

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 39, No.25, June 18, 2013 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **The Grow in Grace Newsletter**— a weekly Bible Study, plus news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church... sent forth to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide who receive the Newsletter), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. ***"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."***

Preparation Today for Possible Persecution Tomorrow— what an honor!

Note: In over 38 years of Newsletter articles— what follows is MOST important! If your 'flesh' is like mine, it will scream, "I do not want to be depressed, so I will not read this!" When this message was preached at Southside, many years ago— some left the church, never to return. **Further reality:** The Christianity of the masses is weak, boring, and has to be pumped up with entertainment. **There is nothing weak or BORING about the Christianity of those who walk in the paths set forth in this study. MAY WE EMBRACE OUR GIFT:**

"Unto you it is given (as a free gift) in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake!" (Philippians 1:29) The true believer is not only a confessing Christian, but also a suffering Christian. True believers suffer persecution because they are not ashamed to confess Jesus before men! **Sadly, many of us Christians in America have a horror of any potential persecution.** We avoid it like the plague. We are even afraid of potential ridicule or rejection. We are uncomfortable with 2 Timothy 3:12—***"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."*** NEVERTHELESS, anyone who has read the Bible and who knows anything of Church history is much aware that **from Cain's slaughter of Abel until the second coming of Jesus Christ**, God's redeemed people have been, are, and will be the object of enemy assaults and the subject of torture, suffering, and cruel death. So what does the Bible say?

Throughout history, the righteous have been persecuted— they have had trial of cruel mocking, scourging, and imprisonment. They have been stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword; they wandered in sheepskins and goatskins,

being destitute, afflicted, tormented. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in dens and in caves of the earth. This is the true history of many of the people of whom the world was not worthy. They have died, (and still do!), at the hands of the men for whose salvation they prayed. (Heb. 12:32-40)

The coming of Jesus Christ DID NOT put an end to deeds of the wicked against the saints. The Lord Jesus Himself was put to death in the most wicked, cruel, and shameful manner. MOREOVER, our Lord Jesus PLAINLY told His disciples that they would be hated of all men for His name's sake; and that the time would come when those who kill them would be so filled with rage and blindness that they would believe they were doing God service. The apostles no less faithfully warned that all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (Matthew 10:21-39; John 16:1-3) **Let none therefore be offended because** of malice, slander and persecution for Christ's sake. The seed of the bond woman has always hated the seed of the free woman. Those who hate Christ Jesus will not love those who would lay down their lives for the Son of God.

Who is a Martyr? The Greek word from which we get our word martyr occurs more than thirty times in the New Testament, and is commonly rendered *witness*, in the plural witnesses— twice *record* and thrice *martyr* or *martyrs*. It is applied to judicial witnesses in Matthew 18:16; to one who testifies to the truth of what he sees, hears, or knows, Luke 24:48; Acts 1:88,22; **and to one who not only testifies to the truth, but lays down his life for the truth, Acts 22:20; Revelation 2:13; 17:6.** All witnesses are not martyrs, but all martyrs are witnesses who LIVE and GIVE the gospel of Christ and for such testimony they are killed. **Thus, a martyr is one who by his death bears witness to the truth of Christ and His gospel of grace.**

A martyr differs from a confessor only in this, that the confessor avows the truth, and his love for it, in the face of danger and when he expects to die for his confession, but in some way his life is spared. A martyr is a confessor who actually lays down his life. In the primitive Church were many confessors—"men that had hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 15:26).

The first martyr was Able. He being dead yet speaketh, (Hebrews 11:4). That is, every reference to Able's sacrifice offering declares the necessity of an atonement for sin; that if sinners would be accepted of God, they must come penitently confessing their transgressions and asking for mercy through the great sacrifice of Calvary; that justifying righteousness is by faith— a faith that obeys as well as relies; that a believer's inheritance is in a better world; that we must be willing to forfeit the favor and incur the malice of even our own kindred, if we would please God; and that the dying testimony of martyrs is not useless. **"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."** The faith and constancy of even one sufferer for the truth has been used to win many to faith in Christ.

Is Every True Christian at Heart a Martyr?

