

The Gospel Standard



“Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people,” Isa. 62:10

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Editorial

One of the early, startling facts, learned in reading the Old Testament is that righteousness is physically, violently opposed. This was introduced with the account of Cain and Abel, when the carnal minded Cain killed his brother. The Bible states quietly and simply that Cain hated Abel because the works of Abel were righteous but his own were evil, 1 John 3:12. Immediately Christians were warned to not marvel that the world will hate us also. Implied is that the hatred will be for the same reason for which Cain hated Abel. Evil hates righteousness. This is why the carnal mind is hatred toward God, Romans 8:7.

Murder! Murder in all of its forms is observed in the lives of those who are evil. A second alarming fact soon observed in a reading of the Old Testament is that almost all of the prophets of God were at one time, or other, violently opposed, and most of them were killed. Killed by whom? By their own brethren, the Jews, who were evil. Elijah was not alone in being persecuted. Not every Jew was evil, but often the majority of them were found in the evil way. The carnal/worldly minded Israelite could easily be persuaded by their leaders to do the evil thing the leaders wished to be done. This is why the multitudes could so easily be persuaded to shout and clamor for the crucifixion of Jesus.

Persecution is the morally low method for the cowardly, worldly minded individuals to hide behind cover, and instigate things which abound to the hurt of those whom they oppose, and in the process frustrate the gospel of Jesus Christ through ungodly and unrighteous acts of men, Romans 1:18. The carnal mind which persuades the masses, rather than confronts the one whom they brand as false, will receive his just wages from God, Romans 6:23.

Today, persecution generally takes the form of isolating the righteous through falsehoods, slanderous misrepresentations, sly innuendos, collusion with those willing to work harm for any impulse entertained, and willing dupes who are too ignorant to know better. By this isolation the ungodly think to frustrate and destroy the credibility of the persecuted one. All those who are involved are either carnally minded, or the few who are helplessly

ignorant and unable to distinguish between their right hand and their left.

In ancient times, violent persecution was possible because the violence would be either excused or justified by leaders (judges, princes, or kings), who were themselves evil, or else very weak persons. The persecutors of the prophets were mostly among the rulers, or their servants. It was Ahab and Jezebel who sought the life of Elijah. Jeremiah was cast into the slimy pit by the rulers of the day, and their weak king felt powerless to condemn that act. The hearts of all were prepared through carnality/worldliness, to accomplish their ungodly deeds of iniquity. So with all persecutors of all times, including today.

The world is in such a majority that it considers Christianity as too small to frustrate their ungodly ways. Mild persecution from the world (social and economic are the main tools by those of the world, used in most parts of the world today) is to be expected, but not as vicious as the persecution faced by one's own brethren. That is the way it has always been from the most ancient of times though today. That is what the Bible clearly sets forth. The most ungodly; the most relentless; the most vicious, and the most heart rending persecution has always come from the false brethren of the persecuted one. The false brother is that one who pretends to be a Christian for the sake of his personal agenda. He claims to be a brother to the faithful but his heart is not in it. His heart and soul are sold to Satan for a small mess of pottage. His feelings are against those who live and plainly teach the necessity of living a righteous life. Like Cain of old, his anger is raised against all such, but that one is a moral coward who slyly, stealthily goes about to pursue with malice to harm those with whom he is angry.

Perhaps it is best that such fiery trials are always from those whom the persecuted ones trust, and love the most. It may be that this is the hardest sort of persecution to endure. It is good, if one is to be tried, to be tried with fire. That is the supreme test. So the ungodly who spread the lies; who do the slandering; who hide behind the masses; who are too cowardly to confront, and to challenge the one whom they seek to destroy, continue to pursue the righteous

with malice. Let them pursue their evil ways. They will one day face their sins in the most awful confrontation they could possibly dream about. They are warned of God in his holy word, but they deliberately turn a deaf ear on those warnings, and in their pride rebel with stout hearts against the God of heaven, and work to hurt His servants.

This preacher has observed over his lifetime a great deal of injustice worked under the guise of opposing error. In most instances, it was not the error hated by the ones working to the hurt of others. It was a carnal mind in those who were working so hard to harm others. It was not a love for truth, but ungodly pride and vanity which provoked and promoted the persecution which was wrongly labeled, opposing the false. No, the false was characteristic of the hypocrites who worked the hurt on others whose only crime was speaking too boldly on behalf of the truth hated by some people.

