

BE KINGDOM-MINDED – READING

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:10.

[Page 29] Jesus does not present to His followers the hope of attaining earthly glory and riches, and of having a life free from trial, but He presents to them the privilege of walking with their Master in the paths of self-denial and reproach, because the world knows them not.

He who came to redeem the lost world was opposed by the united forces of the adversaries of God and man. In an unpitied confederacy, evil men and evil angels arrayed themselves against the Prince of Peace. Though His every word and act breathed of divine compassion, His unlikeness to the world provoked the bitterest hostility. Because He would give no license for the exercise of the evil passions of our nature, He aroused the fiercest opposition and enmity. So it is with all who will live godly in Christ Jesus. Between righteousness and sin, love and hatred, truth and falsehood, there is an irrepressible conflict. When one presents the love of Christ and the beauty of holiness, he is drawing away the subjects of Satan's kingdom, and the prince of evil is aroused to resist it. Persecution and reproach await all who are imbued with the Spirit of Christ. The character of the persecution changes with the times, but the principle--the spirit that underlies it--is the same that has slain the chosen of the Lord ever since the days of Abel.

As men seek to come into harmony with God, they [Page 30] will find that the offense of the cross has not ceased. Principalities and powers and wicked spirits in high places are arrayed against all who yield obedience to the law of heaven. Therefore, so far from causing grief, persecution should bring joy to the disciples of Christ, for it is an evidence that they are following in the steps of their Master.

While the Lord has not promised His people exemption from trials, He has promised that which is far better. He has said, “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” “My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Deuteronomy 33:25; 2 Corinthians 12:9. If you are called to go through the fiery furnace for His sake, Jesus will be by your side even as He was with the faithful three in Babylon. Those who love their Redeemer will rejoice at every opportunity of sharing with Him humiliation and reproach. The love they bear their Lord makes suffering for His sake sweet.

In all ages Satan has persecuted the people of God. He has tortured them and put them to death, but in dying they became conquerors. They revealed in their steadfast faith a mightier One than Satan. Satan could torture and kill the body, but he could not touch the life that was hid with Christ in God. He could incarcerate in prison walls, but he could not bind the spirit. They could look beyond the gloom to the glory, saying, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17. [

Page 31] Through trials and persecution, the glory--character--of God is revealed in His chosen ones. The church of God, hated and persecuted by the world, are educated and disciplined in the school of Christ. They walk in narrow paths on earth; they are purified in the furnace of affliction. They follow Christ through sore conflicts; they endure self-denial and experience bitter disappointments; but their painful experience teaches them the guilt and woe of sin, and they look upon it with abhorrence. Being partakers of Christ's sufferings, they are destined to be partakers of His glory. In holy vision the prophet saw the triumph of the people of God. He says, "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory, . . . stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." Revelation 15:2, 3; 7:14, 15.¹

¹ Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Association), 29-31.

BE KINGDOM-MINDED – STUDY GUIDE

1. Look up the word ‘persecute’ and write the definition below.
2. Think of the Civil Rights movement, apartheid in South Africa, President Mugabe in Zimbabwe relieving white farmers of their [stolen] land. What were some of the ways persecution was demonstrated in these events?
3. Based on the definition of persecution you wrote, and your answer to number 2, have you ever been persecuted? If yes, describe. If no, share what you think you would experience if you were being persecuted.
4. Why does the author say that Jesus “aroused the fiercest opposition and enmity?” {MB 29.2}
5. “_____ and _____ await all who are _____ with the _____ of Christ.” {MB 29.2}
6. The author says that the principle behind persecution has stayed the same through the centuries. Starting with Abel, and thinking of others who have been persecuted for their faith, and considering what you read in {MB 29.2}, what is this principle or spirit behind persecution of the righteous?
7. Why should persecution bring joy to the disciples of Christ? {MB 29.3}
8. What has God promised that is better than “exemption from trials”? Based on your reading so far [through {MB 30.1}], why is this better than not experiencing persecution?

9. The author describes persecution as including torture, being put to death and being incarcerated. {MB 30.2} Do some research on the Internet (or think of the mission stories you have heard in Sabbath School recently) and describe some persecution that is happening today.

10. What do trials, persecution, sore conflicts, bitter disappointments, and painful experiences teach God's chosen ones? {MB 31.3}

Moment of Reflection: “Jesus does not present to His followers the hope of attaining earthly glory and riches, and of having a life free from trial, but He presents to them the privilege of walking with their Master in the paths of self-denial and reproach...” {MB 29.1} We live lives that are free from religious persecution. Are you prepared to be persecuted for what you believe? How can you prepare yourself?

