

GROWING IN GRACE LETTERS! – Calling saints in Christ, (in our homes and with one another in Church), to walk in the Steps of Jesus! (1 Peter 2:15-25) Edited by James Bell, a servant of Jesus Christ!

6 9 26 V2n6A Persecution! Tribulation!

Martyrdom! — Past! Present! Future! [PRESENT for many in various countries in 2026!!]

Philippians 1:29, reveals a **SPECIAL GIFT FOR ALL CHRISTIANS:** ***“Unto you it is given (as a free gift) in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake!”*** **2 Timothy 3:12**, reminds us, ***“... all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”*** Church history reveals that **from Cain’s slaughter of Abel until the second coming of Jesus Christ—** God’s redeemed people have been, are, and will be subject to all manner of persecution. **Hebrews 12:32-40**, unveils that **throughout history, the righteous have been persecuted—** they have had trial of cruel mocking, scourging, and imprisonment.

They have been stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, and slain with the sword; they wandered in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in dens and in caves of the earth. **MANY** have died, at the hands of those for whose salvation they labored and prayed! **MOREOVER**, our Lord Jesus **PLAINLY** told His disciples that they would be **hated of all men for His name’s sake**; and that the time would come when those who kill them would be so filled with rage and blindness that they would believe they were doing God

service. (Matthew 10:21-39; John 16:1-3) **Let none therefore be SURPRISED or offended— for those who hate Christ Jesus will not love those who would lay down their lives for the Son of God!**

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, there were those who, “had hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 15:26)... but they were not called upon to become literal martyrs. **Every True Christian should live with the ‘Heart a Martyr!’— that is,** a real child of God is called to yield his/her life to follow Christ, rather than be false to his/her profession and treasonable to Christ! (Luke 14:26-27, 33). WE MUST stand firm and not be governed by popular opinion, but by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. The apostles said, **“We ought to obey God rather than man.”** Christian martyrs are Christian witnesses who LIVE and GIVE the gospel of Christ and for such testimony they are killed!

***** The Gospels help us to Anticipate Persecution!**

At first Peter could not comprehend that suffering and death for Jesus was a part of the divine plan (Matthew 16:16-22). But as we know Jesus cruelly suffered, bled, and died. Jesus often spoke to His disciples of both the blessedness of persecution and of the absolute certainty of it: Matthew 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; 16:1-4; 16:33. **John’s Gospel reveals at least three reasons why true Disciples of Jesus are persecuted:** 1. We do not belong to the present world-system. 2. We have been chosen out of this world-system by Christ. 3. The world’s hatred of believers is really an expression of their hatred of Jesus Christ.

***** The Book of Acts gives us Historical Accounts of Persecution!**

Please read Acts, marking all references to persecution. **Take special note of the fact that persecution was received with "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' name," (Acts 5:41).** **Also, look for the following Four Forms of Persecution:**

1. Intense Verbal Abuse: In Acts, Christians were interrogated, commanded to stop preaching in the name of Jesus, and threatened. Stephen was maligned and misrepresented by false witnesses, (Acts 4:3-30; Acts 6:9-14).

2. Physical Violence: Acts 5:40; 7:54-60; 8:3; 9:1; 26:10-11, these and other verses record that beatings, stonings, and prisons were the lot of early Christians.

3. Political Power: Acts 13:50; 16:19-20, and Acts 18 show God's saints facing political power as the enemies of Christ sought to silence the saints.

4. Loss of Civil Rights: Acts 16— after a mock trial, Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned. Throughout the centuries, many of God's Saints have faced and now face scorn, violent verbal abuse, inquisitions, fines, prisons, church buildings locked up, freedoms restricted, physical and psychological tortures, ridicule, rejection, etc. **Not every country has the same types of persecution.** But even in America a saint cannot live a godly

Christian life without facing ridicule, scorn, slander, rejection, etc. (SADLY, being masters at compromise we often avoid suffering for Jesus' sake!)