If the meaning of the question be whether upon fair notice and after due consideration, a real child of God will yield his life rather than be false to his profession and treasonable to Christ, the answer must be in the affirmative— for so Christ has Himself determined (Luke 14:26-27, 33). The truly faithful stand firm and are not governed by popular opinion, but by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. The apostles said, ***“We ought to obey God rather than man.”***

The Biblical Gospels Anticipate Persecution

Time and again Jesus disclosed that both He and His Disciples would suffer persecution. At first Peter could not comprehend that suffering and death for Jesus was a part of the divine plan (Matthew 16:16-22). But as we know Jesus cruelly suffered, bled, and died. Jesus often spoke to His disciples of both the blessedness of persecution and of the absolute certainty of it: Matthew 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; 16:1-4; 16:33. These passages from John’s Gospel reveal **at least three reasons why true Disciples of Jesus are persecuted:**

1. We do not belong to the present world-system.
2. We have been chosen out of this world-system by Christ.
3. The world’s hatred of believers is really an expression of their hatred of Jesus Christ.

The Book of Acts Gives Historical Accounts of Persecution

Please read Acts, marking all references to persecution. Take special note of the fact that persecution was received with “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus’ name,” (Acts 5:41).

Also, look for the following four forms of persecution:

- 1. Intense Verbal Abuse:** In Acts 4:3-30, Christians were interrogated, commanded to stop preaching in the name of Jesus, and threatened. Stephen was maligned and misrepresented by false witnesses, (Acts 6:9-14).
- 2. Physical Violence:** Acts 5:40; 7:54-60; 8:3; 9:1; 26:10-11, these and other verses record that beatings, stonings, and prisons were the lot of early Christians.
- 3. Political Power:** Acts 13:50; 16:19-20, and Acts 18 show God’s saints facing political power as the enemies of Christ sought to silence the saints.
- 4. Loss of Civil Rights:** Acts 16— after a mock trial, Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned. Throughout the centuries, many of God’s Saints have faced and now face scorn, violent verbal abuse, inquisitions, fines, prisons, church buildings locked up, freedoms restricted, physical and psychological tortures, ridicule, rejection, etc.

Not every country has the same types of persecution. But even in America a saint cannot live a godly Christian life without facing ridicule, scorn, slander, rejection, etc. However, being masters at compromise we often avoid suffering for Jesus' sake.

The Epistles Give Us a True Analysis of Persecution

It is amazing to see how much space is given in the Epistles to fortify the faith of suffering Saints. **In this context we learn just what persecution cannot accomplish:** Persecution cannot destroy the spirit of a Saint (2 Timothy 4:16-18).

Note: As you will see later, persecution can, however, separate pretenders out of the flock of God's true sheep. Persecution cannot stop the progress of the Gospel (Philippians 1:12-18; Ephesians 6:20; Acts 16:19-34). Persecution cannot separate us from the precious love of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:35-37).

In the Epistles we also learn what persecution can accomplish: **Persecution provides** assurance that we are saved (Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 3:12; John 15:19-20) **Persecution announces** God's judgment that will come on those who oppose the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:4-6). **Persecution sharpens** our vision of heavenly realities (Hebrews 10:32-34). **Persecution purifies** our faith (1 Peter 1:7). **Persecution brings** a sense of blessedness (1 Peter 3:14; 4:13-14). **Persecution builds up** a deepening spirit of love and remembrance of Saints in other places (Hebrews 13:3). **Persecution separates** the pretenders out of the flock of God's true sheep (Matt. 13:20-21).

The Book of Revelation Reveals the Age of Persecution

The books of Thessalonians, Peter, and the Revelation were written to encourage and direct persecuted Christians. Sadly, however, many comfort-loving Americans turn to these same books to find and focus on a supposed promise of no tribulation or persecution.

When the Communists overran mainland China, many of the Christians were ill-prepared for persecution because they had embraced the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine, taught them by western missionaries.

