

NEWS AND VIEWS
MOUNT OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH
3500 Edwards Mill Road, Raleigh, North Carolina 27612-5362

Phone... (919) 787-1910
E-mail: office@mobic.org
Web Page: www.mobic.org

*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

SAM GORE, Senior Pastor
EDITH JACKSON, Prayer Coordinator

NANCY MCBRAYER, Office Manager
MIKE KING, Maintenance Supervisor

VOLUME 36

December 2014

NUMBER 12

As I write today I am having this prevailing thought about Living in the Land of the Free. That phrase seems to be interpreted differently by different people. The question in my mind this morning is are we truly *living in freedom*? Freedom to do what and to whom? And who determines the measure of what *living* really means? Is it existing, surviving, or thriving? Some are dying as they are living while they pursue their pursuits in life. Some time ago in our history as American people, a declaration was made that included these words... *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.* This is part of what we have come to know as the Declaration of Independence. I used to take issue with part of this statement. I stumbled on the pursuit of happiness thing. It seemed a little akin to the so-called prosperity gospel that all too often passes as American Cultural Christianity.

I believe that our Creator *is* about life and liberty but until I studied the scriptures I was a little put off by the “right” to happiness. After all, does God promise happiness or is that only the government speaking? Last night I saw on the television the evidence of lawlessness colliding with unhappiness. What was the declaration I was seeing? On a physical map of Missouri, it’s a little over 230 miles from a place called Independence to a place called Ferguson. On a spiritual level, the distance from Spiritual Independence to Destruction in Ferguson seems to be right around the corner, and all in the same neighborhood.

This morning I am looking into the Word of God, which makes quite a few declarations of its own. Independence from tyrannical oppression is a good thing. But independence from the influence of the Word of God is quite another. Consider the following scripture: *Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, but happy is he who keeps the law. (Proverbs 29:18, NASU)* The passage in this translation gives interpretation of the word *vision* as *revelation*. It seems that the Spirit of God is telling us that without the revealed Word of God, people act in ways that lead to destruction. The headline in an online article caught my eye this morning stating the following: *An Enraged City Sets Ferguson Ablaze.* Really? No. It’s people, not the city, that set Ferguson ablaze. Rioting erupted after some were not satisfied with a ruling of the law announced by the St. Louis prosecutor. All over the land people were protesting the ruling, some violently. It seems that the passage in Proverbs could have been the news headline...but who is reading the Bible these days? There are a whole lot of unrestrained and unhappy people in the land. What can we determine as the root cause of the problem? A lack of God’s revelation? More likely it is a lack of *understanding* and *abiding* by the revelation of the Word of God and living under its influence.

Speaking of influence, or lack of it, what I saw on the television last night gave me a symbolic picture worth the proverbial thousand words. The president issued an appeal for restraint from Washington in which he said, *“We are a nation built on the rule of law, so we need to accept that this decision was the grand jury’s to make”*. The amazing thing about television is something called a “split screen”. I could see the President speaking on one side of the screen and the riots beginning on the other side. I could see what it means to have total disregard for authority...restraint was cast away. Another Scripture comes to mind that speaks about the disregard for authority and the resulting lawlessness. *In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes. (Judges 17:6)* Our cultural landscape is changing rapidly. In the beginning of our history, rebellion overthrew tyrannical authority. In what some see as an end to America as we have known it, a return to tyrannical authority is a perceived threat. A microcosm of anarchy, where lawlessness abides, was on display last night with promise of more to come. This morning my question to myself and to you is...how then shall we live? Consider God’s promise fulfilled and its future implications:

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

The Lawgiver has spoken. He has come and is coming again. When we live under the influence of His law, restrained by His Spirit, we can be truly happy. Jesus is Lord! So let’s live it like we mean it...

Christmas Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam.