

From Faith Unto Faith V Blessed are the Peacemakers & Those Who have been Persecuted

Fred R. Coulter—June 15, 2013

Greetings, everyone! Welcome to Sabbath services! The world is going crazy, and we're trying to stay sane! That's why we have the Sabbath and Holy Days, so we can understand what is going on. Always remember that at the heart and core of nearly every problem in the world is the fact that men have left God. They want to try and work it out *their way!* Therefore, they really don't know what the problems are.

- Why do we have an immigration problem? *We have people coming in!* Why?
- We have a financial problem; we've got a lot of debt! Why?
- We have troubles in marriage, in families, in society, murders and all of these things. Why?

They try to change this and that and the other thing, but they don't know the cause: ***they have left God!*** No one anywhere at anytime under any circumstances can prosper by leaving God. For a while they may do well.

I just read a report on what happened to the United Kingdom. During the 1800s and 1900s the Pound Sterling was the international currency until after WWII, then Bretton Wood took over. Then England went way down because of that. Every time they get a socialist political party in, who gives goodies, they go deeper in debt and trouble comes, and instead of turning back to God, they put in the conservatives and the conservatives rescue them for a while. Then they want more goodies, so they put in the one who promises the goodies and then trouble comes and piles up and sooner or later it's going to be an avalanche! Avalanches have a way of coming very fast *with no warning!* So, the world has many avalanches coming because of it.

- What do we do?
- How do we face the world?
- What do we need to do in our lives?

We need to be *wise as serpents, harmless as doves* as far as the world is concerned.

However, we need to be developing the mind and character of Christ, and that begins with the beatitudes in Matt. 5. Here is one that is very rare today, and the world can't find it. In my lifetime we've had WWII, the Korean War, Vietnam War, Iraq War, several other smaller wars in between; *all to end war!* There is no peace!

Matthew 5:9: "**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called *the sons of God.***" The major peacemaking that we're going to do is at the beginning of the Millennium. We need to look at the world and at this society and see why there is no peace.

Men have tried peace. 'Oh, let us do it our way. I have an idea!' You can take Isaiah 48:22 and apply it in many different ways to many different situations: to individuals, families, cities, states, nations, organizations.

Isaiah 48:22: "*There is no peace,*' says the LORD, 'for the wicked.'" People don't consider themselves wicked, they think they're all pretty good and their ideas are going to work. But unless they follow the principles in the Bible, even if they're not converted, they will have some success. But they're not going to cure the problem, because unless they believe what the Bible says concerning human nature, there's no way they're going to solve the problem.

Isaiah 59 tells us exactly what we have in the world. Likewise this can apply to many different sets of circumstances and people. They always blame God, 'Where is God?' Well, God is right where *you* told Him to be: 'Get out of my life.' But, 'I want God.' Yeah, but God is not going to bless you very much unless you do it *His way!* 'I want God *my way.*' *NO!* God says, 'If you want Me, you come to Me, *My way!*'

Here's exactly how it is in the world, Isaiah 59:1: "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened that it cannot save... [don't blame God] ...nor is His ear heavy that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have come between you and your God, and your sins have hid *His* face from you, that **He will not hear**" (vs 1-2).

Look at all the difficulties that we're having today, as we're sitting here, i.e. fires in Colorado.

- No one stops to think about the voting in of marijuana and allowing that to be legal.
- No one thinks about the case where the federal judge says, 'It's all right to give 12-year-olds the morning after pill.' They don't even know how it may affect young people.

You can go on and on!

Verse 3: "For your hands are defiled with

blood... [war, murder, robbery, thievery] ...and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perverseness.” Whoopee! That sounds like all of the politicians. Here in California we have a government that thinks that a \$1.2-billion reserve fund, with a \$40-billion debt is just fine. What did they do?

Verse 4: “None calls for justice...” There are a lot of people calling for justice, but not *God’s justice!*

“nor does anyone plead for truth...” (v 4). They want the truth, but they don’t go to the basic truth, which is the reason you’re in trouble is because you’ve *rejected God!*

“...they trust in vanity and speak lies. They conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity...” (v 4). Sounds like Obamacare. If you don’t think that’s true, just wait! All those young people who were so delirious in voting in our illustrious President, because they *like* him, wait until the IRS comes knocking and announces to you that your healthcare premium for an unemployed person is \$????; I don’t know what it’s going to be, but its going to be an awful lot of money, *because they’ve left God!*

So, they try and do everything they can, v 5: “They hatch adders’ eggs and weave the spider’s web; he who eats their eggs dies, and that which is crushed breaks out into a viper. Their webs shall not become clothing, nor shall they cover themselves with their works; their works *are* works of iniquity, and the acts of violence *are* in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood...” (vs 5-7). Oh yeah! How many abortions a day? Three thousand?