REALITY: Be they those who lived during the last 2000 years of Church History, or in Islamic countries today, or in America tomorrow, or in the climatic last years before the return of Jesus Christ— **any who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb are subject to persecution and tribulation.** The REDEEMED in the past, now or in the future — including during what is called the Great Tribulation — WILL NOT suffer God's wrath. However, the redeemed have been, are and will suffer satan's and man's wrath. **There is zero Biblical revelation that** men, satan and/or demons will be able to do **anything any more destructive** to 'great tribulation saints' than they have always done and/or that they presently do in some countries to Christians.

REALITY: Every disciple of Jesus is always a candidate for suffering, persecution and even martyrdom! Let us be prepared to courageously stand for the faith; and if called upon to be gracious in the hour of any Christian's highest privilege— ***“Be thou faithful unto death...!”*** (Revelation 2:10).

When Facing Suffering for the Gospel's Sake

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, dying offered two prayers. One was for himself: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” The other was for his foes: “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”

The Apostle Paul said: “The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and imprisonments await me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy.”

Gregory Nazianzen said: “Do they cast us out of the city? They cannot cast us out of that which is in the heavens. If they who hate us could do this, they would do something real against us. The only thing we have really to be afraid of is fearing anything more than God.”

To the King of Navarre, Beza said: “Sire, it belongs truly to God's church rather to suffer blows than to strike them; but let it be your pleasure to remember that the church is an anvil which hath worn out many a hammer.”

Leighton said: “The church has sometimes been brought so low and obscure a point that if you can follow her in history it is by the track of her blood, and if you would see her, it is by the light of those fires in which her martyrs have been burnt.”

Jortin remarked: **“To banish, imprison, plunder, starve, hang, and burn men for religion is not the Gospel of Christ, but the gospel of the devil. Where persecution begins, Christianity ends. Christ never used anything like force or violence, except once; and that was to drive bad men out of the temple, and not to drive them in.”**

Milner said: “Persecution often does in this life what the last day will do completely—separate the wheat from the tares.”

Jesus tells us: “You shall have tribulation: but be loyally faithful unto death. For though you may be killed, I will give you the crown of life! Be not afraid says our Lord, my help is nigh! Indeed! Rejoice!” (Revelation 2:2:10-11).

Praise God for the ultimate witness and most effective soul-winning strategy: namely, that when we who are alive in Christ are delivered unto death for Jesus sake, the resurrection life of Christ is mightily manifest! (2 Corinthians 4:7-12).

Preparation Starts Today— Watchwords to confess... now:

Every time difficulties and impossible situations arise now, I will believe in the omnipotence of God. I will not give place to worry, but completely trust in the Father's tender, loving care and means to help. Then... if or when... persecution breaks out, I shall be 'practiced in faith'. **Now I will bear my small bodily ailments** — pain, weakness, and fatigue — in faith in the power of Jesus' blood that sustains me and renews my strength. Then I shall have practice for the future when the physical suffering may be far greater.

Every time I am faced with hardship and meaninglessness, I will surrender my will, and when I am chastened, I will humble myself even more beneath the mighty hand of God. **I will look to Jesus ever anew, turning to Him with all my heart.** And as I behold the Man of Sorrows, who was full of grief and affliction, a willingness to suffer for His sake is implanted in my soul. I will look to Him, the mighty Victor, who has vanquished Satan and sin. **In faith I will surrender to JESUS** in my daily battle against my spirit of criticism, pride, stinginess, envy, self-will, egoism, anger, the desires of the flesh, and bondage to people and things. Then such sin will be less able to weaken me in the future; and EVEN if I should be taken to a concentration camp, I can be a witness for Jesus when living together with others, by radiating His love and peace. **I will bear every hardship, great or small**, out of love for Jesus, so that when I have to undergo pain and torment in persecution, my natural reaction will be, **"I will bear it for Your sake, Jesus."**

NOTE: When in days past Corrie ten Boom AND countless others suffered for Christ in concentration camps; and when even today MANY LANGUISHED in prisons FOR JESUS' SAKE— why should I only be angry, repulsed or utterly FEARFUL and/or TOTALLY BLOCK from my mind the above paragraph?

