

Inner Death and Resurrection

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is also a metaphor of what is supposed to happen within us. A resurrection implies that there is a prior death. What does this death and resurrection look like for us?

Paul, in Romans 6:3, explains: *“Do you not know that we who were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?”* Baptism is the ceremony or sacrament that signifies our death to the law of sin that Paul describes in Romans 7:14-8:2. This law is the human weakness that we all share, and not just a theological concept. It is there whether you believe in it or not.

“Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). This newness of life is our resurrection in this life that we can walk in.

“For if we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death, so shall we also be united with Him in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him, so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we should no longer be slaves to sin. For the one who has died is freed from sin” (Rom. 6:5-7). We are dead to the hold that the law of sin has on us, which is the human weakness that we all struggle with. *“Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. Look, all things have become new”* (2 Cor. 5:17). What does this new creature look like?

“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death has no further dominion over Him. For the death He died, He died to sin once for all, but

the life He lives, He lives to God. Likewise, you also consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but yield yourselves to God, as those who are alive from the dead, and your bodies to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:8-14).

The last part of this passage speaks of our resurrection in this present life. It is our victory over the law of sin. The Mosaic Law was not able to produce this.

The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 is what this victory looks like. Those that were under the Mosaic Law did not have the grace to overcome the law of sin. This grace became available with Christ. This why Paul says in Galatians 5:4: “ou have been cut off from Christ, whoever of you are justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” Paul says that the Law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Only Christ was able to fulfill the Law because it needed to be done perfectly in order to have its righteousness. This is why all that were under the Law were cursed; except for Christ, who was the only one who could actually fulfill its requirements.

Our victory over the law of sin is not possible without the Spirit of Christ within us. “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). How do we put on Christ in order for this death to life transition to occur? The answer is in the type faith that we apply to Christ. Humility toward Christ is required for receiving from the Godhead. First Peter 5:5-7 describes this humility: “Yes, all of you be submissive one to another and clothe yourselves with humility, because ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. Cast all your care upon Him, because He cares for you.” We unconditionally trust

in God and rest our minds on Him from our lust and anxiety—from all of our own understanding. God draws near to us when we draw near to Him (see James 4:8). “And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. While we were yet weak, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:5-6). Christ makes all of this possible.

2 Peter 1:4 says: “By which He has given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, so that through these things you might become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust.” This is our experience of death to self; and our resurrection in this life. “If you then were raised with Christ, desire those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on earth. For you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:1-3). Lust is the thing that keeps us attached to the things of the world. Merely changing our location does not change our attachments because we carry our lust with us wherever we go.

When we have Christ’s Spirit within us, we also have the mind of Christ. He not only shares with us the victory over sin that He had on earth; but He also gives us a discernment that is not otherwise available, “For what man knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man which is in him? Likewise, no one knows the things of God, except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, so that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God. These things also we proclaim, not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things. Yet he himself is not judged by

anyone. For 'who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:11-16).

A person without the Spirit can never fully understand the Spirit-filled person; but the Spirit-filled person has the capacity to understand both the natural person and the spiritual.

"Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light'" (Eph. 5:14). Christ shares with us the peace and strength that He has from His faith in the Father. This can only happen when we have Christ in us by our faith in Him. "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). This is the true enlightenment that no other spiritual practice can ever produce.

We are to be dead to sin (see 1 Pet. 2:24). "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the age of this world and according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among them we all also once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and we were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and He raised us up and seated us together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:1-6).

Christ fulfilled the Mosaic Law and then nailed it to His cross. His Spirit now contains the righteousness of the Law because He alone was able to fulfill it. We have the righteousness of the law within us when we have Christ's presence because "what the law could not do, in that it was

weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and concerning sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3-4). We have the righteousness of the Law through Christ, without having to perform it ourselves.

"So, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may be married to another, to Him who has been raised from the dead, so that we may bear fruit for God" (Rom. 7:4). This illustrates the transition from the Mosaic Law to Christ for justification or righteousness. Paul compares this to a woman who is obligated in marriage as long as her husband is alive; but when he dies, she is released from the law that binds her to her husband and is free to marry someone else. Because our Husband, Christ, who was under the Law, died, we are now free to marry the resurrected Christ. The Law itself remains but we are not legally obligated by it because of the death and resurrection of Christ. The legal sin for breaking it does not apply to us.

