

# THE WORLD HATES YOU.

May 18, 2008.

## Introduction.

It was my intent to return to our series on the Christian and the Church. But recent events in our church have burdened my heart to preach today's sermon. As you may be aware, one of our brothers in Christ has been dismissed from his job. I am not at liberty to share with you any of the details related to this matter and the ongoing concerns that have arisen. But I do want to ask that we set aside this coming **Saturday, May 24th**, for a time of concerted prayer on behalf of our brother and his family. I am aware also that others in our midst have matters for such concerted prayer. We shall begin at **8 a.m.** and seek to end by **12 noon**. We will spend the first hour giving all who so desire the opportunity to share your prayer concerns. If you are able to, I would ask you to couple this time of prayer with fasting. And I want to press upon you to make every effort to be here.

I am thankful to the Lord for the response of many of you in praying for our brother and his family and giving to them whatever support you can. Your prayer response was a manifestation of the very body life I began preaching about and which I shall return to, Lord willing. Today's sermon will not be available on tape or CD for various reasons. You have your notes that you can work from. Lord willing, I will return to the points I am raising and deal with them in greater detail.

## The General Reality.

Now to begin our study, please turn now to *Acts 14*. The Bible makes it very clear in *vs.22* that “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” The apostle Paul made this statement to the churches he and Barnabas planted during their first missionary journey. We are told within the context of *Acts 14:21-22*, “After they had preached the gospel to that city (Derbe) and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”

The reality of what Paul spoke about is seen very clearly in *vss.19-20*. Paul was stoned in Lystra and left for dead. Paul was stoned because the Jews hated him and the Christ he was preaching to the Jews and Gentiles. I am sure that as Paul spoke the words in *vs.22* to the churches, they saw in his face and other uncovered parts of his body the scars of the stoning he received. Now let us examine Paul’s statement more closely.

Think of the word “through” in terms of a tunnel. As you go through this life living for the Lord, the Bible makes it clear that you will travel your life’s journey through a tunnel. This tunnel is called “many tribulations.” Note the word “many”. “Many” is not a few. “Many” is more than a few. There is no way for you to determine how much more than a few is many. In God’s will “**many**” for you may be less than the other person or more than the other person.

Note now the word “tribulations”. It is the Greek word *thlipsis*. From this we get the Greek verb *thlibo*. *Thlipsis* appears in the N.T. **45** times. *Thlibo* appears in the N.T. **10** times. *Thlipsis* is literally “**pressure**”. It has been variously translated as

“**tribulation, persecution, affliction, distress**”. **Thlipsis** is the pressure that presses you, that compresses you, that squeezes you, and that may ultimately crush you. The imagery of **thlipsis** comes to us from ancient warfare. When an enemy soldier or spy was captured and he refused to talk, this soldier or spy was made to experience **thlipsis**. The soldier or spy was pinned to the ground and his captors would begin to put weights on his chest. The weights would be increased if the soldier or spy kept refusing to talk. Many a captured soldier or spy died as a result of this. The weights would become too heavy and it would crush the chest and kill the victim. In the N.T. **thlipsis** is pictured as affecting your body or mind or both.

This brings us to the verb “we must”. The Greek verb used here, **dei**, is found in the N.T. approximately **99** times. It is translated “must” **56** times and “ought” **17** times. This verb points to that which is divinely necessary. This verb is used of that which must take place. And it must take place because it is the will of God. God has so designed it. God has so determined it. God has so willed it. Let me share with you a few examples. In **Matt.16:21** Jesus told His disciples He must go to Jerusalem and suffer and die. **Lk.18:1** says you ought to pray always. **Jn.3:7** says “you must be born again.” **2Cor.5:10** says we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Here is the point. “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” This is how God has designed it. This is how God has determined it. This is how God has willed it and it must take place.

In **Matt.7:14** Jesus said, “For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” The verb “is narrow” is **thlibo**. The verb is a participle and literally means “having been narrowed” or “**having been constricted**”. The verb is perfect tense which means it has been permanently narrowed and constricted. There is nothing you can do to widen it. The narrow way is the way of tribulations. There is nothing you can do to change this fact. The verb is also passive. Someone made the way narrow and constricted. Someone made this way the way of tribulations. That

someone is God.

In *2Tim.3:12* we read, “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” Note carefully the important qualification. This verse is not teaching that people who live good lives will be persecuted. This verse is teaching that people who live good lives or godly lives “in Christ Jesus” are the one who will be persecuted. Peter wrote, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.” (*1Pet.4:12*). Note carefully Peter’s exhortation, “do not be surprised.”

The final verse I want to share with you comes from *1Thess.3:3-4*. (**turn**). Paul said to these Christians that he sent Timothy to strengthen and encourage them “so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions (*thlipsis*); for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction (*thlibo*); and so it came to pass, as you know.” Note the verb “we have been destined”. It is a perfect tense. This destiny is permanent and unchangeable. The verb is also passive. God is the One who destined us to suffer *thlipsis*.

### **The Specific Reality.**

I turn you now to our second heading, **The Specific Reality**. Please turn to *Jn.15*. Note *vss.12 & 17*. (**read**). The command to love one another is repeated. Why? Note *vss.18-21*. (**read**). You must love one another. Why? The world does not love you. The world loves its own. The world hates you. The world hates you because it hated and murdered your Lord, Jesus Christ.

Now Brethren, I want you to understand this. I want you to think about it. I want you to meditate upon it. I want it to grip your heart until you begin to tremble. The people of this world who are not saved in Jesus Christ, regardless of their religion, race, gender and relationship with you, that person is a child of the devil. (*Jn.8:44*). Note carefully what I said : regardless of the nature of this person's relationship with you, regardless of how much you are convinced and believe that this person is nice, honest, etc., etc., this person is a child of the devil. This person may have and manifest a large measure of common grace. But the foundational fact is this : this person is a child of the devil. This person obeys the devil. *2Tim.2:26* tells us this person wills one will with the devil. This person is your spiritual enemy. This person is your physical enemy. And given the right context and circumstances that hatred will manifest itself in ways that will absolutely shock you.

***Stop being naïve in your relationship with the world and in your dealings with the world. You have no friends out there.*** What happened to our Brother is only one example of what is taking place daily around this world. This kind of persecution is not limited to countries in which there is no freedom of religion. This is happening in England, America, Canada, Australia, etc., etc. I receive persecution reports every day via my computer. Peter wrote, “know that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.” (*1Pet.5:9*).

Your primary friend is the One who loved you so greatly that He gave His life for you. (*Jn.15:13*). As a Christian you are commanded to love your fellow Christian and be this kind of friend to one another. The context of this repeated command to love one another is the reality of the world's hatred of you. You say, “*Pastor, you are scaring us.*” Well, if I did then I have accomplished an important goal today. So let us turn to the third heading in your notes : **Your Response.**

**Your Response.**

Your first response is that you must not become paranoid. Christians must not suffer from paranoia. I am not saying that Christians do not suffer from paranoia. I am saying that Christians must not suffer from paranoia. Why? God is your Heavenly Father. God is faithful. God is trustworthy. **Rom.8:31** asks the question, “If God is for us, who is against us?” In other words, what does it matter who is against you? The most important fact is : God is for you. In **vs.35** we find another question : “Who will separate us from the love of Christ?” Paul proceeded to give us a possible list. And guess what is the first word on the list : **thlipsis**, tribulation.

Paul ended with these words in **vs.38-39**. (**read**). Note carefully the last thing on the list, “nor any other created thing.” What a comprehensive promise! Now I want you to see something. We took note of two verbs, “is narrow” and “we have been destined”. They were both perfect passive verbs. And I said the perfect tense points to unchanging permanence and the passive points to God as the one taking the action. Now take note of the verb, “I am convinced.” This verb is also a perfect passive. Paul is convinced in a permanent and unchanging manner. But who convinced Paul? The God who put us to walk on the narrow way of tribulations. The God who destined us to suffer tribulations, distress, persecution and even martyrdom. Do not be naïve. But do not become paranoid. The God who destined you to suffer at the hands of this world is the God who loves you, who is watching over you, and who is walking with you as you journey through the constricted tunnel of life.

Your second response is : do not be ashamed. Peter said, “it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.” (**1Pet.3:17**). Peter added, “but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.” (**1Pet.4:16**). **Acts 5:41** says the disciples rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus.

Your third response is to prepare yourself for whatever **thlipsis** God has determined He will bring into your life. Prepare yourself from His word. Know what your Bible teaches you about suffering because of Christ. Study the examples of those who suffered for their faith : Abel, Moses, Joseph, Daniel, the three Hebrew boys, Job, Paul, and most importantly, the Lord Jesus. Study **Heb.11**. Read appropriate biographies. Make **1Cor.10:13** an integral part of your life. Paul wrote, “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” Make **Rom.8:28** an integral part of your life. Paul wrote, “And we know that **God works all things together** for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

Prepare yourself by persevering prayer. From time to time couple prayer with fasting. Pray that the Lord will give you strength and endurance. Pray the promise in **Phil.4:13**. Pray for the salvation of those afflicting you. But pray also against them. Call upon the Lord to judge them, to take vengeance on them. What is the ongoing prayer of the martyrs in heaven? **Rev.6:10** says they are praying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” They are praying this prayer on their own behalf and, by implication, on our behalf. Study the psalms and learn how to pray for God’s righteous judgment to fall on those who afflict you because of Christ.

