

Soldout-ness

Once when I was advocating that an apologetics conference be attended by my church's deacons, one of them took the opportunity to ask me a question, trying to catch me in a contradictory theological point, he not holding the doctrine of election... "*If salvation is a 'God job' as you claim it is, why then would we want to learn all that apologetics stuff? Can we actually convince people of the gospel by showing them apologetically, historically, linguistically, Biblically, geographically, etc?*"

My response to him was, and still is, that apologetics is not learned that we may convince others of the truth, but that we, who are already captives of the truth, may live our lives with the power of the convinced.

Nothing demonstrates that particular truth more than what we see from the apostles, Paul, Peter, James, John, Stephen... name one! These were men convinced, to the point of withstanding anything that was thrown at them, all too frequently, an untimely demise. Are we ourselves convinced of our salvation and our beliefs this way? Are we convinced of our *relationship* with Jesus this way? When I speak of being convinced of our relationship with Jesus, I'm not speaking of our doctrinal purity necessarily, but I'm speaking of the *sold-outness* of our lives, based on a relationship with that Man, Jesus, the God-Man. In other words, will we lay it all on the line for what we say we *know* to be true?

As stated above, the martyred Apostles and all the other martyrs of the faith are the perfect example of this. In fact, one of the frequently cited "proofs" of the resurrection of Jesus is that the believers in/of His resurrection were willing to be killed for their affirmation of the resurrection and adherence to the teachings of the Resurrected One. Surely, one can find people who will die for what they *believe* to be the truth. But what one will not find are people who will die for that which they claim to others to be the truth, but which they themselves know to be a lie. Those people did not die for something they knew to be a lie, but for that which they knew to be true. Jesus, the Christ, rose from the dead. They lived with the power of the convinced.

"Where is my faith?", I must ask myself... convinced, or wavering? In this age, we have all these "convincing" things like our church services, Bible study classes, apologetics conferences, Christian radio stations, these infernal articles... not merely so that we have "ammo" that can convince others, but so that we can live with *the power of the convinced*. There are times when God ordains one of the above things as a convincing, "drawing" moment for one in whom he's been working, but those are not the only way, or even the primary ways in which God will do His drawing and convincing. Especially and particularly in this post-modern age in which we live, the drawing/convincing thing is less frequently, the rational, linear, apologetic approach, and more frequently the *personal-story* approach; the witness and *personal-experience* approach.

In that regard and for what it's worth, here is my personal story, my personal experience, and it is rather unpopular in our pluralistic, privatistic, supposedly tolerant culture (which in actuality, is tolerant of all but Jesus!). My story is just this... that for God I'll live, and for God I'll die. I ask you to consider that little saying, and not take it lightly. Is there any Biblical character servant of God about whom that cannot be said, accurately? Is there any actual servant of God today about whom that *should* not be said, properly? Have you ever read the book of the

Revelation? When it comes to the point, ours is to be mindful of the things of God, not the things of man, even if it means not staying alive.

Conversely, today in our culture, the promotion of the maximum number of heartbeats is seen as the greatest and in some cases the only important thing in life. But it is recorded that Jesus said that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses, neither does it consist in the number of heartbeats one gets while on this earth (Luke 12:13-34, Matt 6:25-34.. read these). There are things far more important than just staying alive, are their not? Right now, in this moment, all around us on this the 11th day of September in the year of our Lord 2020, the world is behaving utterly as if having been convinced that nothing is more important than the number of heartbeats they get to count up. Living, life, and all that it entails is being willingly sacrificed that we get a few more beats, thus indicating the mindset that nothing, nothing is more important than human longevity... and the church of Jesus Christ is going right along with that sorry, sorry, godless mentality. Really?

Indeed, as Jesus posed in the above cited Luke passage, "*Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?*" or we might rightly include in the question, "...*one more tomorrow or even one more breath to his/her life?*"? Jesus' brother James writes to his readers that our life is like a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away (James 4:14). James is speaking *against* the mindset that one ought to plan for one's future as if it is a given, as if it is guaranteed, as if you have any real control over it.

Right now in our culture and in our churches, we have given up living, that we may "secure" our tomorrows... and we cannot.

Right now in our culture and in our churches, we are "protecting" ourselves and supposedly others, as if we have some control over our and their longevity, health, life-span... and we do not.

Right now in our culture and in our churches, we are *allowing* tyrannical mandates to dictate our dos and don'ts as if they are able to secure for us some future, the control over which neither they nor us even have!

No one here is advocating carelessness, nor recklessness, nor callousness, nor false-faith, but I submit to you and it is my firm conviction that the church of Jesus Christ going along with what the culture is feeding people, is godless, faithless and wrong. I know that there are many who disagree with me, saying that going along with what is being fed to this American culture - indeed to most cultures around the world - constitutes good citizenship, a good example to set, deference to the "weaker brother", etc... but I contend that it does not. I contend that it constitutes not only less-than-good American citizenship but also less-than-good Kingdom citizenship.

Going along with what the culture/government is feeding us is less-than-good American citizenship because it is complicity with a lie that is being used to violate our nation's stated, codified, constitutional principles, and the denial of our human/civil rights, which our founding documents affirm, come from God, not from man.

It is less-than-good Kingdom citizenship because it violates what we say we believe about God, His Son, His Kingdom, His promises, His priorities, His Word, His faithfulness, His very character.

I, and I pray you, live with the power of the convinced, that Jesus is Lord, and that He is sovereign in the affairs of humans, and that He and He alone is to be trusted with all of my

today's and tomorrow's, all of my breaths, all of my heartbeats, and that He is to be served and obeyed before and above regard for my comfort, safety, longevity, satiety... Amen.

The convincing of people outside of the church *and inside* the church, that the most important thing to all of us, *without dissent*, is the length – not the quality, nor service, nor productiveness, nor Godliness – of our lives and the number of heartbeats we're able to get, is a lie.

In fact, *nothing* could be further from the truth. This current, corrupt, longevity mindset *might* be used to support the idea that “for God I'll live”, but it is not supportive of the true Christian mindset. For God I'll live and for God I'll die.

Pastor