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## APPENDIX:

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### Persecution and the church

**“For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed;  
for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard  
what I have entrusted to Him until that day.”  
(2 Tim. 1:12)**

- I. Theology of persecution
  - A. It is to be expected if one lives godly- 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:12-13
  - B. It is the result of following Jesus - Mat. 10:21-22; John 15:18-23; 1 John 3:13
    - 1. Because the world hated Jesus first it hates believers - vs. 18; Mat. 10:21-22; 1 John 3:13
    - 2. Because the world loves its own it hates those chosen by Jesus - vs. 19
    - 3. Because the world persecuted Jesus it will persecute believers - vs. 20
    - 4. Because the world does not know and hates God and Jesus it does these things - vss. 21-23
  - C. It is the believer's calling, to suffer for doing what is right - 1 Pet. 2:20-21
  - D. It is granted as favor to believers to suffer for the sake of Christ - Php. 1:29-30
  - E. It is something believers can enter into confidently - 2 Tim. 1:7-9
    - 1. Because we do not have a spirit of timidity - vs. 7
    - 2. Because we have a spirit of power - vs. 7
    - 3. Because we have a spirit of love - vs. 7
    - 4. Because we have a spirit of discipline - vs. 7
  - F. It has the result of freeing a believer from the lusts of the flesh to live for the will of God - 1 Pet. 4:1-2
  - G. It is a sign of a believer's victory in Christ - Rom. 8:37
  - H. It is a privilege/blessing - Mat. 5:10-12; Luke 6:22-23; 1 Pet. 4:12-14
    - 1. Because he belongs to God - Mat. 5:10-11; Luke 6:22; 1 Pet. 4:14
    - 2. Because his reward in heaven will be great - Mat. 5:12; Luke 6:23
      - a. Therefore he should rejoice and be glad - Mat. 5:12; Luke 6:23; 1 Pet. 4:13-14
      - b. Therefore he should leap for joy - Luke 6:23; 1 Pet. 4:13-14
  - I. It cannot remove a believer from Christ and His love - Rom. 8:35-39
  - J. It is a life of faith - Heb. 11:6, 24-40



- K. It needs to be a life of discipline - Mark 8:34-35; Rom. 12:12
  - 1. Taking up one's cross daily - Mark 8:34-35
  - 2. Persevering in tribulation - Rom. 12:12
- L. It is a means of testimony to unbelievers as they observe - Mark 13:9
- M. It separates true and false believers - Mark 4:14-17; 8:34-38; 2 Thes. 1:5
  - 1. False believers will fall away - Mark 4:14-17
  - 2. False believers Jesus will be ashamed of - Mark 8:35,38
  - 3. True believers will be willing to suffer and give their lives - Mark 8:34-37; 2 Thes. 1:5
- N. It produces perseverance and endurance which clearly shows that a person is a true believer thus deserving of the kingdom of God - 2 Thes. 1:4-5
- O. It is a struggle against demonic forces, not people - Eph. 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:26; 1 Pet. 5:8
- P. It is the righteous will of God - 1 Pet. 4:19
- Q. It results in God Himself perfecting (maturing), confirming (to make a firm decision about), strengthening and establishing (making stable) a believer- 1 Pet. 5:10
- R. Its outcome is in God's hands - 2 Tim. 3:10-11; cf. Heb. 11:35-37
  - 1. He may deliver you - 2 Tim. 3:10-11
  - 2. He may not deliver you - cf. Heb. 11:35-37

#### SUMMARY:

Followers of Jesus who live godly can expect to face persecution as their Savior did. The world hated Jesus and does not know the Father, therefore it will hate and persecute Jesus' disciples. Hence, it is the believer's calling to suffer for doing what is right. Yet, though persecution is the result of one's association with Christ, it is also a favor granted to him to suffer for Jesus' sake, for he is following in the steps of his Savior. The results of his suffering are many. A direct result will be that God Himself will perfect (mature), confirm (to make a firm decision about), strengthen and establish (make stable) him in his faith. His persecution will also help free him from the lusts of the flesh so that he can instead in a greater way live for the will of God. Such a person is privileged, blessed and should be glad, rejoicing and leaping for joy because his reward in heaven will be great.

Persecution is also a sign of the believer's victory in Christ. Therefore he can enter into persecution confidently, knowing that from God he was prepared for this, being given a spirit of power, of love, and of discipline, not having a spirit of timidity. This is important because he is constantly in a struggle against demonic forces. This is why his life is to be one of faith and discipline, willingly taking up his cross daily and persevering in persecution. His life will be a testimony before unbelievers as they observe him. It will also be a means by which true believers and false believers will be identified, for true believers will willingly to suffer and give their lives to death for Christ. True believers will also persevere and endure in their sufferings which clearly show that they belong to God and are therefore worthy of the kingdom of God. The false believer on the other hand will fall away and be ashamed of Christ.

