

Christianity and Persecution

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Persecution is one of the marks of Bible Christianity. There are three distinguishing marks of a Bible Christian. The object of Satan, in Christian life is to mix things up. He desires everybody to believe that everybody is a Christian; everything is all right. and if a person lives a good moral life, has their name on a church roll, they are then privileged to dabble a little in Christian Science, dabble in Spiritualism, and that they are still all right.

As long as they live a respectable life, act like sanctimonious people, they are all right. However, there is a vast difference in God's sight, between such people and the old Apostles and the people who walked with them. God sees it in an entirely different way.

There is a large religious organization which has a hymn in their church hymnal, which reads as follows—"God has His best and the few who are willing to stand the test; But His second best for them who cannot."

Just as if God has any second best: This lowers the standard of Christianity at once and gives Satan a chance to come in and steal the whole thing before he is through. If anyone gets the idea that he can be God's true child and not walk in the light, and obey God's Word at that moment, the enemy has the advantage over their life, and they are no more on their way to Heaven.

Satan is doing all he can, in these days, to mix these things up with Bible Christianity. There is no adulterating of God's truth, or Word. The object God has is that we shall be truly and entirely His, fully separated unto Him; everything of sin, self and Satan out of the way and 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.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the

Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6: 17-18) That is a wide sweeping statement.

These three marks of Bible Christianity are absent in the life of the average professed Christian. The first mark is righteousness; a life lived within the lids of this Book. Jesus said—"Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My father which is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21)

One who professes to know Him and does not keep His Word is a liar and the truth is not in him. (1 John 2:4) "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Beloved, a first mark of Bible Christianity is obedience to the Word of God., not in our own strength, but through the power of an inward life, which comes through confessing and forsaking of sin.

A second mark of a true Christian is health and protection for the body. We do not say that Bible Christians will not be tempted in their bodies, but God will deliver and protect them. You will never find a Bible Christian, in the entire Bible, who died during a pestilence, not one drowned, not one killed in an accident. Satan does not like us to come to this knowledge; he desires people to think if they have a good start, live a moral life, keep out of jail, they are sure to get to Heaven. Of course, that is unscriptural from every standpoint, for Jesus said:(Matt.7:13-14) "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. Many are called, but few are chosen;". (Apostle Paul was inspired to say that 'many run in the race, but only one receives the prize.'

Jesus also said—"As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be when the Son of Man cometh." What He meant was that Bible Christianity would be scarce and those who really bore the marks of it would be as scarce as those who really believed God and entered into the ark; as there were only eight persons saved in the ark, while the whole world perished in the flood.

As it was in the days of Lot, only three persons, Lot and his daughters, escaped out of these small cities, when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed; so shall it be in the days when the Son of Man is revealed. Jesus when speaking about the unjust judge and the poor widow closed up

the parable with these words: "When the Son of Man cometh will He find faiths on the earth?"

If there is one thing above another, needed in this Age, it is that everyone needs to wake up from spiritual slumber and unawareness and to see things as God sees them, from a real Bible standpoint. The Holy Spirit never said a more appropriate Word for this time, than is written in the 5th chapter of Ephesians. "Awake thou that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Ephes. 5:14) (Spiritual-awareness) is most-needed in the Christian world today).

So, one's protection for their body is a second mark of Bible Christianity. The protection offered in the Bible was so great that Moses said in the 91st Psalm—"that a thousand could fall at our side and ten thousand at our right hand, but it should not come nigh us."

Then a third mark of Bible Christianity is 'persecution'. The Church 'fell down to the level of the world' in the third century, and there has been practically no persecution (in the visible church as a whole) since that time. At the present time however, there have been many who have gotten back to pure 'un-adulterated Gospel' as it was in the first two centuries at which time they suffered great persecution. Nothing they did pleased the world, or the flesh, or Satan.

If Christianity does not bring the direct attacks of Satan, does not bring malice and hatred without cause (from everybody who belongs to Satan), we do not have that first-century brand of Christianity. We may be on the road to that but have not reached the goal as yet.

When we strike the footsteps of Jesus Christ and the early disciples of the first-century church, we will encounter the same opposition from the world, the flesh, and the devil, as they did. We can prove from the Scriptures, that 'persecution is a mark of Bible Christianity, all through the Bible, not only in the Old, but in the New Testament especially, where the Gospel light was shining clearly.

(The late Pastor said) we want to define the word "persecution." It is usually understood to mean people trying to do something to you from the outside; but the power back of persecution is Satan, and without any reason, without any sense of justice or fairness, he will try to ridicule and harm us in every way from the outside.

However, 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, if everybody has a good word for you, and you have never been persecuted; if there has never been anything said to you on account of your Christian life; you need to take stock of yourself at once, for spiritually speaking there are some goods missing; we have lost our salt (if we ever had any. "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savor, where-withal shall it be salted?" If we have 'real salt of the Gospel' Satan will be hard after us all the time. Persecution is an outside attack.

