

General Topics :: Hated for the Name: Persecution in Preaching

Hated for the Name: Persecution in Preaching, on: 2005/4/11 4:50

Hated for the Name
Persecution for Preaching
By Jesse Morrell

“We don’t experience persecution here in America” has been uttered from the lips of many Christians in our day. I have heard people say things like: “There is severe persecution in other countries, but here in America we have freedom and rights that keep us safe”. I am sure you have heard this as well. While it is true that there is severe persecution in other countries, it is not true that there is no persecution here in America because we have “freedom” or “rights”. I know of many Christians here in America who that have been persecuted, even to the extent of being thrown in jail, for nothing more but preaching the gospel. The reason the majority of the Church never suffers the pains of persecution is not because of “freedom” or “rights” but usually it is because they do not preach the gospel to the lost. The absence of biblical persecution in America today is directly related to the absence of biblical preaching.

If a Christian falls out of bed in the middle of the night, he may blame the devil and call it spiritual warfare. If a Christian stubs his toe walking down the sidewalk, he may call it “an attack from the enemy”. But the truth is that the devil is not concerned with, or takes any notice of many of our Church members. It is pride that causes many of us to believe that the devil is coming against us. If we do not hit the devil hard, neither will he hit us hard. Do we really believe that the devil takes any notice of us, and that we are known in hell, if we merely keep to ourselves and stay in our “Church” building? If our witnessing merely consisted of the occasional friendly act of charity, why would the devil persecute us when he very well knows that “faith comes by hearing”? (Rom 10:17). We talk too much about having to defend ourselves from the enemy, but talk very little about the enemy having to defend himself from us.

The only persecuted Christian will be the preaching Christian, who calls out to the world “cleanse your hands you sinners, and purify your hearts you double-minded.” (James 4:8). The man who rattles the bee hive gets stung the most. The man who disturbs the mound of the fire ants will quickly find out why they are called fire ants. The devil is quite occupied leading the chain of bound sinners to hell. But as soon as you come with the chain cutters to set the prisoners free, you’ll discover that the preaching Christian is the persecuted Christian. “Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded FOR their witness to Jesus and FOR the Word of God.” (Rev 20:4). The reason that there is much persecution upon our brothers and our sisters currently preaching the gospel in Asia is because they are witnessing to the lost of the life-changing power of Jesus Christ and preaching the Word of God. And because many here in America do not preach as they do in Asia, neither are we apart of the “fellowship of His sufferings” as they are in Asia. (Php 3:10)

While we may feel as though we are fulfilling our Christian duty if we faithfully attend Sunday Service at our local corner Church, I would like to say that we are sadly mistaken. Christ did not say “follow me and I will make you Church-goers”. The world will never be changed by going to Church only. That is why Christ said “follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Mt 4:19). Christ came to seek and to save the lost; therefore those who follow in His foot-steps do likewise. If you want to see if a man truly is a follower of Christ, take a look at his witnessing life and it will reveal how closely he follows and how much he believes in the Word of God.

One of the very first experiences that I had when I started witness was shortly after my conversion. I was banned from a bible study because they knew I gave out gospel tracts to the lost. “We don’t want you to give the bible study a bad name” they told me. Yet Christ himself “made himself of no reputation”. (Php 2:7). At one point, the other members of this bible study also gave tracts out with me. But when our message brought the reproach of the world it was soon abandoned. When the ship of our reputation starts to sink, men will throw anything or anybody overboard to keep it afloat. If you want to change the world, toss out your reputation. And if you want to be a soldier of the Cross and wage warfare to win the souls of men, don’t even think about joining a Christian Club. Soldiers never fit in with mere Club members. So long as we hold on to our reputations and try not to “ruin our good name” with the world, we will never change the world as the New Testament Church did. We would be giving Christ a bad name if we were to allow the fear of man to overrule the fear of God in our lives. Many of us wouldn’t mind it being said of us “that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world” as it was said of the N. T. Church. (Romans 1:8). But we certainly wouldn’t want to hear, as the N. T. Church did, “for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere.” (Acts 28:22) If we do as the N. T. church did and reason about “sin, self-control, and judgment to come, (Acts 24:25), then we will experience what the

N. T. church experienced: persecution and the saving of souls. If our ministries are not N. T. ministries, then they aren't ministries at all.

As soon as the noses of many Christians start to smell even the hint of hardship, or when their flesh starts to feel the heat of persecution, they shrivel back in terror and fear rather than marching forward in godly boldness and peaceful confidence that Christ is with us always, even in the fiery furnace. We must remember when we stand face to face with tribulation and when we stand toe to toe with oppression, that Christ will help us in our hardships and will give us peace in our persecutions. When we are put in the position to compromise that which can not be compromised, to deny the undeniable; when forced to decide to obey the authorities of man or to obey the authorities of God, holy defiance and godly disobedience to those unreasonable requests is not only necessary in this war, but is our only option. Preachers have told me "the authorities are trying to silence my public message, should I obey God or man?" I tell them that if they want to get an honest answer, ask the souls in hell what they think and they will be sure to tell you.

