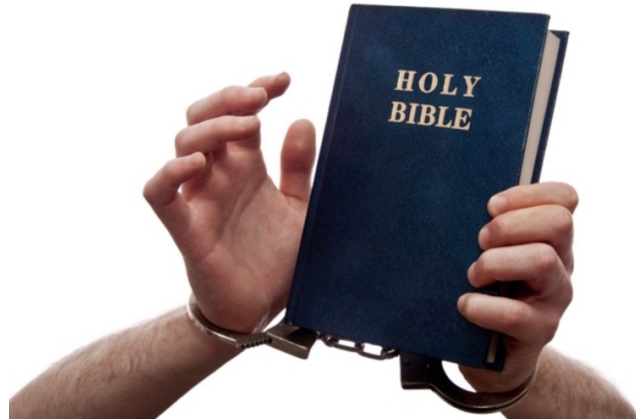




Written by [Alex Newman](#) on April 17, 2020

Amid COVID-19, Deep State Moves in for the Kill Against Churches

With churches across much of America being shutdown by government decree as “non-essential,” they are facing enormous and potentially existential threats. On one hand, churches are being terrorized by state and local governments, with pastors and congregations literally being fined or even arrested for simply attending a service. Then, when the churches try to stream online, Deep State-run Big Tech firms are censoring them or even shutting them down. At the same time, many churches across America are lining up to receive government bailout money — cash that comes with dangerous strings attached, including LGBT mandates. This represents a profound threat to religious liberty and the continued independence of the church in America. It could be a perfect storm.



Even on Resurrection Sunday, perhaps the most important date on the Christian calendar, state and local governments came down hard on churches. Before that, at churches in Mississippi, congregants were given \$500 fines for attending — even though they remained in their cars for the entire service. Meanwhile, drive-thru restaurants in the area remained open for business. In Kentucky, far-left Governor Andy Beshear ordered police to go take down church attendees’ license plate numbers. In Virginia, Pastor Kevin Wilson of Lighthouse Fellowship Church was [charged with violating executive decrees by the governor](#) purporting to shut down churches, and may face up to a year in jail. Prominent Florida pastor Rev. Rodney Howard-Browne, arguing that church is essential, [was arrested for holding services](#). Similar abuses have [been perpetrated by the murderous dictatorship enslaving Communist China](#).

The notion that churches are not “essential,” and that government gets to arbitrarily decide that abortion mills and marijuana shops are essential while churches are not, is beyond outrageous. And yet, it has happened across much of the nation, with very little resistance so far. Non-profit legal firm Liberty Counsel is working on these sorts of cases and has found some success. But across the nation, radical governors and mayors have exploited coronavirus hysteria to act like dictators, imagining that they get to tell churches when, how — and even if — they are allowed to meet. Historically, churches have always been essential, especially during tough times when people need help. But today, many pastors have meekly accepted the dictatorial usurpation of power by government with barely a whimper.

Countless pastors have been satisfied with simply moving their services online. But once again, the Deep State is finding ways to shut them down, too. Consider the case of Christ Church in Moscow,



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Idaho. Last week, Google, owned by the same company that owns Youtube, [removed the church's app from its "Google Play" store because the pastor allegedly did not show enough sensitivity](#). "We don't allow apps that lack reasonable sensitivity towards or capitalize on a natural disaster, atrocity, conflict, death, or other tragic event," the notice received by the church explained. "Your app has been suspended and removed due to this policy issue." Facebook, too, regularly censors and discriminates against Christians. Even those that do not get directly attacked are likely to self-censor to avoid getting banned.

Perhaps even more alarming is the showering of government money on churches — naturally, with strings attached. *The New American* reached out to the "Office of Diversity Inclusion and Civil Rights" at the Small Business Administration to find out whether churches taking bailout money would be forced to hire homosexuals as part of the "non-discrimination" requirements. At first, the person on the phone said yes. However, after that initial response, the phone operator said the SBA was expecting a formal answer from the legal department no later than today or tomorrow. *The New American* will post an update if and when there is more information. In the meantime, numerous establishment-minded Christian bigwigs are helping churches sign up for government money.

