"How do I handle persecution for Christ?"

(DEALING WITH UNJUST OPPOSITION)

Matthew 10:16-25

10/22/2017

INTRODUCTION: V. 16-17

***Be prepared for end-time persecution!**

How do I handle persecution for Christ?

1. **Utilize it for a testimony for Christ** (v. 18)

2. **Don't worry, rely upon divine unction in emergency situations** (v. 19-20)

3. **Expect it even from family members** (v. 21-22a)

4. **Endure it and be delivered** (v. 22b)

5. **Rebound off it, and move on** (v. 23)

6. **Accept it - if they persecuted Jesus, they will persecute you!** (v. 24-26)

Alternative Outline

"PERSECUTION IN THE LAST DAYS"

(How to Handle Unjust Opposition)
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10/22/2017

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Why will God allow persecution to fall upon His saints in the Last Days?

I. So that His <u>TESTIMONY</u> would shine bright in times of darkness (v. 18)

II. So that His <u>POWER</u> would enable them in times of weakness (v. 19-20)

III. So that His <u>FELLOWSHIP</u> (closeness) would sustain them in times of betrayal (v. 21-22a)

IV. So that His <u>DELIVERANCE</u> would reward them at the time of the end (v. 22b)

V. So that His <u>GUIDANCE</u> would re-direct them in times of witnessing (v. 23)

VI. So that His <u>EXAMPLE</u> would encourage them in times of unjust treatment (v. 24-25)

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INTRODUCTION: V. 16-17

Although verses 17-25 are recorded in a context describing Christ's commissioning of His disciples (v. 1-16), these verses will ultimately be fulfilled in the future Tribulation days prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ (NOTE: V. 23).

Note: Verses 17-25 actually were stated by Jesus to His disciples in an escatalogical context (See: Mark 13:1ff; Luke 21:12-19).

However, since Matthew recorded his Gospel thematically rather than chronologically, these verses occur at Christ's commissioning of His disciples.

Certain aspects of this prediction by Jesus were fulfilled in 70 A.D. when Rome destroyed Jerusalem and scattered its people.

These disciples whom Jesus addressed did face severe opposition (Note the book of Acts).

Peter warned us: *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."* (I Pet. 4:12)

It should not come as a surprising shock that opposition will come in the Last Days. God told us how things and people would be.

Contrary to evolutionist thinking, people are not getting better and better, but worse! (though man's sin nature remains as depraved as it ever was, it will be manifested more in the last days!)

The Marks of the End Time Humanity

(II Timothy 3:1-4)

1. **A <u>Troubled</u> Society** (v. 1)
"Perilous times" = grievous times

2. **<u>Selfishness</u>** (v. 2)
a. *"Lovers of their own selves"* = self-lovers; humanism
b. *"Covetous"* = money lovers

3. **<u>Arrogance</u>** (v. 2)
a. *"Boasters"* - to brag about self-superiority
b. *"Proud"* - haughty; to look down on others

4. **<u>Blasphemy</u>** (v. 2)
Abusive speech toward Jesus Christ (Ex: rebels, liberal theologians, and cults)

5. **<u>Disregard for Authority</u>** (v. 2)
a. *"Disobedient to parents"* - unpersuaded of their need to submit to and obey parental authority
b. *"Unthankful"* - no appreciation for what their parents gave to them and ultimately what God gave them (evolution gives rise to unthankfulness - Rom. 1:21)
c. *"Unholy"* - no reverence for that which is sacred

6. **<u>Without Natural Affection</u>** (astorgoi)
Modern examples:
--No family loyalty
--Divorce
--Abortion

7. **<u>Liars</u>**
a. *"Trucebreakers* - refuse to be bound by agreements
b. *"False accusers"* - devilish slander

8. **<u>Wild, Rowdy, and Lawless</u>**

a. *"Incontinent"* = uncontrolled; unrestrained; no power over their emotions, words, actions, etc.
b. *"Fierce"* = savage, untamed, brutal
c. *"Despisers of those who are good"* - lit. to have no love for good (cp. Is. 5:20; Rom. 1:32)