We are spiritually resurrected in our present life, and bodily resurrected into our next life. "So it is written, 'The first man Adam was made a living soul.' The last Adam was made a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45).

"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit that lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if through the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:11-14).

You can download Peter Aiello's book, Hidden Treasure by

visiting his web site: .

{eoa}

Facebook Bans 20 Million Users From Pastor's Page

Steven Andrew has been called “the Facebook pastor” and was asked to run for president by social media fans. He has reached as many as one million people on a post. However, he believes Facebook has censored 20 million people from him since November because he takes a Christian stand. Andrew is pastor of USA Christian Church and author of *Jesus Makes America Great*.

He contacted Facebook, but the company brushed it off.

Andrew's analysis showed he reached 4.6 million people per 28 days in October/November 2016. But now his posts are shown to about 600,000 people per 28 days. That is about one million less people per week. Just 14 percent of the people are reached now. Graphics and analysis [here](#).

Andrew already thought he was being censored, since he reached up to eight million people a month earlier with the gospel.

Facebook shows the messages were cut on November 28, 2016, which is about 20 weeks ago. That is a reduction of an estimated 20 million people. The censoring resulted in slower growth and approximately 30,000 fewer “likes” of the “Pastor Steven Andrew” page.

“Facebook censoring Christianity affects our sharing the gospel and fundraising to end the persecution of Christians,”

Andrew said. He has seen over 1.2 million people pray to become a Christian or rededicate their lives to God.

“Millions less people had an opportunity to give to help start our 25 ministries to defend Christianity,” Andrew said. He needs to raise \$5.7 million to start these ministries to protect Christians and lead nationwide revival.

Facebook also didn't publish some scheduled posts. This included supportive messages about President Trump.

Andrew saw the lower numbers, and when a subscriber confirmed they weren't getting his messages, he knew it was true. He hopes Facebook will uncensor him.

To keep in more frequent contact with Andrew, he asks people to sign up for the One Million Americans on the LORD's Side email.

“It would be one thing if Facebook admitted they block Christianity, but they give the impression they are a platform for all people,” he said.

Andrew's new book, *Jesus Makes America Great*, shows how to make the USA safe, strong and prosperous by following Jesus Christ. The book is available wherever books are sold. He has a special offer to get *Jesus Makes America Great* and the longer version, called *Save America*, at the USA Christian Church website. {eoa}

Pastor Saeed Abedini Attacks

Franklin Graham, Demanding the Evangelist Repent

Saeed Abedini, who spent four years tortured in an Iranian prison, went on a rampage against former friend Franklin Graham on Facebook recently.

“As number one face of persecuted church in the world today, I have this hard responsibility to speak about the serious problems that I see to help church of God even if I lose everything,” Abedini begins his Facebook post.

Graham campaigned for the persecuted pastor’s release with Abedini’s wife, Naghmeh, while Abedini was in prison.

Mark DeMoss, a spokesperson for Graham, says Graham did whatever he could to draw attention to the plight of this pastor, including speaking personally to then-President Barack Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin about his situation and urging Christians around the world to pray for his release.

After Saeed’s release, Graham offered the family room at the Billy Graham Training Center in North Carolina so the couple could work on their broken marriage.

Abedini refused. That’s when he says Graham stepped away:

A week after I got released and Franklin Graham welcomed me home (because of the huge international media attention on me he badly wanted to be involve) he knew I don’t have any place to go but he left me alone in Boise until I was forced to call him to ask money to rent a place.

When all cameras and social media attention were gone in my life, all the famous pastors and lawyers were gone too, and just a week after my freedom, I saw myself so alone with my

family while still news were talking about me.

During the whole last 1/5 year, I asked Franklin Graham to help me to find a job to pay my bills but he didn't and he always gave me the worse and lowest he could. Until today, still I couldn't find a job, and myself financially stable yet, all these that I have been witness stumbled me by knowing his relationship and financial situation and his shows on media as a close friend to me.

