



## **The Patmos Principle**

**TEXT:** Revelation 1:9-10

Revelation 1:9-10 – “I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” “I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,”

### **I. INTRODUCTION – THE ROMAN RULE**

-Titus, the destroyer of Jerusalem, had a brother named Domitian. Titus was a very gifted general, a mighty man of war. He served under his father Vespasian. But before he could ascend to the throne of the Caesars, he sickened and died.

-In the natural course of events, Domitian, came to power in the Roman Empire. Domitian was everything opposite of the good traits of both his father and his brother. He was cruel and bloodthirsty. He was the first of the Caesars who demanded for his subjects to call him, “our lord and god.”

-John, the writer of this book, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, was an aged pastor in the Roman province of Asia. Because of his refusal to bow his knee to anyone but the One True God, he was exiled to an island called Patmos.

#### **A. Patmos**

-Patmos is a very unique place.

It is about twenty-four miles west into the sea off the Asia Minor coast, directly opposite the ancient town of Miletus.

It is some six or eight miles long, and not more than a mile wide, being about fifteen miles in circumference.

-The approach to the island is difficult, the coast is high, and consists of a succession of capes, which form so many ports, some of which are excellent. The only one in use, however, is a deep bay, sheltered by high mountains on every side but one, where it is protected by a projecting cape.

-About halfway up the mountain there is shown a natural cave in a rock, where John is said to have seen his visions and to have written this book.

-It is commonly supposed that John was banished to this island about 94 A.D. No place could have been selected for his exile.

-Lonely, desolate, barren, uninhabited, seldom visited, it had all the requisites which could be desired for a place of punishment; and banishment to that place would accomplish all that a persecutor could wish in silencing an apostle, without putting him to death.

-It was no uncommon thing, in ancient times, to banish people from their country; either sending them forth at large, or specifying some particular place to which they were to go. The whole narrative leads us to suppose that this place was designated as that to which John was to be sent.

-Banishment to an island was a common mode of punishment; and there was a distinction made by this act in favor of those who were thus banished. The more base, low, and vile of criminals were commonly condemned to work in the mines; the more decent and respectable were banished to some lonely island.

-Apparently what Domitian did not take into consideration was the fact that even though John could be banished from man, the old “disciple whom Jesus loved” could not be exiled from God.

Psalms 139:1-15 – “O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.” “Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.” “Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.” “For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.” “Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.” “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.” “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?” “If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.” “If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;” “Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.” “If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.” “Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.” “For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.” “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.” “My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.”

## B. The Sufferings of John – Three Key Words

-John speaks of himself in the text that we read:

Revelation 1:9 – “I John, who also am *your brother, and companion in tribulation*, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. . . .”

-This is not strange, nor unusual, nor new for John to be in this particular situation. Jesus had clearly defined to His disciples that one of their crowning marks was the ability to withstand persecution and suffering.

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake. . . .”

“Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you. . . .”

“Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. . . .”

“Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.”

“But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony.”

“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.”

-Notice the text again, John places three words together:

- Tribulation
- Kingdom
- Patience (Steadfast Endurance)

-Tribulation (THLIPSIS) which simply means “pressure.” Quite literally it meant a great stone that had been placed on a man's back as a burden. But by New Testament times, it had come to describe the pressure of events that comes with persecution.

-The second word, Kingdom (BASILEIA) is the place where earth-bound saints are longing to go. The place that their desire is centered upon. The place where the heart has been set.

-The third word that John identifies himself with is patience (HUPOMONE). This is not the patience that passively submits to the tide of events. It describes the spirit of courage and conquest that leads to gallant acts and transforms even suffering into glory.

-With these three words John establishes a pattern for a New Testament church: In the middle of persecution causes men to look toward the redemption of the Kingdom. There is only one way from THLIPSIS to BASILEIA, from affliction to glory, from earth to heaven, and that is through HUPOMONE. Conquering endurance.

Jesus said: "He who endures to the end will be saved" (Matt 24:13).

Paul told his people: "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Ac 14:22). In Second Timothy we read: "If we endure, we shall also reign with him" (2Tim 2:12).

-In the world ye shall have tribulation. . . . The endurance of difficulty and trial is a mark of the favor of heaven and the blessing of God. That endurance is to be found in Jesus Christ. He himself has endured to the end and He is able to empower those who walk with Him to gain the same goal.

-And somewhere in the middle of the persecution, there is a vision, that will endure the ages, will overcome time, and will outlast the critics.

## **II. THE PURPOSE OF PERSECUTION**

-The whole New Testament is a record of the sufferings of the people of our Lord.

John the Baptist died in his own blood.

The Lord Jesus Christ crucified under the open skies, raised from the earth on a tree.

-The story of the Church from the beginning is written in blood and tears.

Acts 8:1 – “. . . And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem. . .”

-Then begins a long and illustrious list of martyrs that continues even in this present hour. Are you willing to die for what you believe. A man who is not willing to die for a cause is not fit to live.