Some preachers grow aware of what is actually going on in persecution cases, but hold their peace. Then as they do begin, first in private, to admonish and warn others about what they were doing, the evil disposition of the persecutor turns on the brother who in love, is warning and admonishing them. During the past fifteen years, several have vocalized more than a little on the subject, and each time the heat is turned up against those who speak out. Those of a carnal mind work in the only way they understand; carnal methods, with carnal results. They believe that by putting preachers out of the business of preaching, that they are vindicated. However persecution usually only opens new doors of opportunity to preach for the persecuted ones.. From new states, to new regions, to worldwide opportunity, the doors have been opened wide to many who have been persecuted because they believe and practice the truth of God.

The gospel, instead of being frustrated, has been promoted. Words spoken intended to work evil, have worked good. Results designed for evil have strengthened many efforts. I understand that these very words shall have a taunting effect, although that is not why I write them. I write these words because they are firsthand observa-

tions of the workings of persecution. Persecution has always been present among the people of God in some form, to the same degree with which the carnal mind among us is tolerated. This is true chiefly because persecution, and its causes is not understood, or else it is tolerated against the will of God.

Nearly all of us have been participants, either directly, or indirectly, or by toleration, or other reasons, of the persecution that has been perpetuated in our generation. Looking back, it is possible that a few could have been helped rather than been driven out from the “inner circle.” When elaborate plans were made, and then execution of those plans began, was the time brethren should have been publically warned of the collusion participated in by many. If brethren had known, and then willingly participated, well and good. God would then have been clearly justified in his retribution. He shall still be justified in His judgment, but some of us could have helped make it more clearly justified. There are several today who, if they would only write one paragraph on paper and sign their name, then pass it on to the proper ones, could clear up a lot of injustice today, and help clarify the judgment of God when it occurs. I suppose that is too much to ask of those who willingly allow themselves to be made puppets for only a small particle of recognition. **They are such because they are men-pleasers, and can not serve God, Galatians 1:10.**

Persecution shall come. It will always be around. But woe to those from whom it comes, because the Lord is the great avenger. God is the one to whom vengeance belongs said Paul in Romans 12:19: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

Yes, there will always be carnal minded cowards who are fearful to face those whom they misrepresent and slander, lest they be exposed for the false (lying) brother they are. But God, who knows the heart and the actions, allows nothing evil to pass his watchful eye and perfect remembrance. Although the false ones claim error on the part of the persecuted, for the most part, they are only covering up their own error; the error of a carnal heart, flattering

tongue, and lying lips. One day, they, along with all who allow them to use them in their evil purposes, shall clearly see the folly of their ways.

Until then, all who will live godly had just as well set themselves to be persecuted by false brethren and the secular world alike, with the bitterest fiery trials coming from false brethren. The persecuted one can, and needs to pray for all others who are persecuted for righteousness sake.

A PRACTICAL LOOK AT PERSECUTION

Melvin Elliott

We read in Matthew 5:10-11; “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

We must understand that persecution is not limited to physical acts of violence. Jesus said those who say things falsely about those who teach and practice truth are persecuting them. The idea here is; Christians are persecuted on account of their belief in God, teaching, following the truth, and the righteous lives they live. The righteous life of a Christian is an open rebuke to the wicked and they resent it. Those hostile to God's word are envious of the security, contentment and peace such produces so they make sarcastic accusations, use wicked words and lie about the righteous and they know they are lying when they do these things.

The original Bible word translated persecute, means: to put to flight, drive away and to pursue. English synonyms of persecute are maltreat, mistreat, wrong and oppress. All of these carry the

idea of acts that are intended to harm the influence of others and without a just cause. Before we can correctly and fully understand the matter of persecution, we must understand there are two manners of life in this world and the characteristics of them: righteousness and wickedness. Righteousness follows the will of God and wickedness follows the lust of the flesh.

In Romans 8:5-7; “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” In these passages the word flesh and carnal is from the same original word. The spiritually minded are submissive to the law of God and are the righteous because they follow righteousness. The carnally minded are hostile to the law of God and are the wicked because they follow wicked ways. So, the motivation behind persecution of the righteous is the carnal heart, filled with resentment, envy and hatred of that which is righteous, just and true. This is confirmed in I John 3:12; “Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.”

