



Preparing for Persecution; To Be a Christian

by brother Edgar

THE GREATEST failure of the Church in many nations is the lack of preparing Christians for persecution.

Persecution is certain. It is told to us by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Himself. In the Gospel of John it says: “Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his Master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also.”⁸¹⁵ We can believe what Jesus says and we can rely on it. Also in the United States of America and Canada, persecution is certain. In the second Epistle to Timothy it says: “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”⁸¹⁶

Chinese Pastors lamented that they had failed to prepare their Churches for persecution. During the Boxer rebellion in China, 236 foreign missionaries were killed and became Martyrs. Twenty-three thousand Chinese Christians were killed and became Martyrs. Later, missionaries were admitted again and the Chinese Church grew. Thousands of Christians were martyred in the following years and hundreds of thousands were imprisoned during the cultural revolution of Mao Zedong. Following Mao Zedong, there was further

⁸¹⁵ John 15:20

⁸¹⁶ 2 Timothy 3:12

persecution by Chinese Communism. Again thousands were martyred and hundreds of thousands were imprisoned and tortured for Christ. During each wave of persecution the seeds of the Gospel in China were planted anew in the blood of the martyrs. With persecution the Church in China is flourishing. Estimates of the number of Christians vary up to *100 Million Christians*. How is that possible with such persecution? They are endued with the power of God.⁸¹⁷ He is with them. He leads them and they follow.

If we follow Jesus and if we live godly lives we will be persecuted and hated.⁸¹⁸ If I am not persecuted I likely do not live a godly life. I am missing out somewhere on what it means to be a Christian. I need to remember that the meaning of the word martyr is *witness*.

THE CHANGE IS COMING

The world is changing quickly. Our faith is also beginning to be under attack also in the Western hemisphere. We see a rapid progression towards a one world government and a single world leader. The club of Rome, a secret group of political and financial leaders, has proposed 10 world regions. A one world religious system is in the plans that will be headed by a single leader. The Bible calls him the false prophet. This religious system will deny Jesus, the Son of the living God. We will have to stand for the Truth.

The Book of Revelation describes a great tribulation. In the Book of Revelation, the Apostle John had been taken into heaven and he saw in heaven a multitude which no one could number.⁸¹⁹ Since they were in heaven, they must have died and gone to heaven. So who are these people? How did they get there and how did they die? In Revelation chapter 7, John is told: "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation."⁸²⁰ In other words, these are Christians who have lived on earth, endured persecution and then died. What did they die of? Scripture does not tell us in Revelation chapter 7, but there is another passage that gives us an indication. In Revelation 20 it says: "I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been

⁸¹⁷ Luke 24:49

⁸¹⁸ 1 John 3:13

⁸¹⁹ Revelation 7:9

⁸²⁰ Revelation 7:14

given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the Word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”⁸²¹ Please note the word *beheaded*. This indicates a martyr’s death, where the head of a person is cut off from his body.

Many Christians, if they stand strong for the Lord Jesus will be beheaded for their witness. Some have been beheaded already in Middle Eastern countries and in past persecutions. If we think of nations where beheadings take place today we realize that they are Muslim nations. We should love Muslim people because the Bible exhorts us to love our enemies.⁸²² However, we must not accept their faith. God says to love all sinners but we need not love their sin. The Muslim faith is built on muhammad the prophet, and allah who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Son of God and as the Messiah. God opened up heaven and spoke to us by way of a voice to give us a sign to show us who His Son is that we might believe only in Him. In the Gospel of Matthew it states: “As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.’”⁸²³

The person who was baptizing Jesus was John the Baptist. John became a witness and he gave a written record of his witness in the Gospel of John: “Then John gave this testimony: ‘I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on Him. And I myself did not know Him, but the One who sent me to baptize with water told me, The Man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.’”⁸²⁴

We know from the testimony of John the Baptist and from the testimony of God the Father that it was not mohammad in the water, it was not buddha, and it was not a Hindu god that was being

⁸²¹ Revelation 20:4

⁸²² Matthew 5:44

⁸²³ Matthew 3:16-17

⁸²⁴ John 1:32-34

baptized. It was Jesus Christ the Son of the only true God in this universe. Then Scripture tells us in 1 John: “Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist—denying the Father and the Son.”⁸²⁵

Satan seeks to destroy humanity, which was created by God. He is a murderer and father of lies. Satan’s lies have invaded the minds of men to create religions that do not acknowledge⁸²⁶ the One and only true God and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. These religions draw mankind into believing faiths that cannot save. There is no Savior except Jesus the Son of God.

We must stand strong in our faith even during persecution and proclaim that Jesus the Son of God is the Savior and Messiah. He is our only hope to have our sins forgiven, to have peace with God and to receive eternal life.

How will I respond when persecution comes? Am I afraid to die? Am I afraid of torture? Will I deny the true God? Will I deny my Jesus? It is easy to answer: *Of course I won’t deny my Lord.* When the trials come will I stand or fall away?

OVERCOMING SIN AND PERSECUTION

We need to call on the Victor, the Lord Jesus, to overcome sin, overcome opposition, overcome the fear of death, overcome torture, overcome persecution and to help us live a godly life. Pastor Wurmbrand showed a Unites States senate sub-committee most of the deep torture wounds he had received. There were 18 deep torture wounds, where the flesh had been cut out of him. Several wounds were the size of a man’s fist. He said when he was being tortured no Scripture verse could help him—he could not remember any—nothing could help him except the living Son of God, the Christ, who lived inside of him and helped him. The Son of God—the Lord Jesus Christ—is not only seated at the right hand of the Father, but He is also God and Omnipresent, which means He is present everywhere. Christ is inside of us for Scripture says: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but *Christ lives in me.* The

⁸²⁵ 1 John 2:22

⁸²⁶ 1 John 4:3

life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”⁸²⁷ 1 John 4 says: “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”⁸²⁸ Satan is like a roaring lion surrounding us to see how he might destroy and kill us. He wants to take away our testimonies and attacks those who live a godly life. As we yield and surrender to Jesus we will have victory in Jesus. “But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁸²⁹

Then I must be taught for the coming persecution to learn selflessness, forgiveness, sacrificial and unconditional love. I heard Pastor Wurmbbrand in the Peoples church of Toronto, about 40 years ago. There were nearly 2000 people in the church. He walked in without shoes. It became so quiet you could hear a pin drop. The ushers rushed to the podium to put a chair in front of the podium. He sat down quietly and opened his mouth. The Holy Spirit started to fill the auditorium as he opened his lips and then we heard him speak. He said: “Dear sisters and brothers forgive me for sitting down. I have been beaten many times and my feet are broken many times. I cannot wear shoes now and I have difficulty standing. People want me to speak about the evil Communists who beat and tortured me. I cannot do that, you see I am at fault.” There were gasps in the audience. We all thought how could he be at fault? He suffered for the Gospel of Christ. Then Pastor Wurmbbrand continued: “You see,” he said, “they are not at fault, I am at fault, I just did not love enough.”

LOVING OUR ENEMIES GREATLY

I wondered if I could love someone who cuts 18 pieces of flesh from me. I wondered about my church where people had bumped each other and they hated each other. I wondered about myself, when attacked by a sister or brother, did I love them? Did I feel it is an option to love them? Does Jesus want my obedience or do I have a choice? Must I follow what Jesus said in *Matthew 5*? There it says:

⁸²⁷ Galatians 2:20

⁸²⁸ 1 John 4:4

⁸²⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:57

“But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”⁸³⁰ So I wondered? Am I supposed to do 4 things for a person that hates me and tortures me? Love them, bless them, do good to them and pray for them? Pastor Wurmbrand loved those people that cut 18 pieces of flesh out of him. Stephen, when he was stoned to death prayed: “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”⁸³¹ What would I have prayed? Lord help me? Get me out of this? Stop this evil? No, Stephen was more concerned about those who were killing him than his own life. Jesus said from the cross while dying a tortured death: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”⁸³² What about me? What about you?

