

How God Esteems Persecuted Believers

We read the biblical accounts of the saints from long ago and we hear the horrifying news about our Christian brethren being tortured today. But do we truly understand what it means to be a member of the persecuted church? Most of us do not, but Jesus does.

He can identify with the battle against the spirit of fear while being tortured for His faith. And He knows what it will take to be faithful until the end. He holds His persecuted bride in high esteem; He loves her and has a message of encouragement for her.

In Revelation 2: 8-9 we read the following message, "To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The First and the Last, who was dead and came to life, says these things: I know your works and tribulation and poverty (but you are rich). And I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Look, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tried, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.'"

He also says in Matthew 5:10-12: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be very glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in this manner they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

The ability to remain faithful in the face of persecution starts with a pure heart, one that is sold out for Jesus and makes the decision that no matter what I will not recant my faith. A believer with such deep devotion to Christ does not intermingle with the backslidden, worldly, unrepentant, spiritually dead or lukewarm church of today. But gives high honor to the redemptive blood of Jesus Christ, and surrenders his or her will to the Father's will.

And through their deep devotion to God devoted believers can say, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; and always carrying around in the body the death of the Lord Jesus, that also the life of Jesus might be expressed in our bodies. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that also the life of Jesus might be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. 4: 8-11).

"So I take pleasure in weaknesses, in reproaches, in hardships, in persecutions, and in distresses for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10).

In the end, the Shepherd remains faithful to them as they pass through the revelation of Psalm 23:4, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

Dear Persecuted Church,

What an honor it is to intercede for you. I pray that you will find the strength to remain faithful till the end. I hope that the effects of my prayers will find their way to you and that you would be encouraged while under extreme circumstances to fight the good fight of faith, to finish your race, to keep your faith and to forgive those who persecute you.

Love in Jesus,

A Fellow Believer

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