In our study of the beatitudes, the character of the spiritually minded and the carnally minded are brought into sharp focus, especially by this one. As the Roman letter shows, the spiritually minded are yielded to Christ and become the sons of God, i.e., they manifest the same characteristics as the Son of God. They are holy, separated from sin and live unto God and follow righteousness. Those carnally minded are hostile to the rule of God and to those who follow his rule. They are yielded to the lusts of the flesh and have become the sons of Satan as they manifest his characteristics. They persecute the sons of God. Note this enlightening statement of Paul speaking of fleshly Ishmael and spiritual Isaac in Galatians 4:29; “But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.” These two passages show the sharp distinction between the actions of those yielded to God and those hostile to him.

In this country, the majority of persecution of the righteous comes from the religious pretender. The apostle Paul speaks of this very thing in II Corinthians 11:26; “In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;” The false brother appears to be righteous but he is a hypocrite as he is carnally minded. He may sit in a “church house” on Sunday, not to be holy, but for fleshly desires: usually for recognition and control that he does not deserve. He is looking to satisfy his carnal desires and he will use carnal methods to gain them.

He is especially looking to find fault with anyone he perceives to have influence or power that he desires. If he cannot find a flaw in one, he will manufacture one either by exaggeration or fabrication. This shows the distinction between the only two kingdoms in the world, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. The spiritual minded, who are submissive to God, desires to seek truth: follow and exalt righteousness. The carnally minded are hostile to God and so, hostile to the righteous. Therefore, they give their efforts to destroying the influence of the righteous.

We read in I John 3:10; “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” This truth is obvious but the average member of our “church religion” is so void of love for his righteous brother that with rare exception, he allows this persecution to continue without resistance. Over and over I have seen righteous people and their potential influence systemically destroyed by these sons of Satan. How can you have brotherly love and allow this to happen to your righteous brother? As John indicated, those who sit silently by and will not come to aid of his brother, is neither righteous nor does he love his brother. Therefore, he is manifested not to be a child of God! You may think that I have a specific case in mind. Not exactly: I have the normal or general conduct of “church members” in mind and numerous actual cases. This is a common and despicable practice

followed by most professing to be children of God. They are nothing but hypocrites.

It is clear where the problem lies in this matter and who is responsible for causing much of the unrest and persecution of the righteous. First, it is the ungodly pretender that starts the trouble. Secondly, those who have the oversight of the group are usually derelict of their duty to uphold righteousness and defeat wickedness. Whatever title they may wear, they are either ignorant of what the Bible says or else refuse to practice what it requires. In either case, they have rejected the Bible's commands. They often substitute humanistic, compromising appeasement in the place of requiring submission to the will of God. Third, is the majority who sits silently by and allows such despicable conduct to prevail. They think they are so pious, but by neglect; they actually hurt the righteous and further the work of the wicked. Our mental resolve must be to mark and avoid the persecutor. With this righteous resolve, those who would persecute the Christian will not be allowed to do their wicked work. If unrepentant, they are to be withdrawn from and excluded. There can be absolutely no appeasement or compromise with evil persecutors.

As we read above in II Corinthians 11:26; Paul said he was, "...in perils among false brethren;" Paul suffered from many different things but today, with rare exception, it is from false brethren. Why is this allowed to happen? It is because our brothers have not learned what love for a brother requires. Look again at I John 3:10; "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." This plainly states that one who does not love his brother is not of God.

When we allow the godly to be persecuted and do not come to their aid, we are failing to keep the command of God love our brother. When will the otherwise righteous learn this vital lesson? Therefore, we must all the more be on guard for the carnally minded that will persecute the faithful to the disrupting of the peace and tranquility of the genuine Christians. Listen to John in I John 3:18-19; "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we

are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.” If this is true of material needs, how much more of spiritual needs?

What a privilege to be spiritually minded persons, subject to the rule of God, a son of God and in God's kingdom. It also brings responsibility to our faithful brother. We must come to his aid when the wicked trouble him. Look again in I John 3:18; “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue but in deed and in truth.” How then can you claim to love your brother and not come to his aid when he is falsely accused? Note carefully 1 John 2-10-11; “He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.” Hate in this case means to fail to love. When you fail to come to the aid of your brother, you are aiding the persecutor and are walking in darkness with him.

