Hebrews 11:35-38

Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

I remember, probably about 15 or so years ago, that I got called into my Manager's office at work, with HR (Human Resources) being there. The reason was because I had a table in my office where I would have a jar of pistachios, along with another jar of candy for my fellow coworkers to enjoy. I also had a few Gospels of John books there as well, and under them, I had a little sign that said **"Free Take One"** referring to the Gospel of John books. Well it so happened that someone complained because I had them there with the sign. Long story short, I had to take the sign away but was allowed to keep the Gospel of John books there. I know it sounded crazy, but the person felt I was pushing my "so called religion" on others by having the sign. But the truth was that the person was more offended by a part of the bible being there, and that it was available to others, and HR knew this and they decided that they (The gospel of John books) could stay, but the sign had to go.

So did I feel like I was being persecuted as a Christian at that point? No, not at all, because persecution, I believe, has to do more than if someone likes what you believe in or not, but it's how they react. If they would have made me remove the gospels, I would have. I didn't need to fight my employer or that person because I felt my rights were taken away.

Yet how many feel they were being persecuted because they took prayer out of school. But if you think about it, how many even knew there was prayer in school, probably most of them didn't (I personally didn't) yet they felt attacked because their religion (Yes, I said religion) was being attack and their so-called freedom.

Maybe your family or coworkers of even some of your friends exclude you from certain things because you are a Christian. And some of you may feel hurt, because it does hurt and you feel like you are being persecuted.

Didn't Jesus say: "***If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.***" **John 15:18-20**

So, should we be shocked when they say these sorts of things to us and about us? I'll let Jesus answer that: "***Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.***"

It kind of makes you think of the old kids saying of *"Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me"* But we actually know that this is not true, because words and names do hurt us emotionally. But if we are being called names, and things are being said about us for being Christians, then we should do what Jesus tells us to do, ***"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you"*** **Matthew 5:44**

Why pray for them? Simply because their eyes and hearts have been blinded to the truth by the enemy, and they really have no idea what they are talking about, because they are believing the lies of the enemy, and rejecting the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But we here in the USA really have no idea what it's like to be persecuted as a Christian. What if they said that all churches must be closed down, and if you are caught gathering together in the name of Jesus, you would be put in jail, or even worse, tortured or killed. Would you still go to church? It's so easy to say yes when it's not happening. Yet how many stayed away from the church because of covid? The government had warned us to, so it is kind of the same thing, being obedient to fear and not to God. But if you can barely handle prayer being taken out of school, or not being including in some things because you are a Christian or being made fun of as a Christian, then do you think you could really handle it?

Take todays devotional verses as an example (Isn't it a great one to start the day and week off with). If these things could happen to us a believers here in the USA, would you still be a believer and follow Jesus, and go to church or a home bible studies. Remember, you need to stop depending on the laws of the land to save you from such persecution, because it will happen here in the USA, probably sooner then we think.

So, once again, these are things that actually happened to the early church, and if they happened to them, they will happen to us as believers. But, would you still believe, be honest with yourself as you read each one.

- ✓ ***Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.***
- ✓ ***Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings,***
- ✓ ***Yes, and of chains and imprisonment.***
- ✓ ***They were stoned,***
- ✓ ***They were sawn in two,***
- ✓ ***Were slain with the sword.***
- ✓ ***They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.***
- ✓ ***They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.***

Torture, mocking, scourging, being chained up and thrown into prison. Sawn in two (Yes actually sawn in half with a saw), tormented, kicked out of your home and only able to hide and live in a cave or the forest. Today's devotional is not meant to frighten or scare you, it's for all of us to really stop and evaluate our relationship with Jesus, and if you are honest and you think you would really struggle with having to go through some of these things as a Christian; pray about it and let the Lord know how you feel, because He already knows, and ask Him for the strengthen to endure such things if they were to happen to you, because honestly, they are happening to other believer around the world and we need to be praying for them everyday.

- ✞ **Isaiah 41:10** ***Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'***

- ✞ **2 Chronicles 20:9** ***'If disaster comes upon us--sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine--we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name is in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save.'***