The early Methodist preachers received much persecution when they preached the gospel in public, but rather than retreating in defeat, they marched on into glorious victory. These men turned the world upside down, and the world tried to turn them upside down. John S. Simons tells us the story: "If Methodism had not come into contact with the mob it would never have reached that section of English people which most needed Salvation. The 'Religious Societies' shut up in their rooms, would never have reformed the country. It was necessary that a race of heroic men should arise, who would dare to confront the wildest and most brutal of men, and tell them the meaning of sin, and show them the Christ of the cross and the Judgment Throne. The incessant assaults of the mob on the Methodist preachers showed they had reached the masses. With a superb courage, rarely equaled on the battlefield, the Methodist preachers went again and again to the places from which they had been driven by violence, until their persistence wore down the antagonism of their assailants. Then, out of the once furious crowd, men and women were gathered whose hearts the Lord had touched."

Much like the Methodists the Salvation Army faced biblical persecution for their biblical preaching. In the open-air glory days of the Salvationists they had to persevere through many tough battles in order to win their war. Winkie Pratney tells us: "Salvationists were roped, punched, kicked, spat on, and pelted with ships' rockets and burning sulfur, while entire gangs of hundreds, even up to thousands, rallied to stop the little holy band. But the Army marched into town anyways, covered in slime but not ashamed. Kneeling in the center of the town they lifted up their battle cry: 'Lord Jesus, in Your name we claim this city for God,' and then they got up to take it, regardless of circumstances!" We too can change the world as they did, if we become as dedicated and devoted as they were.

While I have seen professing Christians abandon what I call "frontline evangelism" as soon as any persecution arises, assuming that they must have done something wrong, nothing can be further from the truth. Persecution is a sign that you are being a threat to the powers of darkness, that you are making a difference for the Kingdom of God. There is something terribly wrong with our ministries if we never face persecution. Did Christ not say "You will be hated by all for my names sake"? (Luke 21:17). We must be misrepresenting His name if it does not bring us the same reproach that it brought Him. Preaching open-air will not get you the praises of men. Open air ministry got Jesus lifted up on a cross not lifted up in awe and admiration from the people of His time.

Even when we must run up hill, we must finish the race. Even when we have to swim against the current, we must keep going! At the rate things appear to be going here in America for street preachers, many more American Christians will be forced to start prison ministries because that's exactly where we're heading. I am not surprised any longer when I hear of an open-air preacher being arrested, but I am surprised when I hear of one who never has been. I'll never complain about the few times I have been arrested for preaching, neither will I complain when it happens again. I'll expect no greater treatment than what Jesus my Lord received and all those great men of faith who have gone before us. Did not the preaching of John the Baptist lead him to prison and a grave? Did not the preaching of Christ lead him to a cross? I. H. Evans wrote: "Stephen preached until the people were so stirred and excited that they stopped their ears. That is the kind of preaching that accomplishes results...When people become really afraid to hear a man because of his message, and try to silence him by putting him to death, he has done powerful preaching."

We can only buy the prize of souls if we are willingly to pay the cost of suffering. There is no other way to follow Christ, except to take up one's cross. As painful and agonizing as it is the cause of Christ is more than worthy enough. Leonard Ravenhill wrote: "When a nation calls its prime men to battle, homes are broken, weeping sweethearts say their good-byes, business are refitted for wartime production, rationing and discomforts are accepted - all for war. Can we do less for the greatest fight that this world has ever known outside of the cross - this end time siege on sanity, morality, and spirituality?"

While I was preaching to a mocking crowd of sinners in a Connecticut green, the crowd vehemently and viciously shouted out accusations against me to remove the focus and attention off their own sin. One man in particular I can remember being outrageously furious beyond all the rest. He was even more upset than his friend who had already threatened to beat me up and to knock out my teeth. So angry and disturbed this one man was that he eventually stormed away in a rage because he could no longer bear the preaching. Shortly after he left he returned again, but this time I saw his facial expressions change as I said "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3). Rather than spewing out his normal venom, he astonishingly said, I believe to his own amazement, that what I was saying was true. The Holy Spirit had gotten a hold of him confirming the Word of God in his heart. Without any further interruption from him I finished my message as he stood there and listened to every word. After preaching he came up to me and apologized for his ridiculous behavior. While I continued to speak to him about his soul, serious conviction seemed to grip him that showed in his eyes. He said that he needed to get right with the Lord. He turned to his friend and told him "I am done with all of it, I'm done with it all!" referring to his sin. He assured me that he was going to seek after God, repent of his sins, and start to read the bible which he already owned. Usually those who oppose you the most are being impacted the most.

