

PRINCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST SERIES

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

We are looking at some principles of the Lord Jesus Christ that He practiced in His life. We have taught on the first lesson, going the second mile and how that there is something for those who go for the second mile that make them excel above all the others, both in this life and in the next life to come. There are many principles but we just want to highlight some. Another principle that we want to touch on is in Matthew 5: 43 onwards. We were looking at verse 38-42. This time we are going to look from verse 43 onwards. Listen very carefully because these are the words of Jesus Christ. The one who died on the cross for us, shed His precious Blood, left His glory in heaven to come for us. May it never be that when we read God's Word we get dull of hearing. But as we hear these words we must always let them refresh our lives. Especially bearing in mind that these are the words of the Savior whom we confess and profess to love. We need to put into practice not only some of His commandments but all His commandments. And here is a passage that is well known but seldom practiced.

Jesus said in verse 43, "You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. 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, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

If you have been a Christian long enough, at some point of time, you will need these verses. If you have not come to the place where you need these verses, blessed are you, for He is coming soon. Practically every one of you in this Christian life has a need to practice these verses at some point or other, some in a wider situation and some in a personal situation. We have seen how many times when Christians have problems with one another, even if they see one another in the supermarket, they will go the other way. It happens all the time. And here we are bible carrying; tongues talking, demon casting and we say we are Christians. There is something that is so true out there in the church and sometimes we look at ourselves we say, "Lord, when will your people be perfected?" I mean it's happening right now all the time in various churches and various places. Everywhere in this planet earth, you will find brethren not walking in unity. To change the world, we must change first. Before we talk about changing the world, we are already speaking negatively about the church and each other. Have you forgotten that you are the church? That you are the brethren? It starts with one person. The flame of love will go to all. It only takes a spark to get the fire going. Will you be the spark? Will you be the spark Christian? Will you be the spark that will be different from the rest? Maybe 99%, of you are not practicing that. But lets not say the church didn't practice that. We are part of the church. Lets learn to do it first in our lives.

Here are principles that we need to seek in God's Word on Jesus' life. If there was anyone who has faced criticism, it was the Lord Jesus Christ. If there is anyone who had faced family problem and misunderstanding with his/her own loved ones, it was Jesus Christ. His father and mother never understood Him when He was twelve years old. The bible says that she hid this in her heart and pondered over these things. That means she didn't understand. When He launched into His ministry, His own mother and you know how persuasive that is. If your mother comes right now to the door, while you are sitting here, say, Joshua and Joshua hear that familiar voice. It's mummy. Please come back. A part of Joshua wants to go to the door but a spiritual part of him say, stay here. Think about Jesus as He was ministering and His mother and brethren came. And they send a message and said, your mother and brothers are here waiting for You. He got to disappoint them.

If there is anyone who has faced betrayal by those close to him, it was the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all His disciples disappointed Him. Just as when He was going on His grand finale when He started marching into Jerusalem for the last Passion Week. He had spent three years with these folks and as He was marching in and set His face like a flint to enter Jerusalem for the last Passion Week, the disciples were quarrelling among themselves who was the greatest. Doesn't anyone have compassion for Him? And right in Jerusalem and Bethany, He used to travel during the last Passion Week; Judas turned around and betrayed Him. He that had Jesus washed his feet. He that knew Jesus for three years. He that handled all the money. He that ate of the same bowl and drank from the same cup as Him. He that ate of His plate. Shared with Him but turned around and turned Him to His enemies. Besides that He had all these Jews coming against Him. And on the night that He was betrayed, everybody left Him and this same Jesus Christ says love your enemy. Without friends, without encouragement, He went to the cross. The Pharisees who brought forth the crucifixion instigated it. They were screaming their lungs out at the cross. Some of the people who love Him don't dare to stand for Him. Do you know that people can love you but don't dare to stand for you? Because by standing for you they get part of the stoning. They were crying and weeping all the way as He took that heavy cross up to Golgotha. The women cried but they could not confess that they were on His side otherwise they will get it too from the Romans and from the Jews. As He went up Calvary' road, the women cried. And Jesus for a moment turned and said, don't weep for Me but weep for yourselves. He knew that He was in the perfect will of God. They were not. When He was hanging on the cross, while they were screaming at Him in anger, He says, Father, forgive them for they know not what they have done. These were most beautiful words.