Believers facing persecution can know that their suffering is within the righteous will of God. They can also be assured that what they are facing can never remove them from Christ and His love, for in Christ they are secure. They can also know that whatever the result of their persecution (life or death) they and the result is in God's righteous hands.

- II. Attitudes/behavior in persecution
  - A. Always remember in Whom you have believed and be not ashamed, for He will bring you to Himself one day - 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:18
  - B. Believers are to join in the suffering of the gospel according to (in or by) the power of God - 2 Tim. 1:7-8
    - 1. Because we do not have a spirit of timidity - vs. 7
    - 2. Because we have a spirit of power - vs. 7
    - 3. Because we have a spirit of love - vs. 7
    - 4. Because we have a spirit of discipline - vs. 7
  - C. Prepare yourself carefully to suffer in the flesh so you will no longer live for the lusts of the flesh, but for the will of God - 1 Pet. 4:1-2
  - D. Believers are to suffer as Christ suffered - 1 Pet. 2:21-23
    - 1. For when being insulted He did not return insults - vs. 23
    - 2. For when suffering He made no threats - vs. 23
    - 3. For He kept entrusting Himself to His Father who judges righteously- vs. 23
  - E. Through many tribulations believers must enter the kingdom of God - Acts 14:21-22
  - F. Persecution is a sign of a believer's victory in Christ, not a sign that he has been removed from the love of Christ - Rom. 8:35-39
  - G. Always remember you are in the midst of wolves (Mat. 10:16a)
  - H. Be shrewd and innocent in your behavior (Mat. 10:16b-c)
  - I. Beware of men (Mat. 10:17)
  - J. Realize that you may be brought before the authorities (Mat. 10:18)
  - K. Do not worry when you are before authorities (Mat. 10:19-20)
  - L. You are hated by the enemies of Jesus (Mat. 10:21-22)
  - M. When being persecuted, flee if you have the chance (Mat. 10:23)
  - N. Expect persecution (Mat. 10:24-25)
  - O. Do not fear when facing persecution (Mat. 10:26-31)
  - P. Do not be alarmed by persecution; your confidence being a sign of destruction of your opponents - Php. 1:28; 1 Pet. 4:12
  - Q. With all boldness Christ is to be exalted in your body whether by life or by death - Php. 1:20
  - R. The joy of the Holy Spirit can accompany persecution - 1 Thes. 1:6
  - S. Be glad, leap for joy, you are blessed, for your reward is great - Luke 6:22-23, 1 Pet. 4:13-14
  - T. Go beyond what is expected/normal in your persecution - Mat. 5:39-48; Luke 6:27-36
    - 1. Do not resist the evil person - Mat. 5:39
    - 2. Turn the other cheek - Mat. 5:39; Luke 6:29
    - 3. Give your coat, not just your shirt if they ask - Mat. 5:40; Luke 6:29
    - 4. Go the extra mile - Mat. 5:41
    - 5. Give and borrow to those who ask of you expecting nothing in return - Mat. 5:42; Luke 6:30,35
    - 6. Demand nothing in return from those who take from you - Luke 6:30

7. Love your enemy - Mat. 5:43-48; Luke 6:27,35
  8. Pray for those who persecute you - Mat. 5:43-48; Luke 6:28
  9. Do good to those who hate you - Luke 6:27,35
  10. Bless those who curse you - Luke 6:28
  11. Treat others the same way you want them to treat you - Luke 6:31; Mat. 7:12; Gal. 5:14
  12. Be like your Heavenly Father and your reward will be great - Luke 6:35-36
- U. Treat those who persecute you with lovingkindness - Rom. 12:14-21
1. Bless them and do not curse them - vs. 14
  2. Do not pay back evil with evil; do what is right in the sight of all men - vs. 17
  3. Be at peace with them - vs. 18
  4. Never take revenge upon them; this is God's responsibility - vs. 19
  5. If they are hungry or thirsty, feed them and give them drink; this may result in their repentance - vs. 20
  6. Do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good - vs. 21
- V. Do not repay evil for evil, seeking after that which is good for all people - 1 Thes. 5:15
- W. God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him -- Rom. 8:28
- X. Persecution is not to result in fear or a discontinuation of ministry - Acts 4:1-3,18-20,31; 5:27-42; 1 Pet. 3:14; Rev. 2:10
1. One must listen to God rather than man - Acts 4:18-20; 5:29
  2. Boldness in ministry is the result of being filled with the Holy Spirit - Acts 4:31
  3. The result of obeying God may be persecution - Acts 5:40
  4. One needs to rejoice in his persecution, being considered worthy to suffer - Acts 5:41
  5. Even when persecution looms, ministry must continue - Acts 4:18-20; 5:29,42
  6. One is not to fear persecution - 1 Pet. 3:14; cf. Rev. 2:10
- Y. If one denies Christ, Christ will also deny him - 2 Tim. 2:12
- Z. Do not be ashamed, instead glorify God - 1 Pet. 4:16
- AA. Persevere and be strong in faith - 2 Thes. 1:3-4
- BB. God will judge those who afflict you - 2 Thes. 1:6-10
- CC. Resist and stand firm in your faith against the devil who desires to devour you - 1 Pet. 5:8-9
- DD. There may be times that a person needs to flee persecution - Acts 9:29-30; 11:19; 17:4-10, 13-14