Although persecution of the righteous is neither right nor deserved, we must firmly resolve to remain faithful to God. It is in enduring persecution that one will be manifested to be a child of God. Regardless of what happens here, the wicked will not prevail in that land to come. In Revelation 2:10; “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the called out; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”

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Some of the Blessings of the Persecuted Ones

Charles A. Pledge

David begins the book of Psalms with a beautiful description of the man whose heart is the heart God desires. That man is blessed

of God because his heart and conduct is pleasing to God. David writes in Psalm 1:1-3 with verses 4-5 showing a contrast of character between the righteous and the ungodly. “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”

This Psalm sets forth who the blessed of God are, and who they are not. To summarize, and to simplify we shall just state the obvious. God blesses all of those who walk in his way, and he withholds blessings and punishes all of those who refuse to walk in his way. It must be the choice of the individual who walks, to choose either the strait gate and the narrow way, or the wide gate and the broad way, Matthew 7:13-14. Psalm one sets it forth as walking in the way of delight in the law of the Lord. It is the one who, with gladness of heart, welcomes the wonderful word of God into the heart and gladly walks according to its instruction.

Rather than do a commentary on each verse we shall emphasize the important steps involved. The action described in which the righteous man does not walk is progressive. The righteous man rejects all that is contrary to righteousness. Sometimes the Adversary slips up on the blind side when one is not expecting it. For example, I know a man on Facebook. He has said he is not there for social purposes and I believe him. He says he is there to try to present the gospel to people where they are in life. He said once, “I have no time to waste on rabble rousers who are plentiful every where you might look. There are some who seek devious methods to use on people that they think are as dumb as they are.” But, he said, I am not falling for their counsel. I have observed three different occasions when some obviously and openly tried to compromise him; or get him into a position in which he would be compromised. It was a joy to watch him elude their clumsy efforts.

Those people (rabble rousers) care little to nothing about the truth of God. They are traditionalists who rarely, if ever, seriously study

the Bible. They will zealously read what their favorite leader writes, or says. They will diligently follow the advice of their worldly-minded mentors, while ignoring the wise counsel of God, and godly people. I have studied the word of God long enough, and seriously and prayerfully enough, and have diligently tried to apply it to my life long enough, that it is easy to identify the clumsy efforts of the ungodly as they pursue with hatred to do the one they pursue to maliciously harm. Especially from a short distance are the ungodly easy to spot. That is what persecution is all about, pursuing one with the intent to harm in any way possible. The worse the intent to harm, the worse the persecution. The worse the persecution, the more obvious it appears to be what it actually is. “1. The action of persecuting or pursuing with enmity and malignity; esp. the infliction of death, torture, or penalties for adherence to a religious belief or an opinion as such, with a view to the repression or extirpation of it; the fact of being persecuted; an instance of this.” Oxford English Dictionary (hereafter referred to as OED), 20 volume set. Some of these fellows who do not know better do not wish to give it up when the righteous give them a firm no, but no thank you. But they help bring about blessings in the life of the righteous whom they persecute. No, not by their ungodliness, but by providing opportunities of necessity for the righteous to be more vigilant, diligent, prayerful, and submissive to the Savior.

David says that the righteous refuse to listen to the counsel of the ungodly who stand in the plains of Ono and call softly, come over and let’s play this little game of cat and mouse. But the righteous shall always answer, “Brother you play, because I have work to do for the Lord.” The counsel of the ungodly is always seductive, as are all temptations of the devil. But the righteous recognize it for what it is; interference with the way of righteousness.

The Righteous must be more vigilant; watchful and careful about where they step, lest one step turn them in the wrong direction. The righteous sometimes are shoved onto slipper surfaces. Then, extra caution must be used in making a step in any direction. The righteous must exercise more diligence than usual when persecuted. OED defines diligence as: “1.1 Constant and earnest effort

to accomplish what is undertaken; persistent application and endeavor; industry, assiduity.” Each Christian is taught by holy Scripture to be diligent. But diligence all the time wearies most people who want to relax a bit more than necessary. Persecution forces one to be more consistently constant and earnest than usual, and that conduct is very good for the righteous. It means that one practices righteousness more than normally practiced by those who claim righteousness as their character, and that shall develop a character higher than normal. Show me a man who can identify error very quickly; who can spot temptation for what it is; a person who can identify ungodliness in disposition with little trouble, and I will show you a man who is living in an effort to please God and serve his Lord. Persecution forces the righteous to practice all those qualities, and more, much more diligently, with vigilance, fervor, and faith than would probably be practiced without persecution.

