

**The Great Controversy Series**  
**3-Persecuted or Persecutor**  
**Chapter 2: - Persecution in the First Centuries**  
 Bible Sermon Study Notes: Pastor Cary Rodgers, Jr

“When Jesus revealed to His disciples the fate of Jerusalem and the scenes of the second advent, He foretold also the experience of His people from the time when He should be taken from them, to His return in power and glory for their deliverance. From Olivet the Saviour beheld the storms about to fall upon the apostolic church; and penetrating deeper into the future, His eye discerned the fierce, wasting tempests that were to beat upon His followers in the coming ages of darkness and persecution. In a few brief utterances of awful significance He foretold the portion which the rulers of this world would mete out to the church of God. Matthew 24:9, 21, 22. The followers of Christ must tread the same path of humiliation, reproach, and suffering which their Master trod. The enmity that burst forth against the world's Redeemer would be manifested against all who should believe on His name.” GC p. 39

Jesus never promise the faithful freedom from persecution...

**Joh 15:20** Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have **persecuted me, they will also persecute you**; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

**Mar 13:9** But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to **councils (Sanhedrin)** and in the synagogues (churches) ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings (government councils and judges) for my sake, for a testimony against them.

**Mar 13:12** Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against *their* parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

Persecute (Greek) diōkō:

**Thayer Definition:**

- 1) to make to run or flee, put to flight, drive away
- 2) to run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing, to run after
  - 2a) to press on: figuratively of one who in a race runs swiftly to reach the goal
  - 2b) **to pursue (in a hostile manner)**
- 3) in any way whatever to **harass, trouble, molest** one
  - 3a) to persecute
  - 3b) **to be mistreated**, suffer persecution **on account of something**

**2. Main people who persecute God's faithful**

- 1 – Fallen (Apostate ) Church Leadership
- 2- Fallen (Apostate) Church Members
- 3- Family members (mother, father, sister, brother, cousins, etc..)
- 4- Governmental councils or judges

In the New Testament church the Jewish leaders continued to persecute God's faithful starting with Stephen in 34 AD. All the apostles were martyred except John.

In the controversy between the Jews and Roman, many Christians caught in the middle and were persecuted and killed by Rome. Rome also saw that Christians were a threat to the pagan way of life.

History reveals that many Christians who did not compromise truth were dipped in tar and burned in the streets of Rome to light the Roman cities. They were torn and slaughtered in the coliseums as sport in front of thousands.

They were falsely accused and painted in the most negative light to the government of Rome. They blamed the Christian for the famine and pestilences and earthquakes.

They were hunted like wild beast. Many had to hide in dungeons, caves, and even the catacombs. Catacombs of tunnels under the cities of the Roman Empire were many of the dead were buried.

“Though deprived of every comfort, shut away from the light of the sun, making their home in the dark but friendly bosom of the earth, they uttered no complaint. With words of faith, patience, and hope they encouraged one another to endure privation and distress. The loss of every earthly blessing could not force them to renounce their belief in Christ. Trials and persecution were but steps bringing them nearer their rest and their reward.” GC p. 41

### **Why are God's last day people persecuted?**

**Joh 15:18** If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated you.*

**Joh 15:19** If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

Hate (Greek) - Misoō [*mis-eh'-o*]: (*hatred*); **to detest (especially to persecute)**; by extension to *love less*: - hate (-ful).

### **Why do those who persecuted Jesus and those who persecute God's faithful in these last days hate them?** (Is it because they did those who are doing the persecuting wrong?)

**Joh 3:19** And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

**Joh 3:20** For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

The persecutors hate the light and love sin because it exposes their wrong.

### **Who is the light?**

**Joh 8:12** Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, **I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.**

### **Jesus is the light – the persecutors reject Him and those who follow in his light... why?**

**Mat 5:14** Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

**Mat 5:15** Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

**Mat 5:16** Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

The light of Christ in God's faithful exposes sin in other lives even without saying a word!

**2Ti 3:12** Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus **shall suffer persecution.**

### **Why did Cain kill Abel?**

**1Jn 3:9** Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

1Jn 3:10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

1Jn 3:11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

1Jn 3:12 Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

1Jn 3:13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

### **What more does Jesus says concerning this?... Hate without a cause!**

**Joh 15:20** Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have **persecuted me, they will also persecute you**; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

Joh 15:21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

Joh 15:22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: **but now they have no cloke (cover) for their sin.**

Joh 15:23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

Joh 15:24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

Joh 15:25 But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, **They hated me without a cause.**

**Hate without of cause! Why? "They have no more cover for their sin." They Hate and reject Jesus, His law, and love sin!**

### **What does God say about being a friend to the world?**

**Jas 4:4** Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Rom 8:6 For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.

**Rom 8:7** Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

### **Sin and Holiness does not MIX.... Period**

God prophesied this is Genesis 3:15

Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity (hatred) between thee (Snake/Devil) and the woman (God's true church), and between thy seed (Satan's people) and her seed (God's true people); it (Jesus) shall bruise (gape open) thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel

"In vain were Satan's efforts to destroy the church of Christ by violence. The great controversy in which the disciples of Jesus yielded up their lives did not cease when these faithful standard-bearers fell at their post. By defeat they conquered. God's workmen were slain, but His work went steadily forward. The gospel continued to spread and the number of its adherents to increase. It penetrated into regions that were inaccessible even to the eagles of Rome. Said a Christian, expostulating with the heathen rulers who were urging forward the persecution: You may "kill us, torture us, condemn us. . . . Your injustice is the proof that we are innocent . . . Nor does your cruelty . . . avail you." It was but a stronger invitation to bring others to their persuasion. "The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is seed."--Tertullian, Apology, paragraph 50. GC-51

### **What are the blessings of persecution?**

Mat 5:10 Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 5:11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

The more you are persecuted the more you receive the blessings from the God of heaven. If you are martyred during persecution, praise Lord, rest a short while, heaven will soon be your next residence!

