



State of Faith, Family & Freedom Address

Delivered by Tony Perkins

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I am Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council in Washington, D.C., with this year's State of Faith, Family, and Freedom in America.

The apostle Peter wrote to believers who had been scattered because of the persecution of the early church, instructing them to “always be[] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” [1 Peter 3:15 ESV].

Notice where that hope was to reside. Not in the halls of power, the media headlines of the day, and certainly not on the stages of entertainment. Rather, that hope is to be found within us.

As followers of Christ, we have the very presence of God within us, which is our hope and confidence. And in a moment, I want to share with you the tangible results that have come from that hope, results which the godless Left and their lemmings in the legacy media work day and night to keep from you.

So, from that foundation, we look at the state of faith, family, and freedom in America.

The assault on biblical faith continues to accelerate under the Biden administration's policies, both at home and abroad.

Religious freedom, the top foreign policy objective of the former Trump administration, has been replaced with prioritizing attacks on the unborn, promoting LGBTQ ideology, and the climate, the unholy trinity of the Left.

The Biden administration has found the ideal partner to advance this unholy trinity with the World Health Organization (WHO), which is working feverishly to advance an unprecedented global power grab through a pandemic treaty—or pandemic accord as it is deceptively called to avoid the need for ratification by the U.S. Senate.

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This accord grants the compromised WHO the ability to regulate nearly every aspect of life for citizens of every nation when the WHO believes there is a health emergency. The treaty calls for censoring information that would challenge their declaration, which would include silencing dissenting voices. We saw this type of totalitarianism play out here in the United States during COVID-19; we don't want to see a global sequel.

The consequences of the Biden administration's misplaced priorities have rapidly manifested in global chaos and instability, along with historic levels of persecution of Christians and other religious minorities.

A case in point is the country of Nigeria, the most populous African nation. As chairman of the bipartisan U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom during the Trump administration, I led the commission in recommending that Nigeria be designated as a country of particular concern. This designation, which the Trump administration adopted for the government of Nigeria, allowed for economic sanctions upon the country and its leaders for allowing the egregious, ongoing, and systematic persecution of people of faith.

But, without adequate explanation, that designation was immediately removed by the Biden administration when they came into office. The result has been a dramatic rise in the death toll. According to the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law, more than 8,000 Christians were killed in Nigeria last year alone.

This indifference to religious freedom abroad is rivaled only by the hostility toward religious freedom here at home, as a congressional investigation revealed the FBI tracked and worked to infiltrate churches in part because of leftist propaganda from the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The role of faith, the Christian faith, has been routinely undermined by President Biden's policies. Faith-based entities focused on proclaiming truth through charitable service have been assaulted.

At the end of last year, the Biden Department of Health and Human Services put forth a new rule that would shut down Christian foster care services and exclude Christian foster families unless they surrender biblical teaching on human sexuality and gender identity. And this comes at a time when more, not fewer, stable families are needed for children in need of a family.

These policies, which are hostile to biblical truth, have fomented and tacitly approved outright acts of hostility toward churches in America.

Over the last year, there have been 436 identified acts of hostility on churches in the United States, ranging from vandalism to firebombing to shootings. Family Research Council's recently released Hostility Against Churches Report shows an astounding 800 percent increase in acts of vandalism and violence towards churches since 2018.

The family has not evaded the hostility of this administration either, as radical gender policies are pushed from the Department of Education onto local schools, demanding parents be kept in the dark as their children are transitioned. Ask Jennifer and Dan Mead, whose autistic daughter was being secretly transitioned at school without her parents' knowledge or consent. Behind their backs, teachers agreed to call her by a masculine name and male pronouns. The Meads stumbled on the truth when an education plan that detailed their daughter's life as a boy at school was accidentally sent home. Furious, they pulled her out of classes, started homeschooling, and sued. Now, her mom says, "She's safe. She knows her real identity." But who knows how many other parents are living this same nightmare? Or worse, oblivious to what's happening right under their noses.

The hostility of the Left begins at the moment of conception.

"Think about [it]," Vice President Kamala Harris told reporters after the Alabama Supreme Court ruled that frozen embryos are persons. "Individuals, couples, who want to start a family are now being deprived of access to what can help them start a family," she said, referring to the potential impacts on In Vitro Fertilization. "So, on the one hand, the proponents are saying that an individual doesn't have a right to end an unwanted pregnancy, and on the other hand, the individual does not have a right to start a family."

This faux outrage is the height of hypocrisy. The Alabama ruling did nothing to outlaw IVF, but on the contrary, ensured that parents struggling with infertility don't experience even more heartbreak because of the carelessness of IVF clinics that treat embryos as if they are merely pieces of property. This feign of counterfeit compassion over infertility comes at the same time the Biden administration is working to overturn every state's pro-life laws by allowing dangerous

mail-order abortions without medical oversight—which is a violation of federal law. And once again, they are peddling the lie that protecting unborn children puts women’s lives at risk. Not a single pro-life law prohibits saving a mother’s life. Instead, these laws protect unborn children from being brutally torn apart.