#### SUMMARY:

As believers face persecution, they must always remember that Jesus has sent them out into the midst of wolves. Therefore they will be hated by His enemies and should expect persecution. As a result they may be taken before the authorities. However they are not to fear or be concerned about what they will say. Though they should beware of men and can flee if the opportunity arises, they are to be willing to enter into the persecution, not having a spirit of timidity, but one of power, of love, and of discipline. They are also to enter it carefully, being shrewd and innocent in their behavior, prepared to suffer in the flesh, for such preparation will result in their no longer living for the lusts of the

flesh, but for the will of God. As they suffer they are to suffer as Christ suffered; when insulted He did not return insults, when suffering He made no threats, for He kept entrusting Himself to His Father who judges righteously. For through many tribulations believers must enter the kingdom of God. Though this is the case, believers do not need to be alarmed by persecution, for in actuality their confidence is a sign of destruction of their opponents. It is also a sign of a believer's victory in Christ, not a sign that he has been removed from the love of Christ. So in boldness let Christ be exalted in your body whether by life or by death. This should bring you the joy of the Holy Spirit. Therefore be glad, leap for joy, for you are blessed, for your reward will be great. Know in Whom you have believed and be convinced that Jesus is able to guard your salvation which you have entrusted to Him until that day He brings you safely to His heavenly kingdom, then for this reason you can suffer for Christ and not be ashamed.

When being persecuted, the response of the believer is to go up and beyond what is humanly logical or normal. Jesus taught not to resist the evil person, to turn the other cheek, to go the extra mile. You are to give to them, demanding nothing in return. Yet you are to love, pray for, bless and do good to those who persecute you, treating them the way you want to be treated. You are not to take revenge or pay back evil for evil, but instead feed them if they are hungry and give water to them if they are thirsty. Such behavior reflects the character of God, and for it your reward will be great, for God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him

Persecution is not a reason to discontinue ministry. On the contrary, it is a result of fear which the believer is not to have. If one denies Christ, Christ will also deny him, so we should never be ashamed of Christ, but instead are to glorify God. Therefore persevere and be strong in faith, resisting and standing against the devil who desires to devour you. Be assured as well that one day God will judge those who afflicted you. Also, if God so leads, remember that there may be those times (as in the life of the Apostle Paul) when you can flee persecution. God will direct in each situation.

### III. Focus of the believer in persecution

#### A. On the Father

1. On entrusting your soul to a faithful Creator - 2 Cor. 1:9-10, 1 Pet. 4:19
2. On the hope and strength which come from Him - 2 Tim. 4:16-18
3. On the power which comes from Him - 2 Cor. 4:7,8-12; Eph. 6:10
4. On His grace which is sufficient in our weakness - 2 Cor. 12:9-10
5. On wearing His armor daily which is crucial - Eph. 6:11-17
6. On glorifying Him - 1 Pet. 4:16
7. On eternity (life with God and all that it contains) - Heb. 10:34,36

#### B. On Christ

1. On living and reigning with Him one day - 2 Tim. 2:8-13,26; 4:18
2. On His comings - Heb. 10:37, 1 Pet. 4:13-14
  - a. When He comes for believers at the rapture of the church - Heb. 10:37
  - b. When He is revealed at His second coming - 1 Pet. 4:13-14
3. On His sufferings for believers - Heb. 12:3, 1 Pet. 2:18-24
4. On sanctifying Him as Lord in one's heart - 1 Pet. 3:14-15
5. On being faithful to Jesus (Mat. 10:32-33)
6. On loving Jesus above all others (Mat. 10:34-39)

- C. On the Word of God -- 2 Tim. 3:10-17
  - 1. On continuing following those things you learned and are convinced of - vss. 14-15
  - 2. On remembering that it is inspired and profitable in your life and ministry - vss. 16-17
- D. On prayer
  - 1. Praying for boldness - cf. Acts 4:31
  - 2. Praying for your enemies - Mat. 5:43-48; Luke 6:27-28
    - a. Then you will be like your Heavenly Father who loves and blesses the righteous and unrighteous - Mat. 5:45
    - b. Then you will be mature (holy) like your Heavenly Father - Mat. 5:48
  - 3. Praying for your enemies' forgiveness - cf. Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60
  - 4. Others pray for your deliverance -- 2 Cor. 1:11; Php. 1:19; cf. Acts 12:5
  - 5. In your suffering pray; in your cheerfulness sing praises - Jam. 5:13
  - 6. "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" - 1 Thes. 5:16-18
- E. On persevering and being faithful - 2 Thes. 1:3-4; Heb. 10:36-39; 11:6,24-27,35-40; 1 Pet. 5:9
- F. On enduring all things for the salvation of others - 2 Tim. 2:8-10
- G. On comforting others in their afflictions resulting from God's comfort to you - 2 Cor. 1:3-5
- H. On your brothers in the world who are experiencing the same sufferings; therefore resist the devil and stand firm in your faith - 1 Pet. 5:9
- I. On the fact that those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame and one day judged - 1 Pet. 3:16; 2 Thes. 1:6-10
- J. On the reward awaiting you - Luke 6:22-23,35; 2 Tim. 2:11-12; Heb. 10:34,36; Rev. 2:10

