

God's News In The News

Week One Hundred Fifty-One

A Great Divide Is Here

The Divides Are Getting Wider

I talked at length with Christian friends of mine on a long drive recently and we mentioned how divisive family or friend gatherings have become. One was told at her job to refrain from talking about politics so that clients wouldn't be offended regardless of their political persuasion. This isn't all that out of the ordinary as many companies prefer that any controversial topics be avoided as matter of rule, especially in the customer service fields. However, when it extends to all areas of life, the environment for public discourse is concerning. Free speech is a hallmark of American society, but now such speech only seems to go one way and speaking one's mind is restrained by even threats of violence if it doesn't comport with the "correct" views. But navigating the waters of divided views can and has been done for centuries without the kind of civil war we see now. The question then becomes, what has changed? And what does this mean for Christians who are commanded to share the Gospel with others regardless of their varied and differing views?

The War Of More Than Words Was Predicted

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (John 15:18-19, NKJV)

None other than Jesus Himself warned us that serving Him could and even would be divisive. Hate is a strong word to use, but He told us outright that this would happen to all who follow Him. The word for "hate" is *miseó* (*mis-eh'-o*) and means *I hate, detest, love less, esteem less*. It also can mean to *denounce; to love someone or something less than someone (something) else, i.e. to renounce one choice in favor of another*. It is a strong word to be sure and before we avoid using it, we must also know that Jesus also said this using that same Greek word:

If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:26, NKJV)

And yes, this was also predicted to happen in the time just before He returned:

Then they will hand you over to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. (Matt 24:9, NKJV)

It Will Get Personal

For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; 36 and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' 37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. (Matt 10:35-38, NKJV)

We were told this would be the case in normal Christian living, however, a higher level of hatred will exist in the Tribulation as this verse describes:

You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. 17 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. (Luke 21:16-17, NKJV)

The literal gloves will be off during that time, but in the time just before those days, we will see the same conditions growing just as much as we see the other signs Jesus gave to His disciples. And yes, the same Greek word for "hate" is also used here.

The “Why” Needs To Be Explored

The best way to explain why this unusual and I would also add unnatural hatred is happening and will happen will sound a tad simplistic and yet it is true. It is the spirit of the Antichrist predicted to grow stronger and stronger as the world approaches that is behind it. That along with the strong delusion that will blind people to the truth both before and during the Tribulation will make this divide possible and it is totally planned. To be honest, it does also need the fallen nature of mankind to grow and spread, but we can't belittle the demonic spirit promoting such hatred since the social and political airwaves are controlled by the prince of the power of the air. Being called a Christian is fast morphing into a mental disorder that may eventually be a crime. Even now, adhering to Biblical views of sin is seen as divisive and unloving and is not being tolerated. Simply reading Scripture is cause for arrest and even silent prayer is also being criminalized. Government agencies are putting Christian phrases and views on their list of homegrown terrorist descriptions and targeting believers as being real threats of violence. Unless God reverses this trend supernaturally being a Christian will only continue to put you on the watchlist of governments around the globe.

It's Not A New Thing

Some will say that religious intolerance has been a part of our history before and this is nothing new. To be fair, they have a point, however what we see now and what is coming if these trends persist will take this to a whole new level as it will be global whereas in times past, it was not. Hatred of Jews was seen in many chapters of world history, but there were countries who saw it for what it was and refused to go along with it and even fought the countries doing it. Now, with the advent of the Internet such hatred is truly world-wide and tolerance for such bias is waning as the war of words is waged by defining hate speech with new meanings of those views. In a definite Orwellian twist, words like love, peace and tolerance now mean the exact opposite of what they should as things once called perversion are now called natural and things that were thought to be normal are now being called unnatural and perversions. If you oppose the movement to allow these trends to continue, you are intolerant and unloving. And now there are more and more people calling for violence against those who don't agree with them.

Is There Any Hope?

I believe there is as there has always been. We must always remember that greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world as the Apostle John tell us in **1 John 4:4** us. And he would know this since he saw Jesus rise from the dead and survived the Roman governments death sentences twice, first by being thrown into a vat of burning oil and then being exiled to die on Patmos. And there are many, many other stories of coming against oppressive and powerful people for the cause of Christ and triumphing. The name Corrie ten Boom comes to mind as a powerful example of someone who God spared from death against insurmountable odds. Brother Andrew, the man who smuggled the Bible into places it was banned, again against leaders who would no doubt have imprisoned or killed him if they could is another prime example of this power we have inside of us. Then He tells us that we are destined to win:

Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? 36 (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") 37 No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. (Rom 8:36-37, NLT)

It may be a bumpy ride, but in the end God will lead us to the victory He promised.