

“How to Survive the Last Days,” Part 3 - 1 Corinthians 16:17-24 – June 5th, 2016

- Today's teaching will be part three of a new series we began last week titled, “How to Survive the Last Days.”
- The reason I chose this title is because Paul's closing comments here at the end of his letter are apropos for us in the last days.
- Specifically as it relates to surviving and even thriving in a world that today is becoming increasingly hostile towards Christians.

September 22nd, 2015 – Christianity Today - One Christian is martyred every five minutes, persecution watchdog reports - A Christian persecution watchdog has released statistics suggesting a Christian is martyred for their faith every five minutes. Christian Freedom International has found that more than 200 million followers are facing persecution in 105 countries. This makes Christianity the most persecuted religion in the world. The report has found that more Christians have been martyred in the 20th and 21st centuries than during the previous 19 combined.

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/one.christian.is.martyred.every.five.minutes.persecution.watchdog.reports/65368.htm>

- While we here in America are not currently drinking from this cup of persecution like those around the world, we certainly may.
- By that I mean it could get considerably more difficult for us as Christians, here in an increasingly anti-Christian ant-God U.S.
- We're already seeing it trend in that direction, especially as of late in regards to the recent transgender mandate from Obama.

- Please know that I in no way wish to provoke a spirit of fear, rather, I think it's incumbent upon me to say this as a watchman.
- The fact of the matter is, prior to the rapture, Christians in America may very well experience persecution, in the days ahead.
- The question becomes one of whether or not we as believers can remain steadfast, were this to happen. Enter today's text.

1. Be on guard (Verse 13a)

- Here in the first part of verse thirteen Paul simply says to be on guard, or as some translations render it, watch, as a watchman.

2. Stand firm in the faith (Verse 13b)

- Here in the second part of verse thirteen Paul exhorts us to stand firm in the faith, which carries with it the idea of not giving up.

3. Be courageous and strong (Verse 13c)

- Here in the last part of verse thirteen, Paul says, “be courageous; be strong,” or as another translation renders it, “be brave.”

4. Do everything in love (Verse 14)

- Here in verse fourteen the Apostle Paul seemingly wraps everything he's said up to this point by saying, “do everything in love.”

5. Be devoted to service (Verses 15-16)

- He tells them of the Stephanas household who were devoted to the serving God's people urging them to submit to such people.

6. Be an encourager (Verses 17-20)

- v17 Paul says he was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived because they supplied him what Corinth had not.
- v18 He then goes on to say they had refreshed his spirit as well as theirs, and as such, men like this deserve some recognition.
- v19 Paul sends them greetings from the churches in the Asia province along with Aquila and Priscilla and their home fellowship.
- v20 He then sends greetings to them from all the brothers and sisters their with him saying to greet one another with a holy kiss.

- I find it interesting that Paul recognizes and acknowledges by name those who had been a blessing and encouragement to him.
- It seems that the five people he mentions here had not only encouraged him, but they also were refreshing to him in his spirit.
- The reason I point this out is that even though Paul himself was an encourager, he also was himself in need of encouragement.

1 Thessalonians 4:15–18 (NIV) — 15 According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

7. Pray for the Lord's return (Verses 21-24)

- v21-22 Paul taking the pen himself writes that if anyone doesn't love the Lord, they're to be cursed. Then he says, Maranatha!
- v23-24 He ends the letter saying the grace of the Lord Jesus be with them sending his love to all of them in Christ Jesus, Amen.
- I'm hoping you'll kindly indulge me for the remainder of our time together in this chapter, as I really need to address a concern.

- The concern is; those who argue against the truth of the pre-tribulation rapture will bring up the persecution of the early church.
- It usually comes in the form of the question; if the early church had to go through persecution, why wouldn't we have to as well?
- In other words, why wouldn't we have to go through the same tribulation and persecution the early church had to go through?

- First, let me say that the question in and of itself is wrong, and as such, you cannot provide a right answer to a wrong question.
- The right question that should be asked instead is what purpose is served were the bride of Christ to go through the tribulation?
- The answer to this is absolutely nothing by virtue of this fact: the purpose of the tribulation is the salvation of the Jewish nation.

- Lastly, let me say that according to the aforementioned article one could argue that said persecution is worse today than it was.
- Moreover, persecution is the very thing that grows the church, not to mention the fact that great is the reward for those who are.
- In Matthew, Jesus says that those who are persecuted for righteousness sake will inherit their reward in the kingdom of heaven.