

President Trump Vows to Get Tough on Bad VA Employees

President Donald Trump signed an executive order Thursday aimed at cracking down on bad employees in the Department of Veterans Affairs by improving accountability and whistleblower protections.

The order directs Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. David Shulkin to establish within 45 days an Office of Accountability and Whistle-blower Protection, and to appoint someone to serve as its executive director. The office's directives will be to:

- advise and assist Shulkin in using, as appropriate, all available authorities to discipline or terminate any VA manager or employee who has violated the public's trust and failed to carry out his or her duties on behalf of veterans; and to recruit, reward and retain high-performing employees;
- identify statutory barriers to Shulkin's authority to discipline or terminate any employee who has jeopardized the health, safety, or well-being of a veteran; and to recruit, reward and retain high-performing employees and report such barriers for consideration as to the need for legislative changes;
- work closely with relevant VA components to ensure swift and effective resolution of veterans' complaints of wrongdoing at the VA and
- work closely with relevant VA components to ensure adequate investigation and correction of wrongdoing throughout the VA and to protect employees who lawfully disclose wrongdoing from retaliation.

One likely outcome from this effort will be shining a bright light on the need for civil service reform throughout the

federal government. Although the president hasn't specifically talked about seeking such reforms from Congress, he did make it clear once again prior to signing the order that he intends to "protect the people that are protecting us."

The following are his complete comments at the order signing ceremony:

I'm pleased to be here. And we're joined by so many members of Congress. It's been really a fantastic period of time for me. And I'm honored also to be at the Department of Veterans Affairs, because I will tell you this has been something, right from the beginning of the campaign—does not get any more important for me than making life really great for our phenomenal veterans. That I can say.

So we're sharing the stage with a lot of great people, a lot of great friends. A couple of my friends are out in the audience today—Ike Perlmutter, Laurie Perlmutter. Where are they? Where are they? Where are they? These are incredible people, incredibly successful people. And they just have an affinity for helping the veterans and for helping David. And I want to thank them. Unbelievable. Thank you. Dr. Moskowitz, also.

And we're going to protect those who protect. And we're going to protect the people that are protecting us. First of all, Secretary Shulkin—and I call him the 100-to-nothing man, because in a totally obstructionist group of Democrats—we say that with affection—he got not only the Republicans but he got all of the Democrat votes. And he won at a 100-to-nothing clip. So I guess—boy, do they know. I hope they're right, you know.

But David is doing a phenomenal job. He was voted unanimously out of the United States Senate, and he's worked ever since then, day and night, to reform and improve the VA.

I'm also pleased that we're joined by so many members of Congress. We have with us Senators Ernst—where's Joni Ernst? Where is Joni? What a tremendous woman. And right from the beginning, she has been—and she knows more about veterans than anybody. Thanks, Joni. Really appreciate it.

Senator Isakson—thank you, Senator. Thank you very much. Senator Moran and Senator Tester. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, all. Along with Congressmen Arrington, Bergman, Bridenstine, Dent, Roe and Wenstrup. I look forward to serving our veterans with all of you.

And I can tell you, this group, whether they're Democrat or Republican, they're here to help. And we're going to help, and we're going to make this so good, it's going to be one of our crown jewels. And it's happening already.

As part of that process, Secretary Shulkin has carried out a really thorough review—he had some very inside understanding of the VA because he's been here—but a thorough review of the VA to uncover all of the problems and challenges that we inherited, of which there are so many. Based on those findings, we're putting plans into place to fix those problems and give our veterans the health care they need and the health care they deserve.

And they were so for me during this recent election, and I can promise them, and they know it's going to happen—we're not going to let them down. We have a team the likes of which has never, ever been assembled. That includes outside people who are so brilliant and so good—like Ike and Laurie. And they're helping us. And they don't fail.

Much work lies ahead, but we will not rest until this job is totally done. During these first 100 days—which, as you know, I've been saying there's a very extreme emphasis placed on these 100 days, Joni. It's not quite as big as they're saying. But we have really laid a foundation—had a

lot of legislation passed, which nobody understands. I think it's 28 bills as of this moment. Somebody said, by the time it ends, it's 32 bills. And tremendous legislation. But we've already made huge strides to improve the VA and the VA services.

