



June 20, 2010

*Subtle Persecutions*

It's no secret that the culture around us is in a race to adopt every attitude that God condemns and is doing so in the name of goodness. Social and political correctness as well as public image, and now online reputations, are being shaped by the prevailing ideas of tolerance and acceptance of practices that have destroyed nations throughout history. As that takes place, living as a Christian becomes more of a challenge. We think sometimes of the Christians in the early days of the church who were imprisoned and murdered for what they believed. We may view ourselves as lacking when it comes to comparing ourselves to them. We need to realize that the world of the first century and afterward when the persecutions were taking place is completely different from the world that we live in today. The persecutions that we face are more subtle at times but the real threat is in the fact that persecution today is continual. Social pressures and vocational limitations lure us to compromise. When it comes to making a living, our income may be directly affected by the fact that we are a Christian. Decisions must be made based on what we want our lives to tell others about us and reflects how serious we are about serving God. Paul states, "***Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.***" (2 Tim 3.12). In this country we may not be hauled away to jail but we may face other sanctions that affect our lives. Refusal to adopt certain attitudes can result in being passed over for job promotions or consideration for memberships in certain organizations. The general attitude of those around us is being shaped by the mass media. Television presents a number of scenarios each week that proposes changes in attitude toward homosexuality, marriage and religion in general. Some shows and movies portray religious minded individuals as disturbed or ignorant and present them as the misguided souls that have to learn the real lessons from life. Unfortunately there are a lot of folks who formulate opinions based on entertainment venues that have become a showcase for every social debate in the world. Christians however stand by what the scriptures teach and this leads to some very real problems. Peter speaks of this in his writing when he compares the mentality of the world to that of a Christian. "***For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.***" (1 Pet 4.3-5). Company sponsored recreational activities are also a way that businesses promote themselves and their public image to the world. Many times these are scheduled at times and places that would take a Christian away from where we need to be and so we limit our activities. Christians, viewed as lacking in social skills, not team players and perceived as having outdated attitudes and ideas, are shunned and eventually may lose positions. Unfortunately some Christians have compromised their attitudes and engaged in social activities including drinking in order to fit in or help their businesses grow. This story is as old as the world itself and what Christians need to keep in mind is that being a follower of the Lord does not reflect an outdated attitude. Following the whims of the world is much older and far more outdated and destructive. People of the world do not realize that the way some things are done are not necessary. We could do just as well without the amenities the world thinks are necessary. Of course folks such as myself who write articles of this nature are putting our attitudes out in the open which invites opposition. Christians sometimes remain silent when it comes to speaking up because we don't want to be seen as argumentative or archaic. Dealing with these subtle influences also limits the friendships that we could have with those who are not Christians. But, we have God as our friend.

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