



"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" - Hebrews 6:19

Welcome! We're glad you are here!

Sunday - April 2, 2023

Polite Persecution

by Troy Spradlin

We are living in a time when it is becoming increasingly popular for Christians to be ridiculed on the public stage, without consequence. In the past, there was always a sense of respect for one's religious beliefs, even by those who weren't religious themselves. If you said anything negative about Christianity, or any religion for that matter, it was met with societal disapproval and considered to be "in bad taste." There was a mutual understanding that one of the major tenants, upon which America was founded, was religious freedom for all. No matter what your spiritual beliefs might be, you could live and practice your religion in peace within the United States. But now, no longer do the majority hold such respect for people of the Book. While it is still considered to be taboo to disparage or ridicule some religions - no one dare say anything about Muslims, Taoism, or Earth religions, etc - Christianity has become fair game for derision among many celebrities, main-stream media, the Twitterati, and other social media platforms.

An article in Time Magazine from 2016, titled, *Regular Christians Are No Longer Welcome in American Culture*, acknowledged this cultural shift. It said, "This new vigorous secularism has catapulted mockery of Christianity and other forms of religious traditionalism into the mainstream and set a new low for what counts as civil criticism of people's most-cherished beliefs." As a result, and according to many studies done by the Barna Group and Pew Research, Christians have become more fearful of expressing their beliefs, for fear of retaliation. This entire sentiment within the USA has been coined, "**Polite Persecution.**" That is an appropriate description of what is happening!



Let's be clear about one thing at this point, what we Christians are now experiencing in our country is by no means the same as what our brethren experienced in the first century. At that time (and there have been a few other periods since), they were subjected to physical harrassment, false imprisonment, and even the penalty of death for a myriad of senseless accusations and prejudices against their faith. Those of us currently living in the USA are not faced with such atrocious oppression - but we are rapidly heading in that direction! Even our first century brethren experienced "polite persecution" before full-on, wicked subjugation was imposed upon them.

What is a Christian to do?

First, we must acknowledge the warning our Lord and Savior gave to His disciples, "*If the people of this world hate you, just remember that they hated me first.*" (John 15:18 - CEV). We were never promised a trouble-free life when we became His disciple - just the opposite! In fact, Paul wrote, "*all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*" (2 Tim 3:12) We live in a dark and fallen world. Evil abounds in all forms. Thus, we are not immune to Satan's attacks and while he is still active in this world, the church will suffer persecution until the Lord returns.

Secondly, we must acknowledge that we are Christians first, then Americans. Our loyalty lay with our God and Father in heaven. While our physical bodies may be citizens of this earthly nation, our hearts and souls have their "citizenship in heaven" according to Philippians 3:20. This means that no matter what happens to or in the USA, our first priority is our allegiance to God. When Peter and the other apostles were threatened with persecution, they replied, "*We ought to obey God rather than men,*" and then later were, "*rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.*" (Acts 5:29,41) If our nation's leaders turn on us, we must be ready to stand firm in our faith!

Thirdly, we must preach the Gospel! (Matt 29:19-20) The simple good news of an extraordinary man has had a greater impact on this world than anyone or anything ever had before, currently does, or will have in the future. It has the power of God within its message (Rom 1:16) which is more than enough to completely transform the most evil of hearts. If we want to stop "polite persecution" in its tracks, then we must tell others about Jesus!

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YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRY



Upcoming Events / Info

April 2 – Workshop, Boys Presentations, & Puppet Presentations

April 6-9 – Convention in ATL



2023 Camp Dates

Teen Week (6-12 grades):
June 11 – 16

Jr. Week (1-5 grades):
June 25 – 29

Early Bird Registration
Deadline: April 15



Jr. Week Volunteers

Any parent or adult wishing to attend Junior Week as a Counselor, or High School student as a Junior Counselor, please see Casey to get your name on the list.

Junior Week is June 25 – 29.

There will be a preliminary staff meeting on April 30th @ the Spanish Fort church from 3 – 6 pm. Dinner will be provided.



YG BIRTHDAY NIGHT

Wed. April 12

5 pm in the FH



SNAC
SUNDAY NIGHT
AFTER CHURCH
April 16 | Spradlin's

Gulf Coast Area Wide @ Spanish Fort

April 23

Small Groups @ 3:30, Worship @ 4:30, Meal @ 5:30

Bus will depart @ 2:15 & return at 7:15



"How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes! With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word." - Psalm 119:9-1

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER LIST

- Caleb Owens
- Nick Webb
- Reed Wilson
- Lexi Wildes



SERVING WITH HONOR

SUNDAY, APRIL 2

MORNING

Opening Prayer Nick Bartell
 Song Director Mason Chandler
 Sermon Troy Spradlin
 "What is the Gospel?"
 Scripture Reading Parker Godwin
 Romans 1:9-16
 Closing Prayer Phillip Webb

Serving Communion:

Comments Joe King
 Brody Crider Luke McReynolds
 Dakota Boughton Gabriel Lee
 Trevor Bostwick

EVENING

Opening Prayer Josh Owens
 Singing L2L Presentation
 Scripture L2L Presentation
 TBA
 Comments Paul Lipford

Worship Service and Preparation:

Communion Prep Fisher family
 PowerPoint Lori Mense
 Greeters: John Pace
 Secure Building..... Joe King

WEDNESDAY EVENING

Song Director Elliot Wilson
 Opening Prayer Bob Locklin

WEEKLY ATTENDANCE REPORT:

Sunday Bible Class 155
 AM Worship 208
 PM Worship 69
 Wed. Night Bible Class 142
 Contribution\$9,524

TIMES OF SERVICES:

Sunday AM Bible Class 9:00 am
 Sunday AM Worship 10:00 am
 Sunday PM Classes, Worship ... 6:00 pm
 Wednesday PM Bible Class 6:30 pm

Visitors:

Thank you for coming!

You are our honored guest!

For more information about the church, spiritual topics, our classes, and activities, there is a tract rack at the entrance of the auditorium for your convenience.

Or, ask any member for assistance.

Please take a moment to fill out a visitors card, or sign our guest book so that we might have a record of your attendance. Thank you!

MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

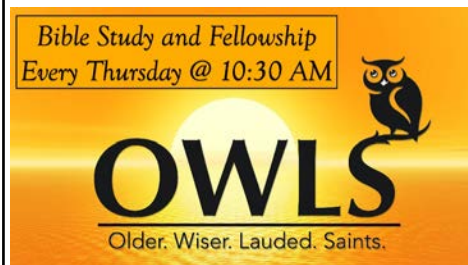
ADMINISTRATION

- Deadline for all bulletin items is Thursday, by noon.



EDUCATION

- Adult and Children Bible classes available on Sundays @ 9 AM and Wednesdays @ 6:30 PM.
- Willing to teach? See Chris Davis!



WORSHIP

- Service Rosters are available on the Welcome Desk and Margaret Street website (listed under "Archives")
- "LISTEN" devices available in the foyer, located in the Armoire.

<WiFi Password posted in Foyer>



Scan this QR Code to open webpage for online giving

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DEACONS* & MINISTRIES

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 Education Chris Davis*
 Evangelism Troy Spradlin
 Finance
 Fellowship Jeff Scott*
 OWLS Stephen Fulton
 Involvement Joe Taylor*
 Lads to Leaders David English
 Missions Mike Scott*
 Visitation Bob Locklin
 Youth & Family Casey Bearden
 Worship Blake Hatcher*