I have not met a single Christian who does not struggle with forgiveness. That's the greatest battle you could ever win in your life. It's not a battle against sicknesses and diseases although those are tremendous because this body will soon pass away. But your soul is part of eternity. You could get healed of every sickness and disease in this life and it's good to be healed and God wants us to be healed and be whole. But it's better to be healed in your soul. It is better to be free from the clutches that will prevent us from tasting all the fullness of the heavenly blessing. You are going to take your soul to heaven but you are not going to take your body to heaven. The greatest battle and war in your life that you could win is the battle over your own soul. Jesus says, what would it profit a man if he were to

gains the whole world and loses his own soul. My friends, the battle over your soul is greater than the battle over your body. And there is a slight blessing there. When your soul is whole as your soul prosper, your body too will prosper. These are the words of Jesus Christ: He says, love your enemy. He is asking that our Christian love will encompass situation like He mentioned here in Matthew 5.

I am going to share with you some little secrets on how to walk that kind of walk and follow the principles that Jesus laid down: Love your enemy. Firstly, we need to understand that persecution, misunderstanding, criticism will always be there. Jesus said, in the world you shall receive tribulation, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world. It is always there. It's just the question of the measure that is coming on your life.

Now understand this principle No.1, sub-principle. The main principle is love your enemy. But under this point no.1, the greatness of God's glory in your life, the greatness of God using you is directly in the proportion to the greatness of the suffering you must endure for Him. In case somebody has not told you that, we are going to tell you the full picture. People promised you the athlete trophy without promising you the athlete training. People promise you the blessing of an anointing without promising you and telling you about the picture that is being paid for that. People tell you about the abundance of prosperity that you can have in Jesus but they don't tell you what Mark 10 declares, *that you shall receive hundred fold in this life with persecution*. In the proportion to how much of the glory of God, the blessings of God that God wants to demonstrate in your life to the same proportion that you have to endure the suffering for His sake. You can ask any blacksmith who is preparing an iron work, or sword or axe or hammer. They could produce different kinds of steel. It depends on what you want to use it for. But the tougher you desire the steel to be, the tougher the hammering you have to give to the steel. In many times, if it's just an ordinary thing that you need to use, you don't need really tough steel. They could just heat it up and hammer it to the shape and to the sharpness that is required and give it to you and you can use it. But if you need that steel to cut through other tough material, they will have to heat it up and hammer it. And while it's hot they take that steel blade and they plunge it into cold water then they will heat it up again and when it is hot, they will knock it again. The tougher the blade the more times they have to do it. The greater God wants to use you, the greater ministry God has for you, please prepare for greater

suffering. The greater you want to be a blessing to all men, the greater must be the testing, the forming and the tampering. So that's why the tougher material goes to the fiery furnace more times.

Acts 9, here Paul is just born again. He is blinded by the glory of God. Waiting three days for God while Jesus went to Ananias to call him to minister to Paul. And as he appeared to Ananias in Acts 9, he said here, His words, when you read it, it causes us to tremble. Acts 9: 15 *"But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."* And some of the translation says, I will show him how great he must suffer for My name. He said that while a great ministry awaited Paul, great sufferings awaited him too. Could I have the ministry without the suffering? No, they are one and the same. The stronger the blade of steel that God wants you to be the greater the fiery furnace you will have to go through. The most interesting thing is this; every one of us has a destiny. According to that destiny He has for you, He will have to tamper you and shape you for that destiny. And along the way He will let you suffer persecution, misunderstanding, and criticism. That's the tampering process of God. Now a most interesting thing happens sometimes. People think they can run away but the world is too small to run from God. In fact, like the Psalmist says in Psalms 139, *where shall I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heavens you are there, even if I sink to the lowest part of the earth you are there.* What happens is wherever you go; it will be the same process coming to you. They may be different actors in the process. However, the spotlight will be staring at you. The main star will still be you. There will be a lot of support actors that changed but you will never run away from that fiery furnace because that's your destiny. It's part of the reward. You say, "O God, what happen if I change shirts." It would be the same thing. There will be different actors, starring Habakkuk Smith, co-starring Pastor Ringo. So you run away, couldn't stand it. You say, I don't want my part and you opt out in the first scene. This time the co-star is Pastor Alberto. Different co-star. After some time you call out, "Cut! I cannot take it anymore." You say there must be a way out from this. So you decided to migrate. You migrate to, say, South Africa. While you are there again, Scene 1 comes, starring Habakkuk Mombasa, co-starring Pastor William. Same scene, same difficult situation until you finally submit to God's will. Isn't God interesting? He knows how to get at us until we conformed to His perfect will.

