

Alabama Same-Sex Marriage Tide Rolling
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I have spent the last few days pondering an answer to my own question regarding the statement of Southern Baptist Convention Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission President Russell Moore, who said that dissenting Alabama judges, including Roy Moore, should obey the federal law, which contradicts Alabama law, or resign with reference to the same-sex marriage issue. My question was, “what else could Russell Moore have said?” This article is my answer to my own question. At the very least, I discovered that Dr. Moore’s two-option approach is far too narrow and largely misses positing a crucial Christian principle.

Let me begin by saying that I firmly believe the gay rights issue should be a state-decided issue, not a federally-decided issue. I feel the same about the abortion question, and other ethical issues as well. There are reasons why people choose to live in certain areas of the United States, and opt to live even in certain states and not others, and it is not just because of the weather.

I am incensed that any federal judge or any federal branch of government has the audacity, or the power, to dictate to a state something voters in that state decided overwhelmingly regarding the same-sex marriage issue. Further, I applaud Alabama Judge Roy Moore for not capitulating to the federal judge’s order negating Alabama law on the matter, choosing instead to uphold the Alabama Constitution and law as decided by the voters in his state while exhausting all efforts in the appeals process. In fact, I do not even regard Judge Moore’s actions as civil disobedience, since he and his state are following the law until a final, definitive, inviolable decision is rendered, which may take a while.

My earnest prayer is that Alabama wins its appeal and states’ rights are protected. Much is at stake here for all Americans, Christian and non-Christian. This is certainly a watershed moment.

Now, speaking from a purely Christian perspective, what are Alabama and Judge Roy Moore to do if, in the final, definitive, inviolable decision on the matter they are told their law against same-sex marriage is unconstitutional and, therefore, null and void? It seems to me that the dissenting judges in Alabama, and other states with a similar law, have a most consequential decision to make. Do they (1) obey the federal law and issue the same-sex marriage licenses; (2) resign their posts rather than violate their conscience; (3) continue to observe state law in spite of the final federal decision and be willing to pay the consequences; or, (4) the state begins to take steps to secede from the union?

At this point, I am compelled to say that I absolutely do not think Christians should engage in a blood-bath on this matter. While it is clear that secularism is eroding more and more of our Christian shores in America the method of resistance we, as Christians, must choose to employ is that of conscientious objection rooted in the highest standard of God’s Word and be willing to pay the consequences.

I am cautious about using biblical examples to illustrate my point because the fit is a bit of a stretch and in principle only. Please let me explain. Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego, Daniel, Peter, and John were

told, in no uncertain terms, to violate their conscience or pay the price. But they were not resisting immoral legislation in their respective contexts. They were resisting foolish, abusive decrees which we in America have not, as of yet, faced which cut to the heart of basic worship of God almighty.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were ordered to bow down to Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar's idolatrous image or face certain death in a fiery furnace (Dan. 3:1-25). They chose the furnace and lived to tell about it. They were willing to maintain their conviction and willing to pay the consequences.

Daniel and all other citizens of the Medo-Persian Empire were put in a position not to make a petition to any god or man besides King Darius for thirty days or face certain death by being cast into a den of lions (Dan. 6:7). Jealous politicians had manipulated Darius into signing the edict in an effort to eliminate Daniel, against whom they could find no other grounds of accusation. This was a classic set-up. But it back-fired! Daniel went to the lions' den and lived to tell about it! He was willing to maintain his conviction by praying to Yahweh, not Darius, and he was caught, red-handed. But he was willing to pay the price.

Two Apostles, Peter and John, were causing quite a stir preaching about Jesus and his resurrection. God was working mighty miracles through them as well (Acts 3:1-11). Jewish religious leaders were incensed, although even they acknowledged that a noteworthy miracle had occurred with the healing of a lame man. Nevertheless, the leaders commanded Peter and John not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18). Peter and John, as we know, refused to be muzzled, endured the present threats, and continued preaching and teaching in the name of Jesus. They, too, were willing to pay the price of arrest, imprisonment, and even death.

We Christians have not quite been put in the same pinch these Bible heroes were. Not yet at least. But it is coming. What we invariably see in all three examples, however, is an unwavering allegiance first and foremost to the biblical, triune God in the midst of secularism and religious persecution like we have yet to see in America. They stood their ground – God's ground – and were willing to pay the consequences; and did so without organizing blood-baths. Peter had learned in the Garden through the Malchus incident that armed resistance to arrest over religious and legal issues is not the way of Jesus. He should have remembered Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego, and Daniel. They went to their punishment, by all appearance, without incident. They were willing to pay the price for their conscientious objection based on solid biblical footing. And they all did so by neither (1) obeying the law nor (2) resigning.

My concluding thoughts on the matter are that dissenting judges and states have the following options: (1) Exhaust all appeals and pray that the federal government quickly recognizes the foolishness of a nation-wide same-sex marriage decree which violates states' rights and laws; (2) practice already existing state law until the appeals are exhausted; (3) in the event of an unwanted final federal decision, follow their spiritual convictions through conscientious objection with no hint of violence and be willing to pay the consequences like Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego, Daniel, Peter, and John. To do so would be both Christian and heroic. Perhaps Dr. Moore would have been wiser, and more firmly rooted in Scripture, had he proffered these steps rather than saying the Alabama judges must obey or resign.