

Preparing for Persecution

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I excerpted the quoted material below from my MS for the 17th Annual Denton Lectures (1998), conducted by the old Pearl St. church here in Denton. Please keep this date in mind as you read:

In America the heinous philosophies of Hedonism, Humanism, Atheism, and Liberalism (political, theological, and moral) and the climate for persecution of the opposing force of Christianity (in the broadest sense) have increased in parallels in the final quarter of the twentieth century. It seems likely that these trials and tests to our faith will only accelerate as increasingly godless voters elect more and more godless officials after their own kind, who will pass increasingly anti-Christian legislation and appoint additional anti-Christian judges. While there is already some real persecution of the Lord's people in America, except for occasional isolated incidents, it is not violent, and it is at present perpetrated largely only by God-hating individuals rather than as a matter of government policy.

However, if the new paganism embodied in the philosophies of the New Age and Postmodern movements – and fueled by the aforementioned forces – continues to gain ascendancy, the young generation of saints may well live to see calculated, legislated, government-sponsored, violent testing of their faith as in bygone ages. There are already some government regulations in place that have been applied by some judges so as to limit the discussion of the Gospel with one's co-workers on the job and to proscribe private religious meetings in homes.

The restrictions in public schools pertaining to anything related to the Bible are well-known (although witchcraft, pagan mysticism, Islam, "Native American" religion, et al., ...have free expression). The so-called "politically correct" speech and thinking that have been forced upon practically every facet of our culture and society are almost altogether anti-Bible and anti-Christian. For the most part, the public education hierarchy, from preschool through university level, is under the control of radical, liberal extremists who despise rationality and exalt subjective "feelings." ...Their sources are the powerful, rabid Atheism and Liberalism already mentioned.

When it is more shameful in the minds of many to cry out against the abomination of homosexuality than to **commit the act**, the forecast of worse trouble for God's people is evident. When our fellow-citizens count it more reprehensible to **display posters showing the graphic results** of the abortion industry in protest of the practice than the murderous act itself, the signs are ominous for what may lie ahead. When a majority of our citizens appear to be more upset with the prosecutor who exposes the corruption and crimes of a morally bankrupt president than with **the president's pornographic and criminal behavior**, the precarious position of Biblical morals is manifest. It does not require the wisdom of Solomon to see that if the militant homosexual and feminist forces continue to gain power, younger Christians may well eventually face federal legislation ordering congregations to install them as preachers, elders, deacons, and teachers or else face crippling fines, seizure of property, and/or imprisonment.

The recent Supreme Court ruling redefining *marriage* may prove to be the catalyst leading to the persecution foreseen above. To in any way endorse dragging this institution – originated, ordained, and defined by God Almighty "from the beginning" (Mat. 19:3–6) – into

the sewer is territory into which we must not be willing to go. Paul could well have been describing what we presently face:

For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12).

The preparation for dealing with such opposing forces is the same now as it was then – equipping ourselves with the “whole armor of God” and arming ourselves with “the sword of Spirit, which is the Word of God” (vv. 10–11, 13–17).

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Lighthouse*, weekly bulletin of Northpoint Church of Christ, Denton, TX, July 19, 2015, of which I was editor.]

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