I want to share with you a little secret that may help you to overcome these things in your life. That is no.1 in proportion to the amount of use God has for you, you will have to suffer. Since God has a ministry for everybody, everybody has to suffer self-denial in different measures, some greater than the other. There is no partaking of His resurrection power without partaking of the fellowship of His suffering. Understand that principle. We see here in the life of Paul, he really suffered. And God is gracious; we say that He will not let you be tempted beyond what you are able to take. Not only that, He will not let you know what you are able to understand. He just gives you one step at a time. If Paul had knew everything he was going to go through, he will say God, I will rather die now than to go through all those things. But God is good; He gives you a little bit at a time. Every one of them suffered. We all must enter into the reward of God with persecution. But here is the key no.2: no suffering is permanent. All suffering is temporary. God is not like the devil that would like to torment you day and night. God has time for refreshing for you. So all sufferings, all persecutions will die. I can prove to you from this bible that persecution has its beginning and ending. The church is not permanently and continuously persecuted. There are times when persecution die down before a new phase come forth.

In Acts 8, there was a persecution that came, verse 1, *"Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church."* See sometimes it's greater than other times. I have been through many great times of persecution and I marveled at people's lack of stamina. You must understand the principle of God. That's the part of His testing of your life. See a great persecution arose against the church, which was at Jerusalem. There were times in my life when there were great persecution and then at other times it filtered down to normal misunderstanding and criticism, which is normal. Once in a while the bubble bee comes and jab you once, other times it's ant bite. You just brush it off. Sometimes you meet a baby Christian who has an ant bite, and cries, "Nobody loves me. Pastor I don't want to go to church anymore. I don't want to read my bible." That's what pastors are for. You take them and you comfort them. You love them and you encourage them. You give them all the scriptures and promises so they grow. One day when they have grown, two years later, they say actually it was an ant bite. So a great persecution arose. But how many knows that the great persecution will die. Acts 9 within one chapter it's finished. Verse 31, *"Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified."* Some translations say they had rest. You ask, "How did they have that?" The main

persecutor was converted.

Now I give you a little secret here. Behind great persecution and great criticism is only one man or one woman. There is always a key instigator, the rest are cohorts. There had been different times when the Word of Faith message was attacked. Every time it is attacked Hagin's name will come in. Copeland's name will come in. But do you know who were behind those persecutions? Famous people. When a famous pastor takes a stand and gives a faith message, all the others dare not take a stand. The majority of people are not leaders. They are just sheep. In 1970s some prominent people took a stand and said that the Word of Faith message is not in season. It's cultist, because they are famous. Because they are well known. Those not so well also say yes that's right. But after sometime, the most prominent people move out of the scene, the dust settled and Hagin is still there. You see behind it are just prominent people or influential people. Once you understand the key element behind persecution, you won't be so worried about it.

Acts 5: 17 *"Then the high priest rise up."* The high priest was famous, the most influential man in all of Israel. You see before that, some people disagree butt don't dare to speak up. Some people are not for it. They just hold their peace. But when a high priest stands up, all those who are with him also stood up and they started going against the Christians. Whether you are persecuted or not, whether you are criticized or not, nobody agrees with you all the time. You don't have 100% of people understanding you or agreeing with you all the time. So lets accept it as a fact because people are at different levels you just walk your walk with God and leave the rest with God. It does not mean that when you are persecuted or criticized, that is the only time that they have disagreed. No, that's the only time they spoke out. Understand here is that fact that only God can bring unity but it can only come when all of us walk right with God and walk faithfully in what God wants us to do. But when somebody prominent stands up against something, that's when the wave of persecutions comes.

Paul had faced many different ways of persecution in his life. He speaks about all those things that he had gone through in fulfillment of what Jesus said to Ananias in Acts 9.