“...their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction *are* in their paths. They have not known the way of peace...” (vs 7-8). How can they bring peace? *We propose peace-talks between the rebels and the Syrians! Isn’t that wonderful? Between the Jews and the Palestinians! Isn’t that wonderful? How long has that been going on with the Jews and Palestinians? 40 years!*

“...and *there is* no justice in their ways. They have made crooked paths for themselves; whoever goes therein shall not know peace” (v 8). Everything is far from them. Those who try and speak the truth, bring out what is right, you’re either hostile, bitter, antagonistic or you’re attacking.

Here’s how it comes out, v 13. “**In rebellion and denial of the LORD...**” They deny Him:

- by being atheists
- by being agnostic
- when they say you can be Christian but you don’t have to keep the Law

- when they setup their own religions
- when they setup their own ways of doing things

One thing I saw on the Weather Channel and they were running secrets—I don’t know if it was of rain or of the earth, but it was totally amazing! Here’s something of God right before their eyes and they say this is amazing and they’re flabbergasted by it! We all know that in order for rain to fall it has to have a little grain of dust in it. Does all that dust come from the earth? *No, it doesn’t!* What they were showing was that there are small granules of magnetite coming into the atmosphere from outer space and they don’t burn up because they’re so small.

They come down into the clouds—think of this concerning bringing of the Flood—and get into the droplets of water. Then the water freezes around it. They showed a great downpour in a tropical area, because all rain starts out as basically ice or snow and then it melts as it’s coming down. They gathered some of the rain water, put it in a little container and then got a little magnet and put in there, moved it around and pulled it out and here’s all the magnetite from outer space. Not totally black; not totally covering the magnet, but enough that you can see, yes, that came from outer space.

Now, all of you atheists who believe in evolution, how did that happen? Yeah, they deny God! What happens when they do that?

“...**denial of the LORD** and turning away from our God, talking perversity and revolt, conceiving and speaking from the heart words of falsehood.... [sounds like the evening news] ...And justice is driven backward, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth has fallen in the street, and uprightness cannot enter” (vs 13-14).

Just think what would happen if someone would be, as the world would look at it, kooky enough to go stand at the Lincoln Memorial, quote Lincoln a little bit and tell everyone that he studied the Bible every single day. ‘I’m standing here to bring you a message. On this side we have sackcloth and on this side we have ashes. God is calling all the politicians, beginning with the White House—he can come first—to come and repent and change to sackcloth and cover yourselves with ashes and go home and repent. In three days come back and I will give you God’s solutions to your problems.’

The Washington police would have you locked up. The CIA would be examining your mind; they would want to give you whatever they could to silence you, to shut you up.

Verse 15_[transcriber’s correction]: “Yea, truth fails;

and he *who* departs from evil makes himself a prey....” When you turn from your former friends and you turn from your former sins, they come after you.

“...And the LORD saw, and it was evil in His eyes that *there was* no justice” (v 15). Let me give you just a little Bible study for this week. Tie this in with the sermon I gave on *Spirit of God/Seven Spirits of God*—which are the seven eyes of God. Look up all the places where it talks about *God sees* and *His eyes watch*. You go through the Bible and God is in real close communication to the earth—is He not? *Yes, He is!*

Verse 16: “And He saw that *there was* no man, and was astonished that there was no intercessor. Therefore His own arm brought salvation to Him; and His righteousness sustained Him.” That’s talking about the return of Christ. It’s going to get so bad that’s the only thing that’s going to be able to do it.

Let’s talk about some peace. Note Heb. 7:2 where Jesus Christ is called *the King of Peace*. This is quite a thing! The more you think about what God did to come as a human being, and what Christ went through—absolutely incredible; just very humbling—there’s no way you can go through that and understand that, and really not make a close connection to God because of what He’s done.

Isaiah 9:6: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder... [the all the time that men have had for government, they have proved that they don’t know the way] ...and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God... [How do you call a ‘baby’ the Mighty God?] ...the Everlasting Father... [which will take place when the Millennium begins; He will be a Father] ...the Prince of Peace.” That’s where you get the *King of Peace* (Heb. 7:2).

Let’s talk a little bit more about the peace that comes from God, and how do we have it? It would be nice if before you correct someone else straighten out your own life. It would be nice after the event that scattered many of the people of God into many different churches, if they would quit attacking one another. We’ve got too much to do, we don’t need to attack each other. We can make a differentiation in wrong doctrine, but let God take care of the other things that are there. Among ourselves we have to be *peacemakers*. We’ll talk about that in just a bit and what we need to do. Jesus gave the instructions on how to make peace.

