

A Sermon

**PREACHED 17 YEARS
AGO**

Introduction

- This sermon addresses something we do not like to think or talk about.
- **Persecution** is something Christians are promised to face – Mk. 10:29-30; Jn. 15:18-20; 2 Tim. 3:12
- Persecution is something many N.T. Christians did face (see Acts and also secular history).
- We must remain faithful despite what we might face – Lk. 14:26; Rev. 2:8-10

“Quotes”

Shocking...disconcerting...telling

Humanists

- “...In the best sense, religion may inspire dedication to the highest ethical ideals. The cultivation of moral devotion and creative imagination is an expression of genuine ‘spiritual’ experience and aspiration. We believe, however, that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species. Any account of nature should pass the tests of scientific evidence; in our judgment, the dogmas and myths of traditional religions do not do so.”
(Humanist Manifesto II, **Humanist Manifestos I And II**, p. 16)

Humanists

- “...In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized. While we do not approve of exploitive, denigrating forms of sexual expression, neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behavior between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered ‘evil.’ Without countenancing mindless permissiveness or unbridled promiscuity, a civilized society should be a tolerant one. Short of harming others or compelling them to do likewise, individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their life-styles as they desire.” (“Humanist Manifesto II,” **Humanist Manifestos I And II**, p. 18)

Feminists: God

- Gloria Steinem [editor of **Ms Magazine**]: “By the year 2000 we will, I hope, raise our children to believe in human potential, not God.” (Saturday Review of Education, March 1973, via Beverly LeHaye, Do These Women Speak For You?, p. 2)
- Naomi R. Goldberg: “Judaism and Christianity have never been challenged to the extent that they will be in the next decades. The images of Christ and Jehovah will be questioned because of the very basic quality of maleness. All of the roles men and women have been taught to consider as God-given will be re-evaluated.” (Changing Of The Gods: Feminism And The End Of Traditional Religions, n.p., quoted in Allan Turner, “The Battle Of The Sexes,” *The Bulletin*, Aug. 6, 1989, 26:32:1)

Feminists: God

- Naomi R. Goldberg: “God is going to change...We women are going to bring an end to God. As we take positions in government, in medicine, in law, in business, in the arts and, finally, in religion we will be the end of Him. We will change the world so much that He won’t fit in anymore.” (Changing Of The Gods: Feminism And The End Of Traditional Religions, p. 3, quoted in Allan Turner, “The Battle Of The Sexes,” *The Bulletin*, Aug. 6, 1989, 26:32:1)

Feminists: Marriage

- “Marriage has existed for the benefit of men and has been a legally sanctioned method of control over women...we must work to destroy it. The end of the institution of marriage is a necessary condition for the liberation of women. Therefore, it is important for us to encourage women to leave their husbands and not to live individually with men.” (The Document: Declaration of Feminism, p. 10-11, via Beverly LaHaye, *Do These Women Speak For You?*, p. 3)
- Vivian Gornick: “Being a housewife is an illegitimate profession...the choice to serve and be protected and plan towards being a family-maker is a choice that shouldn’t be. The heart of radical feminism is to change that.” (*The Daily Illini*, April 25, 1981, quoted in *Do These Women Speak For You?*, p. 2)

Feminists: Marriage

- Dr. Mary Jo Bane: “What happens to children depends not only on what happens in the homes, but what happens in the outside world. We really don’t know how to raise children. If we want to talk about equality of opportunity for children, then the fact that children are raised in families means there’s no equality. It’s a dilemma. In order to raise children with equality, we must take them away from families and communally raise them.” (As quoted by Dolores Barclay, *Tulsa World*, Aug. 21, 1977, quoted in *Do These Women Speak For You?*, p.2)

Feminists: Sexuality

- “Heterosexual relationships are by their very nature oppressive to women in a male dominated society.” (The Document: Declaration of Feminism, published by The National Organization for Women, quoted in Jack Holt, “Radical Feminism,” *Preceptor*, Feb. 1993, p. 50)
- “Women should be free to choose “heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, or asexuality without embarrassment” (Ibid, p. 8)

Does This Sound Familiar?

- In 30-40 years, so many things have changed!
- Does society now look to God as authoritative in matters of morality and sexuality?
- Has the idea of a homemaker become more acceptable?
- Has the institution of marriage grown in strength?
- Homosexual couples can “marry” and adopt children.
- When I was a child you didn’t even *talk* about fornication!

Homosexuals

- “[Christianity], by its moral teaching on the intrinsic evil of homosexuality...is a conspirator in the violence-perpetrated against gay men and lesbian women who are senselessly discriminated against within the public sector.” (Report of the Task Force on Gay/Lesbian Issues, Commission on Social Justice, Archdiocese of San Francisco, quoted in Allan Turner, “Homophobia: Is It A Sin?,” *The Bulletin*, Mar. 11, 1990, 27:10)
- Michael Swift [Well-known militant gay activist]: “All laws banning homosexual activity will be revoked. All churches who condemn us will be closed. Our only gods are handsome young men.” (Quoted in Gary Patton, “Bill Challenges God’s Law,” *The East Florence Contender*, Nov. 1992, 36:11:4)

Homosexuals

- Jean Grossholtz: “Our lesbian fight is against heterosexuality and what it embodies which is male dominance and female subordination. Heterosexuality is the expression of patriarchy. The institution and structures that have been built up around the norm of the nuclear family and the privatization of our common lives have stifled women and children, [and] have made men into monsters” (“Lesbians and the Mainstream media,” *Off Our Backs*, Jan. 1993, p. 23, quoted in “Feminist Follies,” *Family Voice*, June 1993:15:6:33)

The Media: Christianity

- James Dobson: “It is politically incorrect to mock African-Americans, Native-Americans, Hispanics, Moslems, Jews, women, Asians, homosexuals, lesbians, the disabled, the aged, or the mentally handicapped. That is as it should be, for all human beings deserve respect. But why is it that Christians can be depicted in movies stereotypically as weird, hanky-waving freaks who run around saying ‘Praise the Lord’ while exploiting the poor and cheating the rich? No other minority in the world would have to tolerate such abuse.” (James Dobson, *Focus on the Family*, June 1992, p. 4)
- How often does the media shed any sort of positive light on those who are God fearing, moral people, who truly stand for what the Bible teaches?

