

SUFFERING FOR JESUS' SAKE

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 living like the prophets of old. 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 doctrine 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? Every preacher knows that it often takes only a handful of loudmouthed, unconverted members (invariably the loudest) in almost any congregation to undermine his work and uproot his family. It takes a special

kind of courage to declare "the whole counsel of God" in such circumstances, but call not those "faithful" who fail to do it. Currently, many of the wrong preachers are being fired, hired, and retained. When I was a young preacher, it was, for the most part, 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 actually being sought. At the same time, men who are determined to preach all of the Truth without fear or favor (as did the Lord and His apostles) are not desired and are being fired in many places because they dared preach the word faithfully. The number of congregations seeking such faithful proclaimers is steadily decreasing—as sad commentary on the spiritual condition of the church.

Were Christ and Paul now on earth, they would not long be tolerated in many of our pulpits. Personal consequences or dangers do not detract or deter faithful men from speaking "as the oracles of God."

—Dub McClish

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