

Persecution Driving Fast Toward American Church

Like many of you, I have grown really weary of the brouhaha over the statement made by **Dan Cathy** of **Chick-fil-A** in support of the biblical definition of marriage and his opposition to gay marriage.

Understandably, you might have thought it was just a skirmish in a wider **culture war** over what kind of society we will become. To some extent that was true, but if that is what you thought, you may have missed the deeper significance. This was a seminal and catalytic event marking a dramatic shift in the spirit over this nation, particularly where Christians are concerned. I mean that it was not just a war of words or a contrived media moment. Powered by the demonic principality the Bible calls Baal, something real moved that week, like a sudden lurch, in the heart of our culture.

The facts are these: Mayors of several American cities—among them Chicago and San Francisco—have threatened to deny Chick-fil-A permits to build franchises in their cities, not because of any overt discrimination by Chick-fil-A against gay people—there is none—but because of what the owner *thinks* of **gay marriage**. In fact, the company's anti-discrimination policy specifically prohibits any kind of discrimination against any group.

Never mind that such a ban on granting building permits would be illegal as an abridging of our constitutional right to free speech! Law in America has become an increasingly bendable thing as the **spirit of lawlessness** has taken root and grown. We now reinterpret laws to mean what we want them to mean as opposed to what the framers intended them to mean—or we ignore them altogether when they seem inconvenient. This is true both legally and morally.

According to Matthew 24:12, "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold" (NASB). I personally witnessed Chick-fil-A employees responding in grace and love to some very obvious hatred directed at them. Unfortunately, however, in America today your personal thoughts and opinions are no longer just thoughts and opinions. If you don't agree with the opinions of certain others, you will be accused of hatred. This was not the case just a decade ago.

I have **prophesied** that **persecution** would be coming to American Christians and have said that stances we have taken as believers that brought about respectful discussion in the past would soon be regarded as dangerous threats and that we would begin to pay a growing price for our commitments. It has now begun and the body of Christ must wake up to the urgency of the times in which we live. There is no more time. The kind of attack on Christians who stand for biblical principles and **biblical morality** that Dan Cathy has endured will only accelerate in intensity and frequency in the coming days.

This deserves a quote from two paragraphs in my book, *Visions of the Coming Days: What to Look for and How to Prepare* released just this last May:

"Jesus never wants to come in judgment. Rather, He loves us and knows that intensified pressure from the world is coming. In the Western world it will not include physical torture, martyrdom or imprisonment as it did in John's day and for many believers in other parts of the world today. For us it will take the form of increasing marginalization as the mainstream of the surrounding culture moves in directions we cannot follow. It will include discrimination against genuine Christians in nearly every aspect of life. For example, many of us will be denied employment or advancement when our superiors find out what we believe in. Jobs will be lost. From the culture around us, condemnation will increase because we will be seen as hateful and dangerous due to our faith

commitments with regard to moral issues.

“Our Lord knows what weakens us and does not want us to collapse under the pressure. He understands better than any of us what kind of strength it will take to live victoriously in the times to come. As we move into the last days before the Lord’s return, trials—birth pains that accompany the coming of the kingdom of God (see Matt. 24:8, Rom. 8:22)—will come with increasing intensity. Already disasters of record proportions abound in the form of deadly storms and floods, earthquakes and tsunamis. Famines persist. Wars multiply.”

In the book I go on to describe the incredible outpouring of the **Spirit of God** that will come for the remnant as these troubles increase. In His love, God pours out His mercy to match and exceed human suffering, no matter the cause. Sin brings death, destruction and societal decay. As a result, people hurt. We’re called to be there, not as those who condemn, but as God’s people representing the heart of the Father bringing healing and help to those who, in their pain, discover that sin doesn’t work. Unfortunately, too many will continue to live in denial that their behavior is either wrong or the cause of their suffering. In many cases, in the search to find someone or something to blame, they’ll blame us.

We cannot face this with a **spirit of compromise**. We cannot successfully navigate this by minimizing the significance of what confronts us in the surrounding culture or by ignoring the trends we see developing. Lukewarm devotion will not sustain us as the times become ever more difficult. Only a passionate love of Jesus, an understanding of what it means to be transformed into His image through the selflessness of the cross and the impartation of the Father’s heart through Him will suffice. It can no longer be about our personal well-being, prosperity or happiness. That day has ended. Nothing short of the radical selflessness of the cross will carry us through and release the power we need to touch this dying

world and make a difference.

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