It's true that the opposition to the public declaration of the Gospel has always been great and will be great in our day, but the rewards of souls have always made it worth it. George Whitefield, who was the open-air preacher who sparked America's first Great Awakenings, tried to share this truth with his generation, maybe our generation will hear his words loud and clear. Arnold Dallimore writes of Whitefield: "He...urged all ministers not to be satisfied with preaching on Sundays only, but to do so seven days a week; to preach in the open-air and not to be limited to their own parishes, but to go forth wherever lost souls were found and to proclaim the grace of God to them. Such actions, he assured them, would bring the opposition of authorities and the hatred of the world, but it would also witness the blessing of God." Whitefield knew all too well the opposition of authorities and the hatred of the world, but he was also a man who witnessed the blessing of God in remarkable ways, leading thousands of desperately lost sinners to the rivers of Life for cleansing! Whitefield thundered the Word of God to awaken men out of their deep slumber in their comfortable beds of sin. We need men like him in our day who will be the annoying alarm clocks calling men to wake up to go shower in the cold showers of repentance. Unless they shower in those cleansing waters, they can not put on the White Robe of Christ. Sure the world may hit the "snooze" button through persecution, but we can carry on through Christ who strengthens us.

After Whitefield, there came a young man who brought the gospel where it belonged. He too experienced both the battering of the world and the blessing of God. This young man was named William Booth, who was the Founder of the Salvation Army. Because the poor very seldom went to Church, he decided to take the gospel to the poor. He would preach on street corners, in alleys, on chairs or barrels, so all could freely hear the Word of God. Trevor Yaxley tells us one remarkable story: "One early success came with a preaching venture that found him in Kid Street with Will Samson. Expectantly, they had positioned themselves on the street edge, outside the home of a notorious drunk, Besom Jack. Their open-air meeting commenced with a hymn that seemed to be appropriate for the occasion. It was from the Methodist songbook :

"Outcasts of men, to you I call,
Harlots and publicans and thieves!
He spreads His arms to embrace you all;
Sinners alone, His grace receives:
No need of Him the righteous have,
He came the lost to seek and save."

They had no sooner raised their voices than a large, boisterous crowd encircled them. Young William was on his chair in an instant. "friends", he cried as he dodged a well-aimed, overripe missile, his large hooknose having a somewhat magnetic appeal to the tomato-launching public. "I want to put a few straight questions to your soul," he declared passionately. "Have any of you got a child at home without shoes to its feet? Are your wives sitting now in dark houses waiting for you to return without money? Are you going away from here...to spend on drink, money that your wives need for food?"

At that moment the front door behind him flung open and out stumbled Besom Jack, eyes aflame and heading straight for the preaching duo, shouting abuse and lunging at them while still six feet away.

"Jack, God loves your wife, and so did you once," said William steadily, looking the broom-seller in the eye. Jack stopped in his tracks and immediately became quite. "Can you remember how much you loved her and cherished her when you first met?" the teenager asked tenderly. Jack nodded; his eyes fixed on the ground. "Well, Jack, God loves you wi

th a love like that, with a love far deeper and greater than that. The hushed crowd strained to catch what the boy-preacher was saying, amazed at the change that had overcome the drunkard.

Jack lifted his eyes and blinked sheepishly. "Me?" he asked in wonderment. "Yes, Jack, you," said William as he stood down from the chair and took hold of Jack's arm.

Jack's wife recounted the end of this meeting...the following week, saying,

"And I said to him, 'Come Jack, just kneel down here and tell the Lord you love him too. And ask him to forgive you.' And I did! My Jack knelt there in the gutter and he's been a different man ever since; I say he's a Christian now!"

Young William's heart beat for souls! His desire to help the poor had grown into a desire to see them saved. Gone were his notions of joining the Chartists, whose policies could only address the outward, political symptoms of poverty but never affect the heart of a person caught in alcoholism or despair. He had found his calling as a preacher of the gospel, the only true agent of inward change." End quote.

And so here we are in our own day when it is the norm to be a fornicator, a blasphemer, a liar, and a thief. Here we are in our own day when millions of souls rebel against God and are on a grease slide down to hell. The devil is playing for keeps. So here we are in our own day when many of us hide from the world in our Church rooms while the world around us perishes. We would rather not witness because it is so inconvenient, so uncomfortable. But tell me; was the cross comfortable or convenient for Christ? How many souls are lost so that comfort and convenience can be kept? Dr. Michael L. Brown exhorts and encourages us to be the life-changing force which God desires for us to be here in our generation. He said "America can be impacted for the good, and as followers of Jesus, we are called to make that impact. We do it by walking in the light, as He is in the light; by calling the lost to turn back to God in repentance by preaching the gospel and making disciples; by proclaiming liberty to the captives; by pursuing righteousness in every area of our public and private lives; by acts of kindness, mercy, compassion, overcoming evil with good; by prayer, fasting, and the power of God; by living holy lives, and setting holy examples; by being a prophetic voice and a moral conscience to society; by Spirit-lead community involvement and godly political action; by non-violent resistance of injustice and oppression."

