

Christianity and Persecution

Part 2

#S418R 0604 25W

(Part 1 of the message on 'Christianity and Persecution', paused by informing us how "Satan never disturbs a wretched, miserable, blind church! Satan will lull those people to sleep and praise the minister, and he will tell the members that he is the man who will take them to Heaven. But John 16:33 warns "**In the world, ye shall have tribulation**" (persecution). (Satan will try to reach us from the outside, via every means). "**But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.**"

[Some people think when they are ill with an oppression of the body, that it is persecution. It is not persecution, but it is 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 the Bible does not promise that we will be exempted from persecution.]

So (we were questioned) "why are we persecuted?" "Why do people have these persecutions?" Just for one reason, primarily, which is for our own special benefit. And we all need it; for as long as we would move peaceably, the wor1d saying we were good, our neighbors saying we were all right, then that 'old self' hidden in our heart, would be perfectly satisfied and contented; our old self likes people to think well of us; likes to have everybody say we are good; it likes to be honored.; it likes for that big "I" to be set up on a pedestal. So 'pride' must receive a fall, as something comes along, and we lose our reputation; it seems to just 'flee away overnight'.

Well, that is the healthiest thing that could happen 'spiritually speaking', because it crucifies 'self', (and 'self' must be removed from our heart, so that Christ can enter and dwell within our heart).

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'.

If we are seeking the honor which comes from God only, we will not be affected by what men or demons think of us. The majority of people are not seeking that honor from God, but they are very much concerned as to their own good reputation, so when 'Jesus comes back' they will be 'calling for the rocks to hide them' (he said), and, for 'the mountains to fall upon them'; while the real Christian (one who is seeking honor from God only), will be 'shining like the sun in the presence of God', and will be participating in 'the marriage supper of the lamb'. (God's Word says to us, about Jesus) "But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." (Phil.2:7).

Jesus Christ practically considered. Himself a nobody (as far as this world was concerned), and His own loved ones thought Him to be beside Himself. Until one will have been considered fanatical and crazy, then their salvation is not very deep-set 'Persecution' is to 'prove us', that is, to see whether or not we have the genuine stamp of Bible Christianity. If we have that Christianity, we will not worry nor be concerned about losing our reputation; nor about the 'lies of men' and what they say or do; rather, it will only cause our roots to go deeper into God's plan of life for the humble Christian. Through 'persecution' we are made into 'true children of God', for it will drive us toward God and cause 'Christ to dwell in our heart'. (1 Pet. 4:12) "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."

Is it not strange that we should be persecuted when others are not? But that really is not strange at all. They did not persecute the Jews in Jewish synagogue during Bible times, because Satan had succeeded in assuring them that they 'were on their road to Heaven.' But the moment Jesus Christ came into the synagogue and began to prophesy, they were filled with a spirit of murder, and they sought to take His life.

They were not satisfied until they took His last drop of blood.

That word 'trial' (in 4th chapter of 1 Peter) means persecutions. (Let's read that verse from Weymouth's translation); "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."(that is clearly stated.) So that 'persecution' is to discover what 'kind of stamp' we really carry (and how we are going to meet it). What kind of Christianity do we have, whether it is original Bible kind of Christianity, or not.

We have another reason given for why we are persecuted (2 Thess. 1:3-9) "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure", which is manifest 'evidence' of the 'righteous judgment of God', that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you also suffer;" since it is a 'righteous thing' with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled, "rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven" with His mighty angels, "in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who 'do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ'. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction 'from the presence of the Lord' and from the glory of His power."

We can read from Acts chapter 14, that it is 'through much persecution' we are to enter into the kingdom of God. 'Persecution' is not only going to try us, but prepare us, and make us worthy to enter the 'kingdom of Heaven'.

A person, who cannot go through successful in tribulation, and cannot stand up in the face of hatred, insult, and malice of their friends, neighbors, etc., are not worthy of the kingdom of God. And they will not get through the trials they come to face. The people who go through trial and 'are counted worthy of entrance', are those who endured, and successfully met trial and tribulation.

(2 Cor.12:7-10) Paul tells us about his experience. He said he had a 'messenger of Satan' to buffet him, it was like a thorn in his flesh, which annoyed him wherever he went. He said this was allowed, for two reasons; first, that he might not be exalted above measure, that he might not be lifted up and filled with self and pride, and so 'fall in the same condemnation' that Satan did. And the second reason was to reveal his weakness and helplessness, and that he would realize that God's power would come in and enable him to 'be more than conqueror' over all Satan would try to do to him (through that tormenting spirit).

