

33 Perry's Scope 10 The War on Christians

Ironically, Christians established America to incorporate God and His word into the country's life from the White House to the farmhouse but look where we are today. Christian tolerance, like the Hebrews' tolerance of pagans in the Promised Land, has come back to bite us. Pilgrims and others came to America to practice their religion openly. As a result, America was an exceptional nation for two centuries, not that we were better than other countries, we were the exception to the rule. In most cases, unbelievers persecute Christians for their faith, but we once rewarded Christians' faith in America. Now, there is a war against Christians.

You may have heard of **Jacob Kersey**, the nineteen-year-old Georgia police officer who resigned after his superiors suspended him for a Facebook post in which he expressed his religious belief in support of biblical, traditional marriage. His supervisors not only challenged his religious rights, but they also challenged his unalienable right to free speech. Social media is not the only place where censorship thrives. Certain areas of employment shut down their employees and threaten their livelihoods. Believe it or not, this is not limited to the secular world. Church leaders are not above censoring their staff and threatening their jobs. Too many preachers know this firsthand.

Kersey's bosses gave him the courtesy of a meeting but raked him over the coals for expressing his point of view. His superiors (only in rank) told him that outwardly supporting traditional marriage was equivalent to using the "N" word as a slur against blacks or using the "F" word towards homosexuals.

Marxists are ungodly people who adhere to a satanic philosophy and have infiltrated our society on many levels. These are among the groups decrying the police and demanding officials defund them. If you can't defund them, you must find ways to defeat and remove them. Sadly, the devil did go down to Georgia, and they were successful.

As I said, the Marxist attacks on American Christians don't stop with the secular invasion. Marxists have infiltrated churches vicariously through the pastoral students of leftist professors in our seminaries and Bible colleges. When the COVID scare was in full force, a seminary in Kentucky developed a COVID Covenant for its faculty, staff, and students. Most of the covenant was acceptable, but it included a statement that they would obey EVERYTHING the government said. What happened to the biblical concept that we "obey God rather than men?" Even churches and church institutions are at war with Christians.

As a churchman of forty-five-plus years, I am disturbed by how far the church has fallen since I began Ministry almost five decades ago. When I study American history and see the church's role in our independence effort, I am shocked at the contrast between our forefathers and us. Our ancestors were courageous, whereas our contemporaries were cowardly, controlled by fear, not faith. The bygone clergy and lay leaders would not have closed their churches or tolerated government interference. They would have stood against such violations, as did the Minutemen in the shadow of the Lexington church house.

This new American war on Christianity may benefit Christians in the long run. For years, Christians have been conforming to culture rather than transforming it. Look at how our worship services have morphed into religious entertainment. Rather than focusing on God as our audience of one and His preferences, we keep an eye on the crowd and how we can keep them engaged through entertaining methods. Let's get back to God at the core, not us. Let me give you an example.

Several years ago, I attended a prayer conference in Tampa, FL. The conference leaders encouraged us to participate in the host church's midweek prayer meeting. I have always been interested in prayer and prayer meetings but have rarely attended one with which I connected. I went to observe and bring ideas home to my church. The worship team played loud rock-n-roll Christian music as the prayer meeting began, and I

watched the audience sit in boredom. Some prayer leaders addressed the audience instead of God by shouting prayers at us. I stayed in the service until they cranked up the fog machine, and I left. Enough was enough. If they had a growing prayer meeting, it was not because of the presence of God but the entertainment factor.

Leonard Ravenhill (1907-1994) used to say that entertainment is the devil's substitute for joy, and he was right. There is no alternative to the joy of the Lord, but it does not come by worldly means; it comes from the presence of the Almighty in our personal and congregational lives.

Most churches are spiritually weak. They have forgotten passages like **Nehemiah 8:10** (NKJV) which contain thoughts like, "**Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.**" Instead of finding joy in the Lord, they look in all the wrong places.

