

GODLINESS ATTRACTS PERSECUTION

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." – 2 Tim. 3:12.

GODLINESS represents in general the condition of righteousness, opposition to sin, as God is opposed to sin – a condition in harmony with justice, as He is just; generosity and kindness and love, as He is generous and kind and loving. There are kind, generous and noble characters in the world who are not Christians. These may have more or less of opposition from others who are evilly disposed – as darkness always opposes light; yet these noble people exercise moderation in their righteousness – they are not righteous overmuch. They do not go to an extreme in their religion, as it is sometimes expressed. These fine characters might occasionally get some persecution, politically or otherwise; but even the enemies of such would have respect for them.

But the Apostle in our text limits persecution to "those who live godly in Christ Jesus." What is the difference between *living godly* and living godly *in Christ Jesus*? We answer that because of their special relationship to Christ Jesus, God's people have a special enlightenment. They see more clearly the principles of God's Justice. They have a more exacting rule by which their lives are governed. Others do not see these deeper things of the Divine Plan and the special arrangement God has made with the Church.

Those who are "in Christ Jesus" have an intelligent knowledge that they have entered into a Covenant of Sacrifice. They realize that they are not to compromise their religion in any way; they are not to compromise with sin, nor with the world. They must uphold the principles of righteousness, even to the detriment of their own earthly interests.

The godly *not* in Christ Jesus – those who have a measure of Godlikeness – may indulge in a great many things that would not be wrong for the world – not sinful, not immoral, not unkind. With the Christian, however, all of his time, talent, influence, money, are consecrated to the one service, according to what he understands to be the Lord's Word and the spirit of that Word. The worldly man who is righteous might feel perfectly free to give of his money for various causes and purposes, that would be reasonable and proper in themselves; while the Christian would ask himself, What is the Lord's will, the Lord's way?

THE CHRISTIAN STEWARD RESTRICTED

The Christian is restricted in his use of money; for he always considers as to how the Lord would have him use it. The Christian uses his money for the preaching of the Gospel and the publishing of it in various ways; while other people might use their money for large benefactions and endowment of colleges. The Christian would reason: There are many opportunities for people to get education along earthly lines, and I believe the Lord would have me as His child to use His money to help people get spiritual education. **[R5395 : page 39]**

Likewise in the use of his time; the natural man might say, We will have a certain evening for attending a good opera. We will not go to any disreputable place, but we will spend a certain amount each season on the opera. Or, we will be patrons of art and music and literature. We must adopt a course that will win the approval of society. That will be the wise thing to do. But the Christian says, My time, my money are consecrated to the Lord. I am His steward, I can use these in a better way. A worldly man may be a patron of art and spend a thousand dollars – or ten thousand dollars – on a single painting, because he wants art to flourish. Or he might buy a fine piece of sculpture to adorn his home, but this is not the course for me. I must consider the Lord's will for me as His servant.

The Christian has limitations which the worldly do not have. But we are glad for all good men and good women, who can be good and noble even though not in Christ Jesus. We are glad to esteem them. There are noble people in the world. There are some godly ones outside the Church, godly to a certain degree; and they are likely to come to see something of the Truth, if they are really noble characters. The godly of this world will get a blessing in the Restitution time. Every godly thing that they have done, every act of generosity, will get its reward. And by cultivating their higher sentiments, they will have fewer steps to retrace.

SPECIALLY GODLY ARE SPECIALLY PERSECUTED

The persecutions which come to the godly in Christ Jesus are special persecutions. We are not to expect much of this from the Body of Christ. A man is not expected to use his fist to strike his own eye, nor is it to be expected that one hand will injure the other hand. It may be that the skin on one hand is rough, and will sometimes scratch the other one. But we cannot be members of the same Body and persecute each other. Persecution is something that is *intended* and *pursued*, or followed up. Persecution is not merely one act or one word – it is a succession of unkind words and acts with a view to punishing some one for adhering to an opinion or course of conduct. **[R5395 : page 40]**

So persecution comes from a certain class called by Jesus *the world*. But the class that Jesus called *the world* are those who had a *form* of godliness, but did not have the *power* thereof. Christianity has its counterfeits, as has money. So the Apostle speaks of a class who would take the name of the Lord upon them and misuse that name. And there are people in the world today who do not know the difference between the genuine and the counterfeit – between Truth and error – and who do not *want* to know, and who keep out of the way of *being told*. They somehow know that there would

come a certain measure of condemnation to themselves if they recognized the real facts and did not act in accordance with them.

