

The New Testament Church  
*Preparing for Persecution #5: The Gospel Response to Persecution*  
 Pastor Paul Jehle – August 28, 2022  
 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:1-4

I What is Persecution?

- A. Persecution is defined from the Greek; *to put to flight, drive away.... to pursue* – it is **pressure**
  - 1. Persecution is distinct from trials because it is a relentless *pursuit against your faith*
  - 2. We must remember that persecution is ultimately against Christ, not us, and it begins within
- B. Persecution is on the rise – 1 in 7 believers world-wide, suffered significant persecution in 2021
- C. God's purpose for allowing persecution is to expose the darkness and intensify our godly living
  - 1. We are blessed if persecuted for righteousness' sake; can also on unnecessary persecution
  - 2. God uses pressure from the flesh and enemy to focus on the manifestation of His Kingdom!
  - 3. Preparing for persecution begins with practicing to fight the pressure against spiritual growth
  - 4. When your faith is assaulted; we learn to defend it in humility, revealing our assumptions
  - 5. Loving our enemies is what makes Christ's message so unique; *love is our primary response*

II The Gospel Response to Persecution – 1st Corinthians 15:1-4

- A. The context of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:1-2
  - 1. I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you...
    - a. The history and culture of Corinth – prosperous, yet “live immorally like a Corinthian”
    - b. Parallels to today – idolize prosperity, yet live immorally – from toleration to persecution
  - 2. Which you also received and in which you stand, but which also you are saved...
    - a. The believers (Jew and Gentile) received the gospel and were saved (converted)
    - b. However, they also needed to stand or “hold fast” in its truth (pattern) under persecution
  - 3. Every issue within the new Corinthian church is solved by the gospel (it is a pattern of truth)
    - a. Idolatry of church leaders, incest, suing one another, excusing sexual immorality, marriage and singleness, divisions over food, head coverings, affluence and the Lord's Supper, priorities given to the more visible gifts, denying the resurrection...
    - b. The gospel truth (Christ) and **pattern**, if embraced, would solve each of these issues
  - 4. The Corinthian church was persecuted by both civil and religious leaders
    - a. Though this occurred, Corinth did not experience heavy persecution initially
    - b. The best preparation for persecution is to practice the gospel truth in your life and church
- B. The essence of the gospel – 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:3-4
  - 1. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures
    - a. Christ died on the cross in our place in fulfillment of the Law of God – we are all flawed
    - b. We are to die to confess our sin, die to selfish desires as God's law / Word reveals it to us
  - 2. And that He was buried... (according to the Scriptures)
    - a. Burial was not common in Rome, life was not considered sacred, Jesus *was* buried
    - b. Christ's burial signified removal of our sins “as far as east from west” (Ps. 103:12)
    - c. The idea was that all hope to recover from our sin is lost unless God intervenes
  - 3. And that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures
    - a. Christ's resurrection conquered death and the enemy! Eternal life manifested in time
    - b. Out of every despair we are raised spiritually – resurrection life is eternal life – His life
  - 4. The **pattern of the gospel** solves problems and prepares us for persecution
    - a. Our first response is – *what needs to change (die)? He is working silently and invisibly*
    - b. Our second response is – *Let me rehearse that there is no hope but in God's intervention*
    - c. Our final response is – *Because He lives, I can live out of His resurrection in His strength*
  - 5. Water baptism signifies the gospel – confession, submersion, new life – Colossians 2:12
  - 6. Peter experienced this pattern - guilt, denial, persecution, then forgiveness and hope!