#### SUMMARY:

When in the midst of persecution, believers can focus on different things, some that are helpful and others that are not, such as fear and worry. As believers, our focus needs to be on the Father, the Son, on the Word of God and on prayer. We need to entrust ourselves to the Father from whom our hope and strength find their source. From Him we receive our power and grace in times of weakness. It is He who supplies us with a full armor for protection from the evil one with whom we battle. In the midst of persecution we need to focus on glorifying Him and on eternity which we will spend with Him.

During this time we also need to focus on Christ. We need to remember that one day we will live and reign with Him, that He is coming for His body the church. After this He will return at His second coming. The Christ who suffered for us is victorious; therefore as we consider His sufferings, we are to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts.

The Word of God is crucial for the believer, and it brings special help in times of suffering. Therefore we are to remember that it is God's inspired Word which is profitable, something that the believer should follow and obey. Prayer is also of great importance, for the believer needs to pray for boldness and help in times of persecution. It is also important that others pray for him and his deliverance as

well. He is to pray for his enemies, while rejoicing and giving thanks in all things, for this is God's desire.

The suffering believer needs to focus on persevering and being faithful in his persecution. He also needs to focus on the salvation of others, thus enduring for their sake. He should focus on the comfort with which he can comfort others in their affliction, resulting from the comfort he receives in his own suffering. Considering too his Christian brothers who are in the world who are experiencing the same sufferings, he can then focus on their struggles, which will strengthen him to resist the devil and stand firm in his faith. He can take comfort in the fact that those who revile his good behavior in Christ will suffer and be put to shame for it one day. Lastly, he can focus on the reward awaiting him.

#### IV. Encouragement in persecution

- A. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" - Mat. 5:4
- B. In your sufferings for Christ you are blessed - 1Pet. 4:12-14
- C. In the world you have tribulation, but Christ has overcome the world - John 16:33
- D. Your momentary affliction is producing for you an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison - 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Rom. 8:18
- E. God is the God of mercies and all comfort -- 2 Cor. 1:3-5
  - 1. God comforts you in your afflictions so you can comfort others in theirs - vs. 4
  - 2. As your sufferings in Christ are abundant, so also the comfort of Christ is abundant - vs. 5
- F. Remember that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful, so endure as Job and the prophets did for you will be blessed - Jam. 5:10-11
- G. "God has not destined you for wrath, but for obtaining salvation," therefore "encourage one another and build up one another" - 1 Thes. 5:9-11
- H. Favor has been given to you by Christ to suffer for Him - 1 Php. 1:29
- I. "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect (mature), confirm (will firmly decide about you), strengthen and establish you (make you stable)" - 1 Pet. 5:10
- J. "You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near" - Jam. 5:8
- K. Those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame and one day judged - 1 Pet. 3:16; 2 Thes. 1:6-10
- L. God is sovereign and you are ultimately in His hands, not Satan's
  - 1. He is sovereign and rules over all things - I Chr. 29:11-13
  - 2. He does according to His will without hindrance from anyone - Dan. 4:35
  - 3. His purpose and good pleasure will come to pass - Isa. 46:9-10
  - 4. He reigns over all things from heaven - Isa. 66:1-2
  - 5. He is our confidence, thus one can sleep in peace and not fear the onslaught of the wicked when it comes - Pro. 3:24-26
- M. God is omnipresent
  - 1. He is not far from us - Acts 17:27
  - 2. He is always with us wherever we are - Psa. 139:7-12
  - 3. He is with us even in the valley of the shadow of death - Psa. 23:4
  - 4. He hears the cries of the afflicted - Psa. 22:24
  - 5. He watches His own to strongly support them -- II Chron. 16:9