So, how to meet the temptations we face is a very important part for each one of us. (1 Pet.4:12-13) "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

We need to take notice that the first thing we are to rejoice in, is 'the persecution'; for that privilege of having fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, and the persecutions He endured. In (Phil.3:8) Paul says-"For whom I have suffered. the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having 'mine own righteousness', which is the law, but that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; That I may know Him, and the 'power of His resurrection', and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

Paul was willing to suffer and even die, that he might win Jesus Christ. The similar thought that we may have is, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye."

Generally speaking, it makes us feel bad if we are called upon to suffer in this way, (but the Bible tells us, 1 Pet.4:14) "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." Did we ever realize God was glorified when people ridiculed us; that when people made fun and made sport of us, that it brought glory to

God? That is surely something for us to be happy about.

(On their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part, He is glorified). (vs.15-16) "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let Him glorify God for being permitted to bear that Name."

Why is all this? (vs.17-19) "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begins at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

In Hebrews 12:1-3 we are told another way of how we are to meet temptation: what we are to keep in our view. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

That tells us that we are to 'look to God'. If the 'Son of God', the Maker and Owner of Heaven and earth would be willing to lose His reputation and to bear reproach, to be murdered and hung on a cross, (how much more ought we to be willing to do the same?) (vs.4-6) "You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." (In that passage we are being admonished, that we have not lost any blood yet, it has only been talk on our part.)

(Luke 6:22 Jesus tells us) that "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the 'Son of Man's' sake." (In that passage Jesus mentioned several evil-things by which we may have to suffer, but He followed up saying in the next verse), to "Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for; behold, your reward is great in

Heaven: for in like manner did their fathers unto the prophets." (And Jesus cautioned), "Woe unto us when everyone speaks well of us."

In Acts 20th chapter, Paul described how he would meet temptation and persecution. Paul was going to Jerusalem, and he said (Acts 20:22-24) "And now impelled by a sense of duty, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit, at town after town, testifies to me that imprisonment and suffering are awaiting me. But even the sacrifice of my life I count as nothing, if only I may perfect my earthly course, and be faithful to the duty which the Lord Jesus has entrusted to me of proclaiming, as of supreme importance, the Good News of God's Grace."

(Rev.2:8-10) "And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things said the First and the Last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works and tribulations, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer; behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried."

That word 'Suffer' means 'persecution'; "tried" means to be 'tested', which was to see what kind of Christianity they really had (or possessed) in their heart; whether it was this modern day 'will-of-the-wisp' Christianity, or was it the first-century-Bible kind of true Christianity? "And ye shall have 'tribulation' ten days:" Jesus said. (That meant 'Persecution'; but if you hold steadfast in the midst of persecution, and do not yield an inch, even if it costs your life!). That tells us, see how important to go forward in such a time of 'persecution'-"our hope of Heaven depends on it," because Jesus followed up, saying, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a 'crown of life'." That means that our eternal life depends on our not being swerved away from 'the will of God', whatever men or demons may do or say to persecute us.

&&&&&&

www.fcqchurch.org

fcqchurch1@gmail.com

S418R 0604 25W

The First Century Gospel Church/Philadelphia

S418R-SOME MAIN POINTS:

1 Persecution is one of the marks of Bible Christianity and is one of the distinguishing marks of a true Bible Christian. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.”(2nd Timothy 3:12).

2 (John 16:33) “In the world ye shall have tribulation (persecution).” “But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

3 If there is one thing needed in this (or in any) 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.

4 Bible Christians were tested and endured persecution to see what kind of Christianity they really had (or possessed) in their heart; whether it was this modern day ‘will-of-the-wisp’ Christianity, or was it the first century-Bible kind of true Christianity? “And ye shall have ‘tribulation’ ten days:” Jesus said, (which meant ‘Persecution’;) (but, if you hold steadfast in the midst of persecution, and do not yield an inch even if it costs your life!) (because Jesus followed up, saying, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a ‘crown of life’.” (That means that our eternal life depends on our not being swerved away from ‘the will of God’, whatever men or demons may do or say to persecute us .)