



# TRUE PERSECUTION AHEAD?

by Evangelist Van Billingsley

Reprinted from "The Story of Jesus Newsletter" Fall 2005 edition to simply discuss an important topic facing the child of God today and in the coming days.

I'm afraid Christians may not be prepared for what we are about to face. We've gotten used to the comfort and freedom we've enjoyed for many years. We know sin is rampant and getting worse everyday. Paul said to Timothy, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Tim. 3:1). He goes on to detail the wickedness we see so prevalent today. This deals with the wickedness of the world rather than the hardships on the Christian, but Jesus warned us of times of persecution and tribulation:

*"But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and*

*kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake"* (Luke 21:9-12).

Jesus speaks of Christians being persecuted physically, brought into courts and thrown into prisons. We are not accustomed to this today, but should we expect this? We are told by Jesus to expect this! Paul said to Timothy, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). He wrote to Thessalonica, "For ver-

ily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know" (1 Thes. 3:4), and "So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure" (2 Thes. 1:4).

Without getting into an in-depth discussion on the great tribulation, we need to establish the difference between persecution and tribulation on Christians from the world, and the wrath of God poured out on the earth which is the great tribulation. This simple fact is often missed by those who think the church will go through any part of what we know as "The Tribulation Period," simply because scripture states we will face tribulations. Paul told the saints at Thessalonica that we were saved "...to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thes. 1:9,10). God's Word promises us that He will not

pour out His wrath upon His children, but upon the wicked world. "The Great Tribulation" or "The Tribulation Period" is the wrath of God, but we will be persecuted by and face tribulation from this wicked world.

So with the freedoms, liberties, and rights we've grown up with, can we expect this kind of physical persecution and even imprisonment for our faith? The fact is, Christians in New Testament times and throughout the early church, faced this very thing. Should we believe the Christians living in the final days before the end times will not face times as hard as those of the early church? Some may assume that Christians in other parts of the world may face these persecutions and tribulations, but this will not apply to Christians in America. Again, I say, I'm afraid the American Christian is not prepared to face what may lie ahead. Someone laughs at us because we do not indulge in their sinful practice and we consider ourselves persecuted. Someone turns down a tract and we

think we've faced tribulation. If we had a door slammed in our face, we'd just about consider ourselves a martyr!

I do see a troubling trend in our nation which I believe is going to lead to the end time persecution in America. These things are working together in progression to set the stage for true Christianity to be a crime that will send us to prison. I'm not talking about saying you are a Christian, or attending some semblance of a worship service. I mean practicing real Christianity, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ which requires naming and condemning sin; the sort of thing that cost John the Baptist his head.

We've seen most of the things I'm talking about develop over the past ten to fifteen years. It all began with the birth of so-called hate crimes and hate speech. Wicked, ungodly, and perverse life-styles are being labeled as a class of Americans with protected civil rights. Free speech is now being classified as hate speech under these new hate crimes. Something called "Tolerance" is be-

ing lifted up as the ultimate modern virtue, while Christian and Biblical values are being labeled as "Intolerant" and "Hatred." For the first few years this seemed like just a word battle between Christians and a far left society, but since Sept. 11, 2001, we have entered a different world. We now see terrorist Muslim extremists preaching murder and mass murder in the name of religion. We know something must be done to stop this! Eventually, attitudes must change toward using religion to protect such activities. Policies and practices must be developed in America and around the world to stop this practice before attacks are launched. At the same time, strong efforts are being made to proclaim Islam as a noble and peaceful religion, while true Christianity is being deemed radical and unacceptable. A few isolated whackos who have targeted and attacked abortionists and sodomites are portrayed as "Christian extremists" and connected with so-called churches. There are even some idiotic groups claiming to be

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Christians who cheer on such acts. Now Pat Robertson, who while running for president, denied being a "preacher," but a "Christian commentator," is now referred to as an "Evangelical Preacher" when he suggests the assassination of the wicked leader of another country. All this is setting the precedent for laws to be written and enforced to make it a crime to preach against sin and declare the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the only escape of

eternal damnation. To preach that trusting in other politically correct religions will send you to hell will certify you a racist, a bigot, and even a criminal. It will strip you of any respect, exclude you from your rights as a citizen and eventually land you in prison. Yes, I believe we are on our way there. Are you ready to be a true, practicing and active Christian in the coming days? We need to learn how to live the faith of our fathers!

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