

The New Testament Church
Preparing for Persecution #6: God's Power in Weakness
 Pastor Paul Jehle – September 4, 2022
 2nd Corinthians 10:7-10

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*
 6. The gospel response to persecution is to die to self, bury all hope in the natural, and expect the intervention of God's resurrection and eternal power to come!

II God's power is seen in our weakness – 2nd Corinthians 12:7-10

- A. The context of 2nd Corinthians
 1. After he wrote 1st Corinthians, Paul visited the Corinthian church...
 2. His fourth letter to the Corinthian church (2nd Corinthians) is probably in 56 AD
 - a. He reveals his own struggle with enduring persecutions – 2nd Cor. 11:24-33
 1. Five times whipped 39 times;
 2. Three times beaten with rods, once stoned, three shipwrecks
 3. Perils of robbers, his own countrymen, by those unsaved, city, wilderness, by false brethren, weariness, painfulness, hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness
 4. He was let down in a basket to escape from soldiers going to arrest him in Damascus
 - b. Paul wrote the letter in the wake of many believers repenting for the sins addressed
 - c. We need to forgive one another, drop offenses and give each other space to grow
 - d. Quote VOM (9/22), page 2 "At any Cost" Mindset... what are you willing to die for?
 1. Every believer needs to identify their non-negotiables... consider Afghanistan
 2. Quote VOM email – 8/30; and CBN News – was 3rd; now 1st in persecution; yet its church could be 10 times faster in growth than Iran – miraculous presence of Jesus!
- B. *Lest I should be exalted above measure (due to revelations), a thorn in the flesh... - v. 7*
 1. He had a thorn in the flesh – messenger of Satan - handicap, temptation, spiritual struggle...
 2. He asked the Lord three times to remove this torment or personal "persecution" – v. 8
- C. *My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. - v. 9*
 1. God's grace (ability, strength to endure) is given in proportion to the difficulties
 2. The weaker we know we are in ourselves, the greater the power of Christ (anointing)
 3. Anointing presence of God is not just healing, restoration, sustaining, but it is also endurance
 4. The presence of God brings joy, contentment, and above all, gratitude (the silver lining)
 5. Thus, *I would rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me - v. 9*
- D. *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, reproaches... persecutions, distresses for Christ's sake*
 1. This is not taking pleasure in sickness, persecution or distress in and of itself, but...
 2. We take pleasure in recognizing that in our weakness, we experience His strength
 3. It is all for Christ's sake, or His glory – keep our eye on the goal – His Kingdom
 - a. Testimony – waves caused by tides, turns, wind and boats in the canal – bow up, angle
 - b. Ex. of Stephen – dying a martyr's death in the presence of God - Acts 6:8-15; 7:54-60