Some people think when they are ill with an oppression of the body, that it is persecution. It is not persecution, but a sign that Satan is trying to rob them of their Blood-bought rights of good health, and God has promised we shall be delivered from sickness; but no place in the Bible are we promised to be exempted from persecution.

We are promised from Genesis to Revelation that we shall be delivered from sickness, trouble, and sorrow, for these are the three 'charter rights' of the Atonement, of which Isaiah speaks in 53rd chapter (verses 4-6). But we have no promise to 'be delivered from persecution'. A person, who is a Christian, must be willing to be persecuted, because that comes with Christian life.

One time I was speaking on the 74th Psalm (the Pastor said), and one man arose and said that sickness was persecution, and there are many people, who use that particular verse to try to prove that statement. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers him out of them all." (Psalm 34:19 says).

That word "affliction" in present-day English, means 'oppression of body', but in this case best meaning of that word would be 'outside persecution for righteousness sake'; but the Lord will deliver us out of those afflictions, one after another.

The real thought is, "Many are the evils which Satan tries to bring on the righteous. We have the same distinguishing mark given us in (James 5:13) "is any among you afflicted? let him pray." If we are suffering evil at the hands of others, we are told to pray to God to deliver us

out of their hands, and for His blessing upon those 'persecutors'. However, if we are sick, we are to call for Elders and have them anoint us. (James 5:14-15).

(2nd Timothy 3rd chapter), Paul tells us that every true child of God shall suffer persecution. "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecution I endured.; but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." (2nd Timothy 3:10-12).

Satan, through people, from the outside tried to reach him. Satan begins on Bible Christians personally to fill us with a spirit of doubt and fear by which we will be defeated then he will try to make trouble in our homes; then he will try through manmade laws, of which some seem plausible and very good from the outside. He uses the best instruments he can to gain his purpose, and if he does not succeed in all these things, he will try mob rule; that is his last resort to reach the Truth after all persecutions, legal means and methods have been tried, unjust laws, etc. have failed, he will then try mob rule, and every true child of God (especially teachers), will be compelled. to meet the mob rule if they possess the genuine article of salvation.

If Satan resorts to mob rule you may be assured you have the genuine brand of Christianity, as that is the last weapon the devil uses; he has been badly defeated when he resorts to that.

If any people think there is not much persecution in these days because there are so many Christians. That is not true at all. The human heart is just as vile today; (in fact), worse than it was in the 'days of Noah'. "Know this also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, 'despisers of those that are good', traitors, heady, high-minded, 'lovers of pleasure' more than 'lovers of God'; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such 'turn away'." (2nd Timothy 3:1-5)

(John 15th chapter) Jesus tells us something more about 'persecution'. "If the world hate

you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world., but I have chosen you out of the world, there-fore, the world hates you."

The world is represented by public opinion, (such as newspapers, and many more news media sources this day). Well, we need to notice the attitude that they take toward 'the real truth of God', and of how they pervert the truth. Jesus said, "If they persecuted me," (meaning the Master of the House, the 'Son of God', even to nailing Me to the cross), how much more will they persecute those of the household.?"

In (1 Thess.2:13-16), Paul was telling this church a few things. "For this cause also, thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, 'the Word of God', which effectually worketh also in you that believe." "For ye, brethren, became followers of the Churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus; for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews; who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God and are contrary to all men."

It is also very noticeable that the most spiritual Churches in the New Testament were the most persecuted. The Laodicean church had no persecutions, because she proudly said: "I am rich, and increased with goods, and. have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Reve.3:17)

Satan never disturbs a wretched., miserable, blind church! He will lull those people to sleep, and praise the minister, and will tell the members that he is the man who will take them to Heaven.

But (John 16:33 says), "In the world. ye shall have tribulation (persecution)." (Satan will try to reach you by every means from the outside). "But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (Jesus said!) So why are we persecuted? Why do people have persecutions? Just for one reason primarily, which is for our own special benefit spiritually."

Beloved, we all need it; for as long as we would move peaceably, the world saying we were

good, our neighbors saying we were all right, that old self would be perfectly satisfied and contented; our old self likes people to think well of us; likes to have everybody say we are good; likes to be honored.; likes that big "I" to be set up on a pedestal. So 'pride' receives a fall, something comes along, and we lose our reputation; (it just 'flees away overnight').

Well, Beloved, that is the healthiest thing that can happen to us 'spiritually', because it crucifies 'self'. Jesus 'laid aside His reputation', while we are so afraid of our being called a crank, a fanatic, an extremist. But Jesus made Himself of no reputation (and his own family thought He was crazy); but 'He cared not', because He told His followers 'not to be afraid of men', but to 'fear Him who had power to destroy the soul'.

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(END PART-1 HERE)

(LORD WILLING WE WILL HAVE A PART 2 OF THIS MESSAGE AT A LATER DATE.)

SOME MAIN POINTS:

1 Persecution is one of the marks of Bible Christianity. One of the distinguishing marks of a true Bible Christian.

2 (2nd Timothy 3:12). "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution."

3 (John 16:33) "In the world ye shall have tribulation (persecution)." (The devil will try to reach you by every means from the outside). "But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (Jesus said).

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