

## “Godly Persecution of Saints”

I Peter 4: 13-14 “But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”

Matthew 5:10-12 “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Colossians 1:24 “Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.”

Philippians 1: 29 “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, ...”

II Timothy 3:12 “All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted....

**I. There is a difference in suffering in Christ and the suffering because of Christ.**

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August 30, 2009 10:15 a.m.

Romans 8:17  
Romans Series #65  
"God's GPS Navigate Suffering #8

In the very first message of this series, we noted from Romans 8:17 there are two differing opinions concerning to what "suffering" Paul is referring. One camp says he is referring to all suffering that is common to all people. The other camp says that it is the suffering which is unique only to believers (persecution, shame, martyred)

This morning, in the last message of this series, I want to address the "suffering that is unique only to believers."

## **II. There is a directive that we will suffer with Christ.**

I have tried to be faithful to promote "The International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church" through the years. There is tremendous amount of suffering going in the world.

Just this summer:

August 12 - Hindu nationalist extremists attacked Christians attending a teacher training in India. 80 Christians were present, including nine pastors, and they were beaten, slapped, kicked, cursed. Young women were manhandled and the police did nothing. All the Bibles were collected and burned and all their cell phones were taken.

In Sri Lanka on July 12 four people were severely injured and their Vineyard church burned. On June 28, a mob of more than 100 people including Buddhist monks, surrounded the home of a female pastor and broke in doing

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damage while her husband was away and their 13 year old daughter watched.

July 26, a young Nigerian girl watched as militants raided a small church service and hacked the pastor and his brother to death with machetes. The girl and another woman were then taken to a compound with many other Christian women and girls and told to renounce their faith or face ongoing imprisonment.

In North Korea, a 33 year-old mother of three was publicly executed on June 16 after distributing Bibles in the communist nation. Following her execution this month, her parents, husband and children were sent to a prison camp.

We will suffer. Jesus didn't say that if you suffer persecution unless you live in the United States, or the Bible belt or Elgin.

The suffering is not that we will file a law suit against our attackers and have to go to court.

Matthew 24:9 "They will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. "

There is great antagonism toward God and the people who represent God. This will culminate in a period of time unprecedented in world history; a time when the world under a single leader, working under the direction of the devil, will take every conceivable step to blot out any memory of Christ and His gospel. This period is called the

“great tribulation” in the Revelation, and is a period of time when Christians will be persecuted without mercy.

Through the years, many have debated about what Christians will be present during those days and how many. Contemporary theological systems containing a pre-tribulation rapture of the church has been developed to try to ensure Christians won’t have to suffer very much.

While there is a possibility that the rapture of the church could take place before the tribulation, there is also equally Biblically based teaching that would suggest that present-day Christians (or whoever is living at that time) would go through some of the Tribulation.

We need to be careful about a man-made approach to Scripture whether it is Calvinism or Dispensationalism.

The idea of the Rapture of the church is not a Eastern world view, mainly a western world view.

We had better get ready for suffering.

### **III. There is a definition of that suffering with Christ.**

Matthew 5: 11

1. You will be harassed or treated in an evil way, you will be chased away

Persecuted: Comes from the word dioko “to pursue” “to chase” Over time it came to mean “to harass” “to treat in an evil manner”

The word is a passive perfect participle which means “Blessed are they who allow themselves to be persecuted.”

The word is perfect tense which means the attitude is continual.

You can’t hang with the world in their crowd. If they find out you are a Christian, they will chase you away.

2. They will say evil things about you.

Reviled in verse 11 – “To cast in one’s teeth” “to abuse with vicious, mocking words”

Matthew 27:44 “Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.”

Luke 6:26 “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”

3. They will lie about you.

This is the hardest for they speak it falsely. Its hard when people accuse you of something that you’ve never said or done.

4. They may kill you.

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They killed Jesus.

John 15:20 “A servant is not great than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.”

They killed Stephen.

Acts 1:8 “We shall be my witnesses” is the very greek word for martyr.

The letter by John Calvin in 1553 to five young Frenchmen about to be martyred for carrying the gospel into France:

“But since it appears as though God would use your blood to seal His truth, there is nothing better for you than to prepare yourselves for that end, beseeching Him so to subdue you to His good pleasure, that nothing may hinder you from following whithersoever He shall call...Since it pleases HIM to employ your death in maintaining His quarrel, He will strengthen your hands in the fight and will not suffer a single drop of your blood to be shed in vain.”

The ancient church father Tertullian on North Africa in 200 A.D. said, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”

It was for this Jesus said in Matthew 10: 26-31 “Do not be afraid of them. ....Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul....” And he tells us that not one of the sparrows fall to the ground apart from the will of the Father and that even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

As Colossians 1:24 clearly indicates, that God will expand our ministry with the sufferings of Christ.

On July 30, Rep. Christopher Smith of New Jersey spoke from the House floor to pay tribute to Christian martyr Watchman Nee. This worldwide known believer was imprisoned for his faith in 1952, died twenty years later in a labor camp and whose books are still banned in China today.

In his speech, Smith said, "...it is estimated that China has more than 100 million Christians, and millions of them consider themselves spiritual heirs of Watchmen Nee. Millions more are rightly proud of the contribution Watchman Nee made to global Christianity - he was the first Chinese Christian to exercise an influence on Western Christians - and indeed of his contribution to world spiritual culture. It is sad that the works of Nee are officially banned in China - even as they are being discovered afresh by a new generation of western Christians."

#### **IV. There are definite promises made for persecuted Christians.**

1. Your reward in heaven is great.

Matthew 5:11

2. You will be given strength by the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 10:17-20 “for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour....it is the Spirit who is speaking through you.”

3. God will control the test so that you will be victorious for His glory.

I Corinthians 10:13 “...He will provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”

4. God will use your faithfulness in persecution to encourage other Christians in their faith and witness.

Philippians 1:12-14 “What has happened to you has really served to advance the gospel.....and most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”

5. Take heart that your eternal reward in heaven is being increased because of your faithfulness in adversity.

II Corinthians 4:17-18 “...light momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory....”

6. God is in complete and absolute control.

Romans 9:15-18; Daniel 4:35

7. God will not ever leave or abandon you.

Romans 8:35-39; Hebrews 13: 5 “...I will never leave you nor forsake you.”