

Feeling Useless? How to Work for God

Part 3: Enduring Pushback & Hostility

(2/16/25)

Please turn to John 15:20-21,

LAST WEEK: Boldly Sharing with Unbelievers

- There are no “undercover” Christians—we’re called upon to be lights that shine and drive the darkness back.
- Light bulbs are measured by lumens: nightlights may only be 20 and streetlamps 10,000—both serve a function and are necessary.
- When walking into a dark parking lot I want a bright streetlight.
- When stumbling into the bathroom at 2 AM, I only need a night light.
- You and I may never be Christian celebrities standing up in front of thousands at an arena.
- Perhaps we’re meant to bring light to a friend, family member, or co-worker going through a rough time.
- When sharing the good news, it must be with WORDS and not just compassionate actions.
- One of God’s commandments is to share Him with others via speaking—Faith comes by HEARING.
- If you’re shy, then pray to the Lord and ask Him for boldness.
- He empowers us to obey commands of action as well as restraint.

TODAY we will come to believe that **saying Jesus’ name, sharing His Gospel, and quoting His Word will bring pushback and hostility.**

We must learn to anticipate it and count it as VICTORY.

To look forward to it like we’ve just scored a point in some competition.

We cannot allow pushback and hostility to silence or cow us.

IT’S TIME FOR THE CHURCH TO SPEAK AND BEAR WHATEVER CONSEQUENCES MAY COME.

Have you ever seen a pond or lake when there's no wind: it's like a giant mirror, yes? What would happen if you were to throw a stone in it? Even a small one would be quite noticeable? Make waves? Let's call a perfectly still pond "status quo."

How's the status quo for the world in general as far as Godliness & devotion to Jesus? How about the USA? NYS?

If you answered "no" to those questions then wouldn't "making waves" for Jesus' sake be a good thing? I'm not talking about political or social waves, I'm talking about mentioning the name of Jesus, verbally sharing His Gospel, and quoting the Bible.

Satan wants the world blinded to the truth which is the good news that Jesus came here to Save us, and that the offer is still temporarily open. The Gospel hurts Satan and his plans moreso than any other "information" or "revelation" out there. Mark Zuckerberg putting us in FB jail for controversial political comments is one thing.

If you share the good news or say the name of Jesus in an adoring fashion, **the pushback becomes personal: face to face.** It's not just an unknown social media "fact checker" wagging their finger that you violated community standards. ***It's a friend, a family member, a spouse, or a co-worker becoming hostile and maybe taking action.***

If choose to speak in this way, pushback and hostility WILL happen. You will make waves. It will potentially ruin relationships and inspire people to think and feel badly about you. Some will lie, distort, and make false accusations about you if you choose this.

[Jhn 15:20-21 ESV] 20 Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' **If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.** If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. 21 But all these things **they will do to you on account of my name,** because they do not know him who sent me.

With no cynicism, let's believe and accept the following: **whatever was done and said to Jesus can and maybe will be done and said to us.**

- If people gave Jesus pushback when He shared the good news, they'll give us pushback.
- If they lied about Him and made false accusations to try and destroy His reputation, they'll do the same to us.
- If they physically attacked Him and tried to have Him arrested, jailed, or killed, the same can happen to us.

- Jesus has Saved us from God's wrath and eternal punishment.
- He's secured us a spot in the NJ and guaranteed a resurrected body.
- He's placed God the Holy Spirit inside us to be our Companion.

Yet we are subject to pushback, hostility, and persecution. The only way to get around that is to be a silent, undercover Christian whose too afraid to make waves.

Getting blowback and hostility hurts, especially when it comes from someone we love and threatens to ruin a relationship.

Yet I ask that if we really believe all this stuff, **THEN SHOULDN'T WE TAKE THE RISK?**

Do we really believe that there is both salvation and damnation? Heaven and Hell? Resurrection and death?

If you're doubting the damnation, hell, and death part and you're hesitant to affirm those truths then I ask you this: **why did Jesus need to come here?**

If there is no damnation and everyone is saved, if no one's going to Hell and everyone goes to heaven, and if all will be raised into eternal life then why did humanity need Jesus?

- Why did He need to reduce Himself from being omnipotent God on the throne to appearing here in a regular human body?
- Why did He need to share the good news?
- Why did He endure being hated, rejected, persecuted, betrayed, and crucified at the hands of His own creations that He came here to help?

He did all that because we NEED saving.

We're not good enough to earn heaven, righteousness, or eternal life. We need Jesus.

HE CAME HERE BECAUSE HE WANTED TO FREE US FROM WHERE WE WERE GOING. In our sin and unbelief we were headed for damnation, death, and Hell. Christ delivered us from all those things and made us sons and daughters of God.

He, His Apostles, and those who came after them shared the good news. We heard it, received Him, and were Saved.