Psalms 34:1: “I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall always be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; the humble

shall hear and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together” (vs 1-3). He’s putting God *first* in everything that He’s doing. That is the key.

Verse 4: “I sought the LORD, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.” We’re going to face a lot of those in the future, because as we look at the next beatitude in this series: *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake!* We need to be delivered from all our fears.

Verse 5: “They looked to Him and were radiant; and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard, and saved him out of all his troubles” (vs 5-6). So, we can get our lives squared around in the way that they need to be *first*.

Notice what happens then, v 7: “The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him and delivers them.” That’s how you’re delivered from your troubles.

Verse 8: “O taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him. O fear the LORD, all you saints, for there is nothing lacking to those who fear Him” (vs 8-9). Then it talks about the lions that God even takes care of them.

Verse 11: Come, hearken to me... [*hearken* is an interesting word; you’ll notice in it is the word *hear*. *Hearken* means *listen to obey*.] ...you children; I will teach you the fear of the LORD, Who is the man that desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil and do good; **seek peace and pursue it**” (vs 11-14)—in everything that you do.

Verse 15: “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry.” Who are the righteous? *Those that follow all the verses up to that point!* “...seek peace and pursue it” is the only way that you can have peace among each other.

How do you settle the disputes? Too many people have been trained in their church to be totally dependent upon the ministry to solve everything; if there’s something wrong you run to the minister and you tell the minister. Then the minister goes and solves the problem. *That is 100% completely wrong!* Here’s a principle they’ve even understood in business: *Solve all problems at the lowest level possible!* Remember that!

Matthew 18:11: “For the Son of man has come to save those who are lost.” How many people think that they deserve to be called? *None of us!* That means that we’re in the category of the lost; we

need to be saved. So, He says:

Verse 12: “What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, *does he* not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and search for the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Likewise, it is not *the* will of your Father Who *is* in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. *So* then...” (vs 12-15). Based upon that! In other words, if you are going to follow Christ, here is how you need to deal with each other.

Verse 15: “*So* then, if your brother sins against you... [run to the minister—NO!] ...go and show him his fault between you and him alone....” That’s going to take some prayer to do it. That’s going to take some courage to do it. You might even say that ‘some of the things I have to say may not be necessarily pleasant, but give me some space and let me speak, and if there are some things that I say, which are not correct, I am very willing to change. This is all a part of being *peacemakers*.

“...go and show him his fault between you and him alone.... [Is that the lowest level possible? *Yes, indeed!*] ...If he is willing to hear you, you have gained your brother” (v 15). Isn’t that the best way to do it? *Of course it is!* That’s what Christ said. When you do that, you find that you can really accomplish what needs to be done to correct the problem. It may be hard to change, and it may be hard to take the message of offense from the person bringing it, because pride enters in. But nevertheless, ***if you listen and change, that’s what Christ wants!***

Then He says, ‘What’s going to happen if he won’t listen, because that’s the next question, v 16: “But if he will not listen, take with you one or two others, so that in *the* mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he fails to listen to them, tell *it* to the Church...” (vs 16-17). The minister can get involved at that particular point, but in telling it to the Church it generally will end with v 16; rarely will it go to v 17—you tell it to the Church and he still won’t listen.

“...But if he also fails to listen to the Church, let him be to you as the heathen and the tax collector” (v 17).

Notice v 18; this is important: “Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on the earth will have already been bound in heaven...” That is a key translation from the Greek. The Greek is in the perfect tense. In other words, already judgment in heaven has been given on this. So, you seek the will of God and you don’t come up with something contrary to Word and will of God. If you do it right then it will be bound on earth; same way with *loosing*. If it is

something that has already been loosed according to the Word of God, then when a decision is made to loose something, it is done! It is loosed!

Matt. 5:37 ties in with Matt. 18:18. So, whenever these situations come up, you have to do this. Sometimes you don’t do it perfectly. Paul warned the Ephesians not to lie to one another. That can happen with the brethren. When a problem comes up you don’t do that.

Matthew 5:37: “But let your word be *good*, your “Yes” *be* yes and your “No” *be* no; for anything that *is* added to these is from the evil one.”

Matthew 18:19: “Again I say to you, that if two of you on earth shall agree concerning any matter that they wish to request, it shall be done for them by My Father, Who *is* in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there, I am in *the* midst of them” (vs 19-20).

