

Light Brings Salt

Volume 5, Issue 11

March 25, 2007



Iron Range Bible Church

Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God



One Pastor's Vacation Church Experience

Being Persecuted by a Sermon
Dr. Mike Halsey
Pastor County Line Church Hampton,
Georgia

On a recent vacation I did something I've never voluntarily done before. I visited a church of a denomination which I have never been to before. After entering the beautiful building and going through a labyrinth of halls, I found the spacious, attractive, well-lit auditorium filled with about three hundred people.

A song leader took us through a hymn, which was followed by children taking an offering to buy school supplies for children whose parents can't afford such things. When the children brought the money to the front and stood before the congregation, the youth pastor assured the kids that since "You have given a cup of cold water in Jesus' name, you will not lose your salvation."

That caused me to really sit up in my seat. What Jesus really said is, "Whoever gives one of these little ones a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward" (Matt 10:42). The youth pastor deleted one word from the Bible and substituted a totally different word. There is a big difference between reward and salvation. Eternal salvation is a gift, not a reward (Rom 4:4-5; 6:23). Yet no one seemed to notice or care. I saw no one shaking their head, flipping

through pages of Scripture trying to match Christ's words with those of the youth pastor.

Instead, a man with a trumpet appeared and played a hymn, which prepared the congregation for the sermon. While he played, I glanced through the bulletin. The pastor had prepared a feast in a tidy fashion. In the bulletin, there was a printed outline of what he was going to say, complete with fill-in-the-blanks. The sermon was a study of "Persecution" with each of his four points beginning with the letter R.

When the pastor got up to speak, I noticed that hardly anyone had their Bibles open, and those few who did were not turning to the Scripture references the pastor referred to. Nevertheless, many were busily scribbling notes in the bulletin insert, and filling in the blanks, as was I. After speaking about the Recipients of persecution and the Reasons why some are persecuted, the pastor turned to discuss the proper Response to persecution. He first told us what our Response to persecution should not be, and following his pattern, gave us three points, all with more R's.

It was the third improper response to persecution that shook me. According to the pastor we were not to have what he called Religious superiority. The pastor described the current world situation between Islam and Christianity, and then said that we should not tell people that Christianity is superior to any other religion! He implied (though did not say it plainly) that while Christ is a savior, there are many other ways to heaven as well.

I wondered how the pastor would explain John 14:6 and other NT texts that show that Jesus is not simply "a way," but the one and only way (John 11:25; Acts 4:12).

Now remember, this church advertised itself as Evangelical and its stated mission is "to grow people in the family of God."

As generally happens in many churches, the sermon concluded with an invitation. But when the pastor explained how to get to heaven, we were told that we must "turn from the life you are now living, a path that will ultimately lead to a place of darkness and despair, and allow Christ to lead you into an eternal life filled with His love and blessings." Then the pastor added the condition that we must also confess our sins, and "if you want to do this today, you need to invite Jesus into your heart and ask Him to be the Savior and Lord of your life."

So it appears that I have a lot to do in order to get to heaven. I need to turn from my sins, allow Christ to lead me, confess my sins, invite Jesus into my heart, and ask Him to be the Savior and Lord of my life. By no stretch of the imagination is such salvation a free gift. It must be earned. There was no mention of faith alone in Christ alone and no mention of "whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The most famous verse in evangelism, John 3:16, had been deleted from this pastor's evangelistic appeal.

The service concluded and I left the auditorium. On the way home, I reflected on the service. The music was great. The kids taking the offering were cute. The auditorium was exquisite. But what did the pastor say? After muddling the gospel message, his benediction was the most tragic of all: "Go out and show love," he concluded. "Follow Christ's example, give glory to Christ, be a witness, and remember that He's sending us out there to witness." But in reality, these who were being encouraged to witness to others, needed to hear the pure gospel

themselves. A sinister type of persecution was coming from their own pastor, and they didn't even know it.

As we focus on taking the gospel around the world, let us not forsake the dire need of people in our country, and in thousands of churches across America, to hear the good news that Jesus guarantees everlasting life to all who simply believe Him for it.

The Islamic Republic of Minnesota

At one time I was proud to say I lived in the great state of Minnesota. Now, however, I'm having to apologize for more than our wind chills of 40 degrees below zero three months a year. National commentators and talk show hosts are asking, "What is happening to Minnesota?"

Fox News' commentator John Gibson asked if we are the first Somali-Muslim state. Talk show host Glen Beck did a half hour last night on his program asking about the Islamic connections in Minnesota. Some are suggesting we call our state the "Islamic Republic of Minnesota." Are we the second Dearborn, MI, and will this Islamic tolerance come to a neighborhood near you?

Author and commentator Paul Sperry was on air with me in the last year discussing his book, "Infiltration: How Muslims and other Subversives Are Penetrating Washington." He warned of the blatant effort to tilt American culture toward Sharia Law. Here are some examples of what's happening in my hometown known as the Twin Cities:

- Minnesota elected the first Muslim to Congress--Keith Ellison, who took his oath of office on the Koran. There was little outrage, though some protested in futility.
- Last November six Imams boarded US Airways Flight 300 at the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport. Witnesses say that they prayed loudly invoking Allah, switched from their assigned seats to a

September 11 attack pattern, spoke in Arabic and English, criticized the war in Iraq and our President, talked about al Qaeda and bin Laden, and asked for seat-belt extenders. They were arrested, then released.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) has filed a suit against US Airways for racial discrimination and religious intolerance. The Imams are going to sue the PASSENGERS for acting nervous. These are not just childish religious zealots who can be dismissed.

Think of what this could do to national security! People will be afraid to come forth and express suspicious behavior or they might get sued! When they spot danger, they will be forced to keep quiet or face a law suit.

Muslim attorneys are offering to "defend" these evil but innocent passengers. Time will tell if this is legit.

- Muslims working for Target in Minnesota are refusing to handle pork products. If you want a Muslim to ring up your hot dogs, better go to another line. Target caved and rather than firing them, put them in positions where they would not be "offended."
- Muslim cab drivers in Minnesota said they would take NO passengers who had alcohol with them or dogs-- not even seeing-eye dogs. The Airport Commission in the Twin Cities has been clamping down on this.

The bottom line to these stories and others not listed is that Muslims and particularly Muslims from Somalia in Minnesota are not assimilating like legal immigrants do. They are bringing their Muslim culture with them, and they demand Sharia Law or special privileges in many places in America.

Will Minnesotans for the sake of setting the trend for the other states say, "We're going to be open-minded liberals and you can have

a different kind of status here?" Will this set the trend as with Dearborn, MI?

The proper response should be, if you want Sharia Law and special privileges, go back to the country of your origin and don't try to change America. Diversity, multiculturalism, and political correctness will harm America in the long run, even though they are the mantra of the Left.

From Olive Tree Ministries Maple Grove MN

Thoughts from 1 Pet 4:13

Often the first thing that we think when faced with suffering in our life is, Why me? Why now? What is God doing? What we have seen in our studies of James and 1 Peter is that suffering is a tool God uses to get our attention and to accomplish His purposes in our lives.

It is designed to build our trust in God, but suffering requires the right response to the circumstances faced if it is to be successful in accomplishing God's purposes. Suffering forces us to turn from trust in our own resources to living by faith in God's resources.

Suffering is not in itself virtuous, nor is it a sign of holiness. It is also not a means of gaining points with God, nor of subduing the flesh as in asceticism.

But it is a great opportunity to apply the Word and bring glory to Him!

Founder's Quote by Patrick Henry

"It is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth - and listen to the song of that syren, till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the number of those, who having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it might cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst, and to provide for it."