

#242 “Why True Christianity Will Never Be Popular”

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For those who have read my past writings, particularly *Catch Fire*, you know that I believe that God could do a great work of revival among His people leading to the conversion of many who are lost. I hope I never lose that belief or stop praying to that end. However, we shouldn't be deceived into thinking that somehow Christians will take over the globe and win everybody to Christ. The book of Revelation exists for a reason, for most will refuse the gospel and shake their fists at Christ until the very end. The way is indeed narrow, and few find it (Matthew 7:14). This doesn't mean that a church cannot grow exceedingly large like the early church at Jerusalem. God is powerful, alive, and working, after all. But it does mean that we need to be discerning, knowing that many will be tempted to take unbiblical shortcuts, seeking a version of success that is signaled merely by popularity rather than by genuine conversions and growth. Jesus had a great number of followers, but most melted away. Only a few endured. Apparently, Jesus wasn't after popularity, for if He was, He failed (John 6:66). But He didn't fail, for He knew that the truth would never be loved by the world and that those who love Him would also be hated by the world. Here now are seven specific reasons why Christianity in its purest form can and will never be popular.

#1 Christianity requires that we tell the world that it is evil. Nobody wants to hear that they are perverted, disturbed, and deceived at the deepest heart level (Jeremiah 17:9). But this is the truth of Scripture, and before the good news can be declared, the bad news must be recognized. Otherwise, Jesus will be just some nice guy who is totally irrelevant. The gospel does not begin with God giving us all wonderful lives on earth. Rather, it begins with God loving mankind despite his evil and despite rejecting Him. The world will never enjoy hearing about their evil and wicked ways, and therefore Christianity can never be popular.

#2 Christianity requires that we tell the world to give up their sin. Not only must we tell people dead in sin that they are indeed dead in sin (Romans 3:23, Ephesians 2:1), but we must tell them that they must change their ways (Matthew 4:17). The problem is people love their sin more than Christ, and change is not the path of least resistance (John 6:60). There is a highway to hell (Matthew 7:13), full of traffic and highly popular. Most prefer the pleasures of sin for this passing, temporary time on earth, despite the destruction and death that it brings. Christianity is just too convicting for people for it to be popular.

#3 Christianity believes in a holy God Who must pour His just wrath out upon sinners by casting them into hell, a place of fire and eternal, conscious torment. The popular view is to declare that God is love and could never do such a thing as send people to hell. But hell is not the devil's domain but God's rendering of wrath (Revelation 20:15). Because people justify their character as being mostly good and their behavior as being generally acceptable, they cannot conceive of how hell could be just. So Christians preach, and the message ricochets off hardened hearts that are blind to their own total depravity. They cannot see just how they have provoked God to anger (Romans 5:9). Thus, Christianity

will not be popular, but it will be popular to mock and ridicule those who do believe in it. This is the way it has always been, and it is the way it always will be until Christ judges the world.

#4 Christianity believes in engaging the mind (1 Peter 1:13) and being sober of spirit (1 Peter 4:7, 5:8).

However, most people are content to guzzle down a few beers and veg in front of the television. They don't want to be bothered with the heavy questions of life. But there is a reason alcohol is so popular. The conscience must be dulled, quieted, and suppressed for sin to be indulged in peacefully. Alcohol is the boast of many because it dulls the senses and causes them to forget about their emptiness and the purposelessness. When Christianity preaches against drunkenness or any other sedatives of the devil and says to be rather filled with the Spirit and the Word (Ephesians 5:18), how can that ever be popular?

#5 Christianity is not playing on a neutral field in which mere reason, logic, and common sense would gain the victory of souls.

People are blinded by the devil, and the tables are tilted in his favor (2 Timothy 2:26). He has corrupted their thinking mechanisms, he has blinded them to their own contradictions, and he has created in them false metrics for happiness. Only the power of God convicting a heart through His Word can set a person free. It is a total miracle, a divine work of God. It is not something that can be reduced into a formula, system, or a convenient, repeatable, marketable methodology. Rather, we must trust the power of the Word, the Spirit's leading, and the open doors provided by God. We are totally dependent upon Him to open hearts as we preach. It is not easy to believe but hard because there are blind spots and a fierce opposition. Christianity won't be popular because the devil is waging an intense battle. He is not all-powerful, however, and God will win the war, just not through a popularity contest.

#6 Christianity is an exclusive religion in the sense that it believes in absolute truth. Thus, by definition, it rules out and condemns the vast majority of the world (John 14:6). The world hates the truth, and thus absolute truth concerning our Lord will always be unpopular. This is not to say forms of Christianity will not be made popular from time to time, but we do not preach empty religion or a list of factual beliefs but rather a redemptive gospel. The devil can use religion or denominations to his end, but he cannot use the pure and unadulterated gospel. This is why it will never be popular; it would do the devil too much damage.

#7 Christianity teaches a lifestyle of sacrifice, and it invites suffering. Jesus spoke of having to die in order to live (John 12:24), and He said that there would be a great and high cost of discipleship (Luke 14:25-28). Families might reject Christians, governments might persecute Christians, and friends might abandon Christians. This is the way it is, even despite Christians choosing to live sacrificial and selfless lives. Thus, why would people in their natural state choose to deny themselves when it might not gain them anything earthly anyway other than rejection and abandonment? People see all that they could lose, and they are unable to appreciate what they would gain in Jesus.

Many have used a form of godliness to gain popularity, fame, and the spotlight for a season. But, in sacrificing purity of the faith for popularity of the faith, they have denied the power of the God they claim to serve (2 Timothy 3:5). To be opposed by the world should give us hope, and to be persecuted should be a blessing (Matthew 5:10). We shouldn't be concerned about being a minority, but rather we

should be concerned for the majority. Gospel preaching will almost always be out of season, and it will carry with it a cost. The surrendering of fitting in and being liked or popular must be part of the cross that we bear. It is all part of following the One Who, although God in the flesh, was hated enough by the world to brutally execute. So why do we who follow in His steps think it will go all that differently for us (John 15:18)? May God make us less afraid of the cost and more bold concerning the lost. It is not about being popular; it is about being right.