We've imposed new standards of accountability and transparency, including a new website that publishes wait times at every VA hospital. This is a website that works. This is not the \$5 billion Obamacare website. Do we remember that? Nobody remembers that. Does anybody remember the \$5 billion website? No, I don't think so. We don't have to remember it anymore.

We've implemented same-day mental health services at all 168 VA medical centers, so that the veterans in crisis can find help at the VA, without any delay.

Last week, I signed the Veterans Choice Improvement Act—very proud of that—so that more veterans can see the doctor of their choice, and don't have to travel long distances or wait forever for VA care. They were waiting on lines for seven days, eight days, nine days, two weeks. Some instances were horrible. They we're waiting so long—they had a very curable problem and they died before they got to see the doctor. It's not going to happen any longer.

Already this year, using the Choice Program, veterans have received 42 percent more approvals to see the doctor of their choosing. But that's just the very beginning of what we have planned. So much more is coming.

Today, we're taking another bold step forward. I'm signing an executive order to create an Office of Accountability and Whistle-blower Protection at the Department of Veterans Affairs. This executive order makes it clear that we will never, ever tolerate substandard care for our great veterans. With the creation of this office, we are sending a

strong message: Those who fail our veterans will be held, for the first time, accountable.

At the same time, we will reward and retain the many VA employees who do a fantastic job—of which we have many. And I will tell you, some of the doctors in the VA, I've heard it from so many people, they're the finest in the world. These are great, great people. We have to get our vets to those doctors. But we have some of the finest doctors in the world.

We have also some of the most honest employees, and some of them expose wrongdoing, and we will make sure that they're protected.

We're also calling on the Senate to pass legislation to give the Secretary the authority he needs to ensure all VA employees are held accountable for how they treat our veterans.

Today's action is historic. But it is only the start of our reforms. Our veterans have secured this nation with their blood, sweat and tears, and we will not let them down. These are our great, great people. We will always stand with those who stood for freedom and who stood for us. They protected us. They've made it all possible, and now we're going to protect and take care of them.

So I'd like to thank David and his family, and all of the people that are working so hard at the VA. They haven't had enthusiasm—David was just telling me—like this for many, many years. And the veterans see what's happening—because I'm getting so many different messages through all forms of communication, of which we now have many. But they're very, very happy, very pleased with what's going on.

So, David, we want to God bless you and your family. We want to wish you a lot of luck, with a lot of talent, because you have a big job ahead.

I want to wish everybody Godspeed. And we will do a fantastic job at the VA, rest assured. Thank you very much. And we're going to sign right now. Thank you very much. Thank you. {eoa}

Did Pope Francis Just Make Another Move for One World Religion?

Pope Francis arrived in Cairo on Friday hoping to mend ties with Muslim leaders, just as Egypt's ancient Christian community faces unprecedented pressure from Islamic State militants who have threatened to wipe it out.

In an address to the Egyptian people this week, Francis said he hoped his visit would help bring peace and encourage dialog and reconciliation with the Islamic world.

But it comes at a painful time for Egypt's Copts, the Middle East's largest Christian community, three weeks after Islamic State suicide bombers killed 45 people in twin church bombings.

Those attacks followed a cathedral bombing that killed 28 people in December and a spree of murders that has forced hundreds of Christians to flee North Sinai, where the group is most active.

"Pope of Peace in Egypt of Peace," read posters plastered along the road leading from the airport to central Cairo, showing a smiling pope, his hand raised above the Christian cross and the Crescent moon of Islam.

Military Humvees patrolled the streets and soldiers guarded routes the pope will take. As on other foreign visits, Pope Francis will shun armored limousines during his 27-hour stay and use a normal car, saying this lets him be nearer the people.

Streets close to the Vatican embassy in Cairo and other sites have been cleared of cars and blocked off, and pedestrians were not allowed to linger.

“After all the pain we have experienced ... we are satisfied and confident that the state is taking strong security measures to prevent terrorism and protect churches,” said Father Boulos Halim, spokesman of the Coptic Orthodox church to which the majority of Egypt’s Christians belong.

“It’s in the state’s interests to protect its nationals, and the Copts are not an independent people, they are part and parcel of the nation itself.”

Strained Relations

Francis will meet President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi; Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, the world’s most influential seat of Sunni Islamic theology and learning; and Pope Tawadros II, head of the Coptic Orthodox Church who narrowly escaped a church bombing in Alexandria on Palm Sunday.

