

Principle 38

The Spirit of Martyrdom

As the underground Church in China has been baptized in a fire of intensely severe persecution this has produced a theology of suffering with Christ.⁸⁶⁹ They have realized that all suffering is because of Christ and for Christ.⁸⁷⁰ It was clearly told to Paul the Apostle, that he was persecuting Jesus Christ Himself when he was persecuting the early Church believers.⁸⁷¹ There is a willingness in the Church in China to suffer for Christ as the normal cost of being a believer. It is accepted as the will of God at times to suffer⁸⁷² and to even expect severe persecution. This type of suffering produces a joy⁸⁷³ and sense of privilege that they are willing to identify with their precious Lord who has saved them.⁸⁷⁴

Suffering and persecution have not built a resentment against China or its government but rather a deeper love for all the Chinese who are simply sinners in need of God's great saving grace.⁸⁷⁵ In other countries we need to deeply learn and try to understand this lesson that we are to love even our enemies, as our Lord taught us.⁸⁷⁶ As the spirit of antichrist and persecution comes to us we need to learn the same theology of martyrdom that this young underground Church has learned so well.

One beautiful example of this optimism in the face of severe persecution can be read in one of the hymns of the underground Church: "In the dark night, flowers are more fragrant. In the dark night, footsteps are more determined. A journey in the dark, is close to its end. Remember to remain faithful to God!"⁸⁷⁷ Such a dark night of persecution is coming to many, even in the West. May we be of good cheer and leap for joy⁸⁷⁸ even as we reflect the character of God's Son to others.

"The Church thrives under pressure, that was the very birth of the Church. They were persecuted in Jerusalem and all over. In the Scripture, especially in Acts, they went out after being arrested and beaten and they went rejoicing because they were worthy to suffer for the Name of Jesus. I think it's a great privilege, but it's not something you seek, because then that is the wrong attitude."⁸⁷⁹ The pressure of persecution because of the Name of Christ, and an unwarranted hatred will come against you in the end times simply because you adore and worship Jesus Christ. Are you ready to stand in that day?⁸⁸⁰

It will be easy to follow the multitudes, the many who will be turning away from the faith.⁸⁸¹ Yet our Lord desires us to stay true to His calling and His Name by His grace. He states to the Church at Philadelphia: "I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept My

Word and have not denied My Name.”⁸⁸² Also in the city of Pergamum: “Yet you remain true to My Name. You did not renounce your faith in Me, not even in the days of Antipas, My faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where satan lives.”⁸⁸³

May God find us with those faithful Churches that happily and with hope endured much for the kingdom of God, not allowing compromise and lukewarmness to cause them to drift away from being bold for His Name’s sake. This *falling away* is shown in 2 Thessalonians: “Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.”⁸⁸⁴ May God preserve us in that day and allow us to faithfully cling to Jesus Christ as our hope and salvation. May we be willing to bear the loss of all things for His Name sake.⁸⁸⁵ Our great security in Christ is never at jeopardy as long as we continue to abide in Him daily.

A brother counted as a Father of the Church in China warned his flock: “Little brethren, the Book of Romans tells us that persecution and suffering cannot separate us from the love of Christ, whereas Revelation warns us that riches and comfort⁸⁸⁶ will cause us to lose our love for Christ.”⁸⁸⁷

We can sit at His feet as He prepares a table in the presence of our enemies.⁸⁸⁸ The Great Shepherd of the sheep will keep us. Let us stay close to our

Master so that none of these things will overwhelm us. These words should bring strength to our souls for the coming days and give us a desire to do the will of the Father.

“The messengers of Jesus will be hated to the end of time. They will be blamed for all the divisions which rend cities and homes. Jesus and his disciples will be condemned on all sides for undermining family life, and for leading the nation astray; they will be called crazy fanatics and disturbers of the peace. The disciples will be sorely tempted to desert their Lord.⁸⁸⁹ But the end is also near, and they must hold on and persevere⁸⁹⁰ until it comes. Only he will be blessed who remains loyal to Jesus and his word until the end.⁸⁹¹ But when the end comes, the hostility towards Jesus and his disciples will be made manifest the whole world over, and only then must the messengers flee from city to city,⁸⁹² in order that they may proclaim the Word where it can still find a hearing. If they run away then, they will not be running away from the Word, but holding fast to it.”⁸⁹³

In the first century the Apostle John wrote: “Do not be surprised, My brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.”⁸⁹⁴

Now, 2000 years later, let us not be surprised when the entire world system will hate us who call ourselves after the Name of Christ. Be valiant for His testimony, for very soon suffering and martyrdom

will not be mere abstract theology, but a practical reality. May we learn of the Lord now how to endure for that time that is coming upon us. His “grace is sufficient,”⁸⁹⁵ He will bear us up in that day for His glory’s sake.