

Dangers Facing The Church, Part One - Things Are Changing

Sunday PM 02/16/20

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4.1-5 it is like Paul is looking at the current state of modern “professed Christianity”. A Christian is a follower of Christ, one who adheres to his teachings. One not following Jesus is not a Christian. Many professed “Christians are not following Him.

Fact 1----- all are facing numerous problems. Partly because one cannot change their doctrine and practice without consequences.

Fact 2----- “Modern Christianity” is shrinking. Denominations are growing smaller.

Fact 3----- Main stream denominations are being replaced by “Generic” churches, not bound by doctrine.

This lesson will cover the following:

- 1) The reality – things are changing
- 2) Some reasons things are changing
- 3) Consequences of those changes
- 4) How we should respond to those change

2 Timothy 4.1-5 Paul says preach the word. The alarm- a) some will not endure sound doctrine, b) they will turn away from the truth, c) they will turn to fable.

I) The Reality - Things Have Changed.

A) Christianity faces sharp decline as Americans are becoming

less affiliated with religion.

1. People who identified themselves as “Christian” dropped almost 8% in just 7 years, to 71%.
 - a. Millennials are growing even less affiliated with religion as they get older, in 2005 – 25% were not affiliated, in 2014 – 34% were not affiliated.
 - b. There are more religiously unaffiliated Americans than Catholic Americans (20.8%) or mainline Protestant Americans (14.7%).
 - c. Those who are unaffiliated are becoming more secular.

B) Washington Post – Changing U.S. Religious Landscape

1. Evangelical Protestant fell from 26.3% to 25.4% a decline of .9%.
2. Catholic fell from 23.9% to 20.8% a decline of 3.1%
3. Mainline Protestant fell from 18.1% to 14.7% a decline of 3.4%
4. Unaffiliated increased from 16.1% to 22.8% an increase of 6.7%

II) The Reasons Things Are Changing

A) A rejection of the reliability and absolute authority of the scriptures. *2 Timothy 3.16-17; 2 Peter 1.19-21*

1. A belief truth is subjective and relative – no moral absolutes. Doctrine and theology inconsequential. ***Judges 21.25; Jeremiah 6.16-19***

2. The emphasis of feelings and emotions over and in place of the scriptures. **Proverbs 14.12**

B) No need to read or study the Bible

1. It doesn't matter.
2. I am educated and smart enough to determine what is true for me!

C) Biblical illiteracy in the U.S. "Increasingly American is biblically illiterate, George Barna

1. 85% own a Bible
2. 51% can't name the 4 Gospels
3. 60% can't name 5 of the 10 Commandments
4. 12% believe Joan of Arc to be Noah's wife
5. 50% High School Seniors – Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife

D) The Value of the Bible in Everyday Life

1. Age group 66+ extremely valuable 62%
2. Age group 47 to 66 extremely valuable 54%
3. Age group 28-46 extremely valuable 44%
4. Age group 18 to 27 extremely valuable 34%

E) Role of Bible in U.S. Society

1. All adults – too little influence 56% too much influence 13.
2. 18 to 20 yr. olds - too little influence 40% too much influence 20.

3. 29-47 yr. olds -- too little influence 56% too much influence 16
4. 48 to 66 yr. olds- too little influence 63% too much influence 9
5. Over 67 -- too little influence 63% too much influence 6

III) Consequences of These Changes, *2 Timothy 3.1-9*

A) **Having a form of godliness but denying its power, *2 Timothy 3.5***

1. “We have a society filled with people who want what they want when they want it. They are into their own lifestyle, recreation, and entertainment. They want comfort, happiness, and success. When churches appeal to those selfish desires, they only fuel fires that hinder true godliness.”
2. People’s first thoughts in looking for a church is not the church one finds in the Bible.
3. Not where can I be of service.

B) **Vain worship and will worship, *Colossians 2.18-23***

1. The object of worship & service is no longer the God of the Bible - *John 4:24; Rom 1:18-25*
2. Will accept & practice things that are sinful - *Rom 1:26,27; 2 Thess 2:10-12*

C) **Regarding Bible Reading.**

1. “Bible reading has become the religious equivalent of sound-bite journalism. When people read from the Bible they typically open it, read a brief passage without much

regard for the context, and consider the primary thought or feeling that the passage provided. If they are comfortable with it, they accept it; otherwise, they deem it interesting but irrelevant to their life, and move on. There is shockingly little growth evident in people's understanding of the fundamental themes of the scriptures and amazingly little interest in deepening their knowledge and application of biblical principles .

D) Biblical Influence in the U.S.

1. Satan doesn't exist – 60%
2. Jesus committed sin – 40%
3. Bible, Book of Mormon, Koran are all Holy – 40%
4. Professed Christians deny moral absolutes – 70%
5. Morals based on the Bible – 10%
6. Truth discovered by reason, logic, and personal experience – 54%

E) The problem with the Christian Church

1. “The problem facing the Christian Church is not that people lack a complete set of beliefs; the problem is that they have a full slate of beliefs in mind, which they think are consistent with biblical teachings, and they are neither open to being proven wrong nor to learning new insights. Our research suggests that this challenge initially emerges in the late adolescent or early teenage years . . . In a culture driven by the desire to receive value, more Bible teaching is generally not viewed as an exercise in providing such value.”

F) Results

1. We will not believe more than we know, and we will not live higher than our beliefs.
2. The many fronts of moral compromise in this generation can be directly traced to biblical illiteracy in the pews and the absence of biblical preaching and teaching in our homes and churches.

IV) How should we respond to these changes?

A) Individually

1. Develop A Genuine Love For The Truth - **2 Thess 2:10-12; Ps 119:97-104; 2 Pet 2:2**
2. Read & Study God's Word Daily - **Acts 17:11,12**
3. Use God's Word To Mold & Control Our Thoughts, Lives & Homes! - **2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph 6:1-4**
4. Support & Encourage The Preaching of God's Word – **2 Tim 4:1-4**
5. Become More Active & Supportive Of The Church - **Heb 10:24,25**

B) In Teaching Others

1. We MUST set forth a GOOD example - **Matt 5:13-16**
2. We need to have an understanding of where others are coming from - **Acts 19:1-6; Eph 4:15**
3. Be patient - Many will NOT understand why some things are wrong
4. Be equipped to gently answer questions pertaining to evidences & why we can trust the Bible - **1 Pet 3:15**

Conclusion:

The term “Christian” means being a follower of Christ - One is NOT following Christ if he/she is NOT following His word - **Jn 8:32-34**-- One who is NOT following Jesus’ teaching is NOT a Christian - **Col. 3:17; 1 Pet 4:16**-- We NEED to be genuine followers of Jesus - ARE YOU? - YOU CAN BE! - **Matt 11:28-30**