The righteous refuse to stand with the sinner. At first, the sinner offers ungodly counsel. Then, he invites the righteous to come stand with him. He will try to get the righteous into a position where the righteous will feel constrained to defend him. When any sort of defense of the ungodly takes place by the righteous, then the righteous is standing with the sinner. But the righteous will refuse to deliberately stand with the sinner. Sometimes, if the righteous drops his guard, the sinner will try to pretend something in order to get the righteous on his side in a matter, then gradually ease into some error or other and let others know that brother so and so defended me in this matter at such and such a place. But the righteous will steadfastly refuse to take a stand with the sinner whom he knows to be a sinner. Several years ago in a distant state, an Atheist launched a tirade against Christianity based on what some denominational preachers were publically teaching in that town. Some one asked me why I was not in that battle of words, as I had been known to deal publically with Evolutionists, and other unbelievers. My reply was, “In this case the Atheist is correct. I will not defend a teacher of error, against another sinner just because some think the sinner is a worse sinner than the false teachers.” I will defend neither, nor appear to take their sides. In

this case, the Atheist was easily handling the refutation of a specific error taught by sectarian preachers.

The last progression of the righteous in his battle against ungodliness is his refusal to sit in the seat of the scornful. To sit, is to become one of them and to establish oneself as one of them. In Matthew 23:2, Jesus said, "The Pharisees sit in Moses seat." They did not belong there. God did not seat them there. They had usurped that seat. They were sitting where only Moses was authorized to sit. They occupied the position of Moses. They had placed themselves in a position of legislating laws for the people of God. That is what their traditions were when they bound them on the conscience of others. What was true then is also true today. Any person, or group of persons, who attempt to bind their tradition upon others is as guilty of usurping the seat of Jesus Christ, as those Pharisees were guilty of usurping the seat of Moses. David is saying that the righteous will not do this. They will neither occupy the seat of the scornful, nor become like them in character, disposition, and conduct.

The scorner is one who scorns. To scorn is to offer: "1. Mockery, derision, contempt; in mod. use, indignant or passionate contempt....An object of mockery or contempt." (OED) To mock is to show by: "1. A derisive or contemptuous action or speech; an act of mocking or derision." "Derision, mockery." (OED) One who makes a mock (to misrepresent by supposed imitation, but is a counterfeit imitation to deceive), to bring esteem of one, or something, by others low. Scorn; to deride; to laugh at in contempt, is one of the favorite ways false brethren have of persecuting some brother they think is helpless to defend self. Schools use this method frequently against those who refuse to line up with, and "goose step" to their positions, and help support them. God warns against becoming one of these in the first Psalm. Slander is all such as that, when it is stripped of its artfulness. As David once said of the wicked that they will "slander their own mother's son." In short, the scorner knows no limits on slandering others. They have found that this is an effective method when they have some of reputation to spread the slander. And there are many willing

ears who are called gossipers. Paul referred to their backbiting ways in writing to the Galatians. But: the blessings...

We read the words of Jesus answering the question raised by Peter when he began to say in response to the action of the young ruler who turned away from Christ, "...Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee." Jesus did not give him time to complete the question, which would have been "what shall we therefore receive?" This was a valid question and Jesus answered it in verses 29-30. Jesus related what the disciples had left behind in verse 29, then he said in verse 30: "But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the life to come eternal life." Notice that Jesus warned that all those blessings would come *with persecutions accompanying them*. Or, in other words, if we live godly lives, we shall suffer persecutions. No persecutions; no blessings, Jesus warned. Paul said the same thing, 2 Timothy 3:12.

It is not the persecutions which are the blessings; it is the blessings (the cause of them) which bring the persecutions. The godly men and women who conduct their life to the best of their ability after the example of Jesus, 1 Peter 2:21-22, should realize that if they are successful in their efforts, that they shall suffer persecution as a result. Why? The world of darkness hates the world of light. Sin is represented by darkness and righteousness is represented by light. The kingdom of Satan is the kingdom of darkness. The kingdom of Christ is the kingdom of light, Colossians 1:12-13. The word kingdom merely means royal rule. The kingdom of Christ means the royal rule of Christ. The royal rule of Christ is his rule in the heart of man exercised by his word being submitted to by the individual who is thus ruled.

