

# The Sword of the Marginalization of Jesus and His Church Series: The Watchman On The Wall

Rod Myers

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The watchman has the responsibility to warn the city of impending danger. If he doesn't and the city is attacked he will be held responsible. Often the swords coming against the family, church, city and nation is not merely an outside threat, but a threat from within. Sometimes we are our own worst enemy. Thus far we have looked at the:

Sword of Sexuality and Identity

Sword of Racism and Bigotry

Sword of Life and Death

Today, Sword of the Marginalization of Jesus and His Church

What does it mean to marginalize something or someone? Before marginalization can take place:

- What is being marginalized had to be more at the center once
- What is being marginalized has to be devalued
- What is being marginalized has to be replaced by something else

In the case of Jesus and His church, there was a time when both were more at the center of American life.

<https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>

***The religious landscape of the United States continues to change at a rapid clip. In Pew Research Center telephone surveys conducted in 2018 and 2019, 65% of American adults describe themselves as Christians when asked about their religion, down 12 percentage points over the past decade. Meanwhile, the religiously unaffiliated share of the population, consisting of people who describe their religious identity as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular,” now stands at 26%, up from 17% in 2009.***

***Both Protestantism and Catholicism are experiencing losses of population share. Currently, 43% of U.S. adults identify with Protestantism, down from 51% in 2009. And one-in-five adults (20%) are Catholic, down from 23% in 2009. Meanwhile, all subsets of the religiously unaffiliated population – a group also known as religious “nones” – have seen their numbers swell. Self-described atheists now account for 4% of U.S. adults, up modestly but significantly from 2% in 2009; agnostics make up 5% of U.S. adults, up from 3% a decade ago; and 17% of***

**Americans now describe their religion as “nothing in particular,” up from 12% in 2009. Members of non-Christian religions also have grown modestly as a share of the adult population.**

<https://sowhatfaith.com/2019/09/04/are-10000-churches-closing-every-year/>

**Academic research into this topic suggests that in recent years 1% to 2% of American churches close. Put differently the best estimate among researchers is that 3,850 to 7,700 congregations closing a year, which works out to around 75 to 150 congregations a week.**

### **What is happening?**

- Secularization of society driven by skepticism, selfishness, and socialism
- Loss of congregational commitment, loyalty, and connections
- The lie of separation of church and state
- The rejection of Jesus being the only way to be saved

### **Light, Salt, and Yeast:**

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matt.5:13-16)

“He told them still another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.’” (Matt.13:33)

- Once saltiness is lost, how can it be made salty again? Once Jesus and His church lose influence in society, how can it be made influential again?
- Un-salty salt will be trampled under the foot of men because it has no value to them.
- Therefore, fight to retain saltiness/influence.
- Light is meant to be displayed, to be seen. Once it is no longer seen, there will be no effect.
- Darkness is the result of the lack of light of Jesus and His church.
- Leaven has to be mixed into the dough. This is a deliberate and difficult process. If it is not done, then we have to live with flatbread.
- Without the influence of Jesus and His church the result will be bland food, dark houses, and flatbread.

Remember when the Israelites were forced to make the same quota of bricks with less straw? That is what Christians today are being asked to do. Have the same number of people in church while the number of receptive hearts is decreasing significantly.

### **What are Christians to do? Here are some options:**

- Fight the political battles of prayer in schools, sports, and civil gatherings, God mentioned and included in the public square, or statements like “in God we trust” left on our money. Fight to overturn Row v Wade; Second amendment gun rights; et. The strategy is that if we can restore some of these wholesale practices and do away with some anti-God practices in society, people will want to return to God and follow Jesus and flock back to church. I doubt it.
- In my opinion the only two strategies that have any chance of working are:
  - Demonstrate to the world an authentic, sacrificial, serious, radical devotion to Jesus and His way so that society cannot misunderstand our commitment to Jesus and cannot accuse us of hypocrisy. (This is the culture of discipleship I have been talking about in previous messages)
  - Aggressively share the gospel of Jesus with anyone who will listen in an atmosphere of authentic love and acceptance of the person. We must sow more seed to get the same crop we used to get.

Here is what Peter said about living in the pagan society of His day:

1 Peter 2:11-17, 11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. 13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. 16 Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. 17 Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.

1 Peter 3:8-16, 8 Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. 11 They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” 13 Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats ; do not be frightened.” 15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.