Francis is expected to give his key address to a conference on religious dialog at Al-Azhar, part of efforts to improve relations with the 1,000-year-old center after Egyptian Muslim leaders cut ties in 2011 over what they said were repeated insults against Islam by Pope Benedict.

Tayeb visited the Vatican last year after restoring relations. Widely considered among the most moderate clerics in Egypt, Tayeb has condemned Islamic State and its practice of declaring others as infidels as a pretext for waging jihad.

Francis denounces violence in God's name and papal aides say a moderate like Tayeb would be an important ally in condemning radical Islam.

But Tayeb is under fire over the slow pace of reform at Azhar, which critics in Egypt's parliament and media accuse of failing to combat the religious foundations of Islamist extremism. They say Azhar is an ossified institution whose clerics have resisted pressure from Sisi to modernize their religious discourse. {eoa}

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BREAKING: Congress Prevents Government Shutdown ... For One Week

With only a little more than 12 hours to spare, the Republican-led Congress has put together a continuing resolution to allow the federal government to function, avoiding a shutdown some fear could be politically damaging.

The measure maintains government funding for just seven additional days. It passed the House by a 370-30 margin and was immediately messaged to the Senate, where after a brief delay it was adopted on a voice vote. President Trump still needs to sign the bill, and is likely to do so as he works with Congress to secure funding to begin construction on the southern border wall.

Republicans had attempted to pass a one-week "CR" on Thursday, but were blocked by Senate Democrats, who refused to do so

without an agreement on a long-term funding proposal. They claim the GOP has inserted “poison pill” policy riders in the funding bill, and they will not vote on a long-term “CR” with those in place.

“Not all the poison pill riders have been eliminated,” Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) said Friday over his sudden change of heart. “We’re willing to extend things for a little time in hopes that the same kind of progress will be made.”

Insiders on Capitol Hill have suggested the House GOP leadership offered to delay the vote on the American Health Care Act to “sweeten the deal” with Democrats to avert a shutdown. But the issue hasn’t gone away.

But it does give the House a little more time to work on a continuing resolution to get through the remainder of the fiscal year. The end of Fiscal Year 2017 is Sept. 30. The new deadline to avoid a government shutdown is midnight next Friday. {eo}

Benny Hinn Ministries Responds to News of IRS, Postal Inspectors’ Raid

Benny Hinn Ministries “remain confident in the days ahead” after the Internal Revenue Service and postal inspectors raided the headquarters earlier this week.

“As has been widely reported, Benny Hinn Ministries is cooperating fully with the governmental entities that are

reviewing certain operations of the Church,” the ministry posted to Facebook. “The ministry has undergone intense scrutiny over the years, and we remain confident that there will again be a positive and speedy outcome in the days ahead. Pastor Benny appreciates the love, prayers, and support of our beloved partners as we continue to minister the saving and healing Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.”

Federal agents raided the ministry headquarters in the Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, area April 26.

The raid occurred while Hinn was abroad in Paris.

In 2007, Hinn was one of six TV evangelists investigated by the Senate Finance Committee. Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, led the investigation.

All six were cleared of wrongdoing in 2011. {eoa}

Trump: ‘Major, Major’ Conflict With North Korea Possible

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Thursday a major conflict with North Korea is possible in the standoff over its nuclear and missile programs, but he would prefer a diplomatic outcome to the dispute.

“There is a chance that we could end up having a major, major conflict with North Korea. Absolutely,” Trump told Reuters in an Oval Office interview ahead of his 100th day in office on Saturday.

Nonetheless, Trump said he wanted to peacefully resolve a crisis that has bedeviled multiple U.S. presidents, a path that he and his administration are emphasizing by preparing a variety of new economic sanctions while not taking the military option off the table.

“We’d love to solve things diplomatically but it’s very difficult,” he said.

In other highlights of the 42-minute interview, Trump was cool to speaking again with Taiwan’s president after an earlier telephone call with her angered China.

He also said he wants South Korea to pay the cost of the U.S. THAAD anti-missile defense system, which he estimated at \$1 billion, and intends to renegotiate or terminate a U.S. free trade pact with South Korea because of a deep trade deficit with Seoul.

Asked when he would announce his intention to renegotiate the pact, Trump said: “Very soon. I’m announcing it now.”

