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WHAT RELIGION DOES FOR ONE WHO REALLY TRIES IT

2 Timothy 3:12

Have you really ever tried religion - I speak of the N. T. kind!

Paul is speaking of this in 2 Timothy 3:12 says - "Yes indeed, everyone who wants to live a godly life as a follower of Christ Jesus will be persecuted".

Paul does not count his experience as peculiar, but only part of the price of loyal service to Christ.

If you really try religion, he says you are going to be hunted as wild beasts.

V. 13 - Impostors know all the tricks of the trade, will deceive others and themselves.

V. 14 - But Thou, on your part, continue to abide and rely upon what you have learned from the Scripture.

Many religionists of his day had permitted their religious interests to degenerate into self interests.

Followed lines of least resistance - sought comforts at the expense of holier things. Paul disturbed the ungodly and his religion got him into trouble.

Just so the same faith will assure trouble today when one dares apply his religion to everyday living.

The truest test of a motor's performance never occurs on the easy road; it occurs on the difficult stretches of the journey.

The strength of a tree is never revealed in the blowing of the mild spring winds, but in the weight of the blizzards ice and in the impact of the hurricane's force.

The caliber of a football team is never proved in a game with midget opposition but rather when the opposition is terrific.

So with life and people, the crucible test is when one tries the religion

is revealed on a lack of it

Expert workers with various types of timber declare that they can tell, from the flame colors of burning logs, a great deal about the chemical content.

Metal workers can tell a great deal about the content of any piece of metal when it is burned to white heat and they can actually forecast its durability.

All of that is logical. It is also logical that your religion will be tested by troubles.

True Because

First - Christian faith is not changing.

Christian faith refuses to compromise.

V. 2 - Paganism and the world thrives in complacency, self-satisfaction - "Lacking a love for the good".

V. 4 - Treacherous, reckless, conceited, loving pleasure more than God".
When these two forces meet - conflict is inevitable!
Co-existence is out of the question.

Demand for compromise is a demand to the death of your faith. Knowing this your faith runs the risk of head on collision.

Jesus according to Matthew states the case - the Disciples "Were to go out as sheep in the midst of wolves".

They were to anticipate a negative response in many places. Persecution - arrest - imprisonment - ridicule and sometimes death.

They were to guard against vindictiveness. To be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves was a big order.

Amazing that their courage held as firmly as it did - with all the odds against them.

Modern Disciple - what do I get out of it?

He promises them they would get into trouble, suffer much, persecution

trail their steps. If they remained faithful they would be saved.

No doubt about the fact that they would get in trouble if they lived up to the requirement of their faith. The conflict of error with truth - righteousness with evil. Within a same household a division would arise as a result of the new way of life in Him.

Mark this - I'm not saying all trouble comes because of our religion - some must be credited to emotional pronouncements, immature judgments, intemperance, fool-hardiness, egotism, lack of restraint, not the result of intelligent discipleship, nor a compliment to the Christ.

Paul was talking about adverse reaction to courageous commitment.

This is a different sort of trouble. Business crisis results from refusal to be party to crooked dealing, ridicule for standing on the right side of moral issues, hateful lips may hurt you because you refuse to buckle under - these are the things of genuine trouble. There are these things from which real character is built. When you separate from worldly companions.

The Christian is to witness with the Holy Spirit. He is to put pressures upon paganism.

At every hand temptation presents itself to compromise. Had the early Christians yielded to this incessant barrage what would have been left today? They stood their ground against unbelievable odds. The fibre of their strength became "be of good cheer" - going out into the pagan empire of Rome.

Hard to find their equal - ours is a tame - powerless ethic. We condemn evil in the abstract. All the Goliaths have not been slain.

My how we need another John the Baptist to declare that it is not lawful for a man to live with another's wife. We need the old Prophet to look the guilty world in the eye and say "Thou art the man". We need a Moses to say to Pharaoh "Let my people go".

Religion of Jesus will do this if you really try it.

Second, Christian Faith Condemns The Ungodly

The Christian presents a contrast to the pagan. They are like a mirror held up to a dirty face and the pagan didn't like that.

V. 8 - They resist the truth - men of corrupt minds. Reprobate concerning the faith.

This will cause you trouble.

Many are unconscious of their low estate until a high plateau of clean living was practiced in their midst.

They walked differently from the unsaved - no room for carelessness.

Called fools because they refuse to compromise - what a compliment!

Straight living Christian is a plumb line beside the crooked nature of a non-Christian.

Christians stand in too well with the world - so much so that we often hear it said, it is hard to distinguish them from non-Christians. The world can't see enough difference between us.

Part of this condition is caused by the craze to conform. Like a disease, reached epidemic stage "me-too-itus". Therefore boys now look like goats and the gals live like nudists. "Make mine the same" - all of these are processes of our day - who killed the spirit of individuality?

Even subdivisions of houses all the same - books a vulgar presentation for morals. Clothes cut by assembly line yardsticks and I mean cut - all society has a desire to fit in at any price. Even a secular Gospel which fits this age - what age - does the Gospel change? Some say the preacher needs to update his message - want a well rounded Gospel. Rubber ball is round - push it in any direction.

Surrender our souls to conformity.

One things sure - the world will never be condemned and transformed by men who say "make mine the same".

They thought Jesus was square just because he wouldn't roll with the crowd!

He stood his ground.

This is the voice needed in the church. "It was good for Paul and Silas and its good enough for me"! Does this fit you for size? Do you want what they had?