If you agree with anything brother to brother/sister to sister within the Church, then you have to follow through and make it right. If there are problems and difficulties: repent, forgive, go forward and do what is necessary. What if you’ve got someone with a great number of difficulties? What do you do with them? So, Peter asked:

Verse 21: “Then Peter came to Him *and* said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Until seven times?’ ... [I imagine at that he thought he was being pretty generous!] ...Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you until seven times, but until seventy times seven’” (vs 21-22).

Peacemaking starts with each one of us in our lives and with those around us. *Peacemaking* also requires two to agree. Where you have made attempts and have apologized for what you have done wrong or whatever, and you tried reconciling and there is not reconciliation under any circumstances, then you just put them in God’s hands and continue to pray for them. That’s all you can do.

If it is something that is really causing a tremendous problem then you may have to go through steps two and three. If it’s someone not in the Church there are bound to be offenses to come, because after it says ‘*blessed are the peacemakers*’ it says ‘*blessed are those who are persecuted*,’ because they may not agree. What you have to do in that particular case is walk away from it, continue to pray about it and ask God to help them.

Let’s see some things concerning *peace*. ***Peace comes from God!*** Let’s think about this: Wouldn’t things be a whole lot better if all of us would

- draw closer to Christ

- ask for His Spirit
- ask God to help us overcome our carnal mind

because a carnal mind is ‘enmity—an enemy—against God’! When we let our carnality come out and it does.... How many have never had their carnality come out since they’ve been baptized? What do you do? *You forgive each other. You don’t let the sun go down on your wrath, and the next day is better!*

Notice what Jesus said concerning peace, John 14:26: “But *when* the Comforter... [also Helper] ...comes, even the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in My name, that one shall teach you all things... [This is going to teach us how to have peace, as well.] ...and shall bring to your remembrance everything that I have told you. **Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you;** not as the world gives do I give *it* to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it fear” (vs 26-27). *Peace of mind!*

We’re going to see how we have this peace of mind. Let’s see what is to rule in our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit. Colossians 3 talks about a lot of things we need to overcome and put away—doesn’t it? *Yes!* Most of us have put off all the things from Col. 3:3-7.

Colossians 3:8: “But now, you should also put off all *these* things: wrath... [controlling temper] ...indignation, malice, blasphemy, *and* foul language from your mouth.”

I was watching the swamp people catch their gators. There is this father and son, they’re strong and they saw this gator out where they were looking for the lines to get their gators. The son is a sharpshooter and if they saw they had a gator up on the surface of the water—their body is below the water, but their eyes and their snout is up out of the water. so they can see them—the son was up on the bow of the boat and he shot it and they ran over there to get it as quickly as they could. He hit the alligator and wounded it, and kind of knocked it unconscious.

As they get the boat up and they’re trying to get the hook up—it weighed 750 lbs.; it was a real big one—they’re fighting: ‘Do this, do that! Get it/don’t let him get away. Shoot it.’ Then the father let out some explicit swearing language and they scramble it so you wouldn’t hear it. After it was all done, and after the gator was in there, the fellow said, ‘O Jesus, forgive me, I really didn’t mean it, but I was trying to get this gator.’

That shows one thing that is to his good. He’s not called to salvation, but it’s a principle: *be ready to repent!* That’s the best way that you make

peace.

Verse 9: “Do not lie to one another, *seeing that* you have put off the old man together with his deeds, and have put on the new man, who *is* being renewed in knowledge according to *the* image of Him Who created him; where there is neither Greek nor Jew... [interesting that he put the Greek first] ...circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian *nor* Scythian, slave *nor* free; but Christ *is* all things, and in all. Put on then, as *the* elect of God, Holy and beloved, deep inner affections, kindness, humility, meekness *and* long-suffering” (vs 9-12). Developing the character.

This is why we have Sabbath services. They have found that the way that a person learns something and remembers it is reviewing it, going over it. That’s the way that it is with Sabbath services. You come every week and God puts His Spirit here; we have God’s Spirit in us, and every week we learn things and are changed; and we’re brought to where we need to be through the Word of God. It’s all a wonderful spiritual experience that we’re all participating in, so we can change and develop the character of Christ.

Verse 13: “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another... [we saw how to do that; that’s *peacemaking* right there] ...even as Christ forgave you, so also you *should* forgive. And above all these things *put on* love, which is *the* bond of perfection. **And let the peace of God rule in your hearts...**” (vs 13-15). So, *true peace and true peacemaking come from God!*

There are many other things that we can add to it, and look at it and see what we need to do. Do your own Bible study on it. Philip. 4 tells us how to do it, because everything we do outside of our bodies, comes from inside, beginning in our heart and mind. This is why we have to have to laws and commandments written in our heart and mind, why we need to develop the character of God. When the Millennium comes, we are going to be *peacemakers* on earth. Now we have a perfect place within the Church, within the brethren and people we know, to be *peacemakers* as much as possible.

Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in *the* Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your moderation be known to all men; the Lord *is* near. Do not be anxious about anything; but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God in everything; and **the peace of God...** [regardless of how bad the circumstances may be] ...which surpasses all understanding... [it has to come from God] ...shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus” (vs 4-7). That’s

quite a statement—isn't it?

Verse 8: “Finally, brethren, whatever *things* are true, whatever *things* are honorable, whatever *things* are just, whatever *things* are pure, whatever *things* are lovely, whatever *things* are of good report; if *there be* any virtue and if *there be* any praise, think on these things. Whatever things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, you do also; and the **God of peace shall be with you**” (vs 8-9).

That's how we are to be peacemakers!

(go to the next track)

PERSECUTION:

There's already an awful lot of persecution going on in Muslim countries toward those who profess Christianity.

Matthew 5:10: “Blessed *are* those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.... [Notice what they will do; here's how the persecution will come]: ...Blessed are you when they shall reproach you... [despise you] ...and shall persecute you, and shall falsely say every wicked thing against you, for My sake” (vs 10-11). Jesus had to go through all of that Himself.

Here's what we are to do, and this is the difficult part. It think this helps us have the correct attitude when it comes along. Remember:

- they're blinded
- the world is in the grips of Satan the devil
- Satan hates anyone who believe in Christ

—whether a *true* believer or a *pseudo* believer, because *he knows that Jesus is going to end his rule!*

Verse 12: “Rejoice and be filled with joy, for great *is* your reward in heaven... [you'll rejoice a whole lot more when the resurrection comes.] ...for in this same manner they persecuted the prophets who *were* before you.” It's happened in the past; it will happen again!

Let's see what Jesus said to witness to the Scribes and Pharisees—Matt. 23—all of this is full of correction for them.

Matthew 23:27: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!**.... [In a religious sense: *sanctimonious pretender!*] ...For you are like whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful *on the* outside, but within are full of the bones of the dead, and of all uncleanness. Likewise, you also outwardly appear to men *to be* righteous, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (vs 27-28). Isn't that what happens with the religions, even the Christian.

Verse 29: “Woe to you, scribes and

Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the sepulchers of the prophets, and adorn the tombs of the righteous; and you say, ‘If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’ So then, you are testifying against yourselves, that you are the sons of those who killed the prophets; and *as for* you, you are filling up the measure of your fathers” (vs 29-32).

Remember this: ***Whenever there is to be a sharp witness, you spare not the words! Because you are going against the evil that they are doing, and that becomes a witness to them!***

Just before He was arrested and crucified, Jesus was setting the stage here. Remember, this was after the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead. They were absolutely *inflamed* against Jesus, which they should not have been. Here is Jesus' final witness to them:

Verse 33: “*You* serpents, *you* offspring of vipers, how shall you escape the judgment of Gehenna? Because of this, behold, I send to you prophets and wise *men* and scribes; and *some* of them you shall kill and crucify, and *some* of them you shall scourge in your synagogues, and *some of them* you shall persecute from city to city; so that upon you may come all *the* righteous blood poured out upon the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous, unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. **Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation**” (vs 33-36)—and it did!

If you want a really good detailed historical read on the fall of Jerusalem in 70_{A.D.}, read the book of *Josephus*. That was really a terrible carnage of things that happened.

Let's see how we are to conduct ourselves in these things and what we are to do. Sometimes we are to meet these things head-on, other times we are to get out of the way. Remember after Jesus spoke to them in Luke 4, when He announced that He was the Messiah, to them, and He said, ‘This day these things are being fulfilled in your ears.’ Then He told them about Elijah and the widow woman, and that he didn't go to any of the widows in Israel, but the widow woman in Sidon. Then Jesus said that there were a lot of lepers during the time of Elisha the prophet and only Naaman, the Syrian general that conquered the ten tribes of Israel, was healed of leprosy.

They were so inflamed against him, even in the local synagogue in Nazareth that they took Him and they were going to throw Him off the side of the cliff, but He escaped out of their hands. He said, ‘A

prophet has no honor in his own country.'

He's instructing His disciples, Matthew 10:16: "Behold, I am sending you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.... [that is a tremendous skill that is difficult to learn] ...But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues" (vs 16-17).

How tender is your back? Think about this every time you feel sorry for yourself. It's hard for us to conceive of what they did to Jesus because it was so absolutely brutal! But we can relate more as to what happened to the Apostle Paul. He said he was 'beaten with rods three times'—39 whacks on the back—everything that the Apostle Paul went through. Beware! They will do that!