When I asked Franklin to help me to meet Trump who I supported successfully a lot . he said there is no need and then I found his doughtier [sic] preached for Trump in Inauguration and I told myself this people use your opportunities but they don't share theirs with you. Heartbreaking.

I saw and felt myself and churches in a very dangerous world.

DeMoss, Graham's spokesperson, says Graham is no longer in communication with either Abedini or his wife.

"It is unfortunate that Graham's efforts to secure his release from an Iranian prison and provide transportation of him from Germany to America, his financial assistance to Saeed and Naghmeh (while he never raised money from others for Saeed or Nahgmeh, his ministry did provide funds to help Naghmeh travel and raise awareness for her husband's case, and to help her care for her two children and herself while her husband was unable to work and provide for them), his provision of marital counseling at no cost to them and various offers of employment for Saeed have now been met with a bitter Facebook post about him and his ministry, Samaritan's Purse," DeMoss says.

Abedini demands Graham repent for his wealth and not helping

Abedini.

DeMoss says Graham will not respond to either Abedini or Naghmeh but still requests prayer on their behalf. {eoa}

Why Easter Loses Its Luster Without This Gospel Linchpin

Christianity stands alone as the only religion whose founder came back from the dead. This month, millions of believers will celebrate the greatest event in history—the Resurrection of Christ! How ironic that the world’s best news came from a graveyard. The Easter story is the linchpin that holds Christianity together. Without the cross and the Resurrection, the gospel crumbles like a house of cards.

What is unique about Christianity is Jesus. He alone can claim a virgin birth, a virtuous life, a vicarious death and a victorious Resurrection. By defeating death, Christ validated His claim to divinity, activated His atoning work on Calvary, separated Christianity from all other religions and indicated the future resurrection of the saints (1 Cor. 15:12-23).

It’s been said that religion is man’s effort to reach God; Christianity is God’s effort to reach man. Religion is when man reaches up; Christianity is when God reaches down. Jerry Noble observed, “Religion is man-made; the gospel is God-given. Religion is what man does for God; the gospel is what God does for man. Religion is good views; the gospel is good news. Religion ends in outer reformation; the gospel ends in inner transformation. Religion often becomes a farce; the Gospel is always a force—the power of God unto salvation.” Unquestionably, the crux (most crucial element) of

Christianity is the cross. The old saying is true, "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." "For to those who are perishing, the preaching of the cross is foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). To believers worldwide, the cross is still the main thing.

The cross is more than merely a historical event, more than a fashion accessory for jewelry. It is the centerpiece of the gospel, the focal point of human history and God's masterpiece. The cross is a bridge that connects a loving God to a lost humanity. The Romans used crosses to torture, humiliate and eliminate their political enemies. God used the cross to conquer our spiritual enemies—sin, Satan and death. God took a sadistic instrument of torture and turned it into a universal icon of hope and salvation.

D. L. Moody explained the necessity of the cross, "I must die or get someone else to die for me. If the Bible doesn't teach that, it doesn't teach anything. And that is where the atonement of Christ comes in." This principle is at work even in the natural food chain—something must die in order for something else to live.

I'll never forget driving behind a truck headed to a local chicken processing plant. My son, who was 5 or 6 at the time, asked me where they were taking the cages full of chickens. I delicately tried to tell him that those live chickens would be turned into chicken fingers and nuggets. His response was priceless. He said, "Dad, let's join hands and pray together that all those chickens escape."

Jesus could have escaped (Matt. 26:53); instead, He became our scapegoat on the cross. In Old Testament times, the sins of Israel were confessed over a scapegoat on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). The Hebrew word for scapegoat is *Azazel*, meaning "the goat of departure." Once the sins of Israel were transferred to the goat, it was released to wander in the

wilderness, never to be seen again. Symbolically, their sins were removed from them (Ps. 103:12). Notice a double transfer transpired—their sins were transferred to the scapegoat; the innocence of the animal was transferred to them.