I was offended at the State Line Camping guy who shared Jesus with me while I was waiting to have my hitch installed in 1997 and in my characteristically loud voice, told him to back off.

I almost ended my relationship with Becky around the same time when she told me she was “praying for me to repent and be Saved” when I was trying to convert HER to my New Age beliefs.

I didn’t like it when her mother kept asking if I was Saved! She was really persistent and I know I gave her some attitude more than once. Especially when she prophesied that *I* was going to be “the answer to her prayers.” To my unbelieving and unsaved face, she told me that God had promised for one of her kids to marry a born-again Christian who was devout and that He had chosen ME.

Now I say “thank God!” for the fellow at State Line, my wife, my MIL and several others who called upon me to repent and be Saved or I might not be standing in front of you right now.

There are 2 sacred cows that need killing for us to obey God’s command to share:

- For people to like us/our reputation.
- Our personal peace.

SACRED COW #1. I’m NOT saying to not care about what other people think as a whole...if we did that, we might lose compassion and empathy, both of which are Godly qualities that connect us to others.

What I am saying is to **prioritize people hearing about Jesus over what they think of us or whether they like us**...and how that makes us feel. Empathizing with others is one thing because we’re feeling their emotions which can be quite the burden. *Worry about our standing with them is something entirely different.*

- We must be willing to take the risk of them thinking less of us.
- We must prioritize them hearing the good news and maybe being Saved vs. personal pride.

When telling a crowd Who He really was, they said this to Jesus:

[Jhn 8:48 ESV] 48 The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

Calling a Jew a “Samaritan” was ***a major insult*** back then. The same crowd went to say that Jesus was born in fornication because they knew Joseph wasn’t His dad.

[Mat 11:19 ESV] 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' ."

Jesus was compassionate and empathetic, loving everyone. That being said, **HE DIDN'T RAISE UP HIS REPUTATION OR LIKEABILITY ABOVE WHAT FATHER HAD COMMANDED HIM TO DO:** share the good news. The result was being insulted, lied about, mislabeled, and falsely accused. The same thing happened to all the Apostles after Jesus ascended to Heaven.

SACRED COW #2. The USA has become so divisive that most of us are sacrificing things at the altar of personal peace. We isolate, medicate, and bring dogs with us wherever we go and still can't seem to achieve it.

According to the American Psychological Association who did a “stress test” on Americans in 2024, here are their findings:

- 70% of Americans are constantly worried about the future.
- 73% of Americans are stressed over the economy.
- 50% of Americans are stressed in general without pointing to a particular reason.

Despite our efforts to maintain our personal peace, does it sound like we're succeeding? That our methods are working? Does anyone believe that Americans have more personal peace now than we did when we were more community minded (vs isolation), less medicated, and left our pets at home?

Do you have a family member or co-worker who doesn't like Trump?

What would happen if you sat down with that person wearing a MAGA hat? Do you think you'd get some pushback? Maybe outright hostility even to the point where the other raises their voice and calls you some choice names? Doesn't want to be around you after that?

Whoever we're around, we are wearing Jesus:

[Gal 3:27 ESV] 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have **put on Christ**.

[Rom 13:14 ESV] 14 But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

We wear Jesus just like clothing and when we do so openly, it's brighter and draws more attention to itself than even a MAGA hat. It will get responses both affectionate and hostile.

In **[Acts 19:23-29 ESV]** a **riot broke out** because the preaching of the Gospel tanked a local economy dependent upon selling pagan religious items! Paul's ministry team was mobbed and dragged into a theater.

In **Acts 21:27** Paul was preaching at the Temple and was ***mobbed, then arrested***. They started beating on him with intent to murder, only stopped by Roman soldiers intervening. Even then he was arrested, placed him in chains, and given a sham trial.

[2Ti 3:12 ESV] 12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

What if we not only expected blowback, but counted it as a VICTORY?

[Mat 5:10-12 ESV] 10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

There are two blessed's here each of which name the following:

- The actions we take (sharing the Gospel)
- Other's response
- Heavenly reward

We inherit God's Kingdom AND our reward we enjoy there will be "great" (goes beyond just being Saved and dwelling there).

When we're persecuted because we shared Jesus, **it's a point for our team**. It's a victory. If it happened to Jesus then it happened to us, we get to be like Him which is our goal.

Let me say one more thing before I close: **THERE'S A TRANSCENDENT SUPERNATURAL PEACE THAT'S GIVEN BY GOD WHEN WE OBEY HIM**. A peace that "passes understanding" because it defies external circumstances that ought to be taking our peace away. A peace that doesn't require medication, an emotional support dog, or cutting a bunch of people from our lives.

Enduring these things will all be worth it when we eventually stand before Jesus on His throne to be judged. Then is when we hear “well done good and faithful servant!”