6. He is our refuge, so we need not fear - Psa. 46:1-3
  7. He is with us and goes before us, so we need not fear - Josh. 1:9; Isa. 41:10; Duet. 31:8
- N. God is omniscient
1. He knows those who are His own - II Tim. 2:19
  2. He knows our desires and groans - Psa. 38:9
  3. He knows our sorrows - Exo. 3:7-8
  4. He knows our righteous ways - II Kings 20:3; Psa. 1:6
  5. He knows things before they happen - Isa. 42:9
  6. He knows when the sparrow falls - Luke 12:6
  7. He knows our every need - Mat. 6:25-34
  8. He knows all about us - Psa. 139:1-4
    - a) He has searched us and knows us-- vs. 1
    - b) He knows our every action - vs. 2
    - c) He understands our every thought - vs. 2
    - d) He is intimately aware of our daily activities, either awake or asleep - vs. 3
    - e) He knows our unspoken words - vs. 4
- O. God is omnipotent
1. He is God Almighty - Gen. 17:1
  2. His greatness is unsearchable - Psa. 145:3
  3. He is the God of the impossible - Luke 1:37; Mat. 19:26
  4. He can do everything (good) - Job 42:2
  5. He finds nothing too difficult - Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17,27
  6. He is the God of power - Psa. 62:11
  7. He alone is the God of wonders - Psa. 136:4
  8. He will accomplish His purpose and good pleasure - Isa. 46:10
  9. He works all things after the counsel of His will - Eph. 1:11
  10. He carries out His plans - Isa. 14:24
  11. He does whatever He pleases - Psa. 135:6
  12. He is like no other - Jer. 10:6-7
  13. His decrees cannot be overthrown - Acts 5:39
  14. He works all things according to His will - Eph. 1:11
  15. He is able to deliver His promises - Rom. 4:21
  16. He can do all things beyond what we ask of Him - Eph. 3:20
  17. He protects and keeps us for salvation - I Pet. 1:5; John 10:29

#### SUMMARY:

Such things as hope and encouragement are important during persecution. As the writer of Hebrews said, "But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Therefore it is helpful to be reminded that, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Mat. 5:4). Or to remember that those who suffer for Christ are blessed, and that though there are many tribulations in the world, Christ has overcome the world.

Though the persecutions one faces do not generally seem momentary in comparison to what awaits the believer who suffered them in eternity, they are nothing. God is a God of mercy and all comfort, so when your afflictions are abundant in Christ your comfort is abundant as well. So since God is full of

compassion and is merciful, when you endure as Job and the prophets did, you will be blessed. "For God has not destined you for wrath, but for obtaining salvation," therefore you can be encouraged by this and "encourage one another and build up one another" with these truths. For favor has been given to you by Christ to suffer for Him, and after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you." So "you too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near."

One other aspect of encouragement in persecution is knowing who our God is. Remembering that God is sovereign, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent can bring great peace and hope. For we serve a God who rules over all things, who does according to His will without hindrance from anyone. His purpose and good pleasure will come to pass because He reigns over all things from heaven. God is our confidence, thus one can sleep in peace and not fear the onslaught of the wicked when it comes. Remembering too that our Heavenly Father is not far from us, is always with us wherever we are, even in the valley of the shadow of death is comforting. Knowing as well that He hears the cries of the afflicted, that He watches His own to strongly support them brings hope for He is our refuge. He is always with us and goes before us, so we need not fear.

It also brings encouragement when we realize afresh that the God who knows when the sparrow falls knows our every need. He knows all about us for He has searched us and knows us, our every action, our every thought, being intimately aware of our daily activities. We serve an Almighty God who is a God of the impossible. For Him there is nothing too difficult, for He is the God of power and wonders. He is like no other. His decrees cannot be overthrown for He works all things according to His will. He even protects and keeps us for the day of salvation and will one day bring to judgment those who shame and afflict us. What an awesome God we serve!

#### V. Results of persecution

- A. The continued progress of the gospel - Php. 1:12-13
- B. Growing in trust in the Lord because of your positive example - Php. 1:14
- C. Having more courage to speak the Word without fear because of your positive example - Php. 1:14
- D. Knowing that God Himself will perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you in your faith- 1 Pet. 5:10
- E. The great reward awaiting those who faced persecution - Luke 6:22-23,35; 2 Tim. 2:11-12; Heb. 10:34,36
- F. Knowing that those faithful unto death will receive the crown of life - Rev. 2:10
- G. Knowing that those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame - 1 Pet. 3:16

#### SUMMARY:

There are positive results which come from persecution. One is the continuing progress of the gospel. Persecution does not hinder the gospel, but it strengthens and fosters it. If countries want to hinder the gospel, they should

simply give freedom and prosperity to the believers. Another result of persecution is that it can cause believers who watch other believers suffer for their faith to grow in their trust in the Lord, thus having more courage to speak the Word of God without fear. God also promises those who suffer that He will perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish them in their faith, resulting in a more Christ-like character.

