



"BLESSED ARE
THOSE WHO ARE
PERSECUTED
BECAUSE OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS,
FOR THEIRS IS
THE KINGDOM OF
HEAVEN."

-Matthew 5:10



**Old Testament Reading – Proverbs 24:15-29 – New Testament Reading –
Jude: 2-5**

**How Should We Then Live
“With A Clear Conscience” # 2
1 Peter 3:8-17**

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Living in the entrepreneurial environment of America, we have all been spoiled to expect quick solutions to our problems, and quicker deliverance from any pain and suffering.

- However, while God will always deliver us from evil, if we obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit, He may not always deliver us from suffering, for He wants to use that pain and pressure to help conform us to the image of Christ.
- Perhaps the image of Christ that God is calling Christians to portray to the world today is of Him, on His face before God in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying, *“O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”* (Matthew 26:39a)
- Jesus was not saying He did not want to fulfill the mission to which the Father had sent Him, but if there was another way to accomplish it, rather than to endure the pain of being separated from Him, He would prefer it.
- If not, Jesus said, *“Not as I will, but as You will,”* and we know what happened to Him the next day. (Matthew 26:39b)

Basically, this is where we, as Christians are today.

- We know what the Bible says must happen to bring this age to a close, but knowing the suffering that lies ahead, especially for those who do not know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, we wonder if there could be another way.
- The truth is, we are where we are on God’s prophetic calendar, and while the fires of persecution haven’t become hot enough to convince some Christians of that truth, they soon will, and sadly, to avoid the pain of persecution, many will turn away from the truth and embrace the lie. This is called “Apostasy!”
- However, those who are looking forward to that blessed hope will stand firm in their faith, even if they have to suffer persecution.
- Therefore, the purpose of this series of sermons is to show us how we can live for Christ in what is now an antichristian world.

For the last half-century, Christians have lived in the tension between opposing worldviews.

- While the majority of Americans are not “born-again” Christians, they are conservative in their moral values.
- The majority of those who are now in political power are at best, amoral, if not immoral, and very liberal in their moral values.
- According to the U.N. ID2020 project, the Christian Church is now the enemy of human rights, and must be replaced with a humanistic religion that allows people to live as they choose.
- In effect, the United Nations will become the head of the religion of the New World Order.
- While this political and religious tension is rooted in the war between God and Satan, since WWII, it has been manifested in the desire of many American leaders to see America become a socialist-totalitarian state, and in due time, merge with the other nations of the New World Order.
- To accomplish that goal, the Constitutional Republic upon which America was built must be destroyed, and that is now the goal of the “cancel-culture,” to remove any and every reference to the biblical foundation of America.

- While America has wandered very close to that goal many times, especially around the 60's and the 90's, according to the spiritual leaders in whom we can still trust, America's free-fall has now begun; that which was coming is now here.
- The way of life we have known for 237-years will soon be a memory.

Accepting this as truth, you may be like Jesus on that night before His crucifixion: *"O Father, if it is possible,"* find some other way to bring this age to a close!

- However, on the night Jesus prayed that prayer, He was facing the wrath of God for our sins, which was not only His physical death upon the cross, but His separation from God the Father.
- What we are about to endure is not the wrath of God for our sins, nor the wrath God will pour out on earth during the Tribulation.
- Christians in the West are about to experience the same level of persecution our brothers and sisters in the East have lived with for many years, and continue to live with today.
- This is the "spiritual warfare" the Apostle Paul described in Ephesians 6 and 2 Corinthians 10:
 - The winds of persecution that will separate the chaff from the wheat; the false-confessors from the true possessors.
 - The storm that could change millions of casual Christians into devoted disciples of Christ.
 - The fires that will purge our heart of all known sin and prepare us for the Rapture.

“Knowing that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now, our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”

Romans 13:11-14 NKJV

How should we, as Christians, live for Christ in the midst of such persecution? **1 Peter 3:8-17**

1. The Right Attitude – Vs. 8

- Be harmonious rather than hostile.
- Be compassionate rather than callous.

- Be brotherly rather than disconnected.
- Be kindhearted rather than uncaring.
- Be humble in spirit rather than arrogant, aloof, or full of pride.
- Happiness in life is not measured by what we possess, but rather by who possess us.
- God may separate us from the very things we think are vital to our happiness, but that He knows are hindering our intimacy with Him.

2. The Right Response – Vs. 9

- Persecution is not:
 - The suffering we endure because of sickness or disease.
 - The punishment we receive for our disobedience.
 - The oppression we feel as Christians now living in a non-Christian society.
- Persecution is the CONSEQUENCE we will suffer for refusing to disavow our faith in God, and our trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.
- Peter said, when such persecution comes, we should not retaliate, physically, for it is to such persecution that we have been called.
 - The scriptures confirm that in Matthew 5:38ff, Romans 12:14, and in 1 Thessalonians 5:15.
- Neither should we retaliate verbally, for it will not change the attitude of our persecutors, but it may lead to our physical abuse.
- Rather we are to *“turn away from evil, and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.”*
- Christians are to be known as peacemakers, not troublemakers.

3. The Right Reason – Vs. 12

- If we face those who persecute us with the right attitude, the right response, and for the right reason, the eyes of the Lord will be upon us, but He will turn His face from those who are evil.
- However, if we respond to their evil ways toward us, in an evil way toward them, God will also turn His face away from us.
- In Matthew 5:44-45, Jesus said, *“Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may [prove yourselves to] be sons of your Father in heaven.”*

God may allow us to experience persecution to let us see:

- Gaining a deeper knowledge of God is more important than making another dollar and buying more possessions.

- Gaining a more intimate knowledge of Christ is more important than spending time with our friends.
- Laying up treasures in heaven is more rewarding than hoarding them on earth, or leaving them to our family to fight over.
- Developing Godly character is more important than being correct on every argument.
- Demonstrating self-control is much more heroic than defeating our enemies.