Verse 18: "And you shall also be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a witness to them and to the Gentiles." This was not you paying your way to go see the kings and important people, as some ministers have claimed, but you are *brought* like Paul was, as a prisoner (Acts 24-26).

Verse 19: "Now, when they deliver you up, do not be anxious *about* how or what you should speak; for in that hour it shall be given to you what you shall speak." There's no way you can rehearse for that. You've got to have it *in* you and God's Spirit in you. Jesus said, 'In that hour it shall be given to you what you shall speak.' It's not something that *you do!* This is what *God wants* done!

Verse 20: "For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaks **in** you.... [then He shows how difficult persecution is going to be]; ...Then brother will deliver up brother to death; and *the* father, the child; and children will rise up against *their* parents and *have* them put to death" (vs 20-21). I can see that happening today! We're not far from it! Did that not happen during WWII? *Yes, indeed!*

Verse 22: "And **you shall be hated by all** for My name's sake..." Why is that? *Because Satan is going to:*

- deceive the whole world
- inflame the whole world
- inflame everyone

But notice that we have some encouragement here, "...but the one who endures *to the end*, that one shall be saved" (v 22). Whatever we have to go through, *we go through!*

Verse 23: "But when they persecute you in this city, escape into another... [that's what Jesus did; that's what Paul did] ...for truly I say to you, in no way shall you have completed *witnessing* to the

cities of Israel until the Son of man has come." This verse is a prophecy that carries right down to the end. Then He makes a very good point, because a person might say, 'Why me, Lord? Can't You choose someone else?'

Verse 24: "A disciple is not above his teacher... [What did Jesus go through? What did He teach us?] ...nor a servant above his master. It is sufficient for the disciple that he become as his teacher, and the servant as his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* those of his household?" (vs 24-25). What are we to do in cases like this?

Verse 26: "Therefore, do not fear them... [don't be afraid of them] ...because there is nothing covered that shall not be uncovered, and *nothing* hidden that shall not be known. What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, proclaim upon the housetops" (vs 26-27).

Then He makes this statement that is very important to understand, and He gives it so that we can have faith unto the end: Verse 28: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but do not have power to destroy the life..." The *King James* says 'soul'; but 'the soul that sins can die'! The Greek Word 'psuche' is translated *life* more than it's been translated *soul*.

"...rather, fear Him Who has the power to destroy both life and body in Gehenna" (v 28). We're not to worry. Difficulties will come. If we're 'wise as a serpent, harmless as a dove' then we'll be able to weave our way through some things. But sooner or later it will get to the point where you can't.

Jesus gave the warning! What happened to all the apostles? *They were martyred*, with the exception of the Apostle John.

John 15:17: "These things I command you, that you love one another. If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own.... [they would welcome you with open arms] ...However, because you are not of the world, but I have personally chosen you out of the world, the world hates you for this. Remember the word that I spoke to you: a servant is not greater than his master. **If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. If they kept My Word, they will keep your word also.** But they will do all these things to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him Who sent Me" (vs 17-21). Yet, they pretend and claim that they do.

Verse 22: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have had sin; but now they

have nothing to cover their sin. The one who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no other man has done, they would not have had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this has happened so that the saying might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’” (vs 22-25).

This is why God sends His Holy Spirit, v 26: “But when the Comforter has come, which I will send to you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of the Truth, which proceeds from the Father, that one shall bear witness of Me. Then you also shall bear witness, because you have been with Me from *the beginning*” (vs 26-27).

Then He becomes very straightforward with them concerning what was going to happen, John 16:1: “I have spoken these things to you so that you will not be offended. They shall cast you out of the synagogues; furthermore, the time is coming that everyone who kills you will think that he is rendering service to God” (vs 1-2).

A lot of us have already experienced some of these things even in the Churches of God. Imagine that! Churches of God persecuting other people in Churches of God! Just like we find in 3-John, they were casting brethren out of the Church.

Isaiah 66:5: “Hear the Word of the LORD, you who tremble at His Word, **‘Your brethren who hated you...** [we’ve seen those things, too: false ministers, false brethren, persecution] ...who cast you out for My name’s sake, said, “Let the LORD be glorified.”.... [Well, I’ve been disfellowshipped three times!] ...But He will appear to your joy and they will be ashamed.” It’s going to happen! Jesus said that in the synagogues; it’s happening in the Churches!

Let’s understand what’s going to happen, and what Jesus has warned us about, John 16:4: “But I have told you these things so that when the time comes, you may remember that I said *them* to you. However, I did not say these things to you at *the beginning* because I was with you. But now I am going to Him Who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’” (vs 4-5). Then He talks about sending the Holy Spirit again.