Reverend Thomas Littleton, a Southern Baptist from Alabama, warned about the trap the churches are walking right into. "This never before and unthinkable move will spell the end of church as we know it in America as churches now become debtors and grant recipients of the government through the Small Business Administration," he [warned on his popular blog *Thirty Pieces of Silver*](#), calling on churches to trust in the Lord rather than government. While religious liberty and the freedom of churches in America have historically been protected from government interference by the Constitution, that "constitutional refuge is about to evaporate and everything turned on it's head as the church and ministries become funded by the federal government stimulus."

The true church will never fail, Reverend Littleton explained, citing promises from God contained in the Bible. However, many individual churches and ministries have gone and will continue to go "apostate," he warned. "As loan / grant / bailout recipients, churches will be under Small Business Administration obligations for the 10-year life span of the loan, or forever if the loan is converted to a grant and not repaid," said Littleton, who has long [warned about an "Evangelical Deep State"](#) that is leading many American churches astray. "Also churches who take the funding now will likely not hesitate to do so again in the case of another economic crisis. These bad decisions have long term consequences."

Among other issues, Littleton noted that as pastors put their signatures on those SBA forms, they agree to comply with all of the federal government's "non-discrimination and inclusion" mandates. This in an era where the Supreme Court has purported to redefine marriage, and where lawmakers are chomping at the bit to criminalize even religious organizations that refuse to bow before the LGBT juggernaut. "Church leaders will not bite the hand that feeds them," Littleton said, adding that churches taking government money will never be the same. "Going forward, any pastor who takes Covid-19 Stimulus funding will be far less likely to speak up to this or any future administration." Littleton blasted people like Russell Moore with the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission for [encouraging and helping churches to take the government funding](#).

A coalition of Republican U.S. senators is already calling on the Trump administration to take action ensuring that churches do not have to choose between adhering to their religious beliefs and taking bailouts. "As we repeatedly brought to your attention, without these assurances, many of our nation's most impactful faith-based entities would have been unable to participate in the [Paycheck Protection



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Program] due to undue restrictions on their sincerely held religious beliefs, thereby forcing them to choose between abandoning their faith mission or closing their doors to both employees and the communities they serve,” they wrote in a letter to Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin and SBA boss Jovita Carranza urging the administration not to “discriminate” against faith-based entities.

Of course, the Trump administration, which has made protection of religious liberty a priority, is already expressing concerns about the actions of state and local officials against churches. In a statement issued this week by U.S. Attorney General William Barr, the Department of Justice chief said churches could not be singled out for onerous regulations. “Even in times of emergency, when reasonable and temporary restrictions are placed on rights [sic], the First Amendment and federal statutory law prohibit discrimination against religious institutions and religious believers,” Barr explained. “Thus, government may not impose special restrictions on religious activity that do not also apply to similar nonreligious activity.”

As an example, Barr cited movie theaters, restaurants, concert halls, and “other comparable places,” saying that if they were allowed to remain open and unrestricted, then governments could not order churches to close, limit the congregation size, or otherwise impede their gatherings. “Religious institutions must not be singled out for special burdens,” Barr said, pointing to a “Statement of Interest” the DOJ filed in the Mississippi church case.

On the economic front, there appears to be an enormous consolidation underway that was orchestrated by the Deep State. Mom-and-Pop small businesses are being destroyed by the forced shutdown. Everyday Americans, especially blue-collar Trump supporters, are losing their jobs by the millions. Meanwhile, megabanks connected to the Federal Reserve are drowning in newly created currency, while major corporations such as Walmart and Amazon are expanding as authorities allow them to continue operating as normal.

A similar phenomenon appears to be taking place in the ministry world. Smaller, independent churches are struggling, and many will shut down in the face of this engineered shutdown crisis. Those that survive may either surrender their independence for government money, or merge with larger churches more amenable to carrying water for the establishment. Leaders of churches and religious ministries need to prayerfully consider the consequences of taking “free” taxpayer dollars. The price may be much steeper than they can even imagine.

Photo: revjake/iStock/Getty Images Plus

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