

Proclaiming the Gospel

Message
of
Jesus Christ

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;
But unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1.18).

Edifying the Body of Christ (Eph. 4.10-16)

August, 2010

The Wise Still Seek Him

Vol. II.8

Expect It!

Dea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (II Tim 3.12).

"As we seek God and our hearts are enlarged to receive more of Him, we will suffer persecution.... Brothers and sisters, those of you who desire the fullness of Christ in your hearts and lives, you are asking for it. **Expect it!**" (July, 2010 Message)

Why would we say, Expect it? Satan knows those who are endeavoring to endure to the end, those who are striving to live for Jesus Christ, to overcome. Yes, the word endure is used in the Gospels; strive is used in Luke 13.24. John, in the Book of Revelation, uses the word overcome.

It requires effort to keep a constant vigil on our hearts and to live a life surrendered to Jesus. Sometimes, it involves enduring persecution; other times, fighting battles until we overcome the enemy. It involves loving Jesus, knowing His mighty power, and trusting our lives completely to Him – even in the most adverse situation.

The devil is angry when we are committed to Jesus. He will come against the people of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the living God. When we are walking in obedience to the Lord, functioning within the Body of Christ, and are willing to allow God to use us to edify and strengthen His Body, Satan sets himself against us.

Beloved, the Christian life is a daily walk with Jesus Christ, walking *The Way of the Cross* with Him at all times – regardless of the cost. It is out of this walk that Satan hates you as he hated the Lord Jesus Christ.

It has been said that if you did not meet Satan today, it is because you are walking with him. Satan is not after "church-goers." He is after those who are in love with Jesus and walk with Him – come what may.

Christians in America will soon face persecution as has never been before. Our brothers and sisters in other countries have endured torture and death all

for the joy of bringing others to Jesus Christ that they, too, might know the peace that passes all understanding.

If you are going through the fire in your walk (Isa 43.1-3) with the Lord Jesus, I challenge you to find and read scriptures that will strengthen you regarding God's commands to be strong and of a good courage; not to be dismayed; not to fear for the Lord is with you – as you walk in obedience to His call upon your life, realizing the mighty and powerful presence of the Lord with you.

Peter desired to walk on the water to Jesus. However, remember, he began sinking when he took his eyes off of Jesus. When our eyes are not fixed upon Jesus, His will is not accomplished; His glory is not revealed.

Beloved, pray with Jehoshaphat, "O God, we have no might against [the enemy], neither know we what to do: **but our eyes are upon thee.**"

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Co-laborers together for Jesus Christ

Come apart and rest (Mark 6.31).

through history because of their love for Jesus Christ. May we seek a closer, stronger relationship with Jesus Christ and an unfailing love for Him.

I am reminded of the faithfulness of many saints of the Bible as they faced the enemy. God spared or delivered some of them; others endured to the end. May we draw strength from the examples given us.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew that King Nebuchadnezzar set up an image and ordered them to worship it. We do not see them crying and begging God for deliverance, yet no doubt they knew fear. They also knew a love for God that kept them faithful to Him. When brought before the king and faced with the fiery furnace, they answered:

If it be *[so]*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver *[us]* out of thine hand, O king.

But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up (Dan 3.17-18)

Their faith was in God, not in what they wanted. They knew their God was able and were willing to accept His will. When Daniel was faced with the threat of the lions' den, he did what he was accustomed to doing; he knelt in front of his open window three times a day and prayed (Dan 6.10).

God delivered the three Hebrew children and Daniel. On the other hand, Stephen was stoned to death (Acts 7.54-60), and Paul was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14.19).

Peter and John were brought before the council, threatened and commanded not to speak or teach in the Name of Jesus. When they reported the threats to their company of believers, they did not ask for protection or deliverance. They asked the Lord to grant them **boldness to speak God's Word** (Acts 4.9-33). Later, Peter was imprisoned and miraculously delivered (Acts 12). Beaten and imprisoned, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises at midnight and were delivered (Acts 16). Most of these godly men later became martyrs.

I believe all of these saints had something in common; they had an all-consuming love for Jesus. So consumed were they with this love for Jesus that they loved not their own lives unto death. Nothing was of value to them compared to the intense driving force of that desire to serve Him and spread the Gospel of His Kingdom. Their love for the Lord spilled over into a love for people and a commitment to bring others to Jesus Christ.

"Voice of the Martyrs" April, 2010 "The Blessings of Persecution," pp 3-7, shares an account of a young man in another country who attended a house church in an area where Christians were being persecuted. "Two dozen Hindu radicals burst into the service and began beating up those in attendance. They burned Bibles, tore up musical instruments and destroyed

the small house church." The radicals asked, "Who is leading this service?" This young man stepped forward and accepted an arrest in order to spare the pastor that the pastor might continue to shepherd his flock who needed him. This young man **loves** Jesus.

After he was beaten, interrogated and put in jail, Voice of the Martyrs secured his release. "In two years, he has personally witnessed to 3,000 people, all Hindus. Now he is a pastor of a church with 150 members, all formerly Hindus."

Radicals still threaten him. But he is not deterred. He prays for them. He even shares tea with them. Some have even become Christians. He continues his work despite persecution because he believes everyone should know what he knows about the loving savior Jesus Christ.

'My body is perishable,' he says. 'The soul is eternal.'

God is faithful to give His people encouragement and strength.

Since we responded to the Lord's call October, 2008, to serve Him together to encourage the Body of Christ, we have experienced the attacks of the enemy: opposition, criticism, discouragements, physical ailments, stressors – all meant to distract us from the work of the Lord Jesus as Nehemiah experienced (Neh 6). We have prayed with Jehoshaphat, "O God, we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee" (II Chr 20.12).

The Lord continues placing before us His Word assuring us that He is always with us. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb 13.5). Never means always there and in each circumstance. But, our lives must be about the Master's work – caring not what happens to us. Our hearts must be fixed on Jesus. Our joy is in walking with the Lord – even in the midst of adversity. We have the responsibility of walking in the holiness and righteousness of the Lord – regardless of the fiery darts that come from the enemy, regardless of the outcome.

Stephen, when suffering the stoning, saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7.55). God did not spare Stephen, but He was with him.

When Paul and Silas were in prison, though God had not spared them the cruel beating, He, nevertheless, was with them. So powerful was His presence that a great earthquake shook the foundation of the prison and opened the doors and loosed every man's bands.

It is imperative that we understand that whatever happens to any of us, serving the Lord Jesus is not about us. Note that in the case of Paul and Silas, it resulted in the salvation of the jailer and his household. Their eyes were upon Jesus; they were determined to walk with Him for the glory of the Lord and the salvation of others,