Be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed - this is what Christianity is about.

Conforming to the world is not only accepted in many places but expected. Now is the time to change the tune - the message of Jesus Christ is a solution to our problems. The blind cannot lead the blind without both inevitably falling in the ditch.

We live in a climate of diluted integrity - basic honesty is involved men look for truthful ways to lie, honest ways to steal.

V. 14 - But continue Thou in the things which Thou hast learned.

V. 9 - For their folly shall be made manifest to all men.

Christian life condemns.

Coast - watch the tide go out - leaves little puddles of sea water captive. These little spots are warm - not long before the tide returns, fresh and forceful, each tiny puddle is joined in.

Church - need a tidal wave of God's love to move with unity the called out ones - the twice born - redeemed.

V. 12 - Paul said you live godly in Christ Jesus - we are to love the sinner and hate his sin.

Denunciation, yes - but positive affirmation - live godly in Christ Jesus.

This is what a good woman did who lived with a worthless husband. Bottles and debts - years of misery. Often come home late and demand she get up and cook. She would go out in cold and cut wood for fire in cheap cast iron stove, and bake

bread for this worthless man. Because she loved him.

It was love on Calvary.

Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the sky of parchment made,
were every stick on earth a quill and every man a scribe by trade, to write
the love of God above, would drain the ocean dry, nor could the scroll contain
the whole, though stretched from sky to sky.

Glass eyes monster of T. V.

Survey showed that 58% of members of a Protestant denomination serve
liquor in their homes - it does not take Isaiah to predict the future calibre of
the children and their off spring.

Man - darling, if you will just give up that everlasting running to church,
I'll buy you anything you want - we would have peace in our family.

These disturbing words had been said many times before, but may not pay
attention. "That is just it John" she answered "money can't buy the thing I
want most - it isn't for sale. It is free by God's grace and I would never
surrender it for your sake nor for the sake of what you call peace in our home".

So she continues to attend church without him.

He never loses an opportunity to jeer with sarcasm at her religion.

God will reserve for her something special.

V. 6 - Paul - lead captive silly women - God will honor the faithful little
mother who is steadfast in her love to the Lord.

The church stands today at the crossroads in a struggle for decency.

"We do not well, this day is a day of good tidings and we hold our peace
- Syrian Lepers.

Sins grip hasn't loosened, evil still assaults the man of God.

Sin is still sin.

Religion for us is to respectable - be a regular fellow.

Live the mandate of the cross.

Young minister wrote his Bishop this church is one battle ground after another. I want a change - nothing I do seems to please them, they are crucifying me.

Bishop my young friend, you want a change - there is one difference between you and your Saviour; He did not come down from the cross.

Third, Christian Faith Conquors

I have said it refuses to compromise,

I have said it condemns the ungodly.

Now it is a conquoring force.

(No one can really know what Jesus means until he really trusts him.)

Must try him for yourself. He far excels all that I can tell you.

Psa. 138 - I bow before Thy sacred Temple to praise Thee for Thy love so true, that far excels all ever known of Thee (Moffat).

Here is a man who has tested God.

Folks say they have doubts - fears that trip them up.

First hand evidence - Spirit needed in our day - face the future unafraid.

Chister Swor said I stood with a wonderful Christian outside her cottage at 4 o'clock in the morning. We had just driven back from a near by hospital in which her cherished only son, six years old, had died. That in itself was a stunning blow, for he had died after an illness of only 48 hours. To her, however, the loss was even greater, for it was the third major sorrow in quick succession.

So there stood this gallant, lonely heroine. From the firmament of her life, the last little star had twinkled and gone out; from the repertorie of her heart, the favorite melody had been so quickly snatched away. For her, from there on out, stretched a long and lonesome road.

Feeling that I must say something to lighten the load of sorrow, I suggested that she should not try in this hour of physical exhaustion and heartbreak to try to

figure out the why of this experience. I suggested, too, that God would help her to understand sometime and that, meanwhile, he would surely give to her the strength which her weary life so much needed.

Those words of intended consolation had hardly fallen from his lips when she replied with words which thrilled him then and which strengthened since that time.

"I know what you are trying to say" she said. "But you don't need to say it. I know God so well and trust him so fully that even now I would not call my little son back into life if I could; for I have learned in these years that there are so many things worse than death. As great as is the hurt of my heart now, I know that God would not have permitted him to go away unless his going now were not less of sorrow than some future experience, had he lived. God's way is sometimes, for a time, a way of tears, but it is always the better way".

Here is your example of Christian woman who really tried the religion of our Lord Jesus.

The Christian, practicing such surrender will do the best he can with heartbreak knowing that he has power to turn tragedies into triumphs.

You have probably seen a violinist preparing to perform. He turns the keys which control the violin strings until the strings are stretched to the breaking point. We recognize that this tautness is imperative, for beautiful violin music cannot be played on strings which are not so stretched.

The heartstrings may be stretched to the breaking point, so that we feel that one more hour of the grief will break us.

If we are wise in those hours of taunt heartstrings, we shall surrender them to the bow as God's will. He will play the most exquisite music of a lifetime.

From the blindness of John Milton came rich literary compositions. From the imprisonment of John Bunyan came Pilgrim's Progress.

Anchored to God, practicing faith and full surrender, the Christian may

walk forward into the future unafraid.

When called upon to walk through the dark valley, look eagerly for the footprints of God's leadership. Begin to follow him. Then with Paul, you can say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me".