

**Worship Services: Saturdays 10:00 a.m.**  
**at The First Christian Church**  
**17003 Clark Avenue**  
**Bellflower, CA 90706-5721be**  
**gcibellflower.org**  
**Larry Dietrich, Senior Pastor**

# Pastor's LETTER

**SHARING THE JOY OF LIVING IN THE GRACE OF JESUS**

**JULY 2015**

Greetings to You All,

Each year on July 4 in the United States, our country celebrates the freedoms we enjoy as a nation. And as we celebrate, we typically honor the men and women of our armed forces, who have played a large roll in ensuring our country remains “free” – free to live lives with choices. Among these choices is freedom to worship as we please. Sadly, this is not the case in much of our world.

Recently, I was looking at the Plain Truth Ministries website, and saw that Pastor Greg Albrecht had posted an interesting letter about a completely different type of slavery, or bondage, that afflicts literally millions even in our enlightened 21<sup>st</sup> century. I’d like to share what he had to say:

“The majority of the world today lives under some form of religious oppression. Even now, thousands are being imprisoned, tortured or put to death for their faith. Outright persecution is one form of religious oppression, and Christians have received more than their share. In the 20th century alone, it is estimated that 45 million people died for their Christian faith.

But a far more insidious form of religious oppression plagues millions of people. Much of the hatred, terrorism and bloodshed in this sin-sick world is the product of religious oppression.

Christians would readily agree that other religions such as Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and the myriad forms of animism keep their adherents enslaved and grovelling, performing various rituals and requirements to please false gods—or vainly striving to attain an unattainable state of spiritual perfection or enlightenment.

Christians are free from all this—aren’t we? After all, if Christianity didn’t offer greater freedom than other religions, why would we choose to be Christian? But the sad fact is—many Christians are not free.

### **Religious Slavery**

Millions of Christians live under the mistaken belief that their observance of religious rituals, regulations, rules, restrictions and routines will somehow make God more pleased with them. They may be part of groups and churches that call themselves Christian, while promoting religious observance and legalism instead of the freedom of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Often, these people are unaware that they are living under a burden. Until someone begins to lift the weight from their shoulders, they don’t know what a heavy load they’ve been carrying all their lives.”

Not only this month, but every day and every month, let us be truly thankful for the precious, glorious freedom we enjoy, not only in this nation, but also in Jesus Christ!

Larry