*** The Epistles: a True Analysis of Persecution

THANKFULLY, here is what persecution CANNOT accomplish: (1) Persecution cannot destroy the spirit of a Saint (2 Timothy 4:16-18). (2) Persecution cannot stop the progress of the Gospel (Philippians 1:12-18; Ephesians 6:20; Acts 16:19-34). (3) Persecution cannot separate us from the precious love of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:35-37).

SOME OF what persecution can accomplish: (1) Persecution provides assurance that we are saved (Phil 1:29; 2 Tim 3:12; John 15:19-20) (2) Persecution announces God's judgment that will come on those who oppose the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:4-6). (3) Persecution sharpens our vision of heavenly realities (Heb 10:32-34). (4) Persecution purifies our faith (1 Peter 1:7). (5) Persecution brings a sense of blessedness (1 Peter 3:14; 4:13-14). (6) Persecution builds up a deepening spirit of love and remembrance of Saints in other places (Hebrews 13:3). (7) Persecution separates the pretenders out of the flock of God's true sheep (Matt. 13:20-21).

*** The Book of Revelation: the Age of Persecution

The books of Thessalonians, Peter, and the Revelation were written to encourage and give direction to persecuted Christians. Sadly,

many comfort-loving Americans wrongly turn to these same books to focus on HOPED FOR ESCAPE FROM tribulation or persecution.

REALITY: Be they those who have lived during the last 2000 years of Church History, or in Islamic countries today, or in America tomorrow, or in the climatic last years before the return of Jesus Christ— **ALL who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb are subject to the possibility of persecution and tribulation.**

HOWEVER, NONE of the REDEEMED, (in the past, now, or in the future), WILL suffer God's wrath. (The redeemed have suffered, are suffering, and will suffer satan's and man's wrath.)

MOREOVER: There is zero Biblical revelation that men, satan, and/or demons will be able to **do anything any more destructive to 'great tribulation saints'** than they have always done and/or that they presently do in some countries to Christians. **AGAIN:** Every disciple of Jesus is a candidate for suffering, persecution, and even martyrdom!

Let us be prepared to courageously stand for the faith; and if called upon to be gracious in the hour of any Christian's highest privilege— **"Be thou faithful unto death...!"** (Revelation 2:10).

***** EXAMPLES: Suffering for the Gospel's Sake**

1. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, dying, offered two prayers. One was for himself: **"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."** The other was for his foes: **"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."**

2. The Apostle Paul said: ***“The Holy Ghost witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and imprisonments await me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy.”***

3. TESTIMONIES from saints, unknown to us:

a. “Do they cast us out of the city? They cannot cast us out of that which is in the heavens. If they who hate us could do this, they would do something real against us. **The only thing we have really to be afraid of is fearing anything more than God!**”

b. “Sire, it belongs truly to God’s church rather to suffer blows than to strike them; but let it be your pleasure to remember that **the church is an anvil which hath worn out many a hammer.**”

c. “The church has sometimes been brought so low and obscure a point **that if you can follow her in history, it is by the track of her blood**; and if you would see her, it is by the light of those fires in which her martyrs have been burnt.”

d. “To banish, imprison, plunder, starve, hang, and burn men for religion is not the Gospel of Christ, but the gospel of the devil. Christ never used anything like force or violence, except once; and that was to drive bad men out of the temple, and not to drive them in.”

e. “Persecution often does in this life what the last day will do completely — separate the wheat from the tares.”

JESUS SAYS: “You shall have tribulation: but be loyally faithful unto death. For though you may be killed, I will give you the crown of life! Be not afraid says our Lord, my help is nigh! Indeed! Rejoice!” (Revelation 2:2:10-11).

LET US NEVER FORGET: when we who are alive in Christ are delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, the resurrection life of Christ is mightily manifest! (2 Corinthians 4:7-12).

***** PREPARATION— Watchwords to confess, NOW:**

1. Every time difficulties and impossible situations arise now, BY THE GRACE OF GOD, I will believe in the omnipotence of God. I will not give place to worry, but completely trust in the Father's tender, loving care and means to help. ***Then... if, or when... persecution breaks out, I shall be 'practiced in faith.'***

2. Now, I will bear my small bodily ailments — pain, weakness, and fatigue — in faith in the power of Jesus' blood that sustains me and renews my strength. **THUS,** I shall have practice for the future when the physical suffering may be far greater.