Another result of persecution is a great reward for those who face it, for those who are faithful unto death will receive the crown of life. On the other hand, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

## VI. Lessons about persecution from the book of Acts

### A. Peter and John arrested - Acts 4:1-37

1. Peter answered the Jewish leader, being filled with the Holy Spirit - vs. 8
2. Peter proclaimed Jesus to them (with boldness) - vss. 10-13
3. The Jews warned them to no longer speak in the name of Jesus - vss. 17-18
4. Peter and John told them that they could not stop speaking about Jesus - vss. 19-20
5. The Jews threatened them again not to speak in the name of Jesus and then let them go free - vs. 21
6. Peter and John reported these things to their companions which caused them to praise God - vss. 23-28
7. This group of believers then asked God to take note of the threats made against them and to grant them the ability to speak with confidence - vss. 29-30
8. After they prayed they were filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the Word of God, filled with the Holy Spirit and with boldness - vs. 31

### B. Twelve arrested and flogged - Acts 5:17-42

1. The Apostles were arrested for speaking about Jesus - vss. 17-18
2. While in jail during the night, an angel of God miraculously released them and told them to go and preach in the temple, which they did - vss. 19-21
3. The Apostles were recaptured and brought before the Jewish council -- vss. 22-27
4. The Jews reminded them that they were told to no longer speak in the name of Jesus - vs. 28
5. Peter responded by telling the Jews that they must obey God rather than men - vs. 29
6. Peter went on to rebuke the Jewish leaders, making three major points -- vss. 30-32
  - a. Jesus whom they crucified, God raised from the dead - vs. 30
  - b. Jesus is exalted as Prince and Savior to grant repentance for sins - vs. 31
- c. The Apostles obey God and therefore have the Holy Spirit and are witness of these things - vs. 32
7. Though the Jews wanted to kill the Apostles for what they said, they did not - vss. 33-39
8. The Jews had the Apostles flogged and again warned them not to speak in the name of Jesus - vs. 40

9. The Apostles left and rejoiced for being considered worthy to suffer shame for Jesus - vs. 41
  10. The Apostles continued to teach and preach Jesus publically in the temple and from house to house - vs. 42
- C. Stoning of Stephen and the resulting persecution - Acts 6:8-8:4
1. Stephen was taken into custody by the Jews, and false witnesses testified against him - 6:8-15
  2. Stephen spoke to the council about Israel's history of unfaithfulness (not defending himself), but speaking instead of Israel's rejection of God and those He sent as messengers to Israel - 7:1-53
  3. Stephen then looked into heaven and saw Jesus standing at God's right hand - 7:54-56
  4. Stephen was taken out and stoned to death - 7:57-58
  5. Stephen asked for the forgiveness of those who stoned him as he was being put to death - 7:59-60
  6. One result of this was that a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem - 8:1-3; 9:1-2
  7. Another result was that as many fled the persecution, the Word of God spread as well - 8:4
- D. James killed, Peter jailed and miraculously released - Acts 12:1-19
1. Herod the king arrested some believers to mistreat them - vs. 1
  2. James the brother of John was killed as a result of this persecution - vs. 2
  3. Peter was arrested when Herod saw his actions had pleased the Jews - vss. 3-4
  4. Many people prayed for Peter's release - vs. 5
  5. God delivered Peter from prison - vss. 6-11
  6. The people who prayed for Peter could not believe that God had actually rescued him - vss. 12-16
  7. Peter reported to those present all that happened - vs. 17
  8. As a result of Peter's escape the guards who had guarded him were put to death - vss. 18-19
- E. Paul and Barnabas were driven out of Pisidian Antioch as a result of the Jews' persecution of them - Acts 13:44-52
- F. Paul and Barnabas fled from Iconium at a threat of being mistreated and stoned by both the Gentiles and Jews - Acts 14:1-7
- G. After the healing of a lame man, the people of Lystra thought Paul and Barnabas were gods. After preaching to them, the Jews from Antioch and Iconium came and turned the crowds against Paul, stoning him and leaving him for dead. The next day Paul left the area- Acts 14:8-20
- H. Paul and Silas were beaten with rods and thrown into jail in Philippi for casting out a demon in a slave girl who had a spirit of divination. As a result of their imprisonment, the jailer's family believed. Paul and Silas sang with joy in their suffering - Acts 16:16-40
- I. The Jews in Thessalonica, being jealous of Paul formed a mob against him so he had to leave the area - Acts 17:1-10
- J. The Jews from Thessalonica came to Berea and stirred up the Jews there, so Paul once again had to leave the area. - Acts 17:10-15
- K. The Jews in Corinth rose up against Paul to no avail - Acts 18:12-17
- L. The silversmiths and men of similar trades of Ephesus turned against Paul because he turned many people away from idols. Paul then needed to leave the area. - Acts 19:23-20:1

M. Paul's arrest, trials and transportation to Rome are recorded. As a result of his imprisonment, the gospel continued to progress and other believers who observed this became stronger in their faith (cf. Php. 1:12-14). Jews and their leaders, Gentiles and Roman leaders, guards and prisoners, and others heard the gospel message from the Apostle Paul during this time of his imprisonment. During this time Paul wrote epistles which were used to spread the gospel and strengthen the churches of Christ. - Acts 21:27-28:31

#### SUMMARY:

There are dominant aspects of these accounts which are fourfold: The first is the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit. This filling is what gave those persecuted the power to do what they did, and to do it with boldness. The second aspect is that, even when they were told to speak no longer in the name of Jesus, they refused and continued. They could not stop testifying about what they had seen and heard. The third aspect is closely related to the second, this being that even during times of persecution the ministry of the church did not stop. It continued on even in the face of threats and persecutions. In other words, Spirit-filled believers continued to do the ministry in spite of the consequences, trusting God with the results. The last aspect is that even when the consequences brought suffering, the recipients of that suffering rejoiced and glorified God for being found worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' sake.

