

THE TRIAL OF PERSECUTION- Charles Thornton

‘All that live godly in Christ Jesus shall *suffer persecution.*’ There is no exception to this rule; and the knowledge and expectation of this should make us stand fast, having on the breastplate of righteousness, and having our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace. God allows his people to have these experiences and to *suffer for right.* Those whom He is calling at this time are called to be saints. They are to be the Royal Priesthood, who in the Kingdom age, future, shall bring the blessing to all the people.

The purpose of trials are to prove and *to test the characters* of the Lord’s people. We are told that God wants to see *how loyal we are* to the *principles* of righteousness. *How much* are we willing to suffer for Christ’s sake? The adversary would say, ‘Every man has his price.’ And so, in the church, there are some who will endure *So much and then back away.* Some will take a little *more* and others a *little more.* God declares that he is seeking those who would be willing to *give up everything* in order to *prove faithful in obedience* to their covenant with Him. That faithfulness means being loyal to Jehovah God and to His laws which are the standards of righteousness.

A Faithful Cloud of Witnesses - Examples to the Church. {# *Hebrews 12:1*} We would first like to read concerning these, in the 11th Chapter of the Book of Hebrews. They believed God and were willing to suffer for their faith’s convictions- *even to death.* Such were referred to as being a ‘so great a cloud of witnesses’ much like and perhaps endured even *more* than those of this Christian Age.

Moses Refused to be Called the Son of Pharaoh’s Daughter, ‘Choosing rather to *suffer affliction* (persecutions) with the people of God than to enjoy *the pleasures of sin* for a season.’ {# *He 11:25*} As St. Paul beautifully put it, ‘Esteeming *the reproach for Christ* greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect *unto the recompense* of reward.’ Vs. 26. By Faith, he stood in the face of certain death by Pharaoh, was *persecuted by his brethren,* by conspirators to rule, endured their bickerings, rebellions and divisiveness. In the end he was victorious. God called him—‘My servant Moses; He *is faithful* in all My house. *I speak with him face to face.*’ {# *Numbers 12:7,8*} God surely loved *him and will reward him in the coming Kingdom and ages.*

Christ Jesus, our great exemplar in loyalty, did not shrink under persecution but demonstrated faithfulness and obedience to

Jehovah, God, His Father. 'He became *obedient unto death* —even the death of the Cross.' {# *Philippians 2:8*} Jesus 'endured *the contradiction of sinners* against himself' and *endured the cross*, dispising the shame and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God. {# *He 12:3,2*} 'He was dispised and rejected of men, A man of sorrows and aquained with grief.' {# *Isaiah 53:3- 12*} They shoot out their lip saying, Let *him deliver him*, if he delight in him. He suffered the greatest 'even the *cruel death* of the cross.' {# *Psalms 22:6- 8*}

The first Christian martyr was Stephen a most *outstanding witness* in *trial and death*. {# *Acts 7:54- 60*} In the early development of the church, *Satan sought to destroy it* through the efforts of Nero and Diocletian—*extreme persecutions to death*. A few months after Paul was set at liberty, a great fire burst forth in the city of Rome. Nero enjoyed the sight of Rome's burning from his palace singing and dancing the mime of 'the burning of Troy.' Nero reportedly *caused* the fire, and to avert suspicion, charged *innocent Christians*. *Multitudes* of every age and sex, were arrested. Those Christians, *unpopular* with their heathen neighbors and Jews were made *scapegoats* and *suffered dreadfully*. They *were slain* with the sword *put in amphitheaters*, they were *covered with skins* of wild beasts, *torn to pieces* by dogs, wrapped in *sheets of pitch*, tied to stakes *and set on fire*. Nero, *Satan's chief agent*, drove among the people in his chariot, *lighted by the fires* of these hideous *human torches*.

A Union of Civil Powers. Already Europe is fettered with the Dream of Charles DeGaul and the Pope, then and now, —a European *Civil Union*, the EU. In these United States, there has been a concerted effort to defeat the U. S. Constitution's, 1st Ammendment policy of *Separation of Church and State*. Mr. Bush declares there *is nothing wrong with Church and State* and support of *religious parochial* schools. His counterpart Mr. McCain is in agreement both on abortion and *support of private and Parochial schools*. Church/State funding of Parochial schools is a Constitutional issue that has been *refused rulingby the heavily-weighted Catholic US Supreme Court*. The matter has been pressed by two Roman Catholic Governors of Wisconsin and Michigan, and the Mayor of New York, who *strongly support Parochial aid*. The intent is to *by- and- large defeat* and destroy the Public *non-church schools* begun by Congress in Post Constitution 1825. The Adversary is now working *in a full frenzy*, (GK. 'energia'), of dilusion. {# *1 Thessalonians 2:9- 12*}

