

**“PREPARING FOR PERSECUTION”**  
**MATTHEW 5:10,11; HEBREWS 11:36,37**

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**WHY SHOULD WE CONDUCT SUCH A STUDY ON PREPARING FOR PERSECUTION?**

The immunity to persecution that the TRUE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST has experienced in America is VERY UNUSUAL in comparison to the HISTORY OF THE WORLD. Even though we have seen LITTLE PERSECUTION we have NO REASON to believe we can FOREVER ESCAPE PERSECUTION FOR CHRIST’S SAKE! So this leads us to TWO SIGNIFICANT QUESTIONS:

- ARE YOU WILLING TO BE PERSECUTED FOR CHRIST?
- ARE YOU READY TO BE PERSECUTED FOR CHRIST?

UNLESS GOD INTERVENES, the persecution of the TRUE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST is coming to those who REFUSE TO DENY CHRIST AND BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES. In time, COMMITTED CHRISTIANS in America will be PERSECUTED FOR OUR FAITH by being ridiculed, by being fired from jobs, by losing our businesses, by having our voices silenced, by spending time in jail, by being a martyr for Christ. IN 2013 I attended a PASTORS CONFERENCE in California where one of the speakers said, **“IT IS POSSIBLE THAT 50% OF YOU PASTORS WHO ARE IN THIS CONFERENCE, AND PARTICULARLY THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE UNDER 50 YEARS OF AGE, WILL BE PERSECUTED FOR YOUR FAITH AND MAY EVEN DIE FOR YOUR FAITH BECAUSE OF PREACHING THE GOSPEL.”** BELIEVE ME, THAT GOT OUR ATTENTION. But PERSECUTION will NOT necessarily stop with the PASTORS. It will also in time filter down to the PEOPLE IN THE PEW, particularly to those who have a CLEAR TESTIMONY FOR CHRIST. When that persecution comes:

- SOME WILL DENY CHRIST
- SOME WILL COMPROMISE CHRIST
- SOME WILL STAND FOR CHRIST

Dr. Billy Graham said:

**“SINCE WE HAVE EXPERIENCED LITTLE RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN THIS COUNTRY, IT IS LIKELY THAT UNDER PRESSURE MANY WOULD DENY CHRIST. THOSE WHO SHOUT THE LOUDEST ABOUT THEIR FAITH MAY SURRENDER SOONEST. MANY WHO BOAST OF BEING COURAGEOUS WOULD BE COWARDLY. MANY WHO SAY, ‘THOUGH ALL OTHERS DENY CHRIST, YET I WILL NEVER DENY HIM,’ WOULD BE THE FIRST TO WARM THEIR HANDS BY THE CAMPFIRE OF THE ENEMY.”**

**WHAT ABOUT YOU?**

So, we are studying this subject because as YOUR pastor, I love you, I want to equip you spiritually in your Christian life, I want to help to prepare you for any persecution you may face, and I am responsible to God to do so.

**INTRO:** One of the subjects we are familiar with but probably do not spend a lot of time on for various reasons is THE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS. But anyone who reads the Bible knows that PERSECUTION HAS ALWAYS BEEN AT THE FRONT DOOR of the CHILDREN OF GOD. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 8:36: **“FOR THY SAKE WE ARE KILLED ALL THE DAY LONG: WE ARE ACCOUNTED AS SHEEP FOR THE SLAUGHTER.”** By that he meant that PERSECUTION could come at any time.

**IN THE OLD TESTAMENT** persecution is seen:

- With Joseph being put in Potipher’s prison.
- With Elijah facing death at the hands of Jezebel.
- With Haman’s desire to destroy the Jewish people in Esther’s day.
- With Jeremiah being put in prison for prophesying the truth of God.
- With Shadrach, Meshech & Abednego being put in the fiery furnace.
- With Daniel being put in the lions den.

**IN THE NEW TESTAMENT** persecution is seen:

- With the Apostles put in prison for preaching the Gospel.
- With Stephen being killed for his faith in Christ.
- With John being banned to the Isle of Patmos for the Word of God.

**IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH** persecution is seen:

- With Christians being thrown to the lions in Rome.
- With Christians being burnt at the stake for their faith.
- With Christians being whipped and beat for their faith.

**IN MODERN TIMES** persecution is seen:

- With Missionaries being persecuted for their faith.
- With ISIS cutting off the heads of Christians for their faith.
- With terrorists killing Christians because they love God.

IN PRESENT DAY AMERICA persecution is seen:

- With Kim Davis being put in jail for not issuing marriage license to homosexuals.
- With Phil Robertson being suspended from his TV show (Duck Dynasty) for saying the homosexuality is sin.
- With Coach Joe Kennedy being put on administrative leave for praying on the 50 year line after a football game.

**YES! THE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS IS REALLY A PART OF THE NORMAL BELIEVER'S LIFE.** We may not want to talk about this subject, but since it is a part of being a Christian, and since persecution is growing in America, we must talk about it and **WE MUST TALK ABOUT IT NOW!**

CONSIDER SOME BIBLICAL TEXTS:

Matthew 10:16-20; 24:9; John 15:20; 16:2; 2 Timothy 3:12; Revelation 2:10

## **I. THE SENSE OF PERSECUTION**

**(WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF PERSECUTION?)**

A. The word "Persecution" involves being pursued, followed, afflicted, harassed, injured, distressed, oppressed, troubled.