Trump also said he was considering adding stops to Israel and Saudi Arabia to a Europe trip next month, emphasizing that he wanted to see an Israeli-Palestinian peace. He complained that Saudi Arabia was not paying its fair share for U.S. defense.

Asked about the fight against Islamic State, Trump said the militant group had to be defeated.

“I have to say, there is an end. And it has to be humiliation,” he said, when asked about what the endgame was for defeating Islamist violent extremism.

XI ‘Trying Very Hard’

Trump said North Korea was his biggest global challenge. He lavished praise on Chinese President Xi Jinping for Chinese assistance in trying to rein in Pyongyang. The two leaders met in Florida earlier this month.

"I believe he is trying very hard. He certainly doesn't want to see turmoil and death. He doesn't want to see it. He is a good man. He is a very good man and I got to know him very well.

"With that being said, he loves China and he loves the people of China. I know he would like to be able to do something, perhaps it's possible that he can't," Trump said.

Trump spoke just a day after he and his top national security advisers briefed U.S. lawmakers on the North Korean threat and one day before Secretary of State Rex Tillerson will press the United Nations Security Council on sanctions to further isolate Pyongyang over its nuclear and missile programs.

The Trump administration on Wednesday declared North Korea "an urgent national security threat and top foreign policy priority." It said it was focusing on economic and diplomatic pressure, including Chinese cooperation in containing its defiant neighbor and ally, and remained open to negotiations.

U.S. officials said military strikes remained an option but played down the prospect, though the administration has sent an aircraft carrier and a nuclear-powered submarine to the region in a show of force.

Any direct U.S. military action would run the risk of massive North Korean retaliation and huge casualties in Japan and South Korea and among U.S. forces in both countries.

"I Hope He's Rational"

Trump, asked if he considered North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to be rational, said he was operating from the assumption that he is rational. He noted that Kim had taken over his country at an early age.

"He's 27 years old. His father dies, took over a regime. So say what you want but that is not easy, especially at that

age.

"I'm not giving him credit or not giving him credit, I'm just saying that's a very hard thing to do. As to whether or not he's rational, I have no opinion on it. I hope he's rational," he said.

Trump, sipping a Coke delivered by an aide after the president ordered it by pressing a button on his desk, rebuffed an overture from Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen, who told Reuters a direct phone call with Trump could take place again after their first conversation in early December angered Beijing.

China considers neighboring Taiwan to be a renegade province.

"My problem is that I have established a very good personal relationship with President Xi," said Trump. "I really feel that he is doing everything in his power to help us with a big situation. So I wouldn't want to be causing difficulty right now for him.

"So I would certainly want to speak to him first."

Trump also said he hoped to avoid a potential government shutdown amid a dispute between congressional Republicans and Democrats over a spending deal with a Saturday deadline looming.

But he said if a shutdown takes place, it will be the Democrats' fault for trying to add money to the legislation to "bail out Puerto Rico" and other items.

He also defended the one-page tax plan he unveiled on Wednesday from criticism that it would increase the U.S. deficit, saying better trade deals and economic growth would offset the costs.

"We will do trade deals that are going to make up for a tremendous amount of the deficit. We are going to be doing trade deals that are going to be much better trade deals,"

Trump said. {eoa}

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Why Is This Pentecostal Megachurch Pastor Burning Bibles?

A Pentecostal pastor in Uganda's capital has reportedly torched thousands of Bibles because they were "fake" and "demonic."

Pastor Aloysius Bugingo of the House of Prayer Ministries in Kampala ordered the burning of the Good News Bible and the King James Version because they used the words "Holy Ghost" instead of "Holy Spirit."

The Easter Weekend action shocked and angered church leaders in the country, with many terming his actions an insult to Christianity.

"We condemn the act in the strongest terms possible," Bishop Herman Sentamu, leader of the Passover Harvest church, a large Pentecostal group in Uganda, said in a telephone interview Wednesday (April 26).

"Holy Ghost" and "Holy Spirit" are interchangeable terms for the third entity of the Christian Trinity composed of God, Son and Holy Spirit. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the term "Holy Spirit" came into wider use and is now preferred by many Christians.

The pastor had collected the Bibles from his 6,000-member

congregation and set them on fire. He also charged that words “fasting” and “Lent” had been omitted from the books without explanation.