The Federal Government

- The U.S. Supreme Court has used the Constitution's "separation of church and state" to promote/create a totally secular government and society.
- The current administration took a church to court in the *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission* case in an attempt to allow the government to dictate who churches hire as ministers or "clergy."
- This administration has pushed legalization of homosexual marriage, as well as an overall push to support homosexuality.

Educators

- John Dewey [the father of American education]: “Our thinking is enlightened in the degree in which we cease to depend upon belief in the supernatural.” (A Common Faith, via Allan Turner, “Independence Part 2,” *The Wendell Avenue Bulletin*, Feb. 20, 1983, 20:8)
- Dewey (1859-1952) was one of the signers of the Humanist Manifesto I.
- 33 of the 58 original signers of the “Secular Humanist Declaration” were educators.

Educators

- John Dunphy – “A Religion for the New Age,” **Humanist Magazine**:
- “I am convinced that the battle for humankind’s future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselytizers of a new faith: a religion of humanity that recognizes and respects the spark of what theologians call divinity in every human being.”

Educators

- Dunphy: “These teachers must embody the same selfless dedication as the most rabid fundamentalist preachers, for they will be ministers of another sort, utilizing a classroom instead of a pulpit to convey humanist values in whatever subject they teach, regardless of the educational level—pre-school, day care, or large state university. The classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and the new—the rotting corpse of Christianity, together with all its adjacent evils and misery, and the new faith of humanism, resplendent in its promise of a world in which the never-realized Christian ideal of ‘love thy neighbor’ will finally be achieved.”

Educators

- Dunphy: “Then perhaps, we will be able to say with Tom Paine that ‘the world is my country, all humankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion.’ It will undoubtedly be a long, arduous, painful struggle replete with much sorrow and many tears, but humanism will emerge triumphant. It must if the family of mankind is to survive.” (‘A Religion for The New Age,’ Humanist Magazine, Jan/Feb 1983, via Eugene Britnell, “Back To School—To What?,” *The Sower*, Sept. 1983, 28:9:2).

Observations: 17 Years Ago...

- “I know that the statements I read just a few moments ago do not represent the majority of the people in our country...or the majority of women...or the majority of educators...or perhaps even the majority of homosexuals...But these very vocal minorities are powerful and influential in our society today...in the movie industry...in the TV industry...and in the Government.”
- What do you think of the truth of this statement judging by today’s standard?

Observations: Now & Then

- Is it so “far-fetched” to think that Christians in this country could experience real persecution?
- If we keep electing the “politically correct,” will the High Court continue to support religious freedom?
- Consider more observations made 17 years ago:
 - “If feminism and homosexuality become generally accepted throughout our society—what will happen to those churches that continue to stand up for what is right?”
 - “When more and more mainline denominations “cave-in” to the pressure of the feminists and the homosexuals—what will happen to those churches that refuse to give in to the pressure and the rising tide of public opinion?”

A Few Thought-Provoking Questions

How will you fare?

- Bible study, what if they take our bibles or make them illegal?
- Talking to others about Christ, what if we are legally forbidden? – Acts 4:15-21
- Standing up for moral purity now, what if we are jailed, beaten, or tortured for doing this? – Acts 7: 12:1-2
- Attending services faithfully, what if we must meet in secret? – Heb. 11:38

Questions:

**If You
Struggle
Now With...**

- Common sense tells you the answer to each question!
- God provides the answer as well – Jer. 12:5
 - NKJV: “If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses? And *if* in the land of peace, *In which* you trusted, *they wearied you*, Then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?”
 - NASB: “If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, then how can you compete with horses? If you fall down in a land of peace, how will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?”

Answers:

**Jeremiah
12:5**

- Jeremiah was being threatened and was scared – Jer. 11:21
- Jehovah – “If you are having trouble now, what will happen when it gets really tough?”
- And, it did get tough for Jeremiah!
- So, how faithful you are **today** in this climate will indicate whether you can or cannot withstand a much more difficult climate in the **future**.

The Point?

Jeremiah
12:5

- No matter what we face in life, the fight and the sacrifice will be worth the prize – Rom. 8:33-39; Rev. 2:10
- You can help assure your future faithfulness by standing strong today.
- We must be like David who proved himself worthy to fight Goliath by trusting God in previous fights with bears and lions – 1 Sam. 12:32-37
- Consistent victory in “small” battles today help insure victory in the “big battles” in the future!

The Positive Side

Conclusion

- Do not forget Jeremiah 12:5; it asks questions we all must answer!
- I know this is a difficult lesson and some may suppose they will never be strong.
- Remember:
 - You cannot give up.
 - In the N.T. people obeyed the gospel knowing the real treat of serious persecution.
 - The apostles fled at Jesus' arrest, but later grew strong and were willing to die for their faith!
 - You can stand strong too!