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“From the Pastor’s Desk”

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WE WALKED WITH THE CHRISTIANS OF TRINIDAD

Recently this pastor and wife boarded an American Airline plane and headed for the Port of Spain, Trinidad, to share the pulpit with our the President, Steve and Becky Riggle at a Pastors and Leaders Conference, hosted by our Grace International, Inc. representative Pastor Keith and Radica Ramdass, for the entire Caribbean region. The Conference was held at the Redemption Worship Center.

The flight was a twenty-hour ordeal for two 78 year old senior citizens, (which included two lay-overs in Dallas and Miami). Nevertheless, we were delighted for the invitation to return to these wonderful people of Trinidad and our hosts to share more of the good news of the Gospel and to support them in their challenge to call for righteousness to be exalted in their nation.

The purpose of our trip was threefold. Naturally we desired to inspire the many pastors which took out time from their busy schedules to attend this conference. The Conference theme was: *Confronting the Giants in 2018*. It was evident by what the pastors shared with us that they did indeed have their personal, as well as ministerial challenges.

The second reason was to celebrate the graduation of many of the Bible School Students. I was very excited about this because many of these students attending a class were using a book that we have written as their text book: “Answering to the Call of the Ministry.” I was rather flattered when they asked me to autograph their particular text book and even asked for more of my books for their personal study.

The third reason that we went was to support Pastor Keith Ramdass and his wife as they give leadership not only to the pastors in our organization, but to many of the pastors on the island. They are doing their best to combat a new law that the legislatures are trying to pass with the support and endorsement of the LGBT. The proponents of same sex marriage are challenging what is referred to as the Buggery Law which endorses marriage between a man and a woman.

Pastor Ramdass and many of his fellow pastors are engaged in court on this matter and are presently preparing the churches in Trinidad and Tobago to stage several protest marches across their nation to force the government to take a stand for the moral and family values which the church upholds. If these pastors lose their case, the entire Caribbean region will be affected. Already Belize and the Bahamas have ruled in favor of the LGBT.

The various governments of the Caribbean who need financial support and trade opportunities, because of the recession, are under pressure from the United Nations, European Union, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and other International agencies to pass the same-sex law. They are also facing an ISIS threat in Trinidad that has several cell groups who are engaged in various conflicts throughout the world for the present. One hundred and fifty persons went from Trinidad to engage in the war in Syria recently. This nation does have its challenges.

THE SPECIAL MARCH

Pastor Ramdass in preparation for the Conference, decided to organize a march from the Parliament Building to a city Park to protest the changing of the Law in redefining marriage. He was not sure how many people would show up when we arrived but was confident that many members of his church would be there as well as several of his pastors.

However the closer the day came to march he began to receive phone calls from various pastors who elected not to join him. It was frustrating to listen to their excuses as to why they chose not to come. Some of them admitted that they were afraid of how it would affect their standing the community and with some of their legislatures who gave them special diplomatic status in their support of their office.

On the other hand there were other pastors from the different religious denominations (non-Pentecostal) who called him which had heard of what he was attempting to do and they asked him if they could join the march. Naturally, he welcomed them with open arms. So when the day did arrive it was wonderful to see hundreds show up which included Roman Catholic Priests and even some Muslims. It was a hot day and the march included three to four miles. I know that by the time we reached the end (which was a local park), I had swallowed three bottles of water....my clothes were soaked as a result. But my spirit was refreshed.

The news media showed up as well and that evening they made the march one of their major stories, which included pictures of the various people with banners and signs calling for the people of Trinidad to speak up for the true definition of marriage. When we arrived at the park we were told that we could not enter. The plan was to gather in the park and have a time for prayer. However, one call to the Mayor's office was enough to challenge it. The police then stepped aside and we all went into the park for a time of prayer and a few words of encouragement to those that gathered to return the following week to voice their opposition.

Since the march my contact with Pastor Ramdass has informed us that while the march was making an impact it was evident that the battle is not over. Legislation is still continuing to move through their legal system. But the pastors are uniting to stand with their congregation for their leader to listen to their voice on this law. They covet our prayers and support as they continue in this battle.

It was a joy for Pastor Riggle, our Grace International President and I to join them in this walk for righteousness. I realize that our battles here in California, and throughout the nation continues. Very soon, in Sacramento, our State Senate will be voting on a piece of legislation which if passed threatens to place us pastors, counselors, book writers who counsel against transgender issues in legal jeopardy for lawsuit and arrest. *The bill is **AB 2943** will use California's Consumer Legal Remedies Act to punish anyone who receives financial remuneration for counseling an individual of any age who has unwanted sexual desires or gender identity issues, even when they ask for help and healing, known as sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE). Counseling someone in the matter would be considered fraudulent.*

Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), a coalition of attorneys and others who advocate for our right to freely live out our faith, has stated that the bill's vague language extends its scope well beyond one-on-one therapy, saying, "At its core, AB 2943 outlaws speech, whether offered by a licensed counselor, a best-selling author, or even a minister or religious leader. It targets a specific message - that an adult who is experiencing unwanted same-sex attraction or gender identity confusion can find help to address those issues - for censorship. The breadth of this censorship is staggering."

We as pastors desire to focus on evangelism, training in discipleship, and meeting the needs of our congregation in the visitation of the sick, care for the needy, etc. However, this measure will seriously affect our ability to do just that, so we are asking you to pray and take action. I am asking you at this time to pray, and then *write your State Senator and appeal to them to take a stand for marriage as defined in the Holy Scriptures and even in natural law.*

We who are committed to preach the truth in righteousness will never surrender our doctrine and spiritual convictions. I agree with Martin Luther King. When a law is unjust and immoral it the people must act. We love all people regardless of their ideology, persuasion, or belief in such matters, but that does not mean we must agree with them when it runs contradictory to God's Word. Someday we too may need to march for righteousness. Will the Lord and this Pastor be able to count on you? I hope so...but this is the time to act today. So I am asking you while we have the time to voice our concerns please let us do it. I believe one day you will look back at this day of opportunity and be glad, regardless of the outcome that you gave a voice of protest to such evil legislation. Amen