Other observations include the fact that the Apostles and Stephen were not afraid to speak truth to the Jews about how they were murderers, having crucified the Messiah of Israel, how they resisted the Holy Spirit, and did not follow the Word of God. Even though this brought anger and retribution, because of their Spirit-filling, they boldly spoke the truth.

Another observation is taken from the account of Stephen. When Stephen spoke to the Jewish Council and was stoned by them, God gave him the grace needed in both situations (cf. Acts 6:15; 7:55-56). God's grace is sufficient in everything (2 Cor. 9:8; 12:9), even in times of persecution and death which may result from the persecution (cf. Psa. 23:4).

Also from these passages in Acts we see that in the midst of persecution the gospel continued to progress and the church continued to grow. Persecution will not hinder God or His plans; no one or no situation can stop Him. God will continue to call those who are His out of the world to Himself.

A further observation is that God controls the results of the persecution. In one instance James was put to death, in another Peter was released to escape and move on to other opportunities of ministry. Even in the life of Paul, sometimes he was imprisoned and beaten, even stoned, and other times he learned about the potential of persecution and moved onto a new location without harm. God is in control and knows what a person is capable of and not capable of handling. God also knows the results that He desires in each and every situation.

A final observation is that Satan is working in the world against the gospel. He will stir up those who are his to persecute, slander and attempt to destroy the

church of Christ; but ultimately he will not succeed. Jesus is the Victor along with those who are His. Satan may seemingly win some battles, but he already lost the war at the cross.

#### VII. Passages which describe persecution/suffering

- A. Christ - "Matt. 2:13; Matt. 12:14, 24 Mark 3:22; Luke 6:11; 11:15. Matt. 16:1 Matt. 26:3, 4, 14–16 [Mark 14:1; 14:48.] Matt. 26:59; Matt. 27:25–30, 39–44 Mark 15; John 19. Mark 3:6, 21; Mark 15:34 Mark 16; 17. Luke 4:28, 29; Luke 7:34 Matt. 11:19. Luke 11:53, 54; Luke 12:50 Matt. 20:22. Luke 13:31; Luke 19:14, 47 Mark 11:18. Luke 20:20 Matt. 22:15; Mark 12:13. Luke 22:2–5, 52, 53, 63–65 Matt. 26:67; Mark 14:65. Luke 23:11, 23 Mark 15:14. John 5:16; John 7:1, 7, 19, 20, 30, 32; John 8:37, 40, 48, 52, 59 John 10:31. John 10:20, 39; John 11:57; John 14:30; John 15:18, 20, 21, 24, 25; John 18:22, 23, 29, 30; John 19:6, 15; Acts 2:23; Acts 3:13–15; Acts 4:27; Acts 7:52; Acts 13:27–29; Heb. 12:2, 3; 1 Pet. 4:1" (Note: These references were copied from the "The New Nav's Topical Bible," copyright 1994 by logos Research Systems)
- B. Paul - 2 Cor. 11:23-28; "Acts 9:16, 23–25, 29; Acts 16:19–25 vs. 2:24.; Acts 20:22–24; Acts 21:13, 27–33; Acts 22:22–24; Acts 23:10, 12–15; Rom. 8:35–37; 1 Cor. 4:9, 11–13; 2 Cor. 1:8–10; 2 Cor. 4:8–12; 2 Cor. 6:4, 5, 8–10; 2 Cor. 11:23–27, 32, 33; 2 Cor. 12:10; Gal. 5:11; Gal. 6:17 1 Thess. 3:4. Phil. 1:30; Phil. 2:17, 18; Col. 1:24; 1 Thess. 2:2, 14, 15; 2 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 2:9, 10; 2 Tim. 3:11, 12; 2 Tim. 4:16, 17" (Note: These references were copied from the "The New Nav's Topical Bible," copyright 1994 by logos Research Systems)
- C. Books of Acts - 4:1-37; 5:17-42; 6:8-7:60; 8:1-4; 9:1-2; 12:1-19; 13:44-52; 14:1-7; 14:8-20; 16:16-40; 17:1-9; 17:10-15; 18:12-17; 19:23-41; 21:27-28:31
- D. Thessalonians - 1 Thes. 1:6-7; 2:14
- E. Hebrews - Heb. 10:32-34; 11:35-40
- F. Church of Smyrna - Rev. 2:8-11