II Tim. 3: 10-13 *“But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, what persecution I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.”*

You notice the word; out of them all the Lord delivered me. He says all who desires to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. For example, persecution can come in simply among brethren just because of different levels. Somebody will say why must they be so outwardly expressive? Why not be like me? Straight away you will have criticism and misunderstanding. But understand, it's because they are at two different levels. One compartmentalized God but to you, you don't, God is everywhere. Whether in the street you will behave the same. You are not making it up. Of course if you are making it up, it's different. But just be yourself and walk with God and forget about what people say. You just walk with God. Some people are in the flesh, some partly in the flesh, and they will always be there in your life. Why let them make your life miserable, when you are making theirs miserable? They are miserable because every time they see you fervent, they get convicted that they are not close enough with God. When they see you pray, outwardly they say I don't like it but inwardly their spirit say I wish I could be like that, giving myself whole-heartedly to God. There are many ways people get rid of their guilt. By removing those who make them guilty. Understand that when you walk godly with God you will bring conviction to anyone who walk less than you. It's a fact of life. And with conviction comes all kinds of reactions. People can be convicted and give different reaction.

The key no. 2 is no persecution, no criticism last forever. It has only a life span. Some are shorter and some are longer. But they will all die down. If you walk with God, God deals the key persecutor, they either get converted or get coffin. No two ways about it. Provided you walk in certain principles. Sometimes people lengthened their own persecution in suffering by not walking in these principles without knowing it.

Before I go to that, there is a separate major point. Let me go to no.3. The first is

proportionate persecution, second is all persecution is temporary, all misunderstanding is temporary, because everything that is in the flesh never last. Only the spirit can last. So make sure you got enough stamina when you are walking in the Spirit because when the smoke has cleared, you are still there. What has to be shaken will be shaken. What is built in the word will remain. I hope the second point helps you. You say is this my whole life? It's not, however it may be your whole life if you don't observe some principles.

But point three not only it is proportionate to your use down here by God, it is proportional to your reward in heaven. I love point three very much. I don't know why it must be that way but how many of us love that one day we are all in heaven and you would love to have the biggest crowns and prizes that Jesus gives away if possible. I mean Moses, John the Baptist and all the others will be there. And you are called out and the scroll is read out. Habakkuk Smith and the entire choir will be playing and you walk out to receive your crown. In the presence of all the billions of saints and Jesus gives you a crown and said well-done, good and faithful servant. However, there are different degrees of reward. Some of them the angels will call out. They will open the scroll of your name and said John S. Doe and Jesus will just take a small little reward in the presence of three billions of people and you have one tiny little thing. It is so small that you need the super eye in heaven to see it. You say what's that Lord? That's your crown. You say, why Lord? Because you can only stand ant's bite size persecution so I give you an ant size crown. I don't care what people say about me, as long as I know in my heart I am right with God. I am not living in sin. I am living in righteousness and holiness. I don't care what people say about what God calls me to do. Whether they believe it or not, I just want to do my part. But I do care that when I meet with Him face to face one day; I will have my reward there. I want to make sure I have my reward up there.

The third key is important. You see God does give us some glimpses of heaven. What will take place in heaven? Your reward in heaven is proportionate to the amount of persecution you endure here for Him. I hope that helps you. If you really get this into your heart and your mind, the next time somebody say a wrong word and say things like: this Christina, I don't like her or whatever and when words get around, (bad news travel faster than good news, the devil makes sure you hear it), and say do you know who is saying this to you. Christina will say, praise God, one more reward added in heaven. One more jewel on my crown. Why

am I teaching this? Because I want to produce different types of Christian call the overcomer. The champion of God who would not be coward so that when the smallest thing happens they won't tuck their tails between their legs and scream away. No, they will instead stand bold and say, praise God, one more jewel for my crown if we understand that your reward in heaven are measured on your persecution you endure here on earth.

Matthew 5 Jesus tells us here in verse 44-45 *"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven."*

You want to be called a Son of God; you must be able to overcome all those things that are thrown on your life.

Luke 6: 27-29 *"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And for him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either."*

Luke 6: 22-23 *Blessed are you*, that's a blessing when you are persecuted. It's not a curse. Sickness is a curse, poverty is a curse but *blessed are you when you are persecuted for My sake*. Now not for your mistake. You get persecuted for your dumb mistakes it is different. You get persecuted because you are in sin is different. But if you live right and you are holy in God's sight, *blessed are you when men hate you, because they hate the Holy Spirit when they hate you. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you*. Has that taken place in your life? *And revile you and cast out your name as evil*. What does that mean? Call you false prophet. In verse 23, *Rejoice*, it didn't say cry. It didn't say weep. It says rejoice in the Lord. We rejoice in that day. In what day? The day you are persecuted. In the day when you heard the bad news that the devil wants you to hear. Now try to see it from the heavenly perspective. The devil stirs up something against your life, he makes sure you hear about it. He got all his co-runners along the way and the words pass from one mouth to another until it gets into your ear. And usually the

