

Templates of Truth with Rick Smith
Audio Script – May 07, 2009

Imagine this headline: “Local Pastor Arrested for Publicly Quoting Scripture Passage Against Homosexuality.” You say it could never happen? In today’s Templates of Truth, we focus on recent Washington activity that already lays the foundation.

The prophet Micah quotes the people of his day as shouting: *Do not speak out* (Micah 2:6). These were people living in ways that were displeasing to God and in violation of God’s Word. Micah and other faithful prophets had been challenging these behaviors and lifestyles by preaching the commands of God. The people interpreted their preaching as being judgmental, insensitive and words of hate and prejudice. They didn’t want to hear such words and made efforts to silence the prophet.

On April 29 of this year, the United States House of Representatives passed HR 1913 – The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act. This legislation, overwhelmingly approved by House Democrats and strongly supported by President Obama, defines “hate crimes” as those motivated by prejudice against such things as a person’s “sexual orientation.” It will provide federal money for state and local authorities to investigate and prosecute individuals for using language that can be interpreted under the bill as “hate” language. It now goes to the Senate for consideration and approval.

While no one would disagree with a hate crimes law, the Philadelphia *Bulletin* reports that this bill is “loaded with hidden landmines that threaten sacred freedoms of expression and religion.” For instance, the word “hate” is characterized in the bill as including “disagreement,” so that if you express your disagreement with homosexual behavior, you are accused of being “hateful” and engaging in “hate speech,” and even a “hate crime.”

There are other ways this bill can target your pastor. HR 1913 makes it a federal crime to willfully cause “bodily injury” because of “the actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity” of another. Incredibly, the statute fails to define “bodily injury.” When a statute fails to define a term, a judge must discern its meaning by looking to other statutes. Several federal criminal laws define “bodily injury” as including emotional distress. So, if a pastor expresses the biblical viewpoint that homosexual (or other) behaviors are immoral, a homosexual can allege that he has been emotionally injured by the willful conduct of the pastor. That is a hate crime under HR 1913!

Second, religious leaders could be found guilty for the violent acts committed by people who hear them speak. Federal law provides that whoever induces someone to commit a federal crime shall be punished as if he actually committed the crime himself. If a pastor addresses the topic of sexual orientation and an unstable person hears his sermon and is thereby “induced” to murder a homosexual (which would be a federal hate crime), then the pastor could be found guilty of murder as well.

Third, the bill provides special legal protections to people who engage in behaviors that ought to

shock our collective moral conscience. The bill fails to define the term “sexual orientation” and a judge could interpret this term to include behaviors such as pedophilia, voyeurism, exhibitionism, bestiality, and a host of other sexual behaviors. Accordingly, you could be found guilty of a hate crime if you physically stopped a pedophile from assaulting a child because the pedophile is within the special protected class and you “caused bodily injury” “because of” his “sexual orientation.” Absurd? You bet it is!

Even though the people of Micah’s day demanded, *Do not speak out*, he did speak out, because *if we do not speak out concerning these things, reproaches will not be turned back* (Micah 2:6). God has an expectation for how we are to behave. If we refuse, God has a day of judgment coming. That message must have the freedom of expression to be clearly proclaimed. We must fight the passage of this bill now in order to preserve our right of religious freedom and expression. If not, this communication may one day be found in violation of federal law. The days will return when modern preachers and pastors will be jailed for faithfully proclaiming God’s truth, just as the early leaders of the church were in the first century A.D.

That’s today’s Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in Christ Jesus.