

How We Must Respond to Mike Pence's Warning: 'Freedom of Religion Is Under Assault'

Vice President Mike Pence recently warned about declining religious freedoms in our country, as the guest speaker for the 2019 commencement exercises at Virginia's Liberty University. "Freedom of religion," he said, is "under assault."

The former congressman and governor of Indiana told of his own experiences of being mocked and criticized for his personal faith and practice. "We live in a time when it's become acceptable and even fashionable to ridicule and even discriminate against people of faith," he said.

Though the United States of America was built on Judeo-Christian traditions and practices, the vice president explained that "things are different now. Some of the loudest voices for tolerance today have little tolerance for traditional Christian beliefs. So, as you go about your daily life, be ready; because you're going to be asked not just to tolerate things that violate your faith. You're going to be asked to endorse them."

He went on to explain that through most of American history one would not have been shunned or ridiculed for defending the historic teachings of the Bible. But, now, "You need to be prepared to meet opposition."

Apologist and social commentator Alex McFarland has amplified the trouble with the modern understanding and use of the word "tolerance." Originally, he says, "it meant 'putting up with something you disagree with or don't like.' But tolerance has now been redefined to convey the idea that all beliefs should be considered equal, and if it's the belief du jour, it should

be not only tolerated but promoted.”

Christian author and lecturer Ravi Zacharias explains the cultural context of this new tolerance when he says, “Christians are being asked by our culture to erase the lines and move fences, and if that were not bad enough, we are being asked to join in the celebration cry by those who have thrown off the restraints religion had imposed upon them.” Acceptance of others’ lifestyles is not enough. They now demand we affirm these aberrant beliefs and practices, too.

The apostle Paul told the young pastor Timothy that “the time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine, but they will gather to themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, having itching ears, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and turn to myths.” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

He went on to urge Timothy (and us) to boldly “endure afflictions” since “a crown of righteousness” is waiting to be awarded “to all who have loved His appearing” (v. 8).

Jesus told the disciples that when we approach the “end of the age,” His followers will be handed over to those who will “persecute you and will kill you. And you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake ... But he who endures to the end shall be saved” (Matt. 24:3-14).

Endurance and perseverance in the face of adversity and tribulation is a part of the hardships of a “good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:3). Paul offered this “faithful saying: For if we die with Him, we shall also live with Him; If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:11-13).

Basically, the rest of the chapter tells us to live godly lives, “