one that gets it into your ear is one that is quite close to you. And the devil makes sure that it gets into your ear. He wants you to hear it. He will say so and so says this of you. That you are a false prophet and every other name that is not good under the sun. Do you know what the devil is looking for? He wants to see your reaction. Because when you begin to cry, "Aaarghhh," then you are still an earthling. Not a citizen of heaven yet. Or when you start to scream, then you are still in the flesh and not renewed yet. Or when you get angry, then you still got anger in your heart and you are not renewed in your mind. But what's a surprise to the devil. When he makes you hear the gossip or slander and you heard it and you say, "Halleluiah," the devil will get the fright of his life and then he will know you are no ordinary people. Let me tell you the devil will be so frighten to fight against you.

When I read these passages I asked God. I said, "Lord You help me to get Your children to see this truth so that they may be the kind of Christians that You want them to be all the time." That's not supposed to be the super Christians. That's the normal Christians. He didn't say that to some super Christians love your enemies. Rejoice when you are persecuted. He said that to all of us. He expects us to be that way. And I said, "Lord why is it?" I mean I can ask anyone who has pastored any church and say, "Have you found a congregation who comes to you and said, 'Praise God, pastor I must tell you this, they have just persecuted me.' " In all my years of pastoring I never had a congregation come to me like that. I have been in pastors' fellowship. I have been in ministers' fellowship and I have met hundreds of pastors and not a single one has ever come and says, "You know I have this unique member in my church. Whenever he hears something bad about him, he phones me up and says, 'Praise God, pastor, I got one more jewel added to my crown and I want you to know that I am so happy and I can't wait to go to heaven.' " If a pastor has 1000 of those members, it will be a powerful church. The devil will be scared to attack them. I asked God why are the modern believers so different from them? The Lord said, "My people have not been taught." I mean we teach them prosperity until their eyes turn green. We teach them healing until there is power coming out of their fingertip but we don't teach them to love their enemies. We are told to love our enemies but we were not told how, why and all these reasons. So a lot of Christian are not loving their enemies and loving those who persecute them. In fact most of them are claiming other promises. Like Elijah, he said, God send fire. What kind of Christians are we producing? You want to know what the New Testament Christians are like? See what I am talking about is

not something strange and something so extraordinary. Look at Acts for a moment. Look and consider Acts 5; this is the kind of mentality that they have and we need to have.

Acts 5 we read the part about the high priest stirring up the persecution in verse 17, *“then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.”*

The bible tells us in verse 33, *“When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them.”* Only one man stopped them, that’s Gamaliel who was even tempered than the rest. Finally when they did not kill them in verse 40, *“And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus.”*

It says and they had beaten them up. Those Christians, those apostles, when they walk out of that place, they didn’t walk out like little mice, like a dog with the tail tuck between the legs. They didn’t drag their feet like they just come out of a tribulation. No, my friends, after all that they had gone through, they went out praising God. I tell you this high priest is shaking his head. How could they do it? How could they rejoice? The bible says here in verse 41, *“So they departed from the presence of the council.”* That tells you that the moment they left, they walked out like champions. The spirit of a champion is on their lives. They walked out rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. As they walk out they say, thank you Jesus for the extra beating, for the suffering. Thank you Jesus for the criticism. Thank you, you counted us worthy enough to take that for You. What a different type of Christians they were. No wonder they changed the world. Here we are modern Christians with modern technology, video, CD, computers, satellites, internet etc. One tiny criticism, with all that we have, we should have changed the world by now. Because of the type of Christians that we are producing, Christians who love their comfort more than they love Jesus. Christians who will suffer to get something more in life. Some food, some clothing, some shelter, some luxury and they will pay the price. They will suffer to get all

those things. They will burn the mid-night oil. They will spend hours to get something that doesn't last. But they are not willing to suffer for Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Just because they were persecuted a little bit, they cannot take it. The Lord's Spirit is causing the rising of a new breed of people.

Understanding principle No.1, when God wants to use you, the great suffering that you are going to bear.

No.2 they all don't last long. If you get the stamina to endure, you will see the reward at the end.

