THE ADVOCATE

To the Editor

After much planning, on Tuesday March 10th, 2009 myself, a man in my church, and one of my sons, carrying large Scripture banners condemning sodomy, stood on the public servitude on a single road I-10 overpass during heavy morning traffic in Baton Rouge. For several hours, we stood right over the barely-moving-bumper-to-bumper traffic as literally tens-of-thousands passed slowly right under us. We could see the faces of those in the cars as they passed by–horns were honking, many were angry, some gave us a 'thumps-up', but everyone was captivated by our 'protest'. There is little doubt, every car saw and read those banners that morning. The police tried to move us, but we staunchly refused, citing we were on public property and were simply exercising our First Amendment rights. Realizing they had no legal leverage and that we would not be manipulated, they finally left us alone. Radio stations and TV crews descended on us requesting interviews, the phone lines on the talk shows lit up, articles ran in the papers, and video segments ran on the evening news. The entire city of Baton Rouge went into an uproar. Many were simply upset because they were late for work, others falsely criticized us for creating an 'unsafe traffic event', and still others accused us of spreading a message of 'hate'. The day couldn't have gone better! The following 'Letter to the Editor' was written to answer the criticism and place all the public uproar into context…

In the aftermath of our '*protest*' on Tuesday, March 10th, the general public's reaction exposes two sobering facts about today's society:

1. *Americans*, in general, are far more concerned about convenience than God's Word. This is the root cause of why there is a moral crisis that threatens the very fiber of our culture. This is why we elect public officials who have little or no integrity and who throw ol' fashioned Bible morality to the philosophical curb. This is why we can't decide whether we are little *boys* or little *girls*. And this is why we are debating whether it's progressive to redefine marriage and allow men to marry men and women to marry women. God hates our sin and spiritual apathy and He wants someone to warn our society of His judgment against such misplaced priorities. Hence, we obviously felt that our message (*which few are willing to communicate*) was far more important than convenience. Many are going to hell (*Matt 7:13-14*). For us, this demands urgent action. Safety, on the other hand, is the obligation and duty of those operating the vehicles. If *Baton Rougeans* are going to place the responsibility for road safety on us (*or anyone exercising their first amendment rights*), then likewise, it must make *Lamar Advertising* (*a Baton Rouge Billboard advertising company*) and the businesses that use their array of billboards, responsible on a day-to-day basis. Be equal.

2. Likewise, *Americans* are ignorantly and blindly willing to sacrifice their rights, in this case their *First Amendment rights*, for the sake of comfort and conventional wisdom. Even if *Baton Rougeans* don't agree with our message, they should consider the deeper constitutional implications of their complaints. Think about it, what really happened *Tuesday, March 10th*? We, three American citizens, peacefully hoisting large banners on public property so as to communicate a message we felt was important (*the Bible*). Amazingly, the entire city of *Baton Rouge* went into an uproar. We broke no laws. We did something uniquely and traditionally *American*. However, for the

most part, our actions have been roundly condemned on the ground of causing a traffic nuisance. I suggest *Baton Rougeans* think long and hard about the importance of the freedom of speech before criticizing our right to exercise this most basic of *American* privileges.

Finally, it is not only ignorant, but dangerous to our civil liberty, when citizens refer to the free exchange of ideas/philosophies as *'hate'* and *'fear'*. Quite the contrary, I would suggest that it's when we detest our most sacred opinions and traditions being vigorously challenged, perhaps it is *us* who are guilty of *'hate'* and *'fear'*. Speech that does not confront, unsettle, and disturb the status quo needs no civil protection. On the other hand, speech, especially speech that is considered provocative, should be protected with the utmost vigilance; not so much because we agree with its content, but because we understand and value the principles of liberty its free expression represents. If we cannot comprehend this, we have lost the most fundamental concept of the *American* spirit.

--B.W.