Something similar took place on the cross. Jesus became our substitute and paid our penalty of sin—death. Isaiah 53:5 explains, “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.” A young woman was caught speeding in California and ordered to appear in court. The judge enforced the law and fined her \$100. Then he stepped down from behind the bench, removed his judicial robe and opened his own wallet. He took out a \$100 bill and paid the woman’s fine because she was his daughter. Likewise, our heavenly Father sentenced us for our sin, but then He paid our penalty by sending His Son to die on the cross as our substitute.

These song lyrics say it well, “I should have been crucified, I should have suffered and died. I should have hung on the cross in disgrace, but Jesus, God’s Son, took my place.”

Charles Spurgeon, the great British preacher, summarized his entire theology with four simple words—“He died for me.” Paul penned his agreement, “But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

Ironically, the place of death became a place of life. Jesus was crucified at a place called by the Hebrew term *Golgotha* and the Latin term *Calvary*. They both mean “the place of the skull.” It was called this either because the hill resembled a human skull or because skulls littered that place of execution. Only God could take such a cursed place and turn it into the greatest blessing for all mankind.

The geographical center of London is a place known as Charing

Cross. There is a train station there, and you can find your way anywhere in the city from that location. Once a little boy got separated from his parents and was lost. A policeman found him crying and tried to comfort him. When he got the boy settled, he asked, "Can I take you home, son?" The boy replied, "Oh no, sir, take me to the cross, and I'll find my way home."

This Easter season, take time to revisit the cross. If you get to the cross, you'll find your way home. Minus the cross, there is no Easter, no Christianity, no salvation, no reason to have church, and we are hopelessly lost in our sins. I enjoy egg hunts and chocolate bunnies as much as anybody, but nothing can replace the cross—it's the crux of Christianity.

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President Trump Is 'Stealing the March'

The ousting of Steve Bannon from the National Security Council (NSC) staff is part of a reorganization initiated by President Donald Trump's National Security Advisor, Army Lt. General H.R. McMaster. This move solidifies leadership within the NSC at a critical time in our nation's history and it clears the deck for action.

My first reaction to the attack on Syria's Shayrat airfield was that President Trump made the foolish mistake of leading by heart rather than mind. Not the case. The attack constituted a carefully, albeit quickly, devised strategic move. The first clue was that the president's entourage traveling to Mar-a-Lago to meet with China President Xi Jinping included Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Secretary of Defense James Mattis and National Security Advisor Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster. The foreign policy A-Team. What does that tell us? In military terms, Trump was "stealing the march," a military term for gaining the strategic advantage before the opponent can react.

General McMaster's 1997 book *Dereliction of Duty* examined President Lyndon Johnson's national security team from 1964 through 1968 when major decisions led to disaster in Vietnam. President Johnson manipulated his national security team to assure compliance and near-obsequious acquiescence among joint chiefs of staff. For Johnson, the conflict in Vietnam distracted from his top priority: instituting his Great Society. President Johnson got the military leadership he wanted, weak, unobtrusive and accommodating: the B-team. President Trump turned to his A-team for the first, major foreign policy statement of his presidency. McMaster, who may have masterminded the attack on the Syrian base, studied Johnson's mistakes as the departure point for meeting the challenges President Trump faces. As the president admitted during his April 5 press conference, he "inherited a mess." The messes he inherited in Syria and North Korea rank at the top of Trump's national security problems. While LBJ put his domestic political agenda ahead of national security, Trump does not.

After completing his doctorate, McMaster served as operations officer for the Army's Opposition Force (OPFOR) based at Ft. Irwin, California in the heart of Death Valley. During the late 1990s, McMaster employed Russian armored tactics and

equipment modified to emulate Russian weapons. The OPFOR also excelled at deception. Each tank brigade underwent two weeks of simulated warfare. Almost invariably the visiting brigade was handed its proverbial head on the initial engagement due to the OPFOR stealing the march, doing the unexpected to achieve a decisive advantage. The target was always the mind of the opponent because the brain is where the decisive—the strategic—fight is won or lost.

The brilliance of the attack on Shayrat airfield was its strategic impact. The operational target was the Syrian base from which aircraft took off to drop nerve gas on civilians—killing almost 100—many of them women and children. The strategic targets, however, included political leaders in Damascus, Teheran, Moscow, Pyongyang and Chinese President Xi Jinping dining beside President Trump at Mar-a-Lago when 59 cruise missiles started obliterating Shayrat.