No.3 your heavenly reward that is there. When you understand that the heavenly reward is waiting for you, when persecution comes you will say, "Bless God. Thank You Jesus for the privilege of being criticized for you." When you stand up for the Holy Spirit, the anti-charismatic will criticize you. You say, "Thank You Jesus that I can stand up and share the persecution against the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit Himself is facing that. Thank You for the privilege of taking part of the suffering that the Holy Spirit is taking." When people resist the Spirit and you are filled with the Spirit, they will also resist you because the Spirit is in you. And you will be able to say, "Thank You Jesus that I could partake of the grief and the suffering that the Holy Spirit is going through. Thank You that you count me worthy to partake of it." Why worthy? Listen very carefully, not all are given the privilege to suffer. You see the privilege, because that privilege equals the heavenly reward. The next time something is spoken against your life, some suffering, remember this, don't ever forget. Not everybody is given that privilege. You get the privilege of being criticized that other people don't get. No.3, you get your reward in heaven.

But no.4 is also important. There are different progressions that we grow in suffering. The level of your suffering is the level of your Christian life. How much you can take it. Let me show you. When you have reached a higher level in your Christian walk, and when persecution didn't come you will get confused. But for a baby Christian to experience persecution, he or she will have confusion, despair,

and disorientation. But when they learn point one, two and three they move into rejoicing.

Remember the apostle Paul? He had great suffering. He learned something that we need to learn from him. II Cor.12: 10 *"Therefore I take pleasure."* He not only rejoices, but Paul moved beyond rejoice by faith to the fact that he really take pleasure. He said *I take pleasure in reproaches, in infirmities, in distress for Christ sake. For when I am weak then He is strong.* Have you come to the stage in your life where you take pleasure, where they can throw mud on your face and you smile with pleasure? The only form of pleasure perhaps people have is when they are really relaxing. When they are in the bathtub. They just don't have a care in the world. How wonderful if the same pleasure could be felt when they say something about you that is not pleasant and you say, aah...that's nice. They throw a mud ball at you and you say, ooh, so nice. Paul takes pleasure. This was the same man who changed the world. If you cannot overcome that confusion in your soul and that persecution you cannot overcome the world. But when they don't hurt you anymore, then you will know that you are dead completely to self and you take pleasure.

What is it like when people take pleasure in nice food? Larry loves food. When I give him something nice, I like to see how he eat. He really takes pleasure in his food. When I give him one of those spring rolls he says, "I could eat 100 pieces of these." Maybe I should preach a message on fasting when he is around and then he will say, "One more, pastor." One more, he wants more. How nice if somebody criticize you and you say, "One more, one more." Why don't we have that kind of attitude? Your reward will be great in heaven. That is the same man the apostle Paul who said, "I take pleasure," when they beat him until his back was blue black. When they imprisoned him unjustly, when he followed a vision and it looks like the vision is going down the drain, Acts 16 says, he looked up to God at midnight and they prayed and they sang songs. They rejoiced in the Lord. And God sent a mighty earthquake, spiritual earthquake that knocked off every hindrance. As far as I know God's Word, earthquake is usually produced by a strong presence of God or by a strong angel. While Paul was rejoicing, the demons that were against him were rejoicing too. They thought they had won and the demon probably having their own good orgy. That's how the rock and roll fellows got it from the demons. But Paul is singing Psalms. While that is happening, God in

heaven sent a delegation and when the delegation arrives on the earth, the earth would not take their presence. Paul took pleasure in reproaches, in infirmities. What kind of Christian are we? Lets be the Bible type.

There is one more stage to go. From this orientation to rejoicing to pleasure, there is one more stage. Hebrew 11: 24-25 now you know why God use Moses. It says here, *"By faith Moses when he became of age refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."* Verse 25, *"choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasure of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he looked to the reward."*

That's point 3 that we saw just now and to strengthen point 3 there is always a reward at the end of all your suffering. The greatest is in heaven. But God is so generous that even on this earth you experience some reward. Look at Moses, it says he chose to suffer affliction. Paul also went to that stage. Where you chose the road where you know a road of no compromise that will have persecution inside. And you know there are men of God even today, sometimes they get criticized and people are pressuring them to compromise. And they chose a road of compromise so that people will stop bothering them. They chose their reward. In the business world is like this, everyone around you is corrupted but you chose not to be corrupted. What happens? You get persecuted. All you have to do is to compromise and they will stop jeering at you. Or when you stand your ground at a business meeting, everybody drink wine, they say what do you want? You say orange juice. They all laugh at you. Do you know all you have to do to stop the laughing is to take a glass of wine, join the club and they will stop laughing at you? But you chose to drink orange juice and get the jeers. You chose to suffer affliction. You chose not to compromise. It's so easy to compromise when the pressure is turned on but you chose not to compromise. You have your principles. You have the words and you say, "I rather have this people jeering at me than to compromise God's Word in my life." You chose to suffer affliction rather than the temporary pleasures of sin. People don't like you, so what, that's their problem not yours. You got reward in heaven and they got none.