**Did you know that persecution is a furnace of praise, honor, and glory?**

**Rom 5:3** And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

**Rom 5:4** And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

**Rev 3:18** I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich;

**1Pe 1:7** That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

**What are we do in the midst of persecutions?**

**1Pe 4:12** Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

**1Pe 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.

**Mat 5:12** Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you

**If you live the TRUTH, give the TRUTH, preach the TRUTH, teach the TRUTH you will be persecuted but you must endure until the end. This is the message that Jesus gives all who are persecuted:**

Matthew 24:9-14

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

13 **But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.**

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

“How, it is asked, can One who is just and merciful, and who is also infinite in power, tolerate such injustice and oppression? This is a question with which we have nothing to do. God has given us sufficient evidence of His love, and we are not to doubt His goodness because we cannot understand the workings of His providence. Said the Saviour to His disciples, foreseeing the doubts that would press upon their souls in days of trial and darkness: "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." John 15:20. Jesus suffered for us more than any of His followers can be made to suffer through the cruelty of wicked men. Those who are called to endure torture and martyrdom are but following in the steps of God's dear Son.” GC -48

**From Persecuted to Persecutor....**

**How did the once pure church of truth from the NT go from being persecuted to persecutor?**

Compromise... mixing worldliness and truth!

“Satan therefore laid his plans to war more successfully against the government of God by planting his banner in the Christian church. If the followers of Christ could be deceived and led to displease God, then their strength, fortitude, and firmness would fail, and they would fall an easy prey. {GC 42.2}

The great adversary now endeavored to gain by artifice what he had failed to secure by force. Persecution ceased, and in its stead were substituted the dangerous allurements of temporal prosperity and worldly honor. Idolaters were led to receive a part of the Christian faith, while they rejected other essential truths. They professed to accept Jesus as the Son of God and to believe in His death and resurrection, but they had no conviction of sin and felt no need of repentance or of a change of heart. With some concessions on their part they proposed that Christians should make concessions, that all might unite on the platform of belief in Christ.  
- GC 42

### **What did those professed Christian do as a result compromised?**

Established the papacy with false doctrines to depress and suppress truth and then later persecuted the true people of God that stayed on the Mountain of TRUTH!

### **Who and what do persecutors use in order to try to justify what they do?**

**Psa 35:1** *A Psalm of David.* Plead *my cause*, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.

**Psa 35:11** False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge *things* that I knew not.

**Mat 26:59** Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;

**Mat 26:60** But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, *yet* found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

Persecutors will lie and use false witness to try to justify their cause! They will believe that they are doing good and the others who are keeping the commandments of God are doing evil. The persecutors will call the good evil and the evil good.

**Isa 5:20** Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

### **What is the curse of the persecutors in the last days?**

**Psa 7:12** If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.

**Psa 7:13** He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.

**Psa 7:14** Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.

**Psa 7:15** **He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch *which* he made.**

**Psa 7:16** His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.

**Psa 9:15** The heathen are sunk down in the pit *that* they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.

**Psa 9:16** The LORD is known *by* the judgment *which* he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.

**Pro 26:27** Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.

**In the last day those who persecute are digging their own graves. They will eventually get trapped and killed by there own devices.**

Esther 7:10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

Persecuted or Persecutor....

Persecuted stay on the Mount of TRUTH with no compromise. Persecutors have joined themselves to Babylon... Only two choices...

**When the church leadership and conferences continue to compromise truth what do you do? What did the first centuries Christian do when they were faced with the same dilemma that we have today?**

“When Christians consented to unite with those who were but half converted from paganism, they entered upon a path which led further and further from the truth. Satan exulted that he had succeeded in deceiving so large a number of the followers of Christ. He then brought his power to bear more fully upon these, and inspired them to persecute those who remained true to God. None understood so well how to oppose the true Christian faith as did those who had once been its defenders; and these apostate Christians, uniting with their half-pagan companions, directed their warfare against the most essential features of the doctrines of Christ. GC - 45

“It required a desperate struggle for those who would be faithful to stand firm against the deceptions and abominations which were disguised in sacerdotal garments and introduced into the church. The Bible was not accepted as the standard of faith... After a long and severe conflict, the faithful few decided to dissolve all union with the apostate church if she still refused to free herself from falsehood and idolatry. They saw that separation was an absolute necessity if they would obey the word of God. They dared not tolerate errors fatal to their own souls, and set an example which would imperil the faith of their children and children's children. To secure peace and unity they were ready to make any concession consistent with fidelity to God; but they felt that even peace would be too dearly purchased at the sacrifice of principle. If unity could be secured only by the compromise of truth and righteousness, then let there be difference, and even war.” GC – 45

### **How to rekindle persecution among God's faithful.. Live and GIVE TRUTH!**

“There is another and more important question that should engage the attention of the churches of today. The apostle Paul declares that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12. Why is it, then, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber? The only reason is that the church has conformed to the world's standard and therefore awakens no opposition. The religion which is current in our day is not of the pure and holy character that marked the Christian faith in the days of Christ and His apostles. It is only because of the spirit of compromise with sin, because the great truths of the word of God are so indifferently regarded, because there is so little vital godliness in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world. Let there be a revival of the faith and power of the early church, and the spirit of persecution will be revived, and the fires of persecution will be rekindled.” GC – 48

Appeal...

Persecuted or Persecutor...