

(continued from sermon 12)

Those of us who are Christians living in the United States may not have suffered this kind of persecution yet, and perhaps some of you have. This hatred for Christians in the U.S. is becoming quite common and if we don't do something to reverse the way this country is going, we may find that all of us are going to be subjected to this same kind of treatment. If and when it gets tough, however, we can draw the strength and power of God by remembering these four things:

- 1) God wants everyone in the world to hear the Gospel so that they can respond to His gift of salvation (John 3:16; Matthew 28:19-20).
- 2) God's Word cannot be locked away somewhere because it is found everywhere among Christian believers. God's Word will bring about whatever it is He wants to achieve in people's lives (Hebrews 4:12; Isaiah 55:11).
- 3) Christ's suffering reached the highest level of suffering imaginable; none of us will ever suffer as much as He did. And He suffered willingly because of the "*joy set before Him*" (Hebrews 12:2). He willingly suffered so we wouldn't have to face the severe punishment for sin. If you haven't done it already, this would be a good time to think about how much love it takes for someone to suffer the kind of death He suffered for all people, both the good and the bad. Would you be willing to give up your life for someone who has made your life miserable?
 - 1) Paul too was willing to suffer so that he might win the heavenly prize. "*I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus*" [(Philippians 3:14 (HCSB)].

So we too should be willing to suffer if necessary so that others can hear and respond to the Gospel. And let us also keep our eyes on the prize: the opportunity to spend eternity in Heaven with the King of the Universe, Jesus, and God the Father.

The purpose of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and Their Gospel had become Paul's life's purpose. No suffering was too great for him if it in any way supports this purpose, which includes his own salvation and that of so many others. Even though Paul has been dead for almost two thousand years, he still speaks to us and to all those who have lived since the time of Christ. Some have accepted that truth, some have not. Paul was placed in time by God to serve Him when and where he was needed. Because of Paul's willingness to obey, suffer, and never give up, many of us have been led to Christ who completed the work of salvation for both Paul and the rest of us who have come to believe. How, therefore, can we do any less?¹

2 Timothy 2:10 (HCSB):

¹⁰ This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

¹ Op. Cit. Lenski

2 Timothy 2:11 (TLB):

¹¹ *I am comforted by this truth, that when we suffer and die for Christ it only means that we will begin living with him in heaven.*

“William Lloyd Garrison, editor of the abolitionist paper, *The Liberator*, once sold his bed and slept on the floor to buy more newsprint to publish his attacks on slavery. His epitaph cites the courage of honest conviction: **‘I am in earnest ... I will not retreat a single step, and I will be heard.’**”²

That is a rather good definition of **endurance**. Paul was able to endure under all kinds of suffering, and he did it willingly so that the Word of God could be taught to all, whether followers of Christ or not. Paul encourages Timothy to conduct himself in the same way.

Timothy does not need to worry about God helping Him to understand what is being taught. The only requirement is to come to God and ask for it. Jesus has promised this to

all who believe that He died to pay the penalty for their sin, and we know that Jesus has never broken a promise. And we are sent a very special helper when we make that commitment to provide for and protect us until we arrive in Heaven.

John 14:26-27 NAS:

²⁶ *“But the **Helper**, the **Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.*

²⁷ *“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.*

John 16:13-15 TLB:

¹³ *When **the Holy Spirit**, who is truth, comes, he shall guide you into all truth, for he will not be presenting his own ideas, but will be passing on to you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future.*

¹⁴ *He shall praise me and bring me great honor by showing you my glory.*

¹⁵ *All the Father’s glory is mine; this is what I mean when I say that he will show you my glory.*

All the knowledge Timothy needs will be given to him if he only obeys God by doing what the Spirit of God leads him to do.

When we finish our study on the upcoming verses, you may wonder what in the world did some of these things have to do with 2 Timothy 2:10-11? I hope that is not the case because although I have had similar experiences to a lesser degree, I found myself in front of my computer writing constantly for hours, using reference materials only to confirm what I was writing. I truly felt a sense that God was guiding my fingers over the keyboard. So let us get to it and if you do not like the message, just tell God about it.

² Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers*. Garland TX : Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

In the Old Testament there are three basic meanings evident in the use of *“spirit”* in the earliest Hebrew writings:

- 1) It was a wind from God.
- 2) It was the breath of life.
- 3) It was a spirit of ecstasy.³

“First, it was a wind from God.”⁴ In Genesis 1:2 the Hebrew word *ruach* is translated *“Spirit”* where *“the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.”* The same word is used in Genesis 8:1 and it caused the waters of the Flood to subside *“God caused a wind to pass over the earth.”* Also a wind from God blew locusts over Egypt (Exodus 10:13) and *“a wind from the Lord”* blew quail into the camp of Israel (Numbers 11:31). The strong east wind from the Lord separated the waters of the Red Sea during the Exodus (Exodus 14:21).