LORD JESUS, by your grace I will live in close fellowship with YOU and fellow saints of a local Bible-believing church now, conversing with YOU at all times and SEEKING to DAILY CULTIVATE LOVE FOR YOU, LORD JESUS..., so that love, which is the strongest power of all, will give me the strength to bear the suffering in the time of persecution.

{Not just the persecution of the future which might or might not come to me— but the persecution that comes today to all who live Godly in Christ Jesus!!!}

I will lead a life of prayer now, so that I shall be able to pray later. Prayer will be my deliverance in times of loneliness, temptation, suffering, torment, and when I am forsaken. **Now I will fight resolutely against my fear of others** and my desire to win their favor, love, respect, and approval, so that I can overcome cowardice. I commit myself to making an uncompromising stand for the Lord. I want to seek only God's approval in all matters now so that later during persecution, I shall be willing to pay the price.

I will do good now to those who hurt me and treat me unjustly by blessing them and showing them love in thought, word, and deed. Then later I shall be able to meet my persecutors the right way, not judging them, but humbled because of my own sin and meek like a lamb, full of mercy towards them.

Every time I am at a loss as to what to say in some situation or conversation, I will trust the Holy Spirit implicitly to guide me and give me His words, now and also at the future trials and cross-examinations. **Today I will count on the reality of heaven**, which Jesus brings into our lives, and abide in this hope, so that during persecution I can rejoice, saying, **“Suffering will come to an end, and everlasting glory will follow!” LORD JESUS, TODAY, WITH MUCH TREMBLING... AND NO CONFIDENCE IN MYSELF... EMBRACE THE GIFT: “Unto you it is given (as a free gift) in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake!”** (Philippians 1:29) [Much of this article is edited from Ted S. Randell, Prairie Overcomer Magazine, sometime in the 1970s] ~~~~ Grace to all! James Bell

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES for JUNE!

LADIES SUMMER BIBLE FELLOWSHIPS: 6/18; 7/16; 8/13— Cindy Bell teaching!

1. WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM! / YOUTH: Wednesdays, 6-8pm @ Southside Church building!

2. Thursdays @ 6:30pm: OUTREACH

3. Saturdays @ 8am: Men’s Fellowship/Bible Study

SUNDAY SCHEDULE FOR MAY JUNE 23

1. 9:30am- Sunday School

2. 10:45am- Morning Worship / Children’s Church

3. Noon Fellowship Meal {Covered Dish}

4. 1:00pm- Early Afternoon Service

NOTE: JUNE 23— DURING THE 1PM EARLY AFTERNOON SERVICE:

A church family Conversation II This is a re-scheduled FOLLOW UP on our Recent Church-wide CONVERSATION. There were several important matters we did not get to discuss.

SUNDAY SCHEDULE FOR MAY JUNE 30

1. 9:30am- NOTE: CHURCH-WIDE BRUNCH... NO CLASSES...

RATHER- BRUNCH AS A TIME OF SPECIAL FELLOWSHIP WITH BOB AND DIANE CANTWELL...

This will be their last time with us before moving to North Carolina.

(They will be leaving after the Morning Worship hour)

2. 10:45am- Morning Worship / Children's Church

3. NO Noon Fellowship Meal & NO 1pm service _



The Creation Guy John Mackay

Yes, once again we will be very blessed to have 'The Creation Guy, John Mackay in our midst, **June 30, beginning at 4:30pm:**

WHERE: Southside Baptist Church /

WHEN: June 30, 2013 @ 4:30pm-5:30pm and at 6:00pm-7:00pm /

Contact: Southside Baptist Church, 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, Tennessee /

Call: 615-452-5951

TOPICS: GOD'S DESIGN! THE EYES HAVE IT! SKEPTICS HAVE LOST THE PLOT! See the living and fossil evidence this man has collected which he uses to demolish the atheists in debates around the planet. **HOW TO DEFEAT AGGRESSIVE ATHEISM!** Based on Darwinian Evolution, modern atheists are dominating politics, literature, sport and education, and using them to attack Christianity across the globe. Find out how to expose them from a man who defeats them worldwide.

<http://www.aceministries.com/curriculum/?content=presentingACE>

Southside Christian School Please call us at: 615-452-5951