The Good News Bible is a translation of the American Bible Society.

Bugingo allegedly told his followers the Bibles in question were the handiwork of “devil worshippers” and should, therefore, not be allowed to confuse Christians.

But the pastor denied burning the Bibles, alleging his enemies had organized the burning and used his voice. Still, he said he wants to start a publishing house to print “correct versions” of the Bible.

On Sunday, a post on his church Facebook page said the church believed in the Holy Spirit but not the Holy Ghost.

“We shall speak the truth until the end of this world,” the post says.

Sentamu suggested the pastor’s actions stem from ignorance.

The Bible Society of Uganda said it is looking for evidence and may seek legal action against the pastor.

“When you hear somebody has burnt Bibles, it’s like a funeral,” Simon Mukhama, general secretary of the Bible Society of Uganda, told *The Observer* of Kampala. “The person who did it must be brought to book immediately.” {eoa}

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House GOP Still Can't Muster the Votes for AHCA

Despite the fact nearly half of the conservative House Freedom Caucus announced beforehand they would begrudgingly vote for the failed RINOCare bill—the American Health Care Act—and that those remaining in opposition constituted less than a quarter of the legislation's opposition, they took much of the blame for its failure last month.

Following a series of meetings over the Easter recess, the House Freedom Caucus announced this week it was endorsing the AHCA 2.0 bill as a good first step in the process of repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. But late Thursday evening, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) announced there would be no vote on the measure before the end of President Donald Trump's first 100 days in office.

"We are not voting on health care tomorrow," he said following a late-night meeting between Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) and other members of the Republican leadership. "We're still educating members."

Democrats and the compliant liberal mainstream media hailed it as a bitter defeat for the president.

But, rather, this finally exposes the real problem the president and conservatives in Congress face as they try to dismantle the destructive elements of Obamacare. As has been the case all along, it is moderate Republicans—not the conservatives—who are to blame for the impasse in the House of Representatives.

Some observers are even saying the speaker is purposely failing to whip up the votes just to withhold a major victory from the president in his first 100 days.

Both Politico and The Hill have whip counts that show the GOP is about 50 votes short of having the necessary majority to pass the bill onto the Senate. Anything more than 30 votes will doom any legislation without help from the Democrats—and on this measure, that won't be coming, perhaps ever.

The biggest stumbling block seems to be over mandatory insurance coverage for Americans with preexisting conditions. Conservatives correctly note this is one of the biggest drivers of skyrocketing out-of-pocket expenses for most Americans, while moderate-liberal Republicans are wary of a constituent backlash if they agree to remove that provision.

The Trump administration is calling in its biggest gun, Vice President Mike Pence, to help secure the final votes necessary to get the legislation passed. He was on a diplomatic tour of the Asia-Pacific region, which was cut short to make him available to lobby on Capitol Hill. {eoa}

James Goll: The Church Is Anemic in This Important Area of Prayer

What really moves the hand of God?

This important question has been asked throughout the ages, with a great variety of responses. Ponder it for a while. I am sure there are many right answers to the question; faith is a correct one, for sure. Purity, compassion and integrity would be other good answers to this simple yet profound question. But let me cast light for a moment on one strategic quality the Lord looks for: desire.

Webster's defines the noun form of desire as "a wish or craving; sexual appetite; a request; anything desired." The often-quoted teaching of Jesus on the subject of faith states, "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24, KJV).

What do you desire? What is your passion? What do you want so badly that you can hardly live without it? James 4:2 (MEV) says, "You do not have because you do not ask." This verse could easily be rendered, "You ask for nothing because you desire nothing."

What you want motivates you. Do you have a deep craving within you that results in passionate pursuit? Do you want more of God? Do you hunger to see Him move in the earth? Desire is the beginning of the desperate prayer of the heart.

Maybe we need to back up a bit and ask another simple yet profound question: What is prayer? Ultimately prayer is nothing more than desire expressed to God. One proper definition of intercession is "the act of making a request to a superior." So we could say that prayer is the act of expressing a deep-seated yearning to a superior, God, for things to change. You have heard people say, "I'm so desperate I'll do anything!" Well, how about reaching the end of ourselves to the point that we intercede as if there is no other option left?

Prayer and intercession are the passionate cry for lives to change and nations to be impacted.

