

The Sect Spoken Against Johnny Ramsey

In Acts 28:22, we learn that followers of the Lord were looked upon as a sect and were persecuted because of their stand for truth. This one verse teaches us many lessons. It reminds us that Jesus prepared His servants for opposition and duress and the lack of popularity they would surely receive. In Luke 6:26 and John 16:2, the Savior said only false teachers would have universal acclaim and true servants would be killed. Paul was in jeopardy every hour (1 Cor. 15:30), and Peter was inspired to write of the persecution Christians can expect (1 Pet. 4:12-16). When Noah obeyed God, he condemned the world (Heb. 11:7); and the world did not like that! When we preach the high ideals of the Bible, the world of our day will not applaud either. However, we cannot lower the standard to please the worldly crowd (Gal. 1:10). Some brethren in our day are changing God's divine law of marriage and divorce to accommodate "the nations round about us." In doing such compromising teaching, they overlook repentance, purity and Jehovah's first divine institution of marriage and the home. One thing is for sure—if the first century church had blended in with the Roman empire, they would not have been "the sect every where spoken against."

Certainly, a church has to stand for something distinctively different from society to be spoken against. As Christ taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), we will be opposed just like the prophets when we are courageous like Jeremiah, Amos and Elijah were! When our goal is fame, acceptability and numerical power, we tend to forget that spiritual greatness comes only one way—by doing God's will in God's way (2 John 1:9; Luke 6:46).

How can we follow the blessed Redeemer and be praised by sinful men, when He was crucified between thieves? In our incessant craving for approval by society, we tend to "go along to get along." Christianity was never based on such a premise. When truth on any subject embarrasses us, we need to get back to the basics of conversion. Let us search the scriptures (Acts 17:11), and not "the brotherhood," for our authority!

The church of our Lord is not a democracy where we vote on what we like. It is not a union meeting where carnal machinery decides policy. It is not a caucus arrangement where petition-signing overwhelms the scene. The church of our Lord is a divine monarchy where the King has all authority (Matt. 28:18). Educational institutions and doctoral degrees do not dominate the gospel system, and large congregations in metropolitan areas are not more important than small ones in the country. All men stand on level ground at the foot of the cross (1 Cor. 2:1-5), and each alike is answerable to the Savior's directives (John 12:48). One thing is guaranteed for sure: follow the Man of Galilee and you will be spoken against! We cannot follow multitudes (Ex. 23:2), but we must be like the apostles who became the garbage of the world (1 Cor. 4:9).

We even have brethren today who send their "church staff" (whatever that is) to large denominations to find out their success secrets. Why not arrange a session with the devil or the Mafia, since there are so many devotees on their side? The seed of the kingdom is the word of God (Luke 8:11). That is where we ought to be looking.

Truth will always be controversial, and it will always be in the minority (Matt. 7:13-14). However, it will always be distinctive, too (1 Pet. 2:9-12). Christianity has never been a game for sissies, and the faint-hearted usually quit or compromise or join the enemy. Satan and his servants will always speak against the pure gospel way, so we must “be set for the defense of the gospel” (Phil. 1:17) and “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3). Sadly, we must even be ready to stand against brethren who apostatize (Rom. 16:17). Our failure to openly stand up for God and the Bible (Acts 17:3) will result in a church so weak that no one will speak against us. I am afraid that is exactly what some brethren want.