

West Suffolk Baptist Church

Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant



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Preparing for Death

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"
John 11:21-26

None of us know what a day will bring. Indeed, we all live with a measure of uncertainty; we cannot be prepared for every trial that comes our way. In fact, as many have pointed out, the only certainty of life is that it will end. We live in a fallen world, and we know "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Dying, therefore, is one reality for which we must prepare.

Any consideration of death and dying that doesn't pay careful attention to Jesus' words is incomplete. A great place to start, then, is the solid instruction that Jesus provided just after his friend Lazarus died.

Understandably, Lazarus's mourning sisters were deeply concerned about what had happened to their brother. In response, Jesus said that Lazarus was going to rise again. Martha, not fully understanding this declaration, said, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." At that point, Jesus took the conversation one step further, saying, "I am the resurrection and the life."

And then came the challenge for Martha: "Do you believe this?"

Your answer to that question affects both how you live and how you deal with death. Jesus has not only conquered death but also made a way for you to conquer death too. Even though your physical frame will fail you, when you believe Jesus is the resurrection and the life, death simply becomes a transition, a passing from one realm of life into another.

One challenge which faces believers regarding death is not simply to prepare ourselves for its imminence but also to learn how to help others face it. No matter the situation, though, Jesus' words provide the foundation for loving counsel. We are to speak both biblically and honestly, explaining the reality of eternity and the hope that is found in Him. Our words, echoing Christ's own, should not be abrupt or unfeeling but filled with wisdom and grace.

You cannot know how to live until you've settled the question of how to die. Tomorrow is not promised to any of us, but eternity is guaranteed to every follower of the one who is the resurrection and the life. You can prepare yourself—and your friends and loved ones—to meet the day of death with calm and confidence rather than with fear and uncertainty by holding these precious words close: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." Yes, we believe this. ~

Alistair Begg

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The Culture of Death wins yet again: Britain moves to decriminalize abortion right up to the moment of birth

March 19, 2026

Late last night, Britain's House of Lords surrendered to the Culture of Death, advancing a bill that would decriminalize a woman's action to cause an abortion right up to the moment of birth. The astoundingly radical abortion measure had been included in a far larger bill approved without much notice by the House of Commons a few months ago. The House of Lords has no such excuse, for the radical abortion language was right on the front burner—there for all to see. A few members attempted to amend the legislation by stripping the abortion proposals out of the bill, but late last night their efforts failed. The measure moves forward. The Culture of Death advances yet again.

Britain already had one of the most liberal abortion laws in the world, allowing women to seek abortions through 24 weeks of pregnancy, and even later under many circumstances. The new measure removes all criminal sanctions for any woman who seeks or self-administers an abortion at any point in the pregnancy, for any reason. It will result in abortion on demand that extends from the moment of fertilization all the way to the moment prior to birth.

Tellingly, the measure does not decriminalize a physician's involvement in elective abortions after 24 weeks. Thus, under the new legislation a woman could abort her own child at the latest stage of pregnancy, by use of the abortion pill, for example. That is why so many people opposed the measure, for a woman could use a drug like Mifepristone to cause the death of a fully developed infant, but the baby's dead body would remain in her womb and could not safely be expelled. Thus, in the name of a woman's personal autonomy the British government would put the mother's own life in danger. Make no mistake: The Culture of Death kills, and it kills both babies and their mothers.

Allison Pearson, columnist for The Telegraph, referred to the "sickening change in the abortion law" that the bill proposed, calling it legalized infanticide. Pearson referred to Britain's already radical abortion laws, which she described as "shockingly out of step with the majority of European countries."

She continued: "The only other country with our brutal disregard for the unborn child is China, where abortion is generally legal at any stage of pregnancy." She pointed out that even China disallows abortion for reason of sex-selection, but Britain's shocking new abortion would not. Sex-selection abortions would be of no legal consequence. Want a boy? Just abort the girl. A woman would be able to end her pregnancy at any point, for any reason, without legal consequence.

The debate yesterday in the House of Lords went on for hours, going late into London's night. The votes finally came and the House of Lords went home, handing the Culture of Death yet another huge victory. Britain's upper house would not even slow the legislation, abdicating its historic responsibility. The Lords Spiritual—Church of England bishops seated in the House of Lords—did register their support for the amendments, or at least for further study of the matter and the impact on women's health.

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The new archbishop of Canterbury, Dame Sarah Mullally, who had previously served as a registered nurse, did call for a delay in the approval of any abortion measure, but her argument before the House of Lords was not marked by moral passion and abortion itself was not revealed as a great moral evil.

Calum Miller, a medical doctor and medical ethicist in Britain, lamented openly that many in Britain’s medical establishment supported the bill. “The medical profession is fundamentally untrustworthy with these people at its head,” he argued. “They have no credibility whatsoever.”