At that fourth level, you learn to make the uncompromising choices knowing that by choosing that you are to be reproached and persecuted. Paul made those

choices many, many times. Many times he knew what was to happen. Remember how on his last trip of his third journey, he says I know that persecution and affliction await me. But I go bound in the Spirit. He chose the reproaches of Jesus Christ in order to receive the reward.

The fifth, it's also the last point, which helps each one of us to understand God's system. Why we must act like this in 1,2,3,4. Romans 12: 17 onwards. We have saying that when someone does evil to you don't do evil back. When someone criticizes you don't criticize back. When a dog barks at you, don't bark back because that makes you a bigger dog. When people do wrong things against you, they are just behaving in the flesh. You keep your peace. If one day, you get in the flesh and you bark back, but at the end of it, you have become a big dog. You are not renewed at all. Are we preparing ourselves for heaven or just on earth? We want to change right now on earth. When someone does evil, you don't overcome evil with evil. Although many time you could have possibly done it.

It says here, repay no one evil for evil, in verse 17, have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath, for it is written, vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink, for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Even when people keep doing evil against you and the Proverbs says that coals of fire be on the person's life. What is the meaning here? The key to this meaning is found in Ezekiel 10, the whole chapter is the departure of the glory of God. But how does it happen and what took place? In verse on onwards, *"And I looked, and there in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubim, there appeared something like a sapphire stone, having the appearance of the likeness of a throne. Then he spoke to the man clothed with linen, and said, go in among the wheels, under the cherub, fill your hand with coals of fire from among the cherubim and scatter them over the city and he went in as I watched."*

The cherubim went in and he took coals of fire and basically what takes place is the cherubim they took the coals of fire and they spread it on the whole of Jerusalem. What is the coal of fire represents? The judgment of God on the city. From that day onwards the glory of God was going to go. And execution of justice and judgment will take place. Listen very carefully in point 5; remember what I said earlier of people prolonging their sufferings? I am not talking about things that you suffer because of mistakes or anything but if you know that you have done right in God and there is no evidence from the bible that they can fight and you have obeyed God, you have followed after the Holy Spirit and the Word and yet people come against you. Remember this if you learn to walk in love, the period of persecution will be very short because God will bring it to its climax and bring judgment. But if you don't walk in love, what happens? God cannot execute the justice. You know God is a just God. Some of you are asking why must God execute justice when you got all those rewards. Remember this, God will not allow a right to be wrong for long because many people will be lost if they keep seeing evil winning over good. I mean if you are right you are right. And if people say you are wrong and you say you are right. If God does not do anything and waiting for heaven to do something, a lot of people will be lost because most people believe the multitude and think that you are wrong. And you may lose out your blessing that you have brought forth in your life. Therefore God has to execute judgment. But his executing of judgment depends on you - that you do not react and you walk in love. I mean there is nothing as malicious as when you have endured and finally people say, you know for those past ten years actually you are having a truth and you are correct in your life. When you are justified not by man, not by yourself but by God. And by that time, people will begin to turn to your leadership and to the truth, to the Word and the river of life in your life to feed them. But that process depends on you.

Now what happen when you react when people criticize or persecute you? The coals of fire cannot be released. The Word of God's judgment cannot work. By judgment I am not saying that God will wipe off the person. God will do two things. He would either convert that person or He will remove that person. There is no half about it. It is always from Genesis to Revelation. It's a dangerous thing to go against the Spirit of God. There are only two endings that are possible. Either we humble ourselves or God humbles us to the way of God. But God doing it in your life and for you depends on your reaction. If you react and get in the flesh the time span of the persecution will be longer but if you walk in the love the

time is very short and your reward is very great.

Point 5 for God to work justice on this earth and the quickening of your process depends on you repaying evil with good. It depends on you giving love where people give you hate. It depends on you obeying Jesus' command 'love your enemy'. Because when you love them, God could at least begin to convert and turn them. If their heart is really sincere, God will turn them for good. If their heart is set for the devil, God will remove them. That process will be quickened when you learn how to love and walk in love.