

The Teachings of Jesus Christ -- The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:10-12)

“BLESSED are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:10)

What is persecution? What does it mean to be persecuted? Someone is subject to or experiencing hostility, ill-treatment, and being harassed/annoyed persistently due to their race, religious beliefs, political beliefs, etc. Persecution: (Greek -- diOkO) To suffer. Synonyms of persecution: oppress, abuse, victimize, ill-treat, maltreat, tyrannize, torment, torture, martyr, harass, hound, plague, bully, intimidate, pick on, bother, discriminate, exploit, push around, prey on, trauma, affliction, misery, agony, anguish, revile, crucify

Victimize: Single someone out for cruel, unjust treatment

Tyrannize: To rule or treat someone cruelly

Torment: Severe physical or mental suffering - - could also be emotional, spiritual suffering

Torture: Infliction of pain, abuse, ill-treatment

Crucify: Put to death by nailing on a cross; to cause anguish to someone; to criticize someone severely and unrelentingly (revile)

Martyr: One killed because of their religious beliefs

Exploit: Use a person in an unfair, selfish way; benefit unfairly from the work of someone, by overworking or underpaying them

Righteousness: Display of Christian justification (behavior Declared RIGHT by God and is Justified and Accepted by God)...RIGHTEOUSNESS IS: The Lord Jesus Christ!

The Lord is our Example of Righteousness (Remember...WWJD? What Would Jesus Do?)

Synonyms of righteousness: good, upright, moral law-abiding, honest, honorable, ethical, blameless, noble, irreproachable (beyond criticism; faultless), pure, saintly, TRUE

Consider this: If you were to take a survey, how many people do you think would be eager and rejoicing to be in the line for PERSECUTION (Suffering), and enduring suffering for the sake of RIGHTEOUSNESS (The Lord Jesus Christ), and suffering for Christ’s sake as His REPRESENTATIVES here on earth as the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world??!!” The Lord makes it vividly clear to us that if we are to have Relationship with Him, walking in holy obedience, and positioning ourselves to receive earthly and heavenly (eternal) rewards, then we must “savour” or value “the things that be of God” above “those that be of men.” When one values things of God above those of men, this creates a zeal and a “willingness” in one’s heart to sacrifice for His sake. This is one of the elements that makes Christianity a challenge to embrace for those who are “carnal” and “worldly” - - because to walk with the Lord Jesus, there must be a “sacrifice” and “denial” of oneself and one’s will, desires, & “sinful pleasures.” God’s Will must be Priority and must be pursued, performed, and honored FIRST! Understand that this is exactly what separates Christianity from other religions, in that Jesus Christ OFFERS and PROMISES those who sacrifice or “lose” their lives for His sake, an ETERNAL REWARD! The Lord Jesus promises us that our “eternal residence” WILL NOT be a place of torment and death, but a place of DIVINE PERFECTION and LIFE!!! We shall be with God in heaven where we shall receive honor from Him (just as the Lord Jesus Christ receives) instead of receiving condemnation or damnation - - Therefore the Lord exhorts us to: “REJOICE and be exceeding glad: for GREAT is your REWARD in heaven...!” (Matthew 5:12)

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Holy & Royal Son of God, willingly sacrificed His BLOOD and LIFE for the sake of Righteousness and the sake of His Father's Will - - modeling for us to "savour" or highly esteem the things of God and not of men...

Matthew 16: 21-27, "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross (suffering for the sake of righteousness & the sake of Christ), and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works." (See Matt. 10:33-39; Luke 17:33; Mark 8:32-38)

Note how emphatic and determined the Lord is to please the Father and fulfill His Destiny: To SAVE mankind from his sins. Peter's response was rebuked by Jesus, for the Lord entered into the world to die for sinners and He was not going to allow anything nor anyone to obstruct Him from the "fulfillment of Divine Purpose!" Peter was not of "Satanic possession" but his actions and words were opposed (adversarial) to God's Will. Peter was protesting Calvary and the Cross, yet in attempting to persuade the Lord to "save Himself", he was creating an obstruction on the Lord's Path of Obedience and Destiny. As Christians, the Lord commands us to "deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him" in order to be His disciple. Note: (1) In denying ourselves we must completely yield or surrender to the control of the Lord so that "self" has no rights, and we hunger / thirst for righteousness in seeking to please / satisfy the Lord (2) In taking up our cross, we must willingly endure suffering, etc. for righteousness' and Christ's sake (His Purpose). We must be "crucified" (die - no appetite) to sin, self (carnal lusts), & the world (3) Following Christ involves living as He lived in the earth with: humility & meekness, mercy & compassion, mourning, hunger & thirst for righteousness, peace, love, grace, purity, selflessness, etc. To successfully do so, we must not succumb to our voices, voices of others (loved ones, friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, fiancées, spouses, co-workers), nor the voice of the devil & demons to "save yourself" and "just do you!" Allowing ourselves to succumb and be persuaded by voices other than the Lord's causes us to deny the Lord instead of following Him - - the results can be truly catastrophic! (Relational breach with God)