Innocent human life must be protected, as must the mothers, many of whom think they have no alternative. That’s why Republicans are working to stop the Biden administration in its new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program from excluding pregnancy resource centers from receiving federal funding for the myriad of services they provide.

More and more families are looking to religious nonprofits for assistance in many areas as families struggle under the present tight economy, where prices have climbed 18 percent since President Biden took office.

Prices aren’t the only thing increasing under this administration; so has violent crime.

While the Democratic Party wants you to believe that crime has declined over the past year, the reality is that homicides, theft, carjackings, and property damage are astronomically higher than they were in 2019. Violent crimes against young people have actually doubled in the last year. Motor vehicle thefts are up 105 percent since the pandemic—as even members of Congress have fallen prey to carjackings. The murder rate is up as much as 30 percent in places like the nation’s capital and about 18 percent overall.

A contributing factor to violent crime is the skyrocketing illegal immigration on our southern border, made tragically evident again when 22-year-old nursing student Laken Riley was found murdered on the campus of the University of Georgia. The alleged murderer, Jose Ibarra, illegally entered the country in 2022 from Venezuela, was detained, and then let loose or “paroled” into the United States. This is a man who was arrested three times but never detained. And by the way, Athens, Georgia, where the campus is located, is a sanctuary city. A sanctuary for criminals and murderers, not nursing students and law-abiding citizens.

An estimated 10 million illegal immigrants have crossed into the United States since President Biden took office in January of 2021.

Deadly drugs like fentanyl are also streaming across the border, becoming the number one killer of Americans aged 18-45.

It is not just drugs and criminals that are streaming across the border; so are terrorists. At least 342 individuals who are on the terrorist watchlist have been detained at the border; there is no telling how many terrorists have evaded authorities and are now in the United States establishing terrorist cells.

We don't have to look back far into history to see the savagery of a terrorist border invasion. We simply look at October 7 in Israel when Hamas terrorists invaded peaceful Israeli communities and brutally tortured, maimed, raped, and killed 1,400 innocent people and took 240 hostages. And now, five months later, as Israel seeks to secure its borders and eliminate future threats from Hamas, the Biden administration is breaking with one of America's most politically reliable and spiritually significant allies. The Biden administration has repeatedly called for pauses or ceasefires, which allows Hamas to regroup and resupply, even as American hostages have not been freed.

Most recently, the Biden administration reversed the policy of the Trump administration that recognized Israel had a right to build in the biblical areas of Samaria and Judea, misleadingly called the West Bank. President Biden has gone so far as to sanction Israelis living in these areas while giving billions of dollars to organizations like the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), which has been directly linked to Hamas and the October 7 terrorist attack.

Friends, I believe America's support for and stand with Israel has resulted in God extending grace to America despite our accelerating departure from His truth over the last half-century. America's future is inextricably intertwined with Israel's.

When we look at and consider these challenges, we don't do so as people who have no hope of overcoming—to the contrary. Jesus, in the parable about the unjust judge, which is an appropriate analogy as we consider our relationship to our government, said men should always pray and not lose heart or hope.

Jesus was not laying out a prescription to simply feel good. This call to prayer was a prescription for change.

Let me give you just a few facts about the change God has brought forth in our nation because Christians didn't give up hope but instead continued to pray, vote, and stand for biblical truth.

On June 24, 2022, after 49 years of prayerful, disciplined, and often ridiculed political engagement, *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, putting the ability to protect women and children into the hands of their elected representatives rather than unelected judges.

Here is something I am sure you've yet to hear from the legacy media. We have more Bible-believing Christians in Congress, in state legislatures, on city councils, and serving on school boards than at any time in modern history. Look at the speaker of the House, Mike Johnson, a Christian, a conservative, a Republican. I know Speaker Johnson; he and I have been friends for over 25 years.

Look at the transformation of state legislatures across the country. In 1990, there were six GOP-controlled legislatures. Twenty-four years later, there are 28. And one result has been state pro-life laws have doubled since the Republican election wave of 2010.

We know that we will overcome. That is why we must continue to pray for our nation, that we will return to God and His truth. We need to vote. We need to both raise up and vote for leaders who have the qualities that Jethro laid out to Moses in Exodus 18, leaders who: 1) are able, they know what to do; 2) fear God; 3) are men of truth; and 4) are not looking to get rich; rather, they are seeking to serve.

Finally, we need to stand for truth, no matter who else is standing or not standing. And do so filled with the joy of the Lord. In John 15, as Jesus was warning His disciples of the challenges they would face for following Him, He said this: "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" [John 15:11].

And we do all of this in love. Paul instructs us in 1 Corinthians 16, to "watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love" [NKJV].

The state of faith, family, and freedom in America is being tested and tried to a degree that is almost unrivaled in our history. But our confidence and hope in the future has never been more

solid because we've seen the budding fruit of decades of prayer, of biblically guided participation in our republican form of government.

We must let it be known that we will not be intimidated into silence by a weaponized government, nor will we allow Marxist tactics that seek to marginalize the Christian faith to cause us to shrink back into the shadows of society. Why? Because of the hope that is within us and the victory that is before us, it leaves us more resolved than ever to pray, vote, and stand for biblical truth.