B. The concept of "Christian Persecution" is **BEING TREATED HATEFULLY BECAUSE OF HAVING A GENUINE RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST.**

ILLUSTRATION: The Question: "Do you love Jesus" has brought death to some in recent years.

## **II. THE SOURCE OF PERSECUTION**

A. Satan –The one behind it all (1 Peter 5: 8).

B. Governments – Those that are atheistic, communistic, socialist, secular and humanistic.

C. Religions – Those that do not maintain the TRUTH of the Gospel.

D. Places of Employment – Those who want to be politically correct.

E. Certain Individuals – Those who hate Christ and ridicule and threaten.

ILLUSTRATION: The Christian School movement has faced persecution.

## **III. THE STEPS OF PERSECUTION**

NOTE: History shows there are FIVE GENERAL STEPS that are followed by a government, a religion or a ruling power when they hate Christians. These FIVE STEPS lead to OUTRIGHT PERSECUTION which results in ridicule, torture, imprisonment, and eventually martyrdom – DEATH!

A. Step One: IDENTIFYING

-Finger pointing and criticism in order to blame Christians for dividing society.

B. Step Two: MARGINALIZING

-Being called radical, extremists, separatists, fringe in order to smear the reputation of the Christian.

C. Step Three: VILIFYING

-Slander, abusive statements, accusations, innuendoes, insinuations in order to cheapen and debase the worth of the Christian.

D. Step Four: CRIMINALIZING

-When a government gives "LEGAL" justification for arresting or incarcerating the accused by charging the persecuted with accusations of alleged criminal wrong-doing in order to "PUNISH" the offenders and "INTIMIDATE" others.

E. Step Five: TERRORIZING

-Acts of coercion by threat of violence intended to create anxiety and fear in the hearts of the victims in order to silence the Christian message.

OBSERVATION: **Like it or not, believe it or not, but our nation has reached STEP FOUR by CRIMINALIZING CHRISTIAN BELIEFS! PERSECUTION IS NOT COMING TO AMERICA, IT IS ALREADY HERE! OUR RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS ARE VANISHING BEFORE OUR VERY OWN EYES EVERY DAY SOMEWHERE IN AMERICA!**

QUESTION: HOW HAVE WE GOTTEN WHERE WE ARE IN AMERICA?

1) There is a Human Responsibility

a. We have not Evangelized as we should.

b. We have not Contended for the faith as we should.

c. We have not Rebuked godless attitudes and actions as we should.

d. We have not Stood up and Spoken our as we should.

e. We have not Stood in the Gap for Truth as we should.

f. We have not United behind the Gospel as we should.

g. We have not Voted the right people into office as we should.

h. We have not been Faithful to the Church as we should.

- i. We have humanized Christianity.
  - j. We have weakened the Preaching of the Word of God in the pulpits.
- 2) There is a Divine Sovereignty
- a. God has allowed it to happen for His Glory!
  - b. God has always strengthened Christians in persecution.

ILLUSTRATION: Going into Tanzania after it was closed to the Gospel

#### **IV. THE STIMULUS FOR PERSECUTION**

**(WHAT IS THE REASON FOR PERSECUTION?)**

- A. The Life we Live as Christians – Matthew 5:10
- B. The Lord we Love as Christians – Matthew 5:11; John 15:18-21

ILLUSTRATION:

#### **V. THE SUFFERING OF PERSECUTION**

**(SUFFERING PERSECUTION IS A PART OF OUR LIFE AS CHRISTIANS AND WE MUST REALLY EXPECT IT!)**

- A. Christians are Called to Persecution – 1 Peter 2:20,21
- B. Christians are Blessed through Persecution – 1 Peter 3:14
- C. Christians are Glorifying to God through Persecution – 1 Peter 4:12-16
- D. Christians are Matured through Persecution – 1 Peter 5:10

ILLUSTRATION:

#### **VI. THE SQUARING UP FOR PERSECUTION**

**(WHAT MUST WE DO TO PREPARE FOR PERSECUTION?)**

**-Read 1 Peter, but particularly 1:13-16 and 2:11-17-**

- A. We must Prepare Mentally
  - We must think some things through!
  - 1. What do we really want to live for?
  - 2. What are our convictions?
  - 3. What are we willing to be persecuted for?
  - 4. Will we renounce Christ to save our skin?
  - 5. What will we do if going to church becomes unlawful?
  - 6. What will we do if our Bibles are taken away from us?
- B. We must Prepare Spiritually
  - 1. Make sure you are really born again – John 3:-17; 1 Peter 1:23ff
  - 2. Make sure you are walking with God – 1 Peter 3:15,16
  - 3. Make sure you know the Bible and that it is engrafted into your very soul by reading it, studying it, memorizing it, feeding upon it, standing upon it, obeying it, and deriving strength from it – Psalm 1:1-3
  - 4. Make sure you pray regularly – Ephesians 6:18
  - 5. Make sure you meditate upon Christ and that He is real to you
    - Hebrews 12:2,3
  - 6. Make sure you fellowship with and edify other Christians
    - Hebrews 10:25

ILLUSTRATION:

APPLICATION: We never know when some form of persecution will hit us. But we can rest assured that if we are living for Christ, it will. Daily we must be of the attitude to prepare for that **EVIL DAY THAT WILL COME OUR WAY!**