Verse 32: “Listen, the time is coming, and has already come, that you shall be scattered each to his own... [That sure happened to the Church today—hasn’t it? *Yes!*] ...and you shall leave Me alone; and *yet* I am not alone because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, **so that in Me you may have peace....** [that ties in with *peacemaking, persecution* and so forth] ...In the world you shall have tribulation. **But be**

courageous! I have overcome the world” (vs 32-33). *We can overcome the world, as well!*

Stephen:

Let’s see some instances of some real persecution. Acts 7 is where Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin and he gave a powerful witness to them. Notice how they reacted. This was a real central point in the situation concerning the Church. The Sanhedrin itself had a good number of very powerful witnesses given to them. Here is the most powerful, right here with Stephen. This was a prophecy to them of the destruction of the temple. That’s what Stephen was accused of doing, speaking things against the Law of Moses and speaking against the temple.

Acts 7:48: “However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made by hands, as the prophet says: ‘The heaven *is* My throne, and the earth *is* a footstool for My feet. What house will you build for Me, says *the Lord*, or what *is the* place of My rest? Have not My hands made all these things?’” (vs 48-50). Notice that when there comes a time to say it, it needs to be said.

Verse 51: “O stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did*, so also *do* you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, of Whom you have become the betrayers and murderers” (vs 51-52). Remember, Peter and the apostles were hauled before the Sanhedrin twice! They told them that this man was healed in the name of Christ, and there’s *‘no other name under heaven given by which you must be saved.’*

Then when they locked them up again, they escaped out the prison. An angel came and let them out, and they were—early in the morning—teaching in the temple area. The whole Sanhedrin came together. Go back and look at the witness that Jesus gave to them. After His resurrection here’s what the apostles witnessed to them—*twice!* In the last one they were commanded—after beating them—not to preach anymore in His name. They apostles said, **‘We are obligated to obey God and not men!’** So, there comes a time when it has to be said. Notice how Stephen did it here:

Verse 51: “O stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did*, so also *do* you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, of Whom you have become the betrayers and murderers; who received the law by

the disposition of angels, but have not kept it” (vs 51-53). They were following their own traditions instead of the laws of God.

Verse 54: “And when they heard these things, they were cut to their hearts, and they gnashed their teeth at him.” They just looked at him with the most hateful look and gnashing their jaws together.

Verse 55: “But he, being filled with *the* Holy Spirit, looked intently into heaven *and* saw *the* glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” God intended this to be. When the persecution comes, God intends it to come! When the martyrdom comes, God intends it to come!

Verse 56: “And he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right *hand* of God.’” Oh, what a blasphemous thing to say to those scribes, Pharisees, priests and Levites.

Verse 57: “Then they cried out with a loud voice, *and* stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord, and cast *him* out of the city *and* stoned *him*. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man called Saul. And they stoned Stephen, who called upon *God*, saying... [notice this the same way that Jesus said when they crucified Him: *Father forgive them for they know not what they do*]; ...**‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’** And he fell to his knees *and* cried with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not lay this sin to their charge.’ And after he had said this, he died” (vs 57-60).

That is a fantastic witness for us to understand! Whenever you get to thinking that things are troublesome and difficult—whether it be at work, home, in the Church, your relatives, sons or daughter, whatever it is—you’re not the first one. It may be the first time for you, but you’re not the first one.

Paul:

Paul went through a lot of different circumstances. I think it would be good if we went back and read some of those.

2-Timothy 3:13: “But wicked men and imposters shall become worse and worse, deceiving *others* and being deceived *themselves*.”

Verse 12: “And indeed, everyone who desires to live Godly in Christ Jesus shall be persecuted.” Then he talks about all the persecution that he went through. Even left after being stoned! When society comes apart, they look for scapegoats, and the scapegoats always end up being those who are Christian. Let’s just review what the Apostle Paul went through.

2-Corinthians 11:17_[corrected]: “What I am *now* saying, I do not speak according to *the* Lord, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting. Since many boast according to *the* flesh, I also will boast. For since you are *so* intelligent, you gladly bear with fools. For you bear *it* if anyone brings you into bondage, if anyone devours *you*, if anyone takes *from you*, if anyone exalts himself, if anyone beats you on the face. I speak as though we were under reproach for being weak; but in whatever *way* anyone else is bold (I speak in foolishness), I also am bold” (vs 17-21).

Notice what he went through. You talk about one man against the world. A lot of the Churches of God today have gone through a lot of things. Sometimes we get to feeling sorry for ourselves and feeling alone all this sort of thing. But let’s see what the Apostle Paul went through:

Verse 22: “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they *the* seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? (I am speaking as if I were out of my mind.) So am I, above *and beyond measure*—in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in imprisonments more frequent, in deaths often. Five times from *the Jews* I received forty *stripes* less one” (vs 22-24)—with the cat-o-nine-tails.