What Is Prayer Passion?

I am convinced that the last-days battle is a battle of passions. The world flaunts her lustful passions daily across the stage of life full blown with no shame. But the Church has often been anemic in this arena. It is time for the bride of Christ to be filled with passion for her Bridegroom and

perform extravagant displays of lavish love. What better place to exhibit boundless zeal and holy passion than in the place of prayer? Prayer is the bridal chamber of intimacy with our Master.

Prayer passion begins when we bask in the awesome love the Father has for us, His children—the supreme object of His affection. When you are in love, you will do anything to get near that person. One song puts it this way: “Ain’t no mountain high enough ... to keep me from you.” It might not be the current tune on the world’s pop chart, but it is the song the Son of God sings over His bride. A revelation of bridal love makes your communion more passionate than anything I know.

Consider the words of E. M. Bounds: “Prayers must be red-hot. It is the fervent prayer that is effective ... It takes fire to make prayers go. Warmth of soul creates an atmosphere favorable to prayer ... By flame prayer ascends to heaven.” The vital ingredient is what we call prayer passion—the characteristic necessary to fan desire into a full flame.

Expressions of the Heart Beyond Words

Has your heart ever been bursting with love for the Lord Jesus, so much that words cannot express what is inside of you? Sometimes when I am overwhelmed by the loveliness of His great presence, words seem inadequate. When I am captivated by the qualities of this man, Christ Jesus, my heart aches and yearns with the desire to know Him and to embrace His ways. This is when prayer passion is in full bloom. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matt. 12:34b).

But sometimes love speaks a strange language. First and foremost, you see, it is a language of the heart.

The Language of Compassionate Weeping

I think I hear you pondering another question: “Do you mean to

say there are prayers of passion that go beyond the articulation of words?" Yes! Let's consider the power of compassionate weeping.

Several Salvation Army officers in the last century asked General Booth, "How can we save the lost?" Booth stated simply, "Try tears." Today, church growth seminars are held across the nation. Techniques and methodologies are discussed at great length on how we can have successful, growing churches. Cookie-cutters can be passed out, too. But a heart for God is forged only through the crucible of the cross.

Jeremiah 9:1 records, "Oh, that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" Jeremiah knew the power of the language of tears.

From the Trenches of Those Who Knew

I love church history and going to the places where heaven has touched earth. I have been privileged to participate in meetings in the very location in Wales where a great revival took place under the leadership of Evan Roberts. Evan Phillips was an eyewitness to the Welsh revival of 1904. He tells the following about those blessed days and the presence of the Lord that was with the young revival leader, Evan Roberts:

Evan Roberts was like a particle of radium in our midst. Its fire was consuming and felt abroad as something which took away sleep, cleared the channels of tears, and sped the golden wheels of prayer throughout the area ... I have wept now until my heart is supple. In the midst of the greatest fearfulness I have found the greatest joy. Now the bed belongs to the river and Wales belongs to Christ.

One of the most famous of all the great English pulpiteers was Charles H. Spurgeon. Consider this thought from a man of the tearful trenches:

Let us learn to think of tears as liquid prayers, and of weeping as a constant dropping of importunate intercession which will wear its way right surely into the very heart of mercy, despite the stony difficulties which obstruct the way. My God, I will "weep" when I cannot plead, for Thou hearest the voice of my weeping.

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux said, "The tears of penitents are the wine of angels."

King David petitioned, "Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in trouble; my eye wastes away with grief, yes, my soul and my body" (Ps. 31:9). Again: "I am weary of my crying; my throat is parched; my eyes fail while I wait for my God" (Ps. 69:3).

Our beloved Paul, the apostle and writer of many epistles, wrote: "For three years night and day I did not cease to warn everyone with tears" (Acts 20:31). And: "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears ..." (2 Cor. 2:4a).

The heart of God for the prophetic purposes of the city of Jerusalem is revealed through the Messiah. Luke 19:41 states: "When He came near [to Jerusalem], He beheld the city and wept over it."

George Fox experienced a similar place in God for his generation: "I saw the harvest white, and the seed of God lying thick in the ground, as ever did wheat that was sown outwardly, and none to gather it; and for this I mourned with tears."