Right to Life UK released a statement immediately after the vote stating that the legislation would “make it more likely that healthy babies are aborted at home for any reason, up to birth.” The group also asserted that the measure “would change the law so it would no longer be illegal for women to perform their own abortions for any reason, including sex-selective purposes, and at any point up to and including birth.” Note those words carefully—up to and including birth.

Catherine Robinson, spokesperson for Right to Life UK, said that the abortion up to birth measure “is one of the most extreme pieces of legislation ever to pass the House of Commons and the House of Lords.” She continued: “It is a travesty that such an enormous and terrible legislative change, which will directly endanger the lives of unborn babies well beyond the point at which they would be able to survive outside the womb, as well as the lives of their mothers, has been allowed to happen.”

Later, Ms. Robinson simply stated: “A civilized society does not permit abortion up to birth.” That is certainly true, but the sentence should actually be much shorter, like this: “A civilized society does not permit abortion.”

Last night’s vote in the House of Lords tells us that a dark new age is upon us. Hug your children and grandchildren tight, and, as you hug them, pray for the unborn. ~ *Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.* *This article originally appeared at WORLD Opinions on March 19, 2026.*

Religious liberty crashes in Finland: Christian legislator found guilty of “incitement” for teaching biblical truth

March 27, 2026

Well, it’s happened. After years of being told that no such thing would happen, a Finnish member of parliament has been convicted by that country’s Supreme Court of “inciting hatred” by identifying homosexuality as a “developmental disorder” in a published pamphlet. Christian Democrat MP Päivi Räsänen was fined 1,800 Euros and was convicted of a criminal act by posting the pamphlet she had written on Facebook in 2019. She had also published versions of the document in 2004, 2007, and 2020.

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Religious liberty crashes in Finland: Christian legislator found guilty of “incitement” for teaching biblical truth

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Media reports indicated that Räsänen’s conviction for a form of hate crime came only after two lower courts had exonerated her. The country’s chief prosecutor pressed the case until the Finnish Supreme Court ruled against the parliamentarian and former government minister. The Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) defended Räsänen throughout the trials, asserting her right to free speech and religious liberty—both supposedly protected by Finland’s law and constitution.

A report from ADF revealed that Räsänen is the mother of five children and has twelve grandchildren, and that “her Christian faith is a large part of her life, including inspiring her to hold elected office.” She is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

The ADF statement also accused Finnish officials of “blatantly attacking free speech,” even as the nation claims to protect free expression and the right “to express, disseminate and receive information, opinions and other communications without prior prevention by anyone.”

Despite those claimed protections, the government investigated Räsänen under Finland’s War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity Law, which could include offenses such as spreading “an expression of opinion or another message where a certain group is threatened, defamed or insulted on the basis of its race, skin color, birth status, national or ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation or disability or a comparable basis.”

In response, Räsänen stated: “I cannot accept that voicing my religious beliefs could mean imprisonment. I do not consider myself guilty of threatening, slandering, or insulting anyone. My statements were all based on the Bible’s teachings on marriage and sexuality. I will defend my right to confess my faith, so that no one else would be deprived of their right to freedom of religion and speech.”

Finland’s minister of justice, Leena Meri, described the nation’s law in this case as “not sufficiently precise and especially not predictable as required by the principle of legality in the criminal code.” She went on to state the obvious truth: “It is very difficult for people to know what is prohibited and what is permitted.”

Responding to Päivi Räsänen’s conviction, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Riley Barnes stated forcefully: “Holding Christian convictions isn’t a hate crime. Finland’s ‘hate speech’ conviction of MP Päivi Räsänen—for simply writing a pamphlet defending the Bible—shows the tragic state of religious freedom in the West. The United States stands opposed to these ideological attacks against the Christian faith.”

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Religious liberty crashes in Finland: Christian legislator found guilty of “incitement” for teaching biblical truth

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The state of religious freedom in the West is indeed tragic, and the collision between Christian conviction and LGBTQ ideology is already clear on both sides of the Atlantic. Back in 2019, in an event billed as a CNN Equality Town Hall, contenders for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination revealed that the danger is very close. Don Lemon, then a CNN anchor, asked former Congressman Beto O'Rourke this question: “Do you think religious institutions like colleges, churches, charities, should they lose their tax-exempt status if they oppose same-sex marriage?”

O'Rourke responded, “yes,” and received loud applause from the audience. He went on to state: “There can be no reward, no benefit, no tax break for anyone or any institution, any organization in America that denies the full human rights and the full civil rights of every single one of us.”