The purpose of this entire article is to help you understand the personal sacrifice which is required with personal service to the Lord Jesus. Many in our day can not follow Christ because they do not know the cost of following. God forbid that any preacher ever hid the true cost. I don't want anyone who preaches publicly to be surprised when persecution arises. I don't want you to leave your work, believing that you must have done something wrong. If you preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth you will be mistreated, misunderstood, and misrepresented. If you are going to stand up for Christ, expect the world to try to push you back down again. Expect to have to carry your cross up the hill of Calvary to be crucified, but we must overcome any hardship for the sake of the gospel of everlasting life. We have too many soft-men and not enough watch-men who will blow the trumpet declaring "flee from the wrath that's to come". (Luke 3:7). If we overcome all the opposition and preach the gospel regardless of what happens, we too can eye witness the miracle of the new birth in the lives of the lost.

No war has been won without battles being fought. You never know just how much you believe and value something until you have to suffer for it. At the end of time, when we stand in eternity and appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and look into the face of the Crucified, we will know that it has all been worth it. Could you look Him in the face that day and tell the One who bled for you that you could not bleed for Him? Could you look Him in the face that day and tell the One who died for you that you could not die for Him? No matter how difficult and painful the means may get, we have a glorious and wonderful end, to present to Christ the reward of His suffering.

Hast thou no Scar?
No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?
I hear thee sung of mighty in this land,
I hear them hail thy bright ascendant star,
Hast thou no scar?

Hast thou no wound?
Yet I was wounded by the archers, spent,
Leaned me on a tree to die, and rent,
By ravening beast that compassed me, I swooned;

Hast thou no wound?

No wound, no scar?

Yet, as the mast so shall the servant be,
And, pierced are the feet that choose to follow me;
But thine are whole: Can he hath followed far
Who has no wound nor scar?

~Amy Carmichael

Quotes:

- 1) John S. Simons quote can be found in "George Whitefield" by Arnold A. Dallimore, page 132.
- 2) Winkie Pratney quote can be found in "William and Catherine: The Life and Legacy of the Booths" by Trevor Yaxley with Carolyn Vanderwal. Page 18.
- 3) I.H. Evans quote can be found in "The Preacher and His Preaching" by I. H. Evans, page 208
- 4) Leonard Ravenhill quote can be found in "The Jesus Manifesto: A call to revolution" by Dr Michael L. Brown, page 5.
- 5) Arnold Dallimore quote can be found in "George Whitefield" by Arnold A. Dallimore, page 166.
- 6) Trevor Yaxley quote can be found in "William and Catherine: The Life and Legacy of the Booths" by Trevor Yaxley with Carolyn Vanderwal, pages 57-58
- 7) Dr. Michael L. Brown quote can be found in "The Jesus Manifesto: A call to revolution" by Dr Michael L. Brown, page 22

Re: Hated for the Name: Persecution in Preaching - posted by CJaKfOrEsT (), on: 2005/4/11 8:17

"ALL who live godly in Christ Jesus WILL suffer persecution." - 2 Tim 3:12 I'd say that's enough said :-)

Re:, on: 2005/4/11 21:20

Isa 59:15 - "And he who departs from evil makes himself a prey."

Mt 20:22 - "Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?"

"What's in the cup? I believe in that cup is internal suffering, mental suffering, and spiritual suffering. Do you want to drink the cup? Can you drink of that cup? You want to travail? You see, what people are seeking for today is a painless pentecost. There isn't such a thing!...What happened on the day of pentecost? They prospered. Yes they did, they went to jail. It wasn't prosperity it was prison, pain, privation, persecution. The men are dishonest that preach on TV today, their liars!" Leonard Ravenhill

"If your going to follow the Lord it's derision in the family. Your father and mother will hate you. Jesus got to the place where His brothers said He was insane. You know people say 'I want to be like Jesus'. I doubt it! You want to get kicked out of your family because you love God? Do you want to be so true to God that a Thomas comes and doubts you? That a Judas sells you? You really want to be like Jesus? Well why don't you practice it? Why don't you have 40 days and 40 nights of fasting? Forget all the paper work." Leonard Ravenhill

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2005/4/11 22:27

Philippians 3:10: That I may know him, and the power of hi resurrection, and the fellowship of his **sufferings**, being made conformable unto his death;

1 Peter 4:1: Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath **suffered** in the flesh hath ceased from sin.

1 Peter 4:13: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's **sufferings**; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

Thank you Jesse for sharing these vital truth again with your words.