“Second, it was the breath of God that made man a living being.”⁵ The Hebrew word used in Genesis 2:7 is *naphach*. *“Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”* It is one of the earliest understandings of the Hebrew faith that mankind has been given life only through the divine breath or spirit within them:

Job 34:12-15 TLB:

¹² *There is no truer statement than this: God is never wicked or unjust.*

¹³ **He alone has authority** over the earth and dispenses justice for the world.

¹⁴ **If God were to withdraw his Spirit,**

¹⁵ *all life would disappear and mankind would turn again to dust.*

“Third, there were occasions when this divine power seemed to overtake and possess an individual fully,”⁶ so that his or her words or actions went way beyond the capabilities of other people, and clearly identified this special person as God’s messenger. Many leaders of the Jews in the Old Testament may have been chosen because the people saw that they had supernatural abilities.

Later, the adjective *“holy”* was added to make this more clearly understood as the Third Person of the Trinity. We see one instance of this in Psalm 51:11 when David poured out his heart in repentance to God after committing adultery with Bathsheba.

Psalm 51:7-11 NLT:

⁷ **Purify me** from my sins, and I will be clean; **wash me**, and I will be whiter than snow.

⁸ *Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me— now let me rejoice.*

³ A trance or trance-like state in which a person transcends normal consciousness. *En.wikipedia.org*

⁴ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series – Matthew*, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 368-369.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁹ *Don't keep looking at my sins. **Remove the stain of my guilt.***

¹⁰ ***Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.***

¹¹ *Do not banish me from your presence, and **don't take your Holy Spirit from me.***

Acts 5:29-32 NLT:

²⁹ *But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than any human authority.*

³⁰ *The God of our ancestors **raised Jesus from the dead** after you killed him by hanging him on a cross.*

³¹ *Then God put him in the place of honor at his right hand as Prince and Savior. He did this so the people of Israel would repent of their sins and be forgiven.*

³² *We are witnesses of these things and so is **the Holy Spirit, who is given by God to those who obey him.**"*

Then, of course, there had to be those who claimed to have been given such powers so they would be considered prophets as well, but really were not. They wanted the same recognition and respectability so they might be able to use it for their own selfish motives. They were appropriately labeled "*false prophets.*"

The people therefore set up evaluation tests to determine who was and who was not the "real thing"; who was a true messenger of God and who was not. These tests to distinguish the true prophets from the false prophets evaluated the content of the message delivered as well as the character of the prophet's life. These tests did not consider the degree or quality of inspiration the prophet may have created among the listeners.⁷ The test of a true prophet was not his popularity, because often the strongest prophets of God were quite unpopular. This need to determine who was a true prophet and who was a false prophet was necessary in order to distinguish the true Word of God from a merely emotional appeal that might inspire the people, but not be from God. Unfortunately today there are some preachers who have been quite skilled in being able to move people emotionally but who lack the substance of the true Word of God.⁸

For the most part one needs a foundation of understanding Old Testament concepts and passages in order to fully understand the New Testament. The New Testament writers generally share the rabbinic view that Scripture has the authority of the Holy Spirit behind it.⁹ This is consistently proven to be so throughout the entire Bible. Anything that was predicted by God's Old Testament prophets regarding the First Coming of Jesus to earth were all fulfilled. We consider it reasonable to believe therefore that all the predictions made about His Second Coming will come true as well. There is this thread of truth that stretches from the first page in the book of Genesis through the last page in the Book of Revelation. **The New Testament brings to reality what the Old Testament writers looked forward to.**

⁷ See Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:22; Jeremiah 23:14; Micah 3:5.

⁸ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Baker New Testament Commentary – Exposition of Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1955), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 249.

⁹ See Mark 12:36; Acts 28:25; Hebrews 3:7; 2 Peter 1:21.

2 Peter 1:20-21 NAS:

²⁰ *But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,*

²¹ *for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

But at the same time, Christianity not only fulfills what the Jewish prophets predicted, Jesus' coming, but then giving His Spirit to live within those who accept Him as their Savior. That is the beginning of **the new covenant**. This new faith is something very different from that observed in the Old Testament.¹⁰

Matthew 26:26-29 NAS:

²⁶ *While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My **body**."*

²⁷ *And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you;*

²⁸ *for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.*

²⁹ *"But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."*

Salvation is free to us, but it was never cheap; nothing in all of human history has ever cost so much. In the passage above, Jesus could have been referring to Isaiah 52 and 53. Some of the words Jesus used here such as *body*, *blood* and *poured out*, suggest a sacrifice.

The Last Supper was a symbolic¹¹ act, like the triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and the "*cleansing*" of the Temple. Interpreting¹² the elements of the **Passover** feast (the bread, the bitter herbs and so on) was a standard part of the Passover tradition, but instead of using standard explanations that the Jews would have recognized from the Old Testament, Jesus interprets two elements (those that were representative of **food** and **drink** in blessings at Jewish meals) in what must have been a big surprise to the Jews who were present.¹³

The bread Jesus refers to represents His body (it is not actually His body). We should interpret His words here no more literally than the disciples would have taken the normal words of the Passover ceremony which were: "*This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate when they came from the land of Egypt.*" As Jesus was not yet dead at the time He spoke these words

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ The use of one thing to represent another; or, the use of a material object to represent a moral or spiritual truth. *Figures of Speech Used In The Bible: Explained And Illustrated*: symbol.