9. <u>Inconsiderate</u>

a. *"Traitors"* = to betray someone to ruin them
b. *"Heady"* - headstrong; reckless and rash; to rush forward in pursuit of getting their own way without concern for those they crush along the way

10. <u>Egocentric</u>

a. *"High-minded"* - conceited; to "be so inflated with a sense of their own knowledge and importance, that they envelop themselves in a cloud of smoke (root comes from "tuphos" - smoke, mist, cloud) and are unable to recognize the truth" (H. Kent).
b. *"Lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God"* - pleasure lovers rather than God lovers

Contemporary preoccupations: entertainment, recreation, sports, leisure, food, comfort, and convenience

11. **External Godliness**

"having a form (external semblance or appearance) of Godliness" They appear religious, but have no power or ability to really live Godly.

Such wicked behavior will escalate when the Antichrist becomes Satan's global leader who pressures the world into taking his mark and worshipping him (Rev. 12-13).

Jesus said: *"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world"* (Jn. 16:33).

***Be prepared for end-time persecution!**

How do I handle persecution for Christ?

1. Utilize it for a testimony for Christ (v. 18)

"Ye shall be brought" - speaks of God's people being apprehended, arrested, and delivered over to governmental leaders

NOTE: the frequent reference to God's people being *"delivered up"* [cp. v. 19, 21]. Why would governors [local leaders] and kings [national emperors] want to speak to God's persecuted people? Perhaps because they are desperate to find answers to the famines, plagues, and other natural disasters that will occur in the Tribulation.

Also, the unusual conviction to not go along with the rest of the world will gain the attention of these leaders. They will want to know "Why?" "Why such conviction?" "Why not take the mark?" "Why not live the way the rest of the world is?"

"For My sake" - Because of me; on account of me

Simply because you belong to Jesus, that is enough reason for Satan to hate you and for his people to oppose you (SEE: Mt. 5:10-12).

NOTE: Also, Jesus often allows opposition to come upon us so that we can by our steadfastness and loyalty glorify Him!

No one else is worth living for and dying for!

"For a testimony (witness) against (to) them" - God works in mysterious ways and uses unusual circumstances to utilize us as His witness!

All things do work together for good (Rom. 8:28)!

Remember the unjust persecution, then testimony of Joseph (Gen. 39ff) witnessed before the Pharaoh of Egypt. Shadrach, Meshech, Abednego (Dan. 3) witnessed before Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Daniel (Dan. 6) witnessed before Darius, King of Medo-Persia. Paul (who witnessed before the Emperor of Rome Caesar - Acts 27:24).
"No matter how difficult our circumstances may be, we can turn opposition into

opportunities for witness" (Wiersbe, p. 38)

How you handle problems and pressures, trials and tribulations will be either a testimony for Christ (in His favor) or against Christ (in His dishonor)

"And the Gentiles" - the pagan nations of the world will also hear from God's people and the elect remnant of saved Jews.

2. Don't worry, rely upon divine unction in emergency situations (v. 19-20)

"Take no thought" - Don't be anxious, worried, or upset as to how (your delivery) or what (your content) you will say. Both the ability to speak and the choice of words to speak will be given).

(NOTE: This text does not apply to preachers who justify their lack of preparation with the abused promise: *"Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it"* - Ps. 81:10. This text specifically refers to those who will be brought before the world's leaders in the last days.

"In that same hour" - God will not be early or late in giving His servants the message they will need.

"It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit" - The Holy Spirit who resides in believers will give unction to His spokesmen, as He pours out new revelation in the future Tribulation (See: Acts 2:17-20; cp. Joel 2:28-32; Ezek. 39:29).

Though this specific promise is eschatalogical, the Holy Spirit's fullness today brings with it divine unction and power in your witnessing.

(Cp. Acts 4:8 - *"Peter filled with the Holy Ghost, said. . ."*; cp. 13:9)

How often, I recall, I was called upon to preach or had occasion to witness and the Lord would flood my mind with Bible verses. I know His Spirit reminded me of Scripture I had heard or read before. His power is always available for those desperate moments of life.

