

Persecution of Believers

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Persecution is one of the marks of Bible Christianity. The apostle wrote NKJV Acts 14:22 *“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”* If we are persecuted by the world, because of our trust on the Atonement of Christ, it shows that our faith is believing faith.

After Stephen was martyred for his faith Acts 8:1 *“There was a great persecution against the church.”*

Any persecution is proof of true Christianity and genuine faith in God. Satan has convinced most, who proclaim to be followers of Christ, to think that anyone is a Christian, if they just say they are; if they attend a Christian church; and as long as a person looks pious and talks about religious beliefs, that that makes them righteous before God. But there is a huge difference from just looking religious and actually being righteous.

There needs to be a total surrender to God’s will and plan, through a believing, trusting, and living faith in the Atonement Blood of Jesus—a huge and very important difference.

Satan constantly tries to lower the standard of Christianity and to pull believers away from the Word of God until there is no real trust on God, and no genuine faith in Christ, for anything. If anyone thinks they can be a true child of God, but not walk in the light of His gospel Truth, and not follow New Testament teaching, Satan will quickly take them outside of God’s will in everything.

The object of God is that we shall be truly and entirely His, fully separated unto Him; everything of sin,

self, and Satan completely out of the way. As we commit ourselves to Him, He will adjust our life so as to bring us to the place where we will be entirely separate unto Him.

Satan will do anything to distort God’s Truth, which is why the apostle said 2 Corinthians 4:2 WEY *“We practice no cunning tricks [have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty AV], nor do we adulterate God’s Message. But by a full clear statement of the truth we strive to commend ourselves in the presence of God to every human conscience.”* The apostle gave the pure Truth of God’s Word, which is an uncompromising faith in God’s power.

We are required by God to give our life totally to Him, and to separate ourselves from the world and sin. 2 Corinthians 6:17-18 NIV *“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”*

The first mark of true discipleship is living in the will of God, by following what is written, from cover to cover in God’s written Book, the Bible. Our commitment to God’s Truth and keeping separate from those who do not trust Him for things in this life, may bring persecution, but we answer only to God. Matthew 7:21 WEY *“Not every one who says to me, ‘Master, Master,’ will enter the Kingdom of the Heavens, but only those who are obedient to [does the will of NIV] my Father who is in Heaven.”*

True Christianity is lacking in the lives of many who say they are believers. They may be professing faith but are not possessing real faith in Christ. 1 John 2:4 NKJV *“He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”* Bible Christians obeyed God’s Word—not in their own strength, but in God’s strength, through His Holy Spirit—after confessing and forsaking their sins. True Christianity includes being healed and protected by the power of God when a believing faith is on the Blood of His Son.

True Christians will be tempted, tried, and persecuted, but God promises to deliver us. God’s people, throughout the Bible received many answers to prayer for healing, protection, and persecution, but Satan tries

to hide that. AV Matthew 7:13-14 *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”* AV Matthew 22:14 *“Many are called, but few are chosen.”*

Those who truly believe and trust God in faith would be as scarce in this day, as those who entered Noah’s Ark in that day. Jesus predicted Luke 17:26 NKJV *“As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man.”* Only eight persons met the conditions of believing faith on God—the rest of the world perished in the flood.

Jesus gave another example where only three persons escaped. Luke 17:28-29 NKJV *“Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.”* Trusting God in believing faith has always been the issue. Luke 18:8 NIV *“When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”*

We all need a spiritual revival and real awakening to God’s Truth. The Holy Spirit inspired the words in Ephesians 5:14 NKJV *“Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.”* And also in Isaiah 60:1, *“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.”* A deep spiritual revival is desperately needed in our hearts and in the world.

Divine protection that we have is the same as it was throughout the Bible. It was so perfect that Moses was inspired to write that no terror, no pestilence, or no plague could touch us. He said that a thousand could fall at our side, or ten thousand at our right hand, but we would not be harmed. (Psalm 91)

In the first two centuries, Christians suffered great persecution; nothing they did pleased the world or the flesh or Satan until the third century. The Christian church then fell to the level of the world and persecution has not been as severe for Christians after that.