#### VIII. Advice from church leaders who experienced persecution

- A. Sunday Bwanhot, a Nigerian pastor who has been beaten for his faith and who had friends killed for their faith in northern Nigeria advised:

It is common that our flesh wants to react to protect oneself. But this is not how we are to respond. You need to be ready to die. This the unbeliever cannot understand. Go boldly as you go. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Be obedient to the Scriptures. Obey God. He is mighty and powerful. He can rescue people. Do what you should do and trust God. God will use the shedding of blood. We need to be ready to live or die. The Spirit of God will lead you as He did Paul. There is no specific plan for every situation; you need to take each case as it comes. Each situation is different. God gives grace at the point of torture or death, or He will intervene. You will receive His grace at the time of need. You are not alone. God will empower you. More come to church after the persecution. The persecuted church must help itself and be united; it must share its resources. The different groups/denominations need to pull together and set aside their differences to help one another. What happens to one group could happen to another.

- B. Pastor Vitali Kozoubovskii, a Ukrainian Pastor, advised:
1. Share info about meetings you had with government officials
  2. When called to a government office - never talk about politics or the authorities
  3. Don't report on other ministers
  4. Commit your family and your life to Christ - completely
  5. Don't deny Christ
  6. Share Christ when called to office of government officials
  7. Don't fear those who kill the body but cannot destroy your soul
- C. Pastor Pavel, a Ukrainian Pastor, advised:  
 Unity is important. People must stick together. There must not be any secrets. If the pastor or a church member is pressured for a bribe, is threatened or anything else by the authorities, he should tell the church so that the members know everything. When one person is alone they can fall, but when the church stands together, they cannot be easily swayed.
- D. A Ukrainian Pastor advised:  
 One who faces the persecution ought to do three things:
- 1) Remember God's promises ("He is always with us at any place"). His promises encourage and strengthen us in any circumstances of life.
  - 2) Commit your entire life to the Lord
  - 3) Continue to abide in prayer to God.
- E. A Ukrainian Pastor advised:
- 1) You have to have prayer meetings with church leaders of the persecuted church.
  - 2) Teach your church members to pray for those who persecute them and to bless them.
  - 3) Focus your church members on doing evangelism through doing good works.
  - 4) Involve your youth in small groups for prayer.
  - 5) Inspire the church with sermons on topics like, "God will provide" (Gen.22:8), "Deliverance from the Lord" (Ex.14:13), "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil.4:13), and others like these.
- F. A Ukrainian Pastor advised:
1. Be open and sincere before God and the brothers.
  2. Don't be afraid of the enemy because our God is almighty.
  3. Be faithful to the Lord; He is faithful.
- G. When asked about evangelism, fellowship and discipleship/training of believers in the time of persecution, Pastor Vitali Kozoubovskii said:
1. How did his church evangelize during persecution without being caught?  
 Most of the new believers were from Christian families since it was not easy to evangelize. Personal relationships were the key. Since people couldn't trust each other, they were very careful to build friendships before witnessing. God would open the mind of a believer to witness before giving him the opportunity, just as He does today. The only difference was that door-to-door, public crusades or anything like that would not be allowed. There was probably no way to evangelize and not be caught. Even when Christians didn't evangelize they were still called to the government offices many times and questioned anyway.
  2. How did they promote fellowship during persecution without being caught?  
 When you talk about the times of persecution, there was a lot of fear and limits on what you could do. There was a risk, and we did not have a

system of methods or suggestions to avoid "not being caught." Instead, it was a matter of making quick decisions right in the midst of the situation; seeking the will of God through prayer and the collective wisdom of the church ministers.

Fellowship is part of being a believer, so people were seeking it anyway because it was understood and taught in sermons. Even when fellowship had to be done in secret in the forests or cemeteries, again, the importance of prayer was understood when looking for creative ways to do it. Therefore the church and its ministers prayed about it. There were of course times when they were caught anyway because the government officials had many spies among believers.

3. How did they disciple/teach believers during persecution without being caught?

Personal relationships, mentorship and small groups were where everyone could know each other, build trust and accountability. The small group movement and one-on-one mentorship is not a new method of ministry. It is biblical and must occur during persecution. In those times our seminary consisted of meetings at night in the cemeteries for Bible study, learning to preach and do ministry. It was spooky, but no one bothered us there.

The next step was twofold: 1) believers found ways of meeting in small groups in secret places; 2) church ministers did their best to find ways to open the church so that they could meet. Sometimes this worked and sometimes it did not. As a note, our congregation existed for 35 years without our own place to worship. We rented from the Seventh Day Adventists. Before that happened, our church had three church buildings taken away from us by the government officials. None of them were ever returned to us. Since it was forbidden to gather outside of the church building, they took away our places of worship for this reason - "to stop the church!"