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PERSECUTION: WHEN YOU ARE ATTACKED FOR CHRIST

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Foxe's Book of Martyrs presents the testimonies of brave men and women who were tortured and murdered for their unwavering testimony for Christ. While most of us will never be called upon to undergo such cruelties, Scripture explicitly warns: *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).*

That, my friend, is the subject we're concerned with here; the one which I sensed God leading me to address on your behalf that you might *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might . . . and having done all, to stand (Ephesians 6:10, 13).*

But, before we begin, please understand that by *persecution* we aren't in any way attempting to sympathize or excuse unrepentant heretics, scallywags, and backsliders that are receiving a retributive rebuke for their waywardness and wickedness. Far from it. These words are meant to serve as the balm of Gilead for those precious saints of conviction, compassion, and consecration unto the Lord, God fearing righteous souls, that are in love with the Savior, living in obedience to God's Word, and yet are suffering merciless attacks for it. It is those that I stand with because this, my friend, is a subject I personally know something about.

In truth, the pain of vicious, unwarranted attacks upon one's character does not rise to the level of martyrdom. However, it is nonetheless hurtful and frankly inexplicable to those who have never felt the brunt of it. Consequently, in an effort to delineate its devastating affect on a life, I am about to draw back a thick curtain to reveal something I seldom have. However, I do so with measured apprehension fearing you might misunderstand my tone or motive. Animosity isn't the engine driving my candor; *protecting you*, is. Therefore, with my heart fully exposed, dear friend, let me share my story . . .

I loved my twenty plus years of pastoral ministry. During that time, I experienced my share of happiness and heartache just as most all pastors do. However, I will never forget one skirmish with the founding family of a small church in the country they recruited me to lead. Little did I know what awaited me, or the dark history they were hiding. While my predecessor tried to warn me, I refused his advice fearing his experience would influence mine.

I should have listened to him.

For me the nightmare began eighteen months after I accepted the call, and lasted two grueling years. It began secretly, and at a time I least expected it- the apex of God's choicest blessing. ¹

¹ Please be aware of just how slick Satan is my friend. The fact is, when God *uses* you, the devil will find someone to *abuse* you. For three and one half years, our precious Lord blessed this church abundantly. We were experiencing an explosion in attendance; leading the Michigan Convention in baptisms; had won hundreds of new converts; conducted a vibrant senior, youth and family ministry with kids delivered from drug/alcohol abuse. We paid cash for 10 acres and built a beautiful new facility, we supported many missionaries and we still had cash in the bank- and yet Satan was able to find two disgruntled people (who claimed they wanted this when they called me) to lead the charge

His favor had breathed excitement and life into a stagnant church, and seemed to thrill everyone experiencing it- except of course “the family.” For reasons unknown, they had become very calloused to spiritual things, and had chosen rather to amass an army of personal supporters they could lead in battle against me. In time, their persistent recruiting and training paid off for them as their plan for *removal* not *reconciliation* was finally revealed.

They dropped their bomb in the center of my world at a packed out Wednesday night “business meeting”; a monthly event most of them regularly avoided. Tragically, a twenty-year friend of my family had become their star witness against me (Psalm 41:9; 55:12-14). With crafted words befitting their purposes, she wittingly played a pivotal role in Satan’s plot to destroy God’s work. Although no specific wrongdoing was ever cited or proved, the viciousness with which they labeled me a liar, a manipulator, and a thief impugned my integrity, and destroyed my effectiveness as their pastor. That night, brought a tragic end to 40 months of blessed ministry for Christ. With no other recourse in view, God led me to submit my resignation and silently limp away- only later to learn that “the family” was now creating a firestorm of outrage against me for deserting them.

How can something like this happen? Simple. Way too many Christians are more concerned about *unity* than they are *purity*. Now read that again! The mantra on “Christian” television and in religious circles is- “*sacrifice* doctrine so we can serve the Lord together.” But is that Scriptural? If it is, wouldn’t that include JW’s, Mormons, Moonies, and Muslims in the “fold”? God told the occultist, King Saul: *Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22)*. Has God changed His mind in these LAST DAYS? Hardly!

Jude reminds us what’s really valuable to us as Christian believers: *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 1:3)*. But, as we’ve seen, if you contend as you should, you may be singled out for harassment and persecution. When that happens, and it will, remember the admonition of the Apostle Peter who for over three years saw what the adversaries did to our precious innocent Lord Jesus Christ:

But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ (1 Peter 3:14-16).

I am praying this tract touched something deep in your soul my friend. We desperately need men of God that will consider obedience to God’s Word the highest calling in their life and will take a bold stand for truth even when it isn’t popular. I’ve stood before; I’m standing now; and I’ll continue standing in the future- will you stand with me?

If so, I would be pleased if you would write and let me know.

and destroy the work of God. Today, that church still meets every week, but not to the extent God purposed, *for the glory (hath) departed (1 Sam. 4:21-22)*. How sad!