Stephen is stoned outside the city of Jerusalem.

The head of James is severed from the body by the cruel sword of Herod Agrippa.

Antipas was put to death in the city of Pergamos for his preaching of the Word (Rev. 2:13).

Polycarp, the pastor of Symrna, was burned at the stake.

Ignatius, the pastor of Antioch, was torn by wild beasts in the Roman Coliseum.

-Why in the elective purposes of the Kingdom, does God allow persecution among his people? There are three reasons why this occurs:

### **1. The First Reason – For Truth To Find the Soul**

-Out of the trial, the martyrdom, the imprisonment, the sorrows and tribulations of God's people, God speaks truth into our souls. That is the first reason.

-This is clearly seen in the Epistles of Paul. From A.D. 60 - 67, Paul spent much of the last seven years of his life in prison, basically on death row. Some would say that this is a waste of his life to spend these years here. He could have been preaching to the Spaniards, the Gauls, or the Ionians. Yet his final years, perhaps his most productive years are spent in a dungeon.

-God allowed that to occur because from those chains in prison, from those dark, dank dungeons, Paul had a pen that would inflame a New Testament Church then and now.

-The Prison Epistles:

- Ephesians
- Philippians

- Colossians
- Philemon

-Out of the sufferings of Paul, we have revealed the great truths of God that are the very foundational points of the New Testament church. Out of the bruising, buffeting, and beatings, come great revelations. Out of the tears and incarcerations, came the Prison epistles.

-The same occurrence comes to us in the life of the Apostle John. No Patmos, no Revelation. In that hour of heavy trial came an unusual word for the people of God.

## 2. The Second Reason – For the Fires of the Martyrs to Give Light to Truth

-Out of the trial, the martyrdom, the imprisonment, the sorrows and tribulations of God's people, the truth of God darkened by the devices of men, come to light in the fires of martyrdom.

-You owe it to yourself to read an updated version of Foxe's Book of Martyrs. In that book two stories (among many more) are particularly purposeful for what I am preaching about.

One family who suffered so much was that of John Deswarte, his wife and his six sons. The inquisitors came and arrested John Deswarte and his wife and four of his sons, the two younger brothers being away from home. The neighbors told the two boys of their tragic plight that had overwhelmed the other members of their family. They encouraged the two boys to escape for their lives. Those boys said to one another, "Let us not save ourselves but let us die with our father and mother and brothers. When the father saw the two young boys coming toward him, he asked, "Sons, are you ready to go with us to the New Jerusalem?" Those boys replied, "We are." In the city of Lisle the father, mother, and six sons were burned at the stake.

-Out of that came a renewed knowledge of the Word of God.

When they burned Master Ridley and Bishop Latimer in Oxford, Master Ridley began to cringe before the mounting flames. Bishop Latimer said, "Master Ridley, be of good cheer. We shall this day light a fire in England, that if it please God, shall never go out."

-Bro. Ken Gurley preached a message at Youth Congress 2001 in Atlanta, entitled "Don't Forget the Fish." We have a long line of martyrs in front of us. We cannot forget what power there is that comes from endurance that extends beyond this life.

## 3. The Third Reason – The Recovery of the Word

-In the midst of persecution, there is a third reason that God allows this to occur. It is for the distribution of the Word of God.

John Wycliffe accomplished an incredible and daunting task for the English language. He was the first man to translate the entire Bible into the English language. Out of that format, out of that Word of God there was solidified that spoken word that we are now so familiar with. But the Romanists, in hatred, sought the life of John Wycliffe. By the kind hand of Providence, he died before they could lay hands on him, but their cruel hatred was not to be robbed of its intended victim. His dead body was removed from its grave. His exhumed body was burned and his ashes scattered in the waters of the river Swift. But the river Swift pours into the Avon and the Avon empties into the Severn and the Severn pours out into the sea and the seas brush the continents of this world. The book that John Wycliffe translated into English became the Bible that I hold in my hand and has been preached out of through the ages.

-When the converts of Wycliffe were burned at the stake, the Bible of Wycliffe was hung around their necks, that the Scriptures might burn with the martyred bodies of the preachers of the Gospel of the Son of God. But the fires lit a world and the fires gave to the nations of the earth a knowledge of the Son of God. Out of its light and out of its burning the Word of God was given to the world.

-This classically illustrates to us the Patmos principle.

#### 4. A Final Illustration of Persecution

-Out of travail of sorrows, and out of tears of trouble and suffering, out of these things are liberty and freedom born. It is hard for us to realize that in the United States of America, on the shores of this American continent, the preaching of the Gospel was condemned.

On June 4, 1768, there were three preachers who were arraigned in the courthouse in Spotsylvania County, Virginia, in a town named Fredericksburg, were these men brought before the King's Court. In the great decorum and supposed dignity the King's judges took their places ready to prosecute these three. The offense was slowly and formally read by the Court Clerk, "for the statute in that case provided and consequently disturbers of the peace." But while those pompous preparations were in progress, there dismounted a young man in front of the Court House. He was a plain man but he was quickly becoming a devoted patriot.