Any group, or individual, who truly believes and lives by the full Truth of God’s Word, will be perse-

cuted—just as they were persecuted in the first two centuries. Their lives were an offense to the world, so they were persecuted by the devil and his agents.

If our faith in God does not bring the direct attacks of Satan; and if our faith does not result in persecution, hatred, anger, and opposition from those who belong to the world, then we do not have the first-century brand of Truth. When anyone follows the steps of Jesus and His disciples, they will encounter opposition from the devil.

Persecution means someone is acting against us; but the power in back of all opposition is the devil and his agents. When someone wants to live God's Truth, Satan begins to fight them. It is a spiritual battle Ephesians 6:12 NIV *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers [principalities AV], against the authorities, against the [unseen NLT] powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil [wickedness in high places AV]."*

The moment we become Bible Christians; Satan begins to work. Paul said we wrestle against the spiritual hosts in the Heavenly warfare. If we are a friend of the world, we are an enemy of God; and if the world is friendly with you, has a good word for you, have never been persecuted; or if there has never been anything said to you on account of your Christian life; there must be something missing, spiritually speaking. We must have lost our salt, Matthew 5:13, *"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."*

If we have any real salt of the gospel, or have the real Truth of God, we will face real persecution from the enemy.

A physical attack is not persecution—but it is an oppression from Satan. He wants to rob us of our Atonement right to health and healing. We are promised deliverance from sickness, trouble, and affliction—because these are Divine Atonement rights through Jesus' shed Blood on Calvary's Cross written out for us in Isaiah 53:4-6—they are promises from God. There is, however, no promise to be exempted from persecution.

The apostle Paul said 2 Timothy 3:10-12 NKJV *"You have carefully followed my doctrine [teaching*

NIV], manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering [patience], love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions"—etc. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." Satan tried to bring harm to the apostle by unbelievers.

The devil wants us to accept fear and admit defeat, so he causes problems in the home or in the workplace, has unscriptural laws or mandates written. He tries to destroy our peace in one way or another. Even though our persecution seems to be far less than what first-century Christians faced, unbelievers are just as wicked, and Satan is just as evil today, as he was then.

Paul warns Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 NIV *"Mark this: There will be terrible [perilous AV dangerous] times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited [self-important WEY], lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying [the AV] power. **Have nothing to do with them.**"*

Jesus said John 15:18-20 NIV *"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."* If they persecuted the Master of the house and nailed Him to the cross, how much more will they persecute those of His household.

The apostle Paul wrote—1 Thessalonians 2:13 NKJV *"We thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe."*

Anyone who accepts, believes, and lives by the Word of God, will be persecuted by those who do not accept, do not believe, and do not live by that Truth. 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 NIV *"For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the*

Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also [persecute us AV].

"They displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last."

The most spiritual churches in the first century were the most persecuted churches. The Laodicean church was not persecuted because it was not zealous for God's Truth. Jesus said to them Revelation 3:17 NIV *"You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked."*

Satan would not bother a wretched, pitiful, and spiritually blind church, but he would lull them to sleep, and convince them that their minister is teaching the way to heaven, when the truth is he is not.

1 Peter 4:12-14 (WEY), *"Dear friends, do not be surprised at finding that that scorching flame of persecution is raging among you to put you to the test—as though some surprising thing were accidentally happening to you. On the contrary, in the degree that you share in the sufferings of the Christ, rejoice, so that at the unveiling of His glory you may also rejoice with triumphant gladness. You are to be envied, if you are being reproached for bearing the name of Christ; for in that case the Spirit of glory—even the Spirit of God—is resting upon you."*

When facing any persecution, the hope we keep alive is this: John 16:33 NIV, *"I have told you these things, [Jesus said] so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*



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