

Suffering for Jesus' Sake

Dub McClish

Faithfulness to Christ cannot be measured apart from willingness to suffer for His sake.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said:

Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you (Mat. 5:10-12).

Note that not all persecution brings blessing — only that which is for righteousness' sake, for the Lord's sake, and for dedication to God like the prophets of old had. Too few Christians are willing to undergo even any inconvenience or opposition, much less real suffering, regardless of how much they may have to compromise Truth and righteousness. Lamentably, many of our elders and preachers are among this number.

Call not those elders "faithful" who care more about a few doctrinally soft brethren and their money than they do about sound doctrine and the man who is determined to preach it. Elders who are more concerned about losing a few weak and worldly members than they are about feeding the church sound spiritual food are unfaithful to their charge. Faithful elders will suffer whatever is necessary to be loyal to Christ and His Word.

Are those preachers faithful who withhold part of the Truth to keep their positions? It often takes only a handful of loudmouthed, half-converted members (invariably the loudest) in almost any congregation to undermine the good work of a godly evangelist and uproot him and his family. It takes a special kind of courage to declare "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) in such circumstances, but those who fail to do it don't deserve to be called "faithful."

For several years now many of the wrong preachers have been/are being fired, hired, and retained. When I was a young preacher, it was almost always the weak, shallow, soft, liberal pulpiteer who would be sent on his way as soon as he was exposed. Now, these spiritual sissies are not only the ones being tolerated, kept, and encouraged; their services are eagerly sought. At the same time, men who are determined to "preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2) without fear or favor (as did the Lord and His apostles) are not desired — or even tolerated. The number

of congregations seeking such faithful proclaimers is steadily decreasing — a sad commentary on the spiritual condition of the church.

Were John the immerser, Stephen, Paul, yea even the Christ now on earth, they would not long be tolerated in many of our pulpits. Personal consequences or dangers must not detract or deter faithful men from speaking “as the oracles of God.”

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Lighthouse*, weekly bulletin of Northpoint Church of Christ, Denton, TX, March 28, 2010, of which I was editor.]

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