The Catholic Counter Reformation. Why do we mention this? It is because history tells us that the Counter Reformation almost

destroyed the Reformation and *turned back millions into Papacy* through the efforts of Ignatius Loyola. Loyola formed the Jesuits and their schools *with the intent of catachizing the young minds* of those *reformed* young children in their parochial schools *conversion mills*. Today, *by that means*, they hope to *gain control of the courts, the Presidency and the congress and impose Papal rule in this Fair Land*. By means of *numbers and control*, they would be free to ‘make war against the lamb’ {# Revelation 17:14} in persecution unto death of ‘the remnant’ of Saints. {# Revelation 12:17} They are succeeding. A nun superintendent reported ‘90 % of those now attending Detroit Catholic schools *are non Catholic*’ and said that they ‘believe in a *(Catholic) faith based education*’ a *shocking* statement! The Pastor wrote several articles on Papal designs on American Public schools. They now have *voucher* public money and *no one is stopping them*.

Concerning Persecution he also wrote this: ‘If therefore, any one of the Lord’s people *are escaping persecution*, he should *feel fearful* of his condition and should make a *careful examination* as to *whether he is faithful* to all the privileges and opportunities that he can find. This does not mean, however, that we should seek persecution in the sense of doing foolish things or of doing proper things in foolish manner. But it does mean that *we should not shrink from the responsibility* of proper conduct because of *fear of consequences*. Fear is one of the *most subtle foes* of the people of God. It should be offset *by trust, by faith* in God.’ (*Zion’s Watch Tower*, Reprints, 5907, [’16,’02,’09] *Bible Students Library CD*) This reminds us of # He 2:15, where we are told that that there are those ‘Who through *fear of death* are all their lifetime subject to bondage.’ Faithfulness in sacrifice even unto death. {# Revelation 2:10 *See entire text.*}

Further, in *Zion’s Watch Tower* Reprints, 5874, (1916) # Revelation 6:9- 11 we read, ‘*I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How Long O Lord, Holy and true, doest Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?’—and white robes was given to them;*’ and they were told that they should wait a ‘*little season,*’ until their brethren, who were also *persecuted*, should have *the persecutions accomplished* in them.’ We note, that while Br. Russell substituted the words *persecution*, which well applies, the Scripture also reads, ‘until their *fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*’ {# Revelation 6:11, *KJV*} The activities of the Wicked One *are not yet over* for we read ‘He shall bruise thy heel (*the heel members*) but

thou shalt bruise his head (in due time *crushed*) under your feet, shortly.’ {# Genesis 3:15 Romans 16:20}

The Hour of Power. Further, the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, *when empowered*, in their ‘hour of power’ will call for *recognition*, as was *required* of those three Hebrews. *This will be the real ‘hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.’* {# Revelation 3:10} We are told that *whoever* or ‘as many who would not worship *THE IMAGE* of the *BEAST* should be killed.’ {# Revelation 13:13- 18} ‘They shall cast out of the Synagogues: the time cometh that *whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God a service.* And these things they do unto you, because they *know not the Father*, nor me.’ {# John 16:2,3}

Finally, in *Zion’s Watch Tower*, Reprints, 3697, this statement is made, ‘So *popular* will Federated [*United*] Christianity become, that *even to criticize it* will be a ‘*crime*’ *worthy of crucifixion* in some form—socially, financially, if not [*lieterally to kill*] *physically.*’

‘*Politicians* will quickly realize that their bread is buttered on that side, and *be ready to enact legislation of any kind desired by the Federation [Church Union]*. Mamon- worship will take on new forms temporarily, but *POWER* will soon *debauch* the unregenerate mass and *drive out* the regenerate faithful who may temporarily be misled by the great ‘*Union movement*’ *in the name of Christ* (Christian right?), but without his Spirit or authority.’ Jesus admonished, ‘*And when they bring you into the Synagogues (even today’s churches), and unto the Magistrates and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Spirit shall teach [tell] you in the same hour [both then and in that future time also—the hour of power] what ye ought to say.* (What will be spoken, will be by *God’s Spirit working through them* verbally as they speak).’ {# Luke 12:11,12}

Let us, therefore, and may God help us to, have the strength and courage necessary, whether through persecution’s trial either *now* or in the *future*. Let us be encouraged the more to buckle on tightly ‘the whole armor of God,’ and to ‘fight the good fight’ faithfully to the close. {# Ephesians 6:11 _ 1 Timothy 6:12} Let us do this So that we may, with Br. Paul and all the faithful ones, share that crown of rejoicing which the Lord has promised to all who love Him supremely—even unto death. {# 2 Timothy 4:7,8} Amen.

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