The attack means leading from behind is over and America is on the path to recovering world leader status. Assad survives for now but needs to think about retiring. Putin will fume and fuss, but should know milquetoast at the White House, hand-wringing in Foggy Bottom, and a Pentagon focused on political correctness rather than combat effectiveness are gone.

Regarding North Korea's latest missile launch, President Xi probably spent last night reevaluating what his dinner host said 48 hours earlier regarding North Korea, "all options are on the table." It's important because, as one of China's leading businessmen, Xi knows that after U.S. bunker-buster bombs hit North Korean nuclear sites and precision-guided munitions rain down on missile launch sites, communist artillery probably will pummel Seoul a few miles to the south. Within the hour, American and South Korean airstrikes will obliterate most North Korean artillery, but much of Seoul will be shattered. It's likely Republic of Korea (ROK) and a limited number of US ground forces will be battling the North Korean People's Army. U.S. and ROK forces will prevail but

Seoul and its economy may be devastated. North Korea will be as well with millions of starving refugees streaming north to become China's problem.

World leaders hear this: Adult leadership is back in charge at the White House and intent on reclaiming America's exceptional role in world leadership. {eoa}

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Blood Moon Pastor: This Solar Eclipse Is a Sign From God

Pastor Mark Bitltz, who claims to have first noticed the four blood moon-pattern, says the upcoming summer eclipse is a sign from God.

“From a biblical point of view, a solar eclipse is meant as a sign from God,” Biltz told WND. “In Genesis 1:14, God declared this to be so. It is a sign that is beyond man's control, something he can't manipulate. Solar eclipses become biblically and prophetically significant and relevant when man understands their timing according to the biblical calendar and where they happen. Then we look for the patterns.

“As the sun is larger than the moon, the sun represents the nations of the world and the moon represents the nation of Israel, as their calendar months are based on the cycle of the

moon while the nations of the world follow the sun for their calendar. When there is a total solar eclipse, it is a warning to a specific nation or nations depending on its path.”

The total solar eclipse is expected August 21 this year and visible on both the East Coast and West Coast, something that hasn't happened since 1918.

Seven years later, another eclipse is expected to cross the United States, creating an “X” on the map.

Commentator Michael Snyder points to a John Paul Jackson prophecy:

If you follow my work closely, you know that I have been warning for years about the catastrophic earthquake that will someday strike the New Madrid fault zone. The heart of this “X” falls precisely in the area where we would expect such an earthquake, and when I first saw this map that is what immediately got my attention.

That certainly does not mean that the coming New Madrid earthquake will happen on any particular date, but it is definitely a very interesting “coincidence.”

This has also caused me to reflect on something that John Paul Jackson once said. Back in 2008, he made a DVD called The Perfect Storm in which he detailed a whole host of disasters that God showed him are coming to America.

At the very beginning of the DVD, John Paul explained that the majority of the things that he was going to talk about on the DVD would not happen for about a decade.

Well, when you add 10 years to 2008, that brings us to 2018.

In other words, the time frame that John Paul Jackson warned us about nearly a decade ago also lines up with the time frame of these upcoming solar eclipses.

Is that just another “coincidence”? {eoa}

Church Makes Bold Luke 6:28 Stance After Texting Driver Kills 13 Members

The First Baptist Church of New Braunfels, Texas is holding funerals for members killed in a devastating head-on collision that killed 13 people. Meanwhile, authorities are still trying to answer questions about how and why this happened.

“Our priority at this time is to comfort our grieving families and glorify God,” said Pastor Brad McLean.

The accident killed all but one of the 14 elderly passengers traveling home from a church retreat. Their bus collided with a pickup driven by 20-year-old Jack D. Young after he crossed the center line on a two-way road.

Jody Kuchler, who witnessed the crash, said Young told him immediately after the crash, “I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I was texting on my phone.”

While many are outraged by Young’s actions, the church is offering forgiveness.

“God’s grace is for each one of us, and our church family extends our prayers to the driver and his family at this

difficult time," McLean said.

Another mourning parishioner encouraged the community to have compassion on Young.