¹² To explain or tell the meaning of : present in understandable terms. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (Eleventh Edition)*: interpret.

¹³ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series* – Matthew, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 368-369.

should be additional evidence that Jesus was not suggesting that the bread was actually His body.¹⁴

After the meal, Jesus takes a cup of wine and speaks of the **“new covenant” in His blood**. In the covenant from the Old Testament one of the Passover meal's four cups represented *the blood of the old covenant*.

Exodus 24:8 NLT:

Then Moses took the blood from the basins and splattered it over the people, declaring, “Look, this blood confirms the covenant the LORD has made with you in giving you these instructions.”

A covenant in the Bible is a promise or an agreement between God and man. A covenant may be **conditional** or **unconditional**. If the covenant with God requires some action or some obedience on the part of people, then that is a **conditional** covenant. The covenant will stand as long as the person is obedient to the terms of the contract. The blessings will come as long as the people do what God set forth in the covenant. An **unconditional** covenant does not have such a requirement. God promises to do whatever He states in the covenant, no matter what people do on their end.

We find eight important covenants in the Bible. We think it important that you understand these as they relate to God's nature. You see when God makes a promise, He never breaks it. People always break a conditional covenant, but not God. He has never and will never break a promise. So what we see in the following covenants tells us a lot about God, the future, and human behavior. So please try to stay awake.

1. The covenant with Adam

Genesis 1:28 NAS:

God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Genesis 2:15-17 NAS:

¹⁵ *Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.*

¹⁶ *The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;*

¹⁷ *but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."*

You can see from these verses that God made it very clear that Adam and Eve could have eaten all they needed in the Garden of Eden. However, there was one tree in the middle of the garden

¹⁴ Ibid.

from which that they were not to eat, **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**. They could remain in Eden and enjoy all its benefits as long as they obeyed God's commandment not to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This covenant was **conditional**.

So to keep this simple, Adam and Eve could have remained in the Garden of Eden permanently with everything they needed. The only rule God gave them was not to eat from just one tree. What do you think they did? They ate from the forbidden tree. As soon as they did that, sin entered the world and it has been part of every person ever born since that time, with the exception of course of Jesus. Disobeying God is sin, and we all know that we have disobeyed God many times. So man did not keep the condition specified for continuing the covenant (the promise), thereby causing God to withdraw that promise. Thus, Man had his first failure in his relationship with God. There would, unfortunately, be many, many more failures.

Although God punished Adam and Eve for their disobedience by making them leave the Garden, He did make another promise that He would someday send a **Savior** (the Messiah, Jesus Christ). This was **unconditional**. In other words this covenant or promise would be kept by God no matter how people behaved. In the following passage God is speaking to Satan.

Genesis 3:15-19 NAS:

¹⁵ And I will put enmity [deep-rooted hatred]¹⁵ between you and the woman, And between your seed [followers]¹⁶ and her seed (those who trust God and Christ);¹⁷ He shall bruise you on the head [a death blow],¹⁸ And you shall bruise him on the heel [keep Him down for a short time].¹⁹"

¹⁶ To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you."

¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life.

¹⁸ "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field;

¹⁹ By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

So what we have here is the entrance of sin into the world, a condition that would affect everyone ever born. However, because God loves all people He promised that He would send a Savior who would be able to remove the sin of everyone who desired to receive Him. It seems more than fair to me.

¹⁵ *Easton's Bible Dictionary.*

¹⁶ Brackets mine.

¹⁷ Brackets mine.

¹⁸ Brackets mine.

¹⁹ Brackets mine.

2. The Covenant With Noah

Fast forward a number of years. Sin was rampant (unchecked; unrestrained) on the earth, sin of every imaginable sort. So God had to punish that sin and He did so by sending a huge flood to cover the whole earth. You undoubtedly remember the story of Noah. After the Flood had gone down and people could come out of the ark and begin a new life, God promised that He would not destroy the earth by water again, as He had done during the **Flood**. He also promised that the seasons would continue until the end. This promise was also **unconditional**.

Genesis 8:20-22 NAS:

²⁰ *Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.*

²¹ *The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "**I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.**"*

²² *"While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, and day and night Shall not cease."*

Since God was aware that each person has a sin nature which will not be dealt with completely until Jesus' Second Coming, God decided not to destroy everyone living on the earth again until the final judgment. This passage also confirms that global warming and other environmental concerns will not take place!

This thought of the judgment need not strike terror to your hearts if you know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior.

Hebrews 9:27-28 ESV:

²⁷ *And **just as it is appointed for man to die once**, and after that comes judgment,*

²⁸ *so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.*

This passage should clear up any questions you might have regarding reincarnation and purgatory.