

## Where Is God In Time of Persecution?

Marilyn Borst, *The Outreach Foundation*

### The Persecuted Church

#### A range of actions against the Church:

**Restriction(limitation)...Repression(submission)...Reprisal(retaliation)**

#### What Scripture tells us about persecution:

##### **...it is inevitable**

John 15

18 "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. 20 Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' **If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.** If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

II Timothy 3

10 You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, 11 persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. **12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...**

##### **...we mirror Christ in our suffering**

I Peter 4

12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. **13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.** 14 If you are insulted because of the name of

Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

I Peter 2

18 Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. 19 For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. 20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? **But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. 21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.**

##### **...it builds Christian character**

Romans 5

1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, **but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not disappoint us,** because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

##### **...it is a profound witness to the world**

II Corinthians 4

7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. **8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed;**

**perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.** 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. 11 For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.

**...it is an inspiration for other Christians**

II Thessalonians 4

3 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. **4 Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.**

5 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

**...it is required, either personally or vicariously**

Romans 8

16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. **17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings** in order that we may also share in his glory.

18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

I Corinthians 12

24 ...But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26

**If one part suffers, every part suffers with it;** if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

**...God will reward it**

Matthew 5

**10 Blessed are those who are persecuted** because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Revelation 3

8 "To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:

These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. 9 I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. **10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.** 11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

**"God sightings" in the Vulnerable Church**

Vision....the Church in Egypt

Perseverance....the Church in Syria

Sacrifice...the Church in Iraq