly.

Now, President Obama and some members of congress want to repeal the Code. In an article in the Washington Post, four Flag and General Officers using a poll by "Military Times" estimated a minimal of 228,000 would leave if Section 654 of U.S. Code 10 were repealed. Impetus for repeal was initiated when 104 retired Flag and General Officers signed a petition asking for repeal. By March of 2009 over a thousand retired Flag and General Officers had signed a petition saying this law should not be repealed because it upheld "good order, discipline, and morale in the unique environment of the military." I agree that the repeal of the law would impose a "burden on our men and women in uniform and would undermine recruiting and retention, impacting leadership at all echelons." The media seemed more impressed with the message of 104 for repeal than the 1050 who oppose repeal.

Commanders give priority to the accomplishment of the military mission, and the care of our troops. Both priorities will be diminished by the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. We do not have the luxury of reducing the forces that defend our country and constitution for a social agenda, especially in the face of our determined enemies.

The stress level of soldiers is too high already to add another stress-or. Both heterosexuals and homosexuals would endure additional mental strain. The president's greatest responsibility is to protect our nation, not create social change in the military.

We will not improve our military might by repealing Section 654 U.S. Code 10. Congress should not be made up of veterans only; however, all members of congress should get as close to "virtual reality" of life in the military as possible. Living conditions for our troops are far different from civilian life. "Pup" tents are tiny and have to be shared with a buddy. Common showers are "common" indeed. A "common" sexual orientation takes away some of the raw edge of military life.

Removing Don't Ask, Don't Tell will cost the nation a portion of our passion to encourage our best young people to serve. President Clinton was shrewd when he came up with Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Most Americans were satisfied with Section 654 of U. S. Code 10 as it was. For those who are dissatisfied remember President Clinton's regulation has allowed homosexuals to serve in the military. No one is asked their sexual orientation, neither can homosexuals go public. More serious restrictions on our war fighters exist than being silent on their sexual preference. In life outside the military most people are happy to refrain from asking someone about his/her sexual preferences and they don't announce their preference either. The value of liberty is well worth being silent on more private issues than this one.

As a general I was given top secrets. I have forgotten every one of them. When I could remember secrets I never gave them away. As a chaplain I kept the secrets of my soldiers in confidence. I suspect a soldier today who did "tell" his chaplain who did not "ask" would find his chaplain would never "tell."

*(Enzor is a retired Army National Guard chaplain with the rank of Brigadier General, and a member of the Christian Life Commission)*



## "BIG ALCOHOL" is taking over

by Joe Godfrey

For years we heard about the "Big Three" auto makers in America; then we heard about "Big Tobacco" and the large lawsuits and negotiated settlements that were tied to that enterprise; with the BP oil spill in the Gulf, our attention is currently focused on "Big Oil." But, no one ever talks about another enterprise that is arguably far bigger, more powerful and more aggressive than any of the other "Big" companies or industries which garner so much media attention. "BIG ALCOHOL" is taking over our culture at an alarming rate!

During the 2009 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature, the "gourmet beer" bill was passed which

raised the amount of alcohol allowed in a container of beer from 6% to 13.9%. That same year, the Legislature passed a bill which lowered the population requirement for a wet-dry referendum in a city within a dry county from 7000 to 1000 or more. Today, little towns all over Alabama are fighting to keep their communities dry. Though the Governor vetoed this bill, the House voted to override the Governor's veto by 2 votes. When the "override" went to the Senate, the Senate failed to override the veto TWICE. That should have been the end of it. However, the Lt. Governor ruled that they could take

*(continued on page 3)*

# Truth in Advertising... Misery for Sale

by Kenny Hatcher

There has been a great deal of attention paid to illegal drugs in the last generation. We have declared a "War on Drugs", and First Lady Nancy Reagan encouraged our children to "Just Say No". In spite of millions of dollars and countless man hours spent, I believe it is safe to say that we have not won the war, and there are still a lot of people who don't say no. Does that mean that we should just give up? Absolutely not, but we ought to at least be honest when we refer to the drug problem.

Although illegal drugs get the headlines in Alabama, the biggest problem we have is with legal drugs, and by far, the biggest one of these is alcohol. Perhaps the problem stems from the fact that it is legal, and for the most part, it is accepted. Do a little survey where you live to see how many grocery stores, convenience stores, bait shops, etc. don't sell alcohol. Driving under the influence is still against the law, and yet alcohol is sold at gas stations. There just seems to be something wrong with that picture because of the subtle message it must send to our children.

Do we as Christians really believe God's Word? What about Habakkuk 2:15 that says, "**Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth the bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also.....**". If we really believed that, would church members champion the cause of legalizing alcohol sales in dry counties?

Many will tell you that we need the tax revenue that alcohol sales will generate in our depressed economies. If the statistics are evaluated honestly, you will find that it actually costs more than it produces.

If there was truth in advertising, instead of seeing everyone having a great time drinking, you would see someone throwing up. You would see vehicles destroyed and lives cut short. You would see missed days at work, and children neglected and/or abused. You would see broken homes and broken lives. You would see insurance rates rising, and you would see rehab centers prominently pictured.

I know that not everyone who takes their first drink will become an alcoholic, but so far I don't think we've been able to determine which ones will. Will the next alcoholic be someone you love? I have lived with it, and as a pastor, witnessed the devastating results.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2008, there were 13,846 traffic fatalities nationwide that were alcohol related. In Alabama, 37% of traffic fatalities (367) for that year were alcohol related.