The presence of the life lived by the royal rule of Christ is the children of God living as the children of light ought to live. That angers all those whose ungodliness suffers by a contrast with this life. The hatred of the children of darkness is a malicious, evil desire to hurt those whose lives and teaching are righteous.

WHEN ARE THE PERSECUTED BLESSED?

Melvin Elliott

Again we read again Matthew 5:10-11; “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” If you have the January/February, 2011 issue at hand, it will help if you will read again my article, Do We Understand The Word Blessed. If you do not have it, you can read it on our web site, www.booksAready.com

When Jesus said, “Blessed are they which are persecuted...” he was not saying there is value in the persecution itself. Persecution alone does not assure one will be blessed of God. It is only when one is persecuted for righteousness, and only when evil things are said about one falsely, that he may be blessed. However, even in those cases, persecution is not the blessing; it is righteousness that brings blessings from God. There are cases in which false teachers are mistreated: is persecution a blessing to them? Not at all! God will not bless him because he teaches contrary to his word? It may be that we have not reasoned correctly about this matter and have missed the real teaching of these passages.

One must be right with God to be blessed by God. As Matthew said, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake...” It is because of righteousness that one is blessed. This is confirmed by many passages in the New Testament. For example: Matthew 5:21: “Not every one 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.” Further, Revelation 22:14; “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” Blessings from God are contingent upon our living in harmony with his word that results in righteousness. The point is, one must be and stay true to God's word to be right with God and only then will he receive his blessings. It is only when one remains loyal to

God, although he will be persecuted for doing so, that he is blessed. It is when one endures persecution that it confirms their dedication to God and his word and it confirms their love for God is genuine.

In James 1:2-4; “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” We often make a mistake in thinking temptation refers only to allurements to do evil. We would be nearer to the truth to think of temptations as a test of our faith. Sometimes it may involve allurements to do evil but often it refers to other kinds of trials. It certainly can refer to trials by suffering persecution and such is very likely the case in these passages.

James shows this to be the case in verse 12; “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” It is therefore, the endurance of persecution that works patience which proves one's work is complete or mature and so his faith in the promise of God is mature: it does not waver under trial. It also proves one's love of God is complete. It is in this fashion that the character of the Christian becomes complete, mature, wanting in no essential quality and so one is truly a son of God.

Jesus never promised it would be easy to live the Christian life. Satan will see to it that we will have difficulty in this life. However, as we have seen, if we will remain steadfast, Jesus promised it would bring us great rewards. He said the persecuted are blessed, so what is their blessing? We now need to look at a number of assurances promised to those who are devoted to God. In Matthew 5:12 Jesus said; “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” We must remember with every characteristic Jesus enjoined upon a disciple, there is an attached reward. So when we, following the spiritual mind, have learned and are able to follow all of God's laws sufficiently to endure persecution and remain faithful to our calling, we are to rejoice.

We could properly say that we are to jump for joy because of the greatness of the reward for the faithful in heaven. No words are capable of expressing the greatness of it. Such led the apostle Paul to speak these words. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:16-19) The 1611 edition of the King James Version has “The spirit...” (little s): it is later editors that gave it a capitol S but it is unwarranted. Therefore, it is the spirit of son ship that bears witness with our spirit.

Also note the things the apostle Peter has to say about these things. I Peter 5:6-11; “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

Perhaps our greatest fault in this matter is that we often want to complain when we are reviled, falsely accused and mistreated for righteousness. We should not feel sorry for ourselves because we are walking in good company when such is so. We are classed with the prophets, Christ' apostles and all others who have attained to the disposition of a devoted disciple of Christ. We need to learn to follow the example of the apostles in Acts 5:41-42; “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”

The reward of the faithful will be great in heaven. God vouchsafed this to us by allowing Stephen to view that glorious realm before his death at the hand of his persecutors. In Acts 7:54-56, “When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.” What a glorious future awaits those whose life is characterized with these beatitudes. Jesus assures us this is so in Revelation 2:10; “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” John concludes the Revelation with these words. “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” (Revelation 22:14) Heaven will surely be worth it all.

