

The Un-persecuted Church

Introduction:

One of the vilest tricks of Satan has been to make the people of God unaware of his deceptions. We take that because we are not persecuted we are being protected by God.

We look at persecution as people not being in agreement with our doctrine, or the way we dress and our holiness standards and that is the reason people talk about us. But that is not persecution that is a misunderstanding of scripture.

We think because we can't pay our bills or our families are always fighting is persecution and Satan is really fighting us but in reality that is our fault because we spend too much we buy what can't afford and that has nothing to do with an attack of Satan.

Our family feuds are our fault also, because we haven't learned that no one wins in an argument.

Satan knows the human will better than we think he knows it, because it doesn't take much to set us off so his little helpers whispers things into our ears and we go at it.

But let me tell you of what real persecution is:

Matt 5:10-13

10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Is Jesus the reason the world persecutes us?

12 Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt has lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.

Have we been through any of this?

John 15:20-21

20 Remember the word that I said unto you; the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

1 Corinthians 4:11-14

11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place;

12 And labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted we suffer it:

13 Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world and are the off scouring of all things unto this day.

14 *I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.*

I am going to read to you what persecution really is from the Fox's book of Martyr's

- After the persecution of Jesus: St. Stephen suffered the next in order. His death was occasioned by the faithful manner in which he preached the Gospel to the betrayers and murderers of Christ.
- He preached in such a degree that their madness was so excited, that

- they cast him out of the city and stoned him to death.
- The time when he suffered is generally supposed to have been at the passover which succeeded to that of our Lord's crucifixion, and to the era of his ascension, in the following spring.

Upon this a great persecution was raised against all who professed their belief in Christ as the Messiah, or as a prophet. We are told by St. Luke, that "there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem;" and that "they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles."

About two thousand Christians, with Nicanor, one of the seven deacons, suffered martyrdom during the "persecution that arose about Stephen." We haven't faced that yet either!

The History of Christian Martyrs to the First General Persecutions Under Nero.

The next martyr we meet with, according to St. Luke, in the History of the Apostles' Acts, was James the son of Zebedee, the elder brother of John and a relative of our Lord; for his mother Salome was cousin to the Virgin Mary. It was not until ten years after the death of Stephen that the second martyrdom took place; for no sooner had Herod Agrippa been appointed governor of Judea, he raised a sharp persecution against the Christians and determined to make an effectual blow, by striking at their leaders.

This is going to take place again and I see the 1st stage of being set now.

The account given us by an eminent primitive writer, Clemens Alexandrinus, ought not to be overlooked; that, as James was led to the place of martyrdom, his accuser was brought to repent of his conduct by

the apostle's extraordinary courage and he fell down at his feet to request his pardon, professing himself a Christian and resolving that James should not receive the crown of martyrdom alone.

Hence they were both beheaded at the same time. Thus did the first apostolic martyr cheerfully and resolutely receive that cup, which he had told our Savior he was ready to drink. Timon and Parmenas suffered martyrdom about the same time; the one at Philippi, and the other in Macedonia. These events took place A.D. 44 AD.

- Philip was born at Bethsaida, in Galilee and was first called by the name of "disciple." He labored diligently in Upper Asia and suffered martyrdom at Heliopolis, in Phrygia. He was scourged, thrown into prison and afterwards crucified, A.D. 54.

Foxe's Book of Martyrs\Chapter 1 - History of Christian Martyrs to the First General Persecutions Under Nero\XVII.

- Barnabas Whose occupation was that of a toll-gatherer, was born at Nazareth. He wrote his gospel in Hebrew, which was afterwards translated into Greek by James the Less. The scene of his labors was Parthia, and Ethiopia, in which latter country he suffered martyrdom, being slain with a halberd in the city of Nadabah, A.D. 60.

Definition of a Halberd: A weapon of the 15th and 16th centuries having an axe like blade and a steel spike mounted on the end of a long shaft.

- V. James the Less is supposed by some to have been the brother of our Lord, by a former wife of Joseph. This is very doubtful and accords too much with the Catholic superstition, that Mary never had any other children except our Savior. He was elected to the oversight of the churches of Jerusalem; and was the author of the Epistle

ascribed to James in the sacred canon. At the age of ninety-four he was beat and stoned by the Jews; and finally had his brains dashed out with a fuller's club.

- VI. Matthias Of whom less is known than of most of the other disciples, was elected to fill the vacant place of Judas. He was stoned at Jerusalem and then beheaded.
- VII. Andrew Was the brother of Peter. He preached the gospel to many Asiatic nations; but on his arrival at Edessa he was taken and crucified on a cross, the two ends of which were fixed transversely in the ground. Hence the derivation of the term, St. Andrew's Cross.
- VIII. St. Mark Was born of Jewish parents of the tribe of Levi. He is supposed to have been converted to Christianity by Peter, whom he served and under whose inspection he wrote his Gospel in the Greek language. Mark was dragged to pieces by the people of Alexandria, at the great solemnity of Serapis their idol, ending his life under their merciless hands.
- IX. Peter Among many other saints, the blessed apostle Peter was condemned to death and crucified, as some do write, at Rome; albeit some others and not without cause, do doubt thereof. It said that Nero sought matter against Peter to put him to death; which, when the people perceived, they entreated Peter with much ado that he would flee the city.