Fourthly, in each trial you face your approach must be :

- 1). God has ordained this for me.
- 2). I can bear this because God has promised not to give to me more than I can bear. God has also promised to give me the strength to bear it.
- 3). What is God seeking to teach me in this trial?
- 4). How is God sanctifying me in this trial?
- 5). What is God’s good end for my life in this trial? (**Rom.8:28**).

- 6). What is God's good end for the church in this trial? (*Matt.16:18*).
- 7). God is seeking to glorify Himself through me in this trial. (*Rom.11:36*).

Now, in closing, I want you to note carefully the following. *Firstly*, the afflictions and tribulations you may have to endure because of your faith in Christ and godly character will be short. It may seem long as the days begin to multiply. (See *Psa.6:3, 6-7; 13:1-3; 31:9-10.*)

But let us look now at the reality. *Psa.30:5* says, "Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning." The night seems long, even unending, when you have a very bad toothache. But the reality is, it is only a night. In *Rev.2:10* the Lord said to the church in Smyrna, "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation (*thlipsis*) for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." What does the Lord mean by "ten days"? It is not to be taken literally. "Ten days" tell us, firstly, they will suffer for a divinely determined short period of time and secondly, this short period is enclosed by two boundaries – a beginning point and a specific ending point.

Now turn to *2Cor.4:16-18*. (**read**). Take note of the following. The word "affliction" is *thlipsis*. "Momentary" is set in contrast to "eternal" and in contrast to the eternal it is indeed a moment. "Light" tells us that all afflictions, however crushing they may be, are but a weightless trifle when set in contrast to the "eternal weight of glory". There is no comparison between the two.

Secondly, *Psa.34:19* says, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all." Now turn to *2Tim.3:10-11*. (**read**). In times of affliction God may deliver you from the fire, in the fire or through the fire.

The first example I want to set before you is the three Hebrew boys in *Dan.3:17-18*. They refused to worship the king's idol. The king had promised that whoever fails to worship his idol will be cast into the furnace of blazing fire. They refused to worship the idol and said the following to the king (**read *Dan.3:17-18***). Three facts here you need to note : they believed God is able to deliver; they believed God will deliver; but they also believed God may choose not to deliver. The position of these three Hebrews were : if we have to die, we will die. In death God would have delivered them out of the king's hands. The account shows us that God delivered them in the fire.

What about Paul? Paul endured all kinds of sufferings and afflictions but God delivered him. How? God protected his life and kept him on course to finish his ministry. We have one account in *Acts 18* when the Lord protected Paul from suffering. When Paul came to the end of his life and was facing his final *thlipsis* of execution, note what he said. He said in *2Tim.4:18*, "The Lord will rescue (**deliver**) me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen." The verbs "**rescue**" in *2Tim.3:11* & *4:18* are the same. Paul's execution was the Lord delivering him through the fire. Martyrdom was his deliverance. And death was merely the gateway through which he entered into his eternal abode.

The reality is that the bullets did not kill Arif & Kathy Khan. The Lord used the bullets to deliver them from this life and to bring them safely home. For years the Lord delivered them from the fire and in the fire. Then one day the Lord delivered them through the fire. What are the afflictions you are going through? It may be that I did not answer your questions from the pulpit. Well, we need to talk. Let us set up a time to talk. Let us find out what God is doing in your life.

You know, the greatest fiery trial I had to go through thus far in my short life was the death of Dennis. When I say fiery, I mean fiery. When I got the phone call, I felt as if my body was enveloped in fire. But you know what, Dennis is safely home. His gateway to

glory was literal *thlipsis*, the literal crushing of his body in that accident. But then one day I learned that God took him from us because His sanctifying work of grace was finished in Dennis. And God took him because He was protecting Dennis. And God has used these and other lessons to help many others as I have preached time and again from *Phil.1:6*.

What is God doing in your life? What is God teaching you? These are the questions you must answer. But as you seek your answers you must always be able to say, "It is well, it is well with my soul."

**Psalm 83.**

**(Hymn No.580).**