3. Expect it even from family members (v. 21-22a)

Can you imagine your own brother "turning you in" to be put to death? Can you fathom a father betraying his own son or daughter to the enemy? Can you comprehend how a child could disrespectfully rise up against the mother and father who brought them into the world, fed them, clothed them, no doubt with tears gave them the gospel, but to no avail.

Such unnatural traitorous acts against one's own loved ones shows the lack of love (Mt. 24:12), lack of natural affection (II Tim. 3:3), overwhelming Satanic influence (II Tim. 2:3ff; I Tim. 4:1ff), and desperation of people who will at all cost satisfy their selfish needs at the expense of eve their own flesh and blood.

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another and will hate one another." (Mt. 24:9-10).

SEE Micah 7:2-6 for a description of this unnatural behavior (devoid of family loyalty).

"Hated of all men" - to have everyone against you--everywhere you turn--will indeed be a sad time in human history. This has never occurred yet.

"For My name's sake" - Jesus will be the name the whole world will hate! They will at that time turn against all who claim it!

The world hates Christians because it hates Christ. SEE: John 15:18-23.

"There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." (Prov. 18:24).

"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up" (Ps. 27:10).

4. <u>Endure</u> it and be <u>delivered</u> (v. 22b)

"He that endureth" - he who "remains faithful under" the pressures put on by the oppressive world, flesh, and devil

Note: One's "endurance" is a manifestation of the genuineness of their faith!

True disciples will continue and persevere (John 8:31 - *"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed"*; cp. Col. 1:23).

Those who defect from the ranks of Biblical Christianity show by their abandonment that they have given heed to doctrines of devils (I Tim. 4:1) and that they were not really "*of us*" (fellow-believers) (*"They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they have been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that some of them were not of us"* - I Jn. 2:19)

The *"endurance"* involves: not giving up the faith which has been once and for all given to the saints, and not giving in to the Antichrist and his diabolical deception.

"To the end" - to the end of this age (to the end of the times of the Gentiles; to the inauguration of the Day of the Lord).

"Shall be saved" - Saved spiritually or physically? Answer: Physically via Rapture!

The word "saved" means to be delivered. The word "salvation" refers to the "Rapture" very often (I Th. 5:8-10; Rom. 13:11; I Pet. 1:5).

"Shall be saved" - SEE: Mt. 24:13, 21-22.

For those living in the last days of the Tribulation, I Peter 4:13 gives God's encouragement to those who will endure fiery trials. He implores us to *"rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."* (I Pet. 4:13). Christ's glory will be revealed at the Rapture.

5. <u>Rebound off it</u>, and move on (v. 23)

God often uses persecution to scatter His people and spread His Word (the Church reluctant to fulfill the Great Commission into all the world needed a push. Persecution was the push they needed to scatter. SEE: Acts 8:1-**<u>4</u>**).

"The cities of Israel" - God will employ His 144,000 redeemed Jews to preach throughout all the cities of Israel in the second half of the Tribulation, prior to Christ's coming. At the time of His coming, He will reward His faithful (Mt. 16:27 - *"For the Son of man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works."*

6. <u>Accept</u> it - if they persecuted Jesus, they will persecute you! (v. 24-26)

None of us is above Jesus our Master and Lord. If Ye was persecuted and unjustly treated, why do we think we will escape it?

We may be *"as our Master"* in the sense that we too will be unjustly ridiculed, condemned, and beaten.

If Jesus (the good Master of the house) was misunderstood and identified as Beelzebub (Satan), it should come as no surprise that we (sinners saved by grace and members of His family [*"household"])* are called names and wrongly abused - 23:27-31.
John 15:20 - *"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also."*

When Jesus was being led away to be crucified, He compared what they did to Him with what they would do in the future Tribulation (SEE Luke 23:27-31)

CONCLUSION:

The purpose of this message is not to give anyone a "martyr's complex." But to help you the next time you are opposed for Christ. Those living in the future Tribulation will need to be armed with such assurances.

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