Peter, through their importunity at length persuaded, prepared himself to avoid. But, coming to the gate, he saw the Lord Christ come to meet him, to whom he, worshipping, said, "Lord, whither dost Thou go?" To whom He

answered and said,

"I am come again to be crucified." By this, Peter, perceiving his suffering to be understood, returned into the city. Jerome saith that he was crucified, his head being down and his feet upward, himself so requiring, because he said he was unworthy to be crucified after the same form and manner as the Lord was.

- X. Paul the apostle, who before was called Saul, after his great travail and unspeakable labors in promoting the Gospel of Christ, suffered also in this first persecution under Nero. Abdias, declareth that under his execution Nero sent two of his esquires, Ferega and Parthemius, to bring him word of his death.

They, coming to Paul instructing the people, desired him to pray for them, that they might believe; who told them that shortly after they should believe and be baptized at His sepulcher. This done, the soldiers came and led him out of the city to the place of execution, where he, after his prayers made, gave his neck to the sword.

- XI. Jude The brother of James, was commonly called Thaddeus. He was crucified at Edessa, A.D. 72.
- XII. Bartholomew Preached in several countries, and having translated the Gospel of Matthew into the language of India, he propagated it in that country. He was at length cruelly beaten and then crucified by the impatient idolaters.
- XIII. Thomas Called Didymus, preached the Gospel in Parthia and India, where exciting the rage of the pagan priests, he was martyred

by being thrust through with a spear.

- XIV. Luke The Evangelist, was the author of the Gospel which goes under his name. He travelled with Paul through various countries, and is supposed to have been hanged on an olive tree, by the idolatrous priests of Greece.
- XV. Simon Surnamed Zelotes, preached the Gospel in Mauritania, Africa and even in Britain, in which latter country he was crucified, A.D. 74.
- XVI. John The "beloved disciple," was brother to James the Great. The churches of Smyrna, Pergamos, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and Thyatira, were founded by him.

From Ephesus he was ordered to be sent to Rome, where it is affirmed he was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil.

He escaped by miracle, without injury. Domitian afterwards banished him to the Isle of Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation. Nerva, the successor of Domitian, recalled him. He was the only apostle who escaped a violent death.

- XVII. Barnabas Was of Cyprus, but of Jewish descent, his death is supposed to have taken place about A.D. 73 AD.

And yet, notwithstanding all these continual persecutions and horrible punishments, the Church daily increased, deeply rooted in the doctrine of the apostles and of men apostolical and watered plentifully with the blood of saints.

The First Persecution, Under Nero, A.D. 67

Among other diabolical whims, Nero ordered that the city of Rome should be set on fire, which order was executed by his officers, guards and servants. While the imperial city was in flames, he went up to the tower of Macaenas, played upon his harp, sung the song of the burning of Troy and openly declared that 'he wished the ruin of all things before his death.' Besides the noble pile, called the Circus, many other palaces and houses were consumed; several thousand perished in the flames, were smothered in the smoke, or buried beneath the ruins.

The First Persecution, Under Nero, A.D. 67 Nero, finding that his conduct was greatly blamed and a severe odium cast upon him, determined to lay the whole upon the Christians, at once to excuse himself, and have an opportunity of glutting his sight with new cruelties.

This was the occasion of the first persecution; and the barbaric things exercised on the Christians were such as even excited the commiseration of the Romans themselves.

Nero even refined upon cruelty, and contrived all manner of punishments for the Christians that the most infernal imagination could design. In particular, he had some sewed up in skins of wild beasts and then worried by dogs until they expired; and others dressed in shirts made stiff with wax, fixed to axletrees and set on fire in his gardens, in order to illuminate them. This persecution was general throughout the whole Roman Empire; but it rather increased than diminished the spirit of Christianity. In the course of it, St. Paul and St. Peter were martyred.

And I can go on forever of the things that Christians have suffered for the Love of Christ.

Matt 10:16-26 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

24 The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.

25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

26 Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

We are not prepared to suffer persecution: the reason is we have not prayed and prepared for what is about to devastate the world.

Satan has deceived the church into believing that everything is good and this is a time for great revival but church listen to me you that ignore the word of the Lord will be weighed in the balance and found wanting:

Matt 24:1-33 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. That was fulfilled in 70 AD.

3 And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, "Take heed that no man deceive you."

5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: *see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*

7 For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes, in divers places. Being fulfilled right now!

8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Look around you we hear it every day but we are not moved by it!

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

This is happening all over the world except here!

10 And then shall many be offended and shall betray one another and shall hate one another. This is happening in the church right now.

11 And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many. *TV is full of them!*

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

Definition of Iniquity:

- Gross immorality or injustice; wickedness. A grossly immoral act; a sin.

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

25 Behold, I have told you before.

26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be

darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.