Verse 25: “Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned... [left for dead] ...three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I spent in the deep.” Imagine what that was like! Here you are in the ocean and you’re clinging on to some shipwreck, some piece of the ship, and there you are all alone a night and a day! I imagine that his prayers were, ‘O Lord, help me! Save me!’ Of course, there’s all these little sharks swimming around. Think about that the next time you’re on a trip and you end up with a hard mattress!

Verse 26: “*I have been* in journeyings often, in perils of rivers... [because he had to cross them; sometimes there’s no bridge] ...in perils of robbers, in perils from *my own* race, in perils from *the Gentiles*...” Look what happened when he converted so many people in Ephesus. They were bringing all of their occult charms, books and burning them. The idol-makers set up a riot. They were going to kill Paul!

“...in perils in *the* city, in perils in *the* desert, in perils on *the* sea, in perils among false brethren... [if that isn’t enough] ...in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness” (vs 26-27). That was just his personal circumstances he had to go through. Then on top of it, all of this was dumped on him.

Verse 28: “Besides *all* these things from the *world* outside, pressing on me daily is the care of all the Churches.” The Apostle Paul really had to go through it—didn’t he? Quite a thing!

Yes, indeed, there will be persecution against us today. We won’t go into anymore gory details; those will come soon enough. You have to be wise! Don’t do like one woman in the Church who came home and found a robber in her house. She chased him out and he left. She should have stopped right there and thanked God. She ran after him and got herself in really deep trouble. ***When God delivers you, don’t tempt Him by running out and making the problem worse!***

Here’s the attitude we need to have, Matthew 5:43: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’” Here is the strongest test of character! Jesus did this! Stephen did this! I don’t know the circumstances of any of the other apostles, but I’m sure they did the same thing.

Verse 44: “But I say to you, love your enemies...” How do you love your enemies? That’s a difficult one—isn’t it? You’ve heard of several cases—I recall one: It was somewhere down south—I think it was Atlanta—where this woman came home and a man came in to rob and rape her. She got down on her knees and was praying to Jesus: ‘O Lord, save me!’ Something happened to that man’s violent attitude. He also got down on his knees and prayed. You never know what’s going to happen. I think they did arrest him and put him jail for the situation, but that was something!

Another way you love your enemies: *stay away from them!* Another way you love your enemies: “...bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (v 44). Did Jesus do these things? *Yes, He did!* Are we to do the same thing? *Yes, we are!*

Verse 45: “So that you yourselves may be *the* children of your Father Who *is* in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *on the* good, and sends rain on *the* just and *on the* unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not the tax collectors practice the same *thing*? And if you salute your brethren only, what have you done *that is* extraordinary? Do not the tax collectors practice the same *thing*? **Therefore, you shall be perfect...** [that’s the whole goal in all of this] **...even as your Father Who is in heaven is perfect**” (vs 45-48). This is why we are to

- rejoice
- count persecution as joy
- pray for those who bring it upon us
- ask God to intervene

And we look forward to the reward that comes when Christ returns. All of this is contrary to human nature. That’s why these are also the *fruits of the Spirit!*

- It doesn’t make you a sissy!
- It doesn’t make you weak!
- *It makes you strong in the Lord!*

When the time comes, the persecution comes, we ask God for:

- wisdom
- understanding
- love
- strength of witness
- speak what God wants spoken

What happens, *happens!* There is the resurrection, and ***nothing can defeat us!***

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 5:9
- 2) Isaiah 48:22
- 3) Isaiah 59:1-8, 13-16
- 4) Isaiah 9:6
- 5) Psalm 34:1-9, 11-15
- 6) Matthew 18:11-18
- 7) Matthew 5:37
- 8) Matthew 18:19-22
- 9) John 14:26-27
- 10) Colossians 3:8-15
- 11) Philippians 4:4-9
- 12) Matthew 5:10-12
- 13) Matthew 23:27-36
- 14) Matthew 10:16-28
- 15) John 15:18-27
- 16) John 16:1-2
- 17) Isaiah 66:5
- 18) John 16:4-5, 32-33
- 19) Acts 7:48-60
- 20) 2 Timothy 3:13, 12
- 21) 2 Corinthians 11:17-28
- 22) Matthew 5:43-48

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Hebrews 7:2
- Colossians 3:3-7
- Luke 4
- Acts 24-26
- 3 John

Also referenced:

Sermon Series: *Spirit of God/Spirit of Man/Seven Spirits of God*

Book: *Josephus*

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