

right where He wants us

The People of God in Times Like These

Standing and (if need be) Suffering

3 But understand this, **that in the last days there will come times of difficulty.** ²For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. ⁶For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, ⁷always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. ⁸Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. ⁹But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.

¹⁰You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my **steadfastness**, ¹¹my **persecutions and sufferings** that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. ¹²Indeed, **all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted**, ¹³while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴But as for you, **continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed**, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶**All Scripture** is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3

In the last days, we will see (and are already seeing) _____.

Secularization refers to the historical process in which religion loses social and cultural significance. As a result of secularization the role of religion in modern societies becomes restricted. In secularized societies faith lacks cultural authority, religious organizations have little social power, and public life proceeds without reference to the supernatural. <http://sociology.emory.edu/home/documents/profiles-documents/lechner-secularization.pdf>

“Secular, in terms of contemporary sociological and intellectual conversation, refers to the absence of any binding theistic authority or belief. It is both an ideology, which is known as *secularism*, and a consequence, which is known as *secularization*.” (Al Mohler)

Secularization can be both _____ and _____.

Example of *passive* secularization:

Example of *active* secularization:

Secularization inevitably leads to _____.

“... dechristianization never takes a step backward.” - Olivier Roy, *Is Europe Christian?*

The *means* of opposing secularization is faithful _____ and _____ God's Word.

The *cost* of opposing secularization is _____.

⁸We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2 Corinthians 4:8-11

For Christians, the only way to avoid persecution is _____, whether actively or passively.

Passively ...

We _____ unpopular or offensive truths

We _____ the “faith”

We pursue “_____” over biblical _____

We seek _____ rather than _____

We _____ rather than _____

We _____ from public engagement

Actively ...

We _____ biblical doctrines and morals

We _____ biblical values to secular ones

We _____ any and all deviances from orthodoxy

But as faithful Christians, capitulation is not an option. We carry the _____ and _____ of Jesus with us (2 Cor. 4:8-11).

We are His _____.

... if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-20

The passive and active secularism and secularization threatens Christian fidelity. The secularization of the culture challenges the church and demands unconditional surrender. Within the walls of the church, we see continued efforts to undermine the authority of the Bible and usurp the rule of Christ, summoning the people of God to abandon their posts, and to redefine the Christian faith into something more “acceptable” in the view of the dominate culture. The church of Jesus Christ, however, must always live as a people of the Book—as scriptural people devoted to zealous study of God’s Word. The Bible is the norming norm that cannot be normed. Christians must affirm biblical authority and always remember that when you surrender the authority of Scripture, you threaten the very existence of the church. Where you find a church, you find a community committed to the Bible. If not, you have not found a church.

- Mohler, *The Gathering Storm* (p. 34).

6 “musts” for a true church facing **secularization** and **dechristianization**:

(Adapted from *The Gathering Storm*)

- 1) The church must _____ – not just teach – _____.
- 2) The church must _____ on and for “the _____ once and for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3)
- 3) The church must stand on _____ as its first mark.
- 4) The church must _____ and _____ our faith and our identity in _____ form.
- 5) The church must stand for a _____ (Biblical) _____.
- 6) The church must recommit itself to the _____.

This includes ...

Do Christians believe enough biblical truth to withstand the moral liberalism of the age? Cultural forms of Christianity have been largely dechristianized and tamed, and nominal Christianity is fast disappearing. There is no social capital to be gained by joining a congregation defined by biblical truth. To the contrary, such membership will now destroy social capital. Liberal Protestantism is the quintessence of cultural Christianity, and the culture prevailed over Christianity long ago. Are evangelicals and other conservative Christians in the United States prepared to be considered enemies of the regime?

- Mohler, *The Gathering Storm* (pp. xv-xvi).

Next message:

right where He wants us – Intentionally United