May we dig again the trenches of the passionate prayer of tears. Let's follow in the footsteps of the revivalists of old and call forth these seemingly forgotten ways of brokenness as a prayer language of the heart. Let the power of compassionate weeping lay hold of you.

The Invitation Is Extended

So what does all this mean? Simply that we have an invitation to enter into the intercession of Christ that goes beyond our limited knowledge. In no way does our experience compare with the depth of Christ's substitutionary, intercessory act of the cross. That has already been accomplished. Nonetheless, the invitation is given to us to enter the depths of the heart of Jesus and let sighs and groans too deep for the articulation of man's natural vocabulary surface. Whatever the distinctive purpose of these ancient forms of intercession—just yield. Let Him do it.

So here are my parting thoughts to you for now: "Pray with God's Heart. Add compassion as the missing ingredient to your prayers. In fact, "Try tears!" {eoa}

Galatians 6:2 Explains Exactly How Believers Should Approach the Health Care Debate

Different kinds of insurance operate very differently. Auto, homeowners, health, life, Workers' Compensation and medical malpractice all operate in different markets under different rules and different organizational structures. But one thing they all have in common is "risk pooling."

"Risk pooling" certainly figures into recent discussions about repealing, replacing for "fixing" government health care. And it is almost universally misunderstood by policy-makers. It is

a pool of money, yes, but it is also a pool of risks. From the customer's perspective, they pay money into a pool of funds that is available to pay their claims according to the terms of the contract they have with the insurance company. Because of that contract, the "pool" is not just a big vat of money that can be allocated any way they want. Every penny is already contractually obligated to be paid out in the future.

From the insurance company's perspective, this is a pool, not of money, but of risks. Each member of the pool is a risk—some higher, others lower. The company works very hard to determine how much risk it is assuming when it insures any given population. It is required to pay claims regardless of how much money is in the pool, so it needs a very reliable estimate of how many claims will be filed by this group of people in order to know how much to charge in premiums. This is the core function of every insurance company.

This is not easy. The company must set premiums well in advance of the claims being filed—sometimes many years in advance, such as with life insurance. With life insurance, people may pay premiums for decades before ever filing a claim. Consumers need to know that the money paid in will not be squandered or depleted by the time they have a claim. That is why insurers tend to use words like "fidelity" or "trust" when naming their companies. They are trying to reassure consumers that they are dealing with a responsible organization.

Verbal assurances such as these are nice, but may not be worth much to the consumer. So, the primary responsibility of insurance regulators is to oversee the companies to make sure the premiums are adequate, the pools are responsibly invested and claims are paid out in full and on time.

Life insurance is an extreme example. Most insurance does not have that much of a lead time between premiums paid and claims filed, although with some other lines of coverage, such as

homeowners or auto insurance, consumers pay the premiums in the hope they will never have to file a claim. No matter how much they might pay in premiums, it is a good thing to avoid the expenses associated with house fires and traffic accidents. Consumers are still willing to pay the premiums, "just in case."

In all these scenarios, the great challenge for the insurance company is to set premiums high enough to cover costs, but not so high that they scare off customers. This requires the unique work of actuaries. They look at the covered population and estimate how likely this population is to incur conditions that will require filing a claim sometime in the future.

Actuaries will analyze historical trends and scrutinize factors that could arise in the future to determine the "risk" of the people enrolled. They will factor in such variables as age, sex, health status, income, geographic location, occupation, medical history or driving record, and so on.

These variables will affect different lines of insurance differently. Older people are likely to have more health problems but drive safer than younger people. Men drive more recklessly than women but typically have fewer encounters with health professionals. Some occupations are far riskier than others.

Based on all this information, actuaries can estimate what the "pure premium" needs to be. The pure premium is what the company must collect to cover expected claims. On top of that are administrative expenses, taxes, compliance costs and in some cases, strategic pricing. Strategic pricing is how a company might vary the premiums to attract a market segment it hopes to build.

All this money is collected and put into a pool of funds with which to pay claims. This pool is especially needed because actuarial estimates are not always accurate. There might be a

surge of claims due to economic or environmental surprises. There could be a sudden new strain of influenza, or ice storms may result in a flurry of fender-bender accidents or problems in the economy might lead to a large number of lay-offs (people tend to hurry to get medical services when they know they could lose their jobs).