He had heard of the arraignment of the three preachers and had ridden sixty miles from his home in Hanover County in order, unsolicited, to defend those three men before the King's Court. As he entered the house unnoticed, the clerk in that slow manner was reading the indictment, "for preaching the Gospel of the Son of God."

When he had finished, the King's attorney arose and said what few words he thought was necessary to convict and condemn the men. The judges seated in the court were ready to pronounce sentence against those three preachers.

At that moment, Patrick Henry, who, unnoticed, had gone to sit with the lawyers. He stood and walked to the clerk and reached out his hand and took the indictment from him and holding it in his hand, said, "May it please your worships, I think I heard read, as I entered this house, the paper I now hold in my hand. If I have rightly understood, the King's attorney of this county has framed an indictment for the purpose of arraigning and punishing by imprisonment three inoffensive persons before the bar of this court."

"May it please the court, what did I hear read? Did I hear it distinctly, or was it a mistake of my own? Did I hear an expression, as if a crime, these three men, who your worships are about to try are charged with. . . . . What? 'For preaching the Gospel of the Son of God!'" Patrick Henry paused and three times waved that indictment around his head, then lifting his eyes toward heaven, exclaimed, "Great God!"

Then he continued: "May it please your worships: In a day like this, when truth is about to burst her fetters, when mankind is about to be raised to claim his natural and inalienable rights—when the yoke of oppression which has reached the wilderness in America, and the unnatural alliance of ecclesiastical and civil power is about to be dissevered—at such a period when liberty—liberty of conscience is about to awake from her slumberings, and I inquire into the reason of these charges. If I am not deceived, according to the contents of this paper that I hold in my hand, these men are accused of preaching the Gospel of the Son of God. Great God!"

There was another long pause, in which Patrick Henry held up the indictment in his hand. Then the brilliant young lawyer proceeded: "May it please your worships: There are periods in the history of man when corruption and depravity have so long debased the human character, that man sinks under the oppressors hand, and becomes his servile, his abject slave; he licks the hand that smites him; he bows in passive obedience to the mandates of the despot and in this state of servility he receives fetters of perpetual bondage. But, may it please the worships, such a day has passed. From the period when our fathers left the land of their nativity for settlement in these American wilds, for liberty—for civil and religious liberty—for liberty of conscience, to worship their Creator according to their conceptions of Heaven's revealed will; from the moment they placed their feet on the American continent and in the deeply imbedded forests, sought an asylum from persecution and tyranny—from that moment despotism was crushed; here fetters of darkness were broken, and Heaven decreed that man should be free—free to worship God according to the Bible. Were it not for this, in vain have been the efforts and sacrifices of the colonists; in vain were all of their sufferings and bloodshed to subjugate this new world, if we, their offspring, must still be oppressed and persecuted. But, if it may please your worships, let me inquire once more, for what these men are about to be tried? This paper says, 'for preaching the Gospel of the Son of God.' Great God! For preaching the Savior to Adam's fallen race!"

When Patrick Henry reached the culmination, the Court, the audience, the spectators were amazed and the face of the prosecuting attorney was pale and ghastly and he was unconscious that his whole frame shook as in a quake. The

judge, in a tremulous voice, speaking for the Court, said, "Sheriff, discharge these men."

Out of the sufferings of those three preachers observed by Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe, came religious liberty for America. Those statesmen, moved by the example of those faithful men, wrote into the basic document that governs America our amendment on freedom of religion and liberty of conscience.

### **III. CONCLUSION – ENDURANCE IS THE KEY**

-Out of difficult times comes the greatest fruits of our lives. Who is say that this is not the finest hour that America has ever reached? Buildings collapse, economy heading for a recession, Wall Street on a slide down, massive layoffs facing some corporations, moments of uncertainty are now turning into days of uncertainty. . . . . But there is a God who sustains. . . . .

-You must remember always: The cost of quitting is greater than the effort of enduring.

Runner's World (8/91) told the story of Beth Anne DeGiantis's attempt to qualify for the 1992 Olympic Trials marathon. A female runner must complete the 26 mile, 385 yard race in less than two hours, forty-five minutes in order to compete in the Olympic Trials. Beth started strong but began having trouble around mile 23. She reached the final straightaway at 2:43, with just two minutes left to qualify. Two hundred yards from the finish, she stumbled and fell. Dazed, she stayed down for twenty seconds. The crowd yelled, "Get up!" The clock was ticking--2:44, less than a minute to go.

Beth Anne staggered to her feet and began walking. Five yards short of the finish, with ten seconds to go, she fell again. She began to crawl, the crowd cheering her on, and crossed the finish line on her hands and knees. Her time? Two hours, 44 minutes, 57 seconds. How was she able to do it? Endurance!

Our God Is An Awesome God,  
He reigns from Heaven above  
With wisdom, power and might,  
Our God is an Awesome God.