

Missionary Andrew Brunson Says Charismatics Are Not Prepared to Suffer Due to Their Theology

One man who knows suffering from experience is Pastor Andrew Brunson, who was in prison for his faith in Turkey for two years on trumped-up terrorism and spying charges before being released in October 2018. Brunson believes persecution and harassment toward Christ-followers in America is about to intensify in many ways and that Christians—charismatics in particular—are not ready.

“Jesus said that it would happen,” Brunson says. “Just as the world hated him, that it will hate His followers.”

A missionary to Turkey for 25 years, Brunson told me when I interviewed him recently on my *Strang Report* podcast that American Christians must to be prepared for persecution in the coming days. He said the charismatic theology that God is a good God who cares for His children like a benevolent parent is part of the reason they won't be ready when the persecution comes.

“I'm especially concerned about my charismatic brothers and sisters,” Brunson says. “We have an emphasis on presence and on glory and encounters and miracles. When those don't happen, how are we going to handle it?”

“I think many charismatics could be in danger,” he says. “Jesus specifically warns that the love of many will grow cold, and this is talking about offense in the heart. That distances people from God, and it specifically happens in times of persecution, which I believe is coming. People become disillusioned with God because of the rise of the amount of

wickedness that God allows, the judgments that He will bring and the persecution He allows, but also many people go through that silence of God. Jesus warns that many people will be knocked out. I think this is especially a risk for charismatics because of the heightened expectations that we have.”

Preparing for persecution means more than just stockpiling food or arming for violence. We must be prepared not to become offended at God for allowing such things to happen. This view of suffering goes against a lot of Pentecostal/charismatic doctrine, which teaches that God is a good God who lovingly protects His children from anything bad.

Actually, I believe that. I also believe that suffering is part of life. It’s the same way I believe Christ is all God and all man.

A mature Christian knows the Christian walk involves dealing with seeming contradictions. Jesus himself said, “In the world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world (John 16:33b).

On the podcast, Brunson told me he almost turned his back on God in prison but didn’t because earlier in his life he had developed a real intimacy with the Lord. He said: “The thing that best prepared me for my time under persecution was cultivating that love for God and running after His heart.”

Brunson expects “significant change in this area” [of persecution] because “many leaders in our society now—the corporate world, entertainment, media, politics and also academia—do not honor God and, in fact, they openly defy Him. They are increasingly hostile to those who identify clearly with Jesus and His teaching.”

While persecution has started as a trickle, Brunson sees “a tidal wave on the horizon, and it’s coming toward us very quickly. It’s not some far-off threat.”

And, Brunson warns, it is crucial for charismatics to strengthen and condition themselves for the upcoming spiritual warfare headed our way. He speaks from his heart and from personal experience.

"I think it is especially important for the charismatic church to begin to talk about persecution, the human cost that comes with suffering," Brunson says. "Often, in charismatic churches, we focus on Jesus the miracle worker, and rightly so. But we don't speak so much about Jesus as a man of suffering and grief.

"Someone said to me recently that Jesus will not be unequally yoked to his bride," he says. "She will also be a bride who has suffered. So we need somehow to begin, as a part of our theology and teaching, to prepare people that actual suffering can happen. That can be more difficult than we expected."

So what does this persecution look like in an American context?

"One is in silencing, marginalizing, shaming, canceling people," Brunson said. "A big issue in the future for us is going to be communication, how we get our message out to other Christians, to nonbelievers also. What if you're banned from social media, and no one will host your church website or your podcast?"

He also identified the danger of individuals or ministries losing their credit card processing providers or banks, which is already happening, as we have seen. Someday, churches may lose their tax-exempt status for teaching biblical morality, and already some Christian teaching is being defined as hate speech.

"This is something that's really burning on my heart," Brunson says. "We need to prepare ahead of time so that when we are afraid (or under pressure) we do not run but stand firm."

He notes: “There are several ways to do this, but the No. 1 that I want to underline is [this]: The way we prepare to stand in difficult times is by cultivating love for God. ... Over the years, this pursuit of God’s heart prepared us for difficult assignments, including my time in prison. So, God knew that I would struggle; He knew that I would break. But He also knew that because of all of those years of drawing close to His heart in the most difficult times, I would turn toward Him and not away.

“So, the truth is that intimacy fuels perseverance, and we are willing to suffer for those we love,” Brunson says. “The thing that best prepared me for my time under persecution was cultivating that love for God and running after His heart.”

Are you prepared for the upcoming persecution Brunson talks about? To make sure, you’ll want to listen to this most compelling interview with him. Here is the entire episode of the *Strang Report*. Be sure to subscribe to the *Strang Report* on Apple Podcasts or your favorite podcast platform for more words that will inspire and challenge you in the power of the Holy Spirit. {eo}

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