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A Certain Disadvantage by the Persecutors

Charles A. Pledge

In my studies of the Old Testament, to the surprise of many who know me, I have emphasized the practical lessons which stand out. In my thinking, this should underscore the present importance of the Old Testament, as well as the practical side of it for Christians. Although the old Law contained in that Covenant God made with the people of Israel is gone, many of the greatest lessons are still there. Some of the many practical lessons has to do with persecution which was plainly revealed and frankly spoken of. That has more than helped me in this present state of affairs among the people of God. What we are facing, is being faced generally throughout the religious world which claims to follow Christ.

First the present Administration is dealing in a heavy-handed way with Bible believing people. (See the Tennessee Eagle, May, 2012.) This is a prelude to government persecution with the heavy-handedness carrying over into the stage of persecution. **Second**, persecutors within the different religious disciplines are growing

more bold with the assurance offered by the government status, that more latitude for bending, and even breaking laws in order to persecute, will be tolerated. Therefore a boldness today is seen in writings which, a generation ago would never have been permitted without libel suits mushrooming all over the nation. I was advised by a lawyer to state publically what thirty years ago would have been totally unthinkable. This would be a full answer to some false charges made privately, but then carried to the public by others. As a preacher, I have always sought guidance concerning the law and what I do. I have a citizens responsibility, plus I have a Christian's responsibility; a dual responsibility, to remain within legal bounds.

I mention this, because even though the persecuted remains in a disadvantaged position, he does have more legal recourse than do the persecutors. This is important to remember. There was an era during which brethren were taught that it was anathema for a brother to go to law against a brother. Now that attitude is changing. My ebooklet on the subject stands, with the argumentation not having been answered to this date, available on www.booksaready.com

Persecutors more often than not, break the law on the outset of their persecution. They misrepresent the persecuted. In plain words, they lie. When said, it makes it slander if vocalized, and libel if written. This is why most persecutors refuse to put anything they say in writing, and sign their name. Libel is easier to prove than slander. This has been one reason that over the years, I have refused to believe anything evil a person says about another person, if they refuse to place it in writing and sign their name. Several years ago, an elder who agreed to serve as a hatchet man in their sordid attempt to defame the character of a preacher, told a group that he would not put anything in writing, "...but if anyone has a question about what you tell them regarding the things I have said, have them call me." That, in my view, is a telling admission.

However, as legally weak as a case may, or may not be, takes a very distant second to a more pressing, and obvious situation. That situation is a deep, widespread indifference to anything which is unpleasant or difficult regarding the intangible welfare of others.

By this I mean, the non-physical welfare of other people. A person may be a brother of Satan and when he is ill, religious people are asked to pray for their recovery with no mention made of their spiritual condition. In a distant state many years ago, during a gospel meeting I was conducting at a congregation there, a brother specifically asked that the material welfare of another be blessed, with no mention of praying that the man should repent. It just so happened that the man being prayed for was a heretic who had nearly destroyed the congregation where the meeting was being conducted. I was preparing to go to the front and explain the scriptural necessity in this instance but the local preacher was there before I could get more than two steps. He explained what a scriptural request should have included, and then led in a prayer which also included a request that the man would repent and turn back to the Lord. That prayer led to his removal as preacher a few weeks later, and when I defended his action the following day, it placed me under direct attack by several of the men and women of that congregation.

Only a few years ago a lady asked me to pray for sister so and so who was ill. I looked her in the eyes and told her I would gladly do it. I made mention of the lady's illness and asked the Lord to help strengthen her. I then mentioned the lady's spiritual illness and asked the Lord to spare her until she would repent, if there was any hope for her to do so. It shocked the entire congregation. But they all knew her spiritual condition because she had lied publically about some members and the rest knew it was a falsehood. They were shocked because I would bring it up to the Father who knows even the secrets of the heart. Why?

There are two huge problems involved in this attitude. (1) Ignorance of what the scriptures plainly teach. (2) Indifference toward the kingdom of God and His righteousness. The first feeds the second, and the second fuels the first. They exist apart, only at the outset of the other. It takes little time for the second to develop. Most ignorance is self-willed ignorance. In other words, a person deliberately, or intentionally remains ignorant. As creatures who are created in the rational likeness of God, we are to inherently respect and love truth so much we seek to learn all

we can. My advice to people is to read selectively and critically. He who reads in this manner is he who learns by reading. Selective, critical reading will greatly diminish ignorance. By selective, we mean select that type of material to read which is guaranteed to produce correct information. The Bible is first on my list. The second on my list is a good unabridged edition of good dictionaries. My first choice is the Oxford English Dictionary, 20 Volume set. My second choice is Webster's Third International Unabridged edition. Random House Unabridged Webster's is my third choice of dictionaries, running a distant third to the others. Whatever you choose to read, ask questions concerning what you read. Not questions of unbelief, but questions to force an explanation of what is being read.