LOVING OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

The Bible says we are not even Christians if we can't love our brothers or sisters! How much more our enemies. In 1 John 3 it says: “This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.”⁸³³ Also it says: “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death.”⁸³⁴ In 1 John 3 it also says: “If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?”⁸³⁵ 1 John 4 says: “Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.”⁸³⁶

⁸³⁰ Matthew 5:44

⁸³¹ Acts 7:60

⁸³² Luke 23:34

⁸³³ 1 John 3:10

⁸³⁴ 1 John 3:14

⁸³⁵ 1 John 3:17

⁸³⁶ 1 John 4:20

SIGNS OF TRUE CHRISTIANS IN CHINA

When viewing a DVD of the Chinese underground Church made by Chinese Christians called *The Cross: Jesus In China*,⁸³⁷ I saw many signs of what true Christians are like. They have:

- A personal relationship with Jesus.
- Unity with the believers.
- A deep desire to worship God.
- A great love for each other and their persecutors. They are hated yet they loved.
- Deep faith. Their persecution never stops, including jail many times. Some itinerant preachers have gone to prison 10 or more times. They face torture, beatings, electric shock and loss of life. Yet they trust the Lord and they love.
- They love not their lives unto death. Two deceased martyrs were shown in the video, with one being partially uncovered to show part of his torture wounds. Yet they love their enemies.⁸³⁸
- They accept that love means devotion, selflessness, sacrifice, and even death.
- Their path of the cross is suffering and sacrifice.
- There is deep repentance on many faces, with tears streaming down their faces.
- They have power from the Holy Spirit to witness.
- There is the power of the Holy Spirit by way of miracles, healings and driving out demons.⁸³⁹
- There is great humbleness, including great humbleness in their leaders.
- One leader could not overcome torture and he denounced Christ Jesus. He was released. In the video he was seen walking back into prison with his wife. He said he could no longer deny his Lord and would rather die in prison.
- There is deep joy. They use poetry and song to express what is in their minds and hearts. They convey through song the beauty of Jesus. Their music reflects the innocence and joy of Christians as inspired by the Holy Spirit.

⁸³⁷ Free documentary available at: chinasoul.org

⁸³⁸ Matthew 5:44

⁸³⁹ Mark 16:17-18

- A visiting pastor was asked to give a sermon. "How long?" he asked. "An hour?" "Oh no!" "Two hours?" "Oh no!" "How long, then?" he asked. "Could you preach from early in the morning to late at night, please?" he was asked. Then the pastor realized that they did not have Bibles.

- They meet in homes, in barns, in caves, in underground tunnels and in fields, hoping to avoid detection. Yet they are busy witnessing despite the threat to their lives.

CLEANSING AND FILLING OF THE SPIRIT

Oh how my heart burns. What will we do when that kind of persecution comes us in non-persecuted countries? We must learn from our brothers and sisters in persecuted countries. Will we still follow our Lord? Will we meet in house Churches? Will we meet in the underground? We must start now to follow the Word of God in truth and in the Spirit of God.

My first step back *to live a godly life* comes with my confession to the Lord that I fell short. I need to understand His Word better, and to look at the early Church. I need to repent of my lukewarmness, of my selfishness, of my materialism, of my search for pleasure, of my pride and my unwillingness to live a life fully yielded to Jesus. I must repent of not presenting my body as a living sacrifice.⁸⁴⁰ I must repent of not taking up the cross and following Jesus Christ.⁸⁴¹

In 1 John it says: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."⁸⁴²

Once I am cleansed I then need to pray to our Heavenly Father to fill me with His Holy Spirit. We cannot overcome through our own might or power. The Lord says we can only overcome by His Spirit.⁸⁴³ We need to pray and ask God the Father to give us the fullness of His Spirit.

In the Gospel of Luke it says: "Then Jesus said to them, 'Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend,

⁸⁴⁰ Romans 12:1

⁸⁴¹ Mark 8:34

⁸⁴² 1 John 1:9

⁸⁴³ Zechariah 4:6

lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”⁸⁴⁴

Beloved sisters and brothers pray with all of your might and surrender anew to Jesus. Give up all that stands in the way of God, and ask Him to give you the filling of the Holy Spirit. This will enable you to stand in the time of persecution and to be a witness for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let it be so. *Amen.*

⁸⁴⁴ Luke 11:5-13