Years ago, back as far as 2005, a major figure like attorney Chai Feldblum, who would hold a seat on the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), would state openly that religious liberty and what she called “identity liberty” would come into eventual collision, and that in such a collision, religious liberty would have to give way. Feldblum described the nature of the collision and then stated that a point would come when “an inevitable choice between liberties would come into play.” She stated her case succinctly and clearly: “In making that choice, I believe society must come down on the side of protecting the identity liberty of LGBT people.” Religious liberty just has to give way.

Dr. Päivi Räsänen has indicated that she will press her case for religious liberty to the European Court of Human Rights. It is also apparent that religious liberty is in real danger, not only in Finland and Scandinavia, but throughout Europe. I was with Dr. Räsänen last year at a meeting in Berlin. I can assure you that she is both kind and courageous in her convictions.

Christians everywhere must pay close attention to this case. There are many on the left who want the United States to adopt similar hate crime and hate speech legislation. Far too many Americans take comfort that such prosecutions can't happen here. Christians in Finland have just been stripped of that comfort. Christians all over the world must see the danger clearly. At the same time, we have no choice but to stand on the authority of the Bible and speak the truth. It may well come with an increasing cost and even larger threats. Just ask Dr. Päivi Räsänen. ~ **Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.** *This article originally appeared at WORLD Opinions on March 27, 2026.*

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A Pharisaical Invitation

There is no greater reason for our gratitude, as Christians, than God's gift of salvation. Without it, we would all remain in self-imposed darkness—doomed for eternity. As sinners, we were rightly condemned before a holy God with no means to justify ourselves. This reality is what makes the gospel shocking.

But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-7)

It is no wonder we sing rich hymns about God's saving love—unceasing gratitude should be our natural response. Only a stone-cold heart could offer anything less. That's why Jesus says that those who are forgiven much, love much, as we'll see in Luke 7:47. Their life reflects the grace they receive from God.

The Transformative Power of Grace

Nothing adorns the preaching of the gospel better than a life transformed by grace. Jesus knew and utilized this reality well. Of course, our Lord did not need transformation Himself, but on occasion, He used other people's transformed lives as instruments to reach unbelievers with the gospel. We see an example of this in Luke 7:36–50.

Jesus, who came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10), is here seeking out a lost man. And He uses the transformed life of a sinful woman as the means to confront this man with the truth. Most readers think of this account mainly as the story of an immoral woman, but that stops short of its full purpose. The woman is only an element of the story; its true focus is the evangelization of a Pharisee.

Jesus had just been accused of associating with only drunkards and swindlers—*"a friend of tax collectors and sinners!"* (Luke 7:34). But He did not withhold friendship from deeply religious sinners like the Pharisee in this story also. In fact, Luke's gospel records several occasions when Jesus shared a meal with Jewish religious leaders (Luke 11:37–54; 14:1–6). In those passages we see Him sitting down for a prolonged conversation with the specific intent of telling these Pharisees who He was and why He came. Jesus was committed to presenting His message of salvation to all sinners, low- and high-class alike.

In Luke 7:36–50, in an act of illustrative irony, Jesus demonstrates His power to forgive sins to a self-righteous Pharisee by means of a person the Pharisee would despise most: a wretched prostitute. Her changed life was both shocking and inarguable, and it was the irrefutable evidence of the transforming power of Christ's forgiveness.

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Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisees house and reclined at the table. And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner." (Luke 7:36-39)

The story opens with one of the Pharisees requesting that the Lord dine with him. Where this incident took place is not known, except that it was in Galilee during Jesus' Galilean ministry (Luke 4:14–9:50).

Like the other Pharisees who invited Jesus to dine with them, this Pharisee was no open-minded inquirer. He had already decided that Jesus was a blasphemer (Luke 5:21). These self-appointed guardians of legalistic, external religion hated Jesus' message of grace. They also hated Him for pointedly rebuking their hypocritical self-righteousness and for associating with the outcast and disreputable of society (Luke 6:11; 7:30). Having already reached this conclusion about Jesus, they busily sought evidence against Him to support it. This meal invitation was doubtless part of that; no self-respecting Pharisee would willingly associate with a blasphemer, except to do him harm.

Jesus, of course, was aware of this man's motives. Though hosting someone at a banquet was normally a sign of friendship and honor, Christ understood that the Pharisee was a hypocrite who harbored evil intentions toward Him. Still, Jesus graciously accepted in order to reach out to this lost sinner—to expose him to the Savior's power to transform lives.

It was customary to invite a visiting rabbi to a Sabbath meal or a special banquet, giving attendees the opportunity to discuss theological, cultural, and social issues with him. There is some evidence that on such occasions, the doors could be left open so those not formally invited could still stand around the room's perimeter and thus listen in. That seems to have happened here.

Among the people who'd be drawn to such a meal were the poor, who came hoping to pick up scraps that fell from the table or to scavenge leftovers. Day laborers who perhaps hadn't found work and sufferers of disabilities might have done the same. So although they weren't official guests, it was not unusual for people from lower stations in life to be present.

