

Persevering Through Persecution

Living Your Faith in a Faithless Culture

Steven Garofalo / https://twitter.com/Steve_Garofalo / August 5, 2015

“The world awoke in shock as the breadbasket of Western Christian Civilization redefined marriage contrary to Scripture and Christian morality. The Scripture that immediately came to mind was 2 Timothy 3:1-4. “But understand this that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.” 2 Timothy 3:1-4.

We can be assured, there will be no accommodation between gay rights activists and Christians seeking religious freedom desiring to opt out of the gay rights movement. While Gay rights activists demand tolerance for their views and lifestyle, they simultaneously deny tolerance for those who disagree with them. This is a difficult position for the Christian who is called to love the sinner but hate the sin. The active phrase *Cum dilectione hominum et odio vitiorum*, which translates roughly to “With love for mankind and hatred of sins”, was penned by St. Augustine in his Letter 211: (C. 424).¹ I think that a better way to look at truth and evangelizing our world might be for us to learn to be apologetically equipped to share the love of Jesus Christ with our homosexual friends, and to allow the Holy Spirit to convict their hearts as to what is morally right and morally wrong. I am not suggesting that we avoid speaking the truth about Scripture, but that we focus on the gospel and allow our friends of different thought to come to us with the hard questions. I was at the YMCA earlier this summer when a man I have known for a number of years asked me my opinion on Christian morality in relation to marriage. When I provided my perspective, he attacked me. I explained to him nicely and calmly that it was he who asked me the question. I then asked him, “Why are you attacking me for answering a question that you asked?” He caught himself in that it was he who interrupted my workout to ask me a moral question, not the contrary.

The Holy Spirit does not agree with the relative belief that moral judgements can be rendered “*Right for You, But Not For Me*”. I pray for my friend daily-that the Lord would work in his heart to see the truth in Scripture. John F. Kennedy said, “Tolerance implies no lack of commitment to one’s own beliefs. Rather it condemns the oppression or persecution of others.”²

There is an Argument from Tolerance which asserts that we ought to be tolerant of those with whom we disagree. The argument asserts that we ought not to think that our morals, culture, or even our country’s values as morally superior than any other because morality and values are

¹ <http://www.catholic.com/quickquestions/who-said-love-the-sinner-hate-the-sin>

² http://www.jfklink.com/speeches/joint/app24_christiansandjews.html

relative. The problem with the argument from tolerance, outside of the fact that it is untrue, is that it is mainly applied to Christians and almost never applied to any other people groups.³ Notice how those who proclaim moral relativism deny moral absolutes in one breath, and then assume them in the next-when they make their own moral assertions. All of this begs the question, *how do we begin to prepare to live and share our faith in a world opposed to the gospel-a world looking to persecute us?*

I recommend that we not only accept but embrace the following truths with boldness in standing up for the Truth in love. We have the Holy Spirit on our side and it is by no accident that each one of us reading this article was born for *this time* in history (Esther 4:14).

First, we need to awaken to the fact that we now live in a world very different from that of our parents and grandparents. If we cling to the past, we will be depressed. If we live too focused future (good times yet to come), we miss what God has for us in the present. We can focus on today, for tomorrow will worry about itself (Matt.6:34). Furthermore, God is “I AM” (Exodus 3:14) meaning that He has no past or future tense, but as an eternity of presence. In other words, in order to be closest to God, we must live each day focused on seeking what the Lord has for us this day in the present; avoiding the trap of looking to the good old days or better times yet to come. Second, we can expect to be exposed by neighbors, co-workers, and perhaps the government for our faith in Jesus Christ. Remember that in all of this, that the Lord will provide for us and bless us. “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promise to those who love him” James 1:12. God comforts us in our troubles (2 Corinthians 1:4). Third, the deeper the pain inflicted upon us, the more that we rely upon God. Dr. Norman Geisler would say to us in seminary, “Christians are like tea-the hotter the water, the best flavors come out.” Let me add to Dr. Geisler’s sentiment in that when the best flavors come out-God is able and ready to bring revival. Revival may not be devoid of persecution, but revival is beginning to brew in America and around the world. We hear stories of 25,000 people coming to Christ daily in China and we are encouraged about what the Lord has in store for us as believers. Revival is God’s work, and our God hasn’t lost a bit of his might, power, justice, love or ability fulfill his will-which He ordained from eternity.

It is through intolerance and persecution that God will move us into deeper spiritual waters and greater mission as Christians in the 21st Century. I hope you will embrace perseverance through persecution, and be prepared to be used by God in ways we have not experienced in our life time.

If you are interested in having Steven Garofalo speak further on the subject of preparing for perseverance in persecution, please send an email to www.Info@ReasonForTruth.Org. For more on Moral Relativism, you can order Steven Garofalo’s book, “Right For You, But Not For Me-A Response To Moral Relativism” at <http://reasonfortruth.org/#/seminars/order-book> or on Amazon.

³ Steven Garofalo, *Right For You, But Not For Me: A Response To Moral Relativism*, (Charlotte, NC: Triedstone Publishing Company, 2013), 258.