"It's devastating that it happened, but he is somebody's son," Moore told My San Antonio News. "If somebody does something wrong, it's like crucify, crucify, crucify! They need to start talking about forgiveness."

Meanwhile, there is a long investigation ahead for Texas authorities.

The Department of Public Safety issued search warrants but won't finish its investigation for weeks.

"We're waiting on a lot of different pieces of evidence, and witnesses are still being interviewed," said District Attorney Daniel Kindred. "Criminal responsibility can be assigned on several different theories, based on issues like impairment and reckless behavior. We can't make a decision on what is the most appropriate charge is, if any, until we get the case."

The DPS could decide to file a charge, Kindred said, but noted, "They are still in the evidence-gathering stage too. We want to be correct, not quick."

Those charges could range anywhere from manslaughter to aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, all of which are second-degree felonies. {eoa}

Mike Pence: The Constitution

Is Stronger With Gorsuch on the Supreme Court

Following Associate Justice Neil Gorsuch's swearing-in ceremony in the Rose Garden, the White House issued a statement from Vice President Mike Pence.

In the statement, the vice president lauded his friend's joining the high court, and heralded the implications this will have on American self-government. In a nutshell, he said having Gorsuch on the Supreme Court would make the Constitution of the United States stronger, not just now, but for future generations of Americans.

The following is his complete statement:

In the summer of 1787, our Founding Fathers crafted a framework of government that would protect the timeless ideals that bind us together as a people and give us purpose as a nation.

They gave us our Constitution. It was, it is, and I believe it will forever be the greatest charter of liberty our world has ever seen. It has fostered our nation's unparalleled success. And it is, to this day, the greatest bulwark against tyranny in American history. This is the Constitution that President Trump and I have both sworn to uphold.

The American people elected President Trump in significant part because of his vow to do just that—to nominate someone to the Supreme Court who would keep faith with our Constitution and uphold the God-given liberties enshrined there.

On Friday, by the grace of God, I presided in the United States Senate as Neil M. Gorsuch's confirmation was taken to

the floor for a vote. Today, he was sworn in to serve as associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

President Trump has kept one of his most significant promises he made to the American people: to put a justice on the Supreme Court who will keep faith with our Constitution and uphold the God-given liberties enshrined there.

In Justice Neil Gorsuch, President Trump chose one of the most mainstream, respected and well-qualified nominees in American history—and our Constitution and the rule of law will be stronger with him on the Supreme Court.

Today is a historic day for our country. We are giving a new voice to the age-old vision of our Founding Fathers and rededicating ourselves and our country to the timeless principles that they proclaimed. {eoa}

Revival Fire Catching in Brazil as Believers Exchange Immorality for Salvation

Pastor Marcio Antonio stands at the pulpit in a one room evangelical church built precariously above barbed wire fences and illegally hung electrical cables, exhorting his flock in a Brazilian favela to improve their morals.

A former drug dealer in Cantagalo, an informally built hillside settlement where most residents lack official property rights, Pastor Antonio and his flock at the Assembly of God Church are part of a growing trend.

Evangelical churches are expanding rapidly in Brazil, home to

the world's largest Catholic community, especially in poor favelas, experts and parishioners said.

These communities, which developed from squatter settlements, often do not have the same services as formal Brazilian neighborhoods in terms of healthcare, sanitation, transportation or formal property registration.

"The government doesn't help us so God is the only option for the poor," Pastor Antonio, 37, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation following his Sunday sermon.

Wearing a white linen robe over a black shirt and tie, Antonio was born and raised in the *favela* where he preaches to a congregation of two dozen from a clean, one room church with a tiled floor and fans buzzing overhead.

Like other poor young men, the lure of easy money drew him to the drug trade before he found God and a new mission.

"There are a lot of problems here in the *favela*," said Antonio, eating plain white bread and drinking black coffee after a two-hour sermon. "Poverty, a lack of work, crime, mental health issues—the church helps with these things."

In *favela* communities where the state often doesn't have much of a presence, evangelical churches are gaining members partially by providing social services like education, security and economic development, analysts said.