The scene was set for an extraordinary lesson in guilt, grace, and gratitude. A respectable Pharisee would be juxtaposed with a despised outcast, and Christ would use both to reveal precious truth about salvation from sin. ~ **Dr. John MacArthur (1939 - 2025)**

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Jackson has successfully completed his homeschool education, concluding a remarkable academic journey that began in 2012. Over the years, he has demonstrated exceptional dedication, discipline, and perseverance in his studies, consistently excelling academically while developing a strong sense of character and leadership. Homeschooling provided Jackson with the opportunity to cultivate both intellectual curiosity and personal responsibility, qualities that have prepared him well for the challenges ahead.

In addition to his academic accomplishments, Jackson has pursued a wide range of interests and talents that reflect his well-rounded character and commitment to personal growth. He has devoted countless hours to the strategic discipline of chess, sharpening his analytical thinking and problem-solving skills. His passion for music has been evident through his study of both piano and guitar, pursuits that have fostered creativity, patience, and self-expression. Jackson has also remained active in athletics, where he has learned the value of teamwork, perseverance, and physical discipline.

Jackson's achievements and strong work ethic have earned him an appointment to the prestigious United States Military Academy, where he will join the Class of 2030. As he begins this next chapter at West Point, he plans to study engineering, combining his aptitude for mathematics and problem-solving with a desire to serve others through leadership and innovation. His family, friends, and mentors are proud of all he has accomplished and look forward with great anticipation to the impact he will make in the years to come.

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Responding to God's Call

We live in daily submission to a host of authorities who circumscribe our freedom: from parents to traffic police officers to dog catchers. All authorities are to be respected and, as the Bible declares, honored. But only one authority has the intrinsic right to bind the conscience. God alone imposes absolute obligation, and He does it by the power of His holy voice.

He calls the world into existence by divine imperative, by holy fiat. He calls the dead and rotting Lazarus to life again. He calls people who were no people “My people.” He calls us out of darkness and into light. He effectually calls us to redemption. He calls us to service.

Our vocation is so named because of its Latin root *vocatio*, “a calling.” The term vocational choice is a contradiction in terms to the Christian. To be sure, we do choose it and can, in fact, choose to disobey it. But prior to the choice and hovering with absolute power over it is the divine summons, the imposition to duty from which we dare not flee.

It was vocation that drove Jonah on his flight to Tarshish and caused his terrified shipmates to dump him in the sea to still the vengeful tempest. It was vocation that elicited the anguished cry from Paul, “*Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel*” (1 Corinthians 9:16). It was vocation that put a heinous cup of bitterness in the hands of Jesus.

The call of God is not always to a glamorous vocation, and its fruit in this world is often bittersweet. Yet God calls us according to our gifts and talents, and directs us to paths of the most useful service to His kingdom. How impoverished we would be if Jonah had made it to Tarshish, if Paul had refused to preach, if Jeremiah really had turned in his prophet’s card, or if Jesus had politely declined the cup. Think about it . . . what will be the tab of spiritual losses if you do not respond to God’s call? ~ *Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr. (1939 - 2017)*

Coram Deo

Coram Deo - “**Before the face of God**” or “**In the presence of God.**” It’s often used in Christian theology—especially in traditions shaped by thinkers like John Calvin—to describe a way of living with the awareness that everything you do happens in God’s sight and under His authority. It implies living with integrity and accountability, even when no one else is watching. Recognizing that all life—not just religious activities—is spiritual. Acting with a sense of purpose, humility, and reverence. So when someone says they want to live *Coram Deo*, they mean they want their whole life—work, relationships, decisions—to be lived consciously in God’s presence.

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If you have a birthday or anniversary in June that is not posted here or is listed in error or you do not want to be published in this newsletter, please contact Walt or e-mail him at gwlcf10415@gmail.com.

Birthdays and Anniversaries Corner June 2026

Birthdays

Gene A. (6) Mike P. (27)
Vincent P. (8) Ruth E. (30)
Ethan M. (27)

Anniversaries

Brian and Muriel R. (7) Ben and Carrie P. (23)
Zach and Corrisa A. (16) Scott and Ruth T. (25)

Jesus Calms a Storm **Luke 8:22–25 (ESV)**

²² One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side of the lake.” So they set out, ²³ and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. ²⁴ And they went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. ²⁵ He said to them, “Where is your faith?” And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, “Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?”



West Suffolk Baptist Church Leadership

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Please submit information to the editor by the second Sunday of each month preceding publication by e-mail, in person or at the church office. The editor reserves the right to edit for content or space. May the Father be glorified in every word.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions from the contributors to this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of West Suffolk Baptist Church or its leadership.