3. Every time I am faced with hardship and meaninglessness, I will surrender my will, and when I am chastened, I will humble myself even more beneath the mighty hand of God.

4. I will look to Jesus ever anew, turning to Him with all my heart. And as I behold the Man of Sorrows, who was full of grief and affliction, a willingness to suffer for His sake is implanted in my soul.

I will look to Him, the mighty Victor, who has vanquished Satan and sin.

5. In faith I will surrender to JESUS in my daily battle against my spirit of criticism, pride, stinginess, envy, self-will, egoism, anger, the desires of the flesh, and bondage to people and things. Then such sin will be less able to weaken me in the future; and EVEN if I should be imprisoned for Christ, I can be a witness for Jesus to others, by radiating His love and peace.

6. I will bear every hardship, great or small, out of love for Jesus, so that when I have to undergo pain and torment in persecution, my natural reaction will be, **“I will bear it for Your sake, Jesus.”**

7. LORD JESUS, by grace I will live in close fellowship with YOU and fellow saints of a local Bible-believing church, conversing with YOU at all times and SEEKING to DAILY CULTIVATE LOVE FOR YOU, LORD JESUS— so that love, which is the strongest power of all, will give me the strength to bear the suffering in the time of persecution.

[AND... Not just the persecution of the future which might or might not come to me— but the persecution that comes today to all who live Godly in Christ Jesus!]

8. I will lead a life of prayer now, so that I shall be able to pray later. Prayer will be my deliverance in times of loneliness, temptation, suffering, torment, and when I am forsaken. **Now, I will**

fight resolutely against my fear of others and my desire to win their favor, love, respect, and approval, so that I can overcome cowardice. I commit myself to making an uncompromising stand for the Lord. I want to seek only God's approval in all matters now so that later during persecution, I shall be willing to pay the price.

9. I will DO GOOD NOW to those who hurt me and treat me unjustly by blessing them and showing them love in thought, word, and deed. THUS, later I shall be able to meet my persecutors the right way, not judging them, but humbled because of my own sin and meek like a lamb, full of mercy towards them.

10. Every time I am at a loss as to what to say in some situation or conversation, I will trust the Holy Spirit implicitly to guide me and give me His words, now and also at the future trials and cross-examinations.

11. Today I will count on the reality of heaven, which Jesus brings into our lives, and abide in this hope, so that during persecution I can rejoice, saying, **“Suffering will come to an end, and everlasting glory will follow!”**

12. TODAY, WITH NO CONFIDENCE IN MYSELF ... I EMBRACE THE GIFT: “Unto you it is given (as a free gift) in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake!” (Phil 1:29)

[Original concepts of this article, drawn from a long since lost, 1978 Christian magazine]

Grace to all in Christ! James Bell www.southsidegallatin.or

SUNDAY SERVICES for JUNE 14, 21, 28

[1] Sunday School at 9:30am: Nursery, Children's classes, Youth, and Adult classes. [2] WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:45am!

JUNE 21 — LORD'S SUPPER // Home Groups

JUNE 28 — 5:00PM WORSHIP SERVICE

EVERY SATURDAY * 8:00 AM — Men's Bible Study!** (*Doors open by 7:30am... coffee, juice, donuts, and Hardee's Biscuits are available!*) JUNE 13 ... ROMANS 10

NEXT LADIES' BIBLE STUDY IS SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY, JUNE 23 @ 11:00 AM

****TUESDAYS: LADIES PRAYER MEETING @ 10:00am**

Young Adults! Tuesdays at 7:15pm at Jaden and Rhi's home!

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS @ 6:30pm, MEN'S Prayer Service // YOUNG FAMILIES SERVICE

LOVE OFFERINGS UNTO THE LORD by MAIL or by ONLINE: BY MAIL (checks), make out to Southside Baptist) — MAIL TO: Southside Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1594, Gallatin, TN 37066 / TO GIVE via ONLINE GIVING: <https://southsidebaptist.breezechms.com/give/online>