

Inconvenient Faith

Scripture reading: II Timothy 3:1-17

- I. Imagine a day when we could not meet here openly, we could not have a Bible, we could not openly profess or live by our beliefs. It is easy to be a Christian when it is socially acceptable and even helpful. But what happens when it costs us?

- II. Rising opposition to biblical Christianity
 - a. Examples from around the world
 - i. 55,000 Christians around the world are killed annually for religious reasons (German Evangelical Alliance)
 - ii. Articles
 - iii. Rising threat of Islam. Most severe persecution in Muslim countries. Some sources suggest Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world.
 - b. UK court case (“High Court Finds Christian Parents Unsuitable” (Parentalrights.org))
 - c. United States. You may say, it is nothing new; that is true. You may say, well, persecution is only occurring in other countries, we live in a “Christian” nation.
 - i. Comparison to founding
 1. *It is the duty of all men in society, publicly, and at stated seasons, to worship the SUPREME BEING, the great Creator and Preserver of the universe. And no subject shall be hurt, molested, or restrained, in his person, liberty, or estate, for worshipping GOD in the manner most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience; or for his religious profession or sentiments; provided he doth not disturb the public peace, or obstruct others in their religious worship.* -- John Adams (2nd President), Thoughts on Government, 1776
 2. *Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor...* -- George Washington, Thanksgiving Proclamation (1789)
 - ii. Increased hostility towards Christianity
 1. “Third Wave of Homeschool Persecution” article (HSLDA)
 2. “Court Uphold Expulsion of Counseling Student Who Opposes Homosexuality” article (FoxNews)
 3. Homosexuality in the military, changing DADT policy, sensitivity training
 4. Conscience Laws

5. Prayer banned from public schools
6. Public religious displays ordered taken down
7. *Persecution: How Liberals are Waging War Against Christians*, by David Limbaugh

d. Persecution is certainly nothing new, but we have been very fortunate to this point to live in a country where Christianity is tolerated and even promoted. That is changing. While many of these changes have been occurring for many years, they occurred against a backdrop of strong pro-Christian sentiment. Now there is a growing anti-Christian sentiment. Persecution of Christians is coming to America.

III. Kinds of persecution

- a. Blatant. In the Church History class we have seen many examples of this. Around the world this kind of persecution still occurs. It is comfortable to think this kind of persecution couldn't happen in the U.S., but our safety could evaporate in a moment.
 - i. Murder
 - ii. Torture
 - iii. Confiscation of property
 - iv. Denial of rights
- b. "Soft"
 - i. Social pressure (Don't be so rigid and intolerant)
 - ii. "Choices" (don't make things hard on yourself; be reasonable)
 - iii. "Gagging" (you can believe whatever you want—just don't act on it)
 - iv. False doctrine (historical example of Catholic church, Colossians 2:8).
Consequences can be just as bad as above, but attack on our faith is more subtle

IV. Our response

- a. Important to understand where we fit dispensationally. We are not in the last days prophesied in the Old Testament and at the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17-20). We are not appointed to wrath (God's judgment) (I Thessalonians 5:9).
- b. Persecution has always been the companion of those who follow God
 - i. Elijah (I Kings 19:1-10)
 - ii. Daniel (Daniel 6:1-10)
 - iii. All the prophets persecuted (Acts 7:51-52 (cf I Thessalonians 2:14-15))
 - iv. Apostle Paul (II Timothy 2:9)
 - v. Many others
- c. We are told to expect persecution

- i. All those who live godly will suffer persecution (Philippians 1:28-29, I Thessalonians 3:3-4, II Timothy 3:12). In fact, Paul describes the Christian life as warfare (Ephesians 6:12, I Timothy 1:18)
 - ii. Last days (II Timothy 3:1-5, 13, 4:3-5)
- d. Understand what persecution is. It is Satan's attack on Body of Christ and God's plan (Ephesians 6:12). Satan will do anything he can to thwart God's plan (II Corinthians 2:11, Ephesians 6:11, I Timothy 3:6-7, I Peter 5:8). He wants to neutralize us. (By the way, it's easy to avoid persecution. If we take the route of expediency, don't act any different than the world we probably won't have any problem. Being conformed to the world will generally avoid trouble.)
- e. Be glad for persecution!
 - i. We benefit (Romans 5:3, 8:17, II Corinthians 4:17, II Timothy 2:12)
 - ii. It is an honor to suffer for Christ (Acts 5:41, 20:22-24, 21:11-13, Colossians 1:24, II Thessalonians 1:4-5)
- f. Stand fast
 - i. We are greatly affected by what society expects us to do, but we should have a spiritual perspective not an earthly one (Colossians 3:1-4). We are not to be conformed to this world (Romans 12:1-2)
 - ii. We are instructed to not fear persecution (Romans 8:35-39, (also Colossians) II Timothy 1:7)
 - iii. We are instructed to not be ashamed (II Timothy 1:8, 12)
 - iv. We are to hold fast to sound doctrine ((Ephesians 4:14), II Timothy 1:13-14)
 - v. We should stand fast whether or not it is popular (II Timothy 4:2-5)