In most states, the regulators require a certain minimum amount of money to be held in the pool; three months' worth of claims is typical, but some companies hold more than that—six months or more. On a large scale, this can result in a large amount of money, sometimes billions of dollars.

The company invests this money and collects revenues from it. That provides considerable clout in the financial markets, but it also can provide leverage to the company, as some of its investments are made in companies it is doing other business with.

Health Care Sharing Ministries are nothing like what has been described thus far. They have no actuaries. There is usually no pool of funds, but even when there is, there is no contract for future benefits and no assessment of risk. In fact, every member of a Health Care Sharing Ministry is responsible for paying his or her own medical bills. The purpose of the ministry is simply to organize other people who voluntarily choose to help fellow members pay their medical bills in keeping with Biblical commands to “share one another's burdens.”

The ministry notifies its members when there is a medical need, and the members share the expenses of a member in need. If the needs are higher than normal, members may be asked to spread contributions over a period of months. If the needs are very low for a month or two, the amount members are asked to contribute will be reduced.

Insurance executives would think this is crazy—how can you

rely on the goodwill of other people for paying bills? Exactly. It makes no sense at all in the world of business. It only makes sense in the Kingdom of God and the world of faithful believers. All others should stick with the insurance model. {eoa}

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Have We Been Misinterpreting the Word 'Head' in Ephesians 5?

The Greek word Paul uses for "head" in Ephesians 5:23 is *kephale*, which was commonly used to refer to the physical head on one's shoulders. In fact, of the 59 times *kephale* is found in the New Testament, 44 times, it is used of someone's literal, physical head.

The issue, then, concerns the meaning of *kephale* when it is used figuratively. Does it, as the English word "head," refer to someone in charge, as in the "head" of General Motors?

That was the assumption until a landmark study by Dr. Berkley and Alvera Michlesen entitled "The Head of the Epistles" that

was published in the Feb. 20, 1981 issue of *Christianity Today*. They examined and compared how the Jewish translators of the Greek Septuagint had translated *rosh*, the Hebrew word for "head," into Greek. Their findings completely upended the traditional view and threw many traditionalists into disarray.

They discovered that when *rosh* was used literally to refer to someone's physical head, they used *kephale*. When *rosh* was used figuratively to refer to the source or origin of something, they would again use *kephale*. However, they discovered that when *rosh* was used figuratively to refer to a person of authority, the Septuagint translators avoided *kephale* and used *archon* (ruler) or a similar word.

This shows that when Paul says in Ephesians 5:23 that the husband is the *kephale* of the wife, his point is not about authority and leadership. If he had wanted to establish an authoritarian structure for marriage, he could easily have done so by using words such as *archon* (ruler), *despot* (master) or *timē* (one of rank and honor). Any of these would have unambiguously communicated the idea of superior rank and authority.

Paul, instead, avoids those words and speaks of the husband as the *kephale*, or source of the wife. In doing so he is referring back to the Genesis account of creation where, instead of creating a separate creature from the ground to make the woman, God took a side from the person He had already created from the dust, and built the side into the woman. The popular Jewish commentary known as *The Chumash* says,

Unlike man's, the woman's body was not taken from the earth. God built one side of the man into woman—so that the single human being became two, thereby demonstrating irrefutably the equality of man and woman (Hyatt, *Paul, Women and Church*, 85).

This was important, for ancient, pagan teaching said that woman had been made from a different and inferior source than

man, which became the basis for male superiority and female subservience. It also became the basis for homosexuality, for as Plato declared, "the truly noble soul is masculine and will therefore seek out another male as the object of its love," because they are alike and of the same substance.

Paul's use of *kephale* carried connotations of mutuality between the man and the woman and undermined the ancient argument for homosexuality. It also contributed to Paul's call for commitment and intimacy in the marriage relationship by highlighting the common origin of the sexes.

Commenting on the use of *kephale* in the New Testament, Dr. David Scholer, the late Professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, stated that the latest research "does not support the traditionalist or complementarian view of male headship and female submission." He goes on to say, "This data supports a new understanding in Christ by which men and women are viewed in a mutually supportive, submissive relationship." {eoa}

This article was derived from Dr. Eddie Hyatt's latest book, Paul, Women and Church, available from Amazon and his website at .

Dr. Eddie Hyatt is an author, historian and biblical scholar. His books on church history, church order and spiritual awakening are available from Amazon and his website at .