Suicide (eleventh leading cause of death in U.S) seems to be a growing problem in our nation. According to statistics, 1 in 5 is alcohol related. Depression also seems to be on the rise. What kind of drug is alcohol? It is a depressant. It has also been proven that drinking alcohol is related to as many as 1/3 of all accidental deaths. You won't see that on the commercials.

I know that alcoholism is a fact. I know that it has been classified as a disease, but if it is a disease:

1. It is 100% preventable (just don't take that first drink)
2. It is the only disease that is contracted by an act of will
3. Only disease that is habit forming
4. Only disease that comes out of a bottle or can
5. Only disease that causes so many broken homes and ruined lives
6. Only disease that seems to promote crime and brutality
7. Only disease that contributes to so many highway fatalities each year
8. Only disease that can be bought in grocery stores, drug stores and gas stations
9. Only disease that is sold by license and taxed by the government

If the profits were not so high there would not be so many rushing to sell it. But I would remind you that your cost of living is higher to cover the hidden expense that alcohol creates. You pay higher insurance premiums even if you don't drink.

Pastors, are you willing to take a stand?

*(Hatcher is pastor of Northside Baptist Church, Selma, and a member of the Christian Life Commission)*

**"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Proverbs 20:1**

*("BIG ALCOHOL" continued from page 2)*

a third vote (an unprecedented step). Just before that vote, lobbyists for the brewers and distributors of alcoholic beverages in Alabama scurried to individual senators' offices and when senators returned to the chamber, they voted by ONE vote to override the Governor's veto!

During the 2010 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature, a bill that allows all wine (up to 24% alcohol per container) to be sold in convenience and grocery stores passed both Houses and the Governor's veto was overridden. This law makes inexpensive forms of VERY potent wine easily accessible to adolescents. Some have

predicted that these wines will become the "drink of choice" on prom night in Alabama!

Who is behind this massive push to increase the potency and the availability of alcoholic beverages?—"BIG ALCOHOL!" If we are going to stop this destructive enterprise, preachers must preach the biblical principal of total abstinence. Hopefully, such preaching will teach church-going legislators why they should oppose "BIG ALCOHOL!"

*(Godfrey is executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program – ALCAP)*

# FACTS & ISSUES

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## RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN BRITAIN

Brits face religious freedom controversies that Americans have only glimpsed. Christians have been charged for publicly speaking of homosexuality as a sin, most recently a Baptist street preacher just three days before the election. A Christian doctor was barred from sitting on a public adoption panel when she asked to abstain from adoption decisions involving same-sex couples. Others have been banned from wearing crosses in the workplace. “The rights Christians thought they had in this country are being eroded,” said David Muir, head of Faith in Britain.

*World Magazine, p. 46, May 22, 2010*

## POWER OF PRAYER

The Pentagon dropped evangelist and Samaritan’s Purse head Franklin Graham from its May 6 National Day of Prayer service under pressure from the Military Religious Freedom Foundation over his comments about Islam. Nine years ago after 9/11 Graham called Islam a “very wicked and evil religion.” Following the Pentagon’s brush-off, he said, “I love Muslim people...I want Muslims everywhere to know...that Christ can come into their heart and change them.” The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) applauded the Pentagon’s decision and tried unsuccessfully to stop Graham’s appearance at the congressional Day of Prayer service. The move didn’t stop Graham from attending a meeting between his father, Billy Graham, and President Barack Obama at the elder Graham’s home in North Carolina April 25. It was Obama’s first meeting with the ailing 91-year-old evangelist, who has ministered to 12 presidents. Both men said that they prayed for one another.

*World Magazine, p. 12, May 22, 2010*

## SEXUAL SLAVERY IN AMERICA

“Most Americans do not realize that child trafficking is a major problem on Main Street USA,” said Ernie Allen, president of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, at a February congressional hearing. “These kids are victims. This is 21st-century slavery.”

*Christianity Today, May 2010*

## SEAT BELTS

Seat belts saved more than 13,000 lives in the US in 2008. Also in that year—the most recent for which statistics are available—front air bags saved 2,546 lives. More than 18,500 lives were saved by these and other vehicle safety features.

*National Highway Traffic Safety Administration,  
[www.nhtsa.gov/seatbelts](http://www.nhtsa.gov/seatbelts)*

## SALES TAXES

Sales taxes have risen to record levels. The highest rate is 12% in one part of Alabama. The highest big-city rate is 10.25% in Chicago. That is scheduled to fall to 9.75% on July 1—matching the rate in Los Angeles. San Francisco and Seattle charge 9.5%... New York City, New Orleans, 9%...New York City, 8.875%... Houston, Dallas and Charlotte, 8.25%...Las Vegas, 8.1%.

*William P. Barrett, Forbes.com, March 8, 2010*

## ORPHANS

Russia has 700,000 orphans, reportedly more than at the end of World War II.

*World Magazine, p. 16, May 22, 2010*

## Save the Date...

*August 1, 2010*

➤ *Social Issues Sunday—Pornography*

*“Abstain from all appearance of evil.” 1 Thessalonians 5:22*

*September 19, 2010*

➤ *Anti-Gambling Sunday*

*“Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.” Psalm 119:37*

*October 10, 2010*

➤ *World Hunger Sunday*

*“He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.” Proverbs 22:9*



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