They are not all bad people by any means. There are very many good people among the tares; but there is no real wheat among the tares – no real nutriment. But these tares pose as the Church of Christ; the tare systems pose as Christianity. And from this class usually come the persecutions. They try to crowd out the wheat, or to choke it and make it unfruitful. It was so in our Lord's day. Those to whom the Lord referred as persecutors were not the Gentile world of His day, but the worldly ones of the Jews – those who were not fully consecrated to the Lord, but who thought they were.

Nicodemus was a fine character, and Gamaliel was a fine character – and so were a great many who did not become Christ's disciples at all. Evidently many were seeking after righteousness; as, for instance, the young man who came to the Lord and asked Him, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" The Lord answered, "Thou knowest the commandments." The young man said, "Master, all these have I observed from my youth up." He was a noble character, and Jesus looking on him *loved* him, even though he was not a disciple. And Jesus said to him. "One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven; and come, take up thy cross, and follow Me." But he went away sorrowful. He did not want to become a member in Christ Jesus. He did not want to give everything to the Lord. He was very rich – "had great possessions," and he preferred to hold on to his wealth. – Mark 10:17-22.

There were others who went through many of the forms and ceremonies, and who kept the various admonitions of the Law, and its feasts and fasts; but they were not the "Israelites indeed in whom was no guile." And later they became the persecutors of Christ and those who walk in His steps of sacrifice.

PROFESSED CHRISTIANS PERSECUTORS

And so those who live godly in Christ Jesus have their persecutions, not so much from the worldly class as from professing Christians. There is a class in Churchianity today that has a great deal of pride and self-satisfaction. They are upholding a large institution. If anything seems to be inimical to that institution, they are wrathful and wish to persecute. Some say respecting those who proclaim Present Truth and who live saintly lives as followers of Jesus Christ: If we let these people alone and let them teach these things, all that we have been upholding for centuries will crumble. Did not Luther hand down Truth to us? Did not Calvin give the Church Truth? Have we not the teachings of Wesley? No, no; we will not have these "new doctrines"!

But we see that these people are persecuting the Truth and its representatives because of misunderstanding. We should have a great deal of sympathy and not feel specially angry with them. This does not mean that we should be *glad* of *persecution* – no persecution "for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous." (Heb. 12:11.) But if we know that we are suffering for righteousness' sake, then we know the Spirit of God rests upon us. It is those who know that they suffer for Christ's sake, and who take it gladly because it is the will of God, that may rejoice, because the persecution is working out in them blessed effects. Let us then

"Be still beneath His tender care,
For He will make the tempest cease;
And bring from out the anguish here,
The afterward of peace."

"THE LORD YOUR GOD DOTH PROVE YOU"

Why does God permit His people to suffer? Why does He not shield those who are His from suffering, just as a loving parent

would shield a child? The Scriptures reply that it is because God is working out a great Plan that will eventually bring blessings to all who will do righteously; for God wishes to show the evil effects of sin, its deteriorating effects. God's purpose is that after the Six Days of Sin and Death are ended, in the Seventh Day there shall be a blessing for the whole groaning creation. "Jehovah God will wipe away tears from off *all* faces." – Isa. 25:8.

And there is a particular reason why God should permit persecution to come upon His consecrated ones. "The Lord your God doth prove you," test you. Why? What is He proving? We profess to be His loyal children. We profess to be laying down all that we have. And now "the Lord your God doth prove you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul." – Deut. 8:2; 13:3.

How much will you endure? How patiently will you endure? To what extent will you endure? Those who will endure most, and endure most patiently, will give evidence of the best character. And those who demonstrate the best character will have the highest positions in the Kingdom. Each will get a position according to his faithfulness. But as star differeth from star in glory, so it will be in the Kingdom. He who fights the greatest fight against his own nature and demonstrates most the love and zeal of his heart, such is the one who will have a high place.

"How goes the fight with thee?
The lifelong battle with all evil things?
Thine no low strife, and thine no selfish aim;
It is the war of giants and of kings.
Heed not the throng of foes!
To fight 'gainst foes is still the Church's lot.
Side thou with God, and thou must win the day;
Woe to the man whom Satan fighteth not!"

THE SOLITARY WAY

Alas! How few may know the grace it takes
To tread the solitary way. Alone!
Ah, yes, *alone!* No other human heart
Can understand the nameless sorrows there –
The nights in weeping spent, and yet, when dawns
The day, to greet the world with radiant smile,
And scatter sunshine while you whisper low
To your poor heart, "*Canst bear a little more?*"

Alone! Poor heart, and dost thou question, *Why?*
Dost think it *strange* that thou must walk this way?
Ah, no! Thou dost but follow in His steps
Who went before, and of the people there
Was none with Him! Alone? Yet *not alone* –
Hath not thy blessed Lord and Master said,
"*My* presence shall go with thee"? Ah, my soul,
No longer, then a *solitary* way!

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