With conservative outlooks on birth control, abortion and other issues, the rise of evangelical churches drawing a base from poor communities is shifting Brazil's political landscape to the right.

State Absence

Protestants, many of whom are evangelical, comprise more than 20 percent of Brazil's 200 million population, up from less than three percent in 1940, according to the Pew Research

Center, a demographics organization.

In favela communities, the proportion of evangelicals is generally higher, sometimes about 50 percent, said Jeff Garmany, a lecturer at King's College London's Brazil Institute.

"People in favelas are dealing with serious issues of stigma, poverty and violence," Garmany told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"The state's inability to adequately deal with these issues allowed the churches to grow and make inroads with people."

With more than 20 percent of Brazil's big-city residents living in informal *favelas*, the growing sway of evangelicals among the working poor has translated into political power.

"The evangelical churches aren't just providing religious services in the favelas, they're addressing social issues people are dealing with head-on," Garmany said.

In Cantagalo, one of three inter-linked favelas in southern Rio de Janeiro with a combined population of about 30,000, there are two catholic churches and more than 15 evangelical churches, PastorAntonio said.

In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's second largest city, known for samba parties and skimpy bikinis, an evangelical bishop who opted to skip the city's raucous Carnival celebrations, was elected mayor last year.

Marcelo Crivella, founder of a mega-church, won much of the working-class vote despite being derided by some for controversial comments on Catholics and homosexuals.

Crivella's office did not respond to repeated interview requests from the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Crivella has pledged to improve public services such as

transport, health and education rather than using the mayor's office to push his conservative religious views.

Safety in Numbers

But analysts say his election, along with the impeachment of former left-leaning president Dilma Rousseff, signals a shift to the right in Brazilian politics. This is in turn linked to the growing power of evangelicals who draw disproportionate support from the urban poor, analysts say.

Part of the unique appeal of evangelical churches for favela residents is the sense of belonging and security they provide, worshippers said.

"We are like a family," said Luana de Souza, a housewife and member of Cantagalo's Assembly of God Church following chants of "hallelujah" from other parishioners.

"The church helps out with things like finding work and education," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

De Souza, like pastor Antonio and most other worshippers at this church is of Afro-Brazilian heritage.

Afro-Brazilians make up a large portion of the people living in *favelas* and face disproportionate levels of violence and harassment from the police, according to Human Rights Watch.

For worshipper Laiana Almeida, a babysitter who moved to Rio from Brazil's poorer north east three years ago, the reason for the growth of evangelical churches in *favelas* is simple.

"What the world can't provide us, the church provides," said Almeida following the Cantagalo service. "The church gives me things the physical world cannot offer." {eoa}

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YWAM Founder Loren Cunningham: Revival on the Way

Loren Cunningham, founder of Youth With A Mission (YWAM), is one of the great Christian leaders of our generation.

I recorded a podcast with him yesterday and asked what he believes is happening spiritually in a morally decadent culture. He said the greatest revival in the history of mankind is coming and backs up what he says with history, explaining that something huge happens in God's calendar every 500 years.

This year marks the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's Reformation.

With so many lives disrupted by natural disasters, terrorism and other crises, Cunningham believes millions will turn to Christ.

He says he sees the tide turning. It's well-known that in China, Christianity is growing faster than anywhere else in the world. Cunningham also said more people have come to Christ in the Middle East in the past two decades than in the past 1,000 years.

I hope you will listen to our interview, recorded as we drove around Kona, Hawaii, the home of YWAM's University of the Nations. I was there on vacation and was thrilled he would fit me into his busy schedule during the few hours our cruise ship was anchored there.

I will write later about what I saw and heard on my whirlwind trip to Kona, including Cunningham's vision to see at least a portion of the Bible translated into every language on Earth by 2020. I felt it important to share today what he says is happening spiritually from the vantage point of his contact with YWAMers around the world.

For those Christians who feel overwhelmed by what they see in today's society, Cunningham urges tenacity and endurance mixed with kindness. That's excellent advice.

Enjoy this podcast—even though it was recorded in the car. The excellent content offsets the less-than-optimal production quality. Please share it with others who will be encouraged by Cunningham's spiritual insight. {eoa}