Indifference is the second huge problem. Indifference is actually born of unbelief. No person can believe in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ, without a compelling urge to learn more in order to do more. He who is indifferent toward any responsibility to heaven, or he who remains wilfully ignorant of that responsibility, is to that extent in unbelief. If I do not believe in either the Father or the Son, then whatever the argument or action based upon a relationship with them, seems unimportant to the unbeliever. These are the two great hindrances to the persecuted being helped or encouraged by his/her brethren. At the same time, these are the two greatest contributors to the aid of the religious persecutors in this country.

Unbelief is fanned by materialism. Practical materialism is when people give lip service to spiritual emphasis in life, but live as if the material is all that matters. The real emphasis then is that the material and the pretense, soon leads into full grown hypocrisy. The more materialistic the people of God become, the more unbelief grows, and that unbelief mushrooms indifference toward anything other than the physical.

An example of this is how the appeal for the physical far outweighs the appeal for support of the spiritual. **Few** of those abroad do not emphasize support for the physical side of life. For example, catastrophic related aid; aid for a few orphans in

countries with millions of orphans leads a supporter to believe they are really making a difference. But the millions are multiplying and the coffers of those pleading grows. The same person, pleading for billions of lost souls would get only a small per cent of help presently received from people who think that most of their contributions go to help the homeless. If tornadoes, or other catastrophic events, should strike a large county where very few of the Lord's people live, they could request for, and receive, millions of dollars and supplies to help. Let the same people plead for someone to support them in efforts to get the gospel to all the county in which they live, and almost none, if any results. Why?

Materialism prevails and restricts most concerns of many brethren to the material things of life. That is a tragic commentary on the life of many of us who claim a right relationship with our Lord. Is that claim with, or without genuine basis? When we began the "Wyoming Work," I promised many of our supporter who asked, that we would not begin trying to raise support for material things beyond what was necessary for the work such as equipment, supplies, etc. We have kept that promise in spite of the continuing difficulty of raising funds which will be used only to preach the gospel. I intend to keep that early promise. But it is sad to see what is happening to the Lord's people.

Because interest is restricted primarily to the physical, it is only when persecution turns violent that much interest is sparked in the case. My brethren, that disposition lends aid and encouragement to the persecutor by making it much easier for religious persecution to exist with little or no outside interference. When the government begins to persecute Christians, how many will be left who will endure unto death? If the present trend is not reversed, it is not if, but when such persecution begins. How many false brethren will step forth and volunteer to identify Christians for the government to hunt them down and imprison, deport, exile, or even put to death.

How many know of all the supposedly "safe places" prepared for those who may be displaced because of terrorist attacks? Question? Why does the razor wire extend inwards instead of out-

wards? Refugee camps in foreign countries are known for their disease and starvation rampant conditions, held bound by barricades placed for their “safety.”

How many box coffins and quick lime is being stockpiled in some, if not all of the major cities in the country. Semi-tractors have been observed unloading these items into warehouses in Dallas, Texas, and reportedly in other places. Why are they there. Is a terrorist biological attack being expected? Or is the government preparing for resistance to their planned confiscation of privately owned guns and weapons? Will the Lord find faith in such circumstances?

Memorials

Those who give memorial gifts do a two fold service and honor to the one given in memory of. First, there is the honor or public remembrance. It declares that one was of a character worthy of remembrance. Second, it enables others to have an opportunity to read gospel teaching by means of supporting this paper with the gifts. The person being remembered is the occasion of good work being done.

A gift was sent by Melvin and Jean Elliott in memory of **Jim Thompson.**

May the remembrance produce eternal flowers that never lose their bloom.

The Special Issue

The special issue on Calvinism will be September/October, Instead of July/August. There are several reasons, namely the task of gathering new email addresses will require more time. This is the main reason. If we can obtain enough email addresses, we can save more than \$6,000.00 in printing and mailing costs.