

A Promise We Would Wish to Avoid

2 Timothy 3:12 ... Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

Not all of God’s promises excite us and give us hope. The promise of hell for unbelievers is probably the most unpleasant promise in the Bible. Today’s verse may also seem unpleasant. It is a promise we wish God had not included in the Bible, and something we wish he did not allow. Why does God reward his followers with a promise of persecution? Knowing today what we know of persecuted Christians around the world, makes us cringe. Since the time of Christ his followers have died by the millions around the world. In the early days of the church, the Roman government executed as many Christians as they could find, even hanging their bodies on poles and burned as streetlights, plus entertaining citizens of Rome by having Christians devoured by lions in public stadiums.

For the past two thousand years Christians have been jailed, tortured and executed for their faith in Christ. It is happening today in Syria, China, North Korea, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, central Africa and elsewhere. Someday it could happen in the Philippines. God’s promise will not be cancelled. If you live long enough, persecution will probably affect you. You may one day have to make a choice between serving God or giving up your faith to save your life. One of the more remarkable incidents in Syria, is that young children stood for Christ and willingly died for their faith instead of bowing before violent men and false gods. Is that something you could do?

If you are not a believer, you are not on satan’s hit list. If you claim to be a believer, but do not honor God with your life, you also may not be on satan’s hit list because you are not a threat to him. When someone accepts Christ and commits to living in obedience to him, that person becomes satan’s enemy. Satan then paints an invisible bullseye on the convert’s back and starts using that person for target practice; firing occasional arrows meant to discourage the new believer. The target practice transforms into missile attacks once the convert leads other people to Christ.

As bad as persecution may sound, we cannot ignore another promise of God in Ephesians 6:16 ... “above all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one [satan].” Battle-hardened soldiers testify that the first time they fought an enemy, they were afraid, but after that they acquired greater courage and were able to defeat the enemy in other battles. The first time or two that satan tries to persuade you to abandon Christ, you may experience fear and doubts. But, as your faith grows and God protects you from real danger, you will gain more courage and assurance, plus he will give you peace of mind and confidence in his power.

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