The joy of the Lord is just that, having the presence of the Lord in our lives in a natural and meaningful way. Having the Lord is different from having the blessings of the Lord. Too often, we seek the Lord for what we can get from Him rather than the gift of having Him. We want eternal life (the alternative is not appealing), pleasure, comfort, security, and even liberty, so we seek the Lord and try to convince Him to serve us.

If we engage the Lord for who He is, we lose control of our lives and become dependent on Him. Yet, that is where the joy is, not in us and our whims. Jesus tells us in the beatitudes that we are happy when we empty ourselves and then fill our lives with God. In the same sermon on the mount, He said we are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and He would take care of our needs (**Matthew 6:33**). God is in the joy-producing business, but we must do it His way. Wait, there's more!

We tend to shy away from an all-out effort to know God because it requires energy and sacrifice. It is easier to be satisfied with spiritual scraps, entertain ourselves, and feel spiritual because we have fleeting moments of "warm fuzzies" in our hearts.

Ray Vander Laan is one of my favorite Bible teachers. He has studied the Hebraic roots of Christianity and is one of the world's leading experts on the subject. A few years ago, I attended one of his conferences and shall never forget his side comment on dedicating ourselves to God. He said he had sacrificed watching the NFL to devote more time to his studies. We might enjoy watching sports, but there is a more profound joy than superficial entertainment that Vander Laan and Ravenhill experienced. The joy of the Lord is eternal. The devil's substitute is momentary. Listen to **Romans 14:17** (NKJV):

¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit makes the kingdom out of the spiritual elements of righteousness, peace, and joy. We often downplay Spirit, but He plays a pivotal role in our inner being. When I converted to following Christ, people in my new church family told me about the Holy Spirit. They told me that we receive the Holy Spirit at baptism (**Acts 2:38**), but – wait for it – He doesn't do anything for us. He just lives inside us. My denomination had overreacted to the Charismatic Movement's emphasis on the Spirit. We denied the Spirit and created a new trinity, "Father, Son, and Holy Scriptures."

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is active in and through His people. HE produces HIS fruit in us according to **Galatians 5**. He aids our faith and guides us into the truth (**John 14:26**) as He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (**John 16:8**).

Jesus came into the world to save us (**1 Timothy 1:15**), to give us abundant life (**John 10:10**), and reveal the Father (**Matthew 11:27**). He intercedes so the Father will send the Holy Spirit to us (**John 14:15-17**). The Spirit is important to us on many levels that we may overlook if we are careless.

Jesus intends for us to fall in love with the Father because the Father loves us. Listen to Jesus' love language in **John 17:24-25** (NKJV):

²⁴“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. ²⁶And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

We want to spend time with the ones we love. Is that how you feel in regard to God? God wants us to entirely center on Him and love Him with our hearts (**Deuteronomy 6:4-5**). He wants us to return the same love He has for us. How much more could God do to show His love for us than to give us His Son? Paul nails the point in **Romans 5:8-10** (NKJV):

⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. ¹⁰For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

There is a war against Christians both from the secular world and our churches. John explains the reason for the war in **1 John 3:10-15** (NKJV):

¹⁰In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. ¹¹For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ¹²not as Cain *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. ¹³Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love *his* brother abides in death. ¹⁵Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

We expect the world to resist the gospel, but we do not expect church leaders to be anti-Christian. Their silence in the face of evil, censorship, and silencing of preachers who speak boldly against the culture's sins indicate opposition to the truth and compliance with the enemy.

We are in a time when we need the presence of God in each of our lives. Pray fervently that the Father will send His Spirit to indwell and aid us in the midst of opposition to the truth of God and spread of the gospel. Put on the whole armor of God and stand as Paul declares in **Ephesians 6:10-11**.

¹⁰Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

He went on to speak of the most potent weapon in our arsenal, prayer, in **verse 18**:

¹⁸praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—

Let's rely entirely on God as we resist the evil of our day and Keep The Light of His Presence Burning!