This major obstacle to discipleship with Jesus Christ is to "save one's life" which involves saving oneself from shame, pain, loneliness, loss, persecution for the sake of righteousness and Christ, and choosing to live in a carnal, selfish way which opposes God. This means one does what one "feels right and feels good", and becomes a slave to carnal ambitions and desires (seeking to satisfy their own carnal hunger, thirst, lusts), instead of doing what the Lord SAYS is right and thirsting / hungering to satisfy Him (Note: Israel sinned GREATLY during one of the darkest times in their history (period of Judges) for "...every man did that which was right in his own eyes" - - Judges 17:6 & 21:25. God's STANDARD was rejected, and men promoted their own individual standards...much like today, true?

The Bible assures that those who “save their lives” in seeking to satisfy their carnal hunger, thirst, and lust shall never find satisfaction nor fulfillment in their pursuit of those things:

“Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are NEVER satisfied” -- Prov. 27:20

“All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing” (What’s the purpose of labouring / exhausting oneself & being consumed to accumulate possessions just to be unsatisfied?) - - Ecclesiastes 1:8

“There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches, neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea it is a sore travail” -- Ecclesiastes 4:8

“He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also VANITY” -- Ecclesiastes 5:10

Who wrote these Divine words of wisdom? Solomon, king of Israel who God made like no other - - Solomon’s wisdom & wealth was matchless... “So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom” (1 Kings 10:23). The queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon (1 Kings 10) and when her eyes were laid upon all that God blessed Solomon with, “there was no more spirit in her” (v.5). She said, “...I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard” (v.8). What did she experience? For every question she asked, Solomon had an answer. She saw his navy, home, food, servants, butlers, his ivory throne overlaid with gold, all his drinking vessels made of gold, his 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and silver in such abundance that it was the same as just going outside and finding a rock (v.27) Solomon was loaded!!! King Solomon built an “House” for the Lord - - Solomon’s Temple (approx. 986 BC). The approximate cost to build it today would be \$174 billion! Listen to what Solomon said regarding his own personal experience in seeking satisfaction from pursuing selfish desires (including wealth)...

“I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and behold, ALL WAS VANITY AND VEXATION OF SPIRIT, and there was no profit under the sun” --- Ecclesiastes 2:4-11

How amazing that King Solomon arrived at a point in his life where he saw all those things as vain or useless, and they brought him no satisfaction! He even went on to say: "Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for ALL IS VANITY AND VEXATION OF THE SPIRIT" (5:17). (Note: One reality that disturbed Solomon was fact that he would die one day and all of his labour and wealth would possibly be in the hands of a FOOL!) The Lord Jesus parallels this obstruction of "saving oneself" or living a selfish, unfulfilling life to consuming ourselves with attaining earthly wealth - - this is equivalent to "laying up treasures upon earth" (Matt. 6:19) and "gaining the whole world." The ambition and quest of one to make ALL the money would completely consume one's time and energy to the extent that one would be without time and energy (exhausted) to "sacrifice" his life to the Lord. One would also exist without an understanding of their Purpose on this earth - - not to make "tons of money" for selfish, carnal purposes, but to serve the Lord selflessly, seek His Purpose, and "lay up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:19). Our brother Solomon experienced a great lesson in learning that man's Purpose in God's Will is not centered upon "possession accumulation", nor thirsting to satisfy "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16), but he learned what man's Purpose REALLY was:

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: FEAR GOD, AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: FOR THIS IS THE WHOLE DUTY (Purpose) OF MAN" - - Eccles. 12:13

The Lord Jesus says to us...Are all these temporary, worldly possessions worth destroying your eternal soul and sabotaging your soul from receiving eternal bliss which cannot be described in human words????!!! None of these things are worth hungering / thirsting for because they cannot produce the SATISFACTION that the Lord gives...The Lord Jesus exhorts us to seek SATISFACTION from Him (having Obedient Relationship):

"...Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him SHALL NEVER THIRST; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13-14)

"...I AM the bread of life: he that cometh to Me SHALL NEVER HUNGER; and he that believeth on Me SHALL NEVER THIRST" (John 6:35)

"I AM the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 4:51)

"As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" (John 6:57-58)

The Lord assures us (Matthew 6:25-34) that in seeking Him (the kingdom of God) FIRST, He will meet and exceed our need for the necessities of life such as food, shelter, and clothing! The Lord Declares that He feeds the birds daily and clothes the fields with lilies and grass...certainly since we are of more value to Him, and won't he provide us food, drink, and shelter also????! ONLY THE LORD CAN GIVE EVERLASTING SATISFACTION TO ONE'S ETERNAL SOUL!!!

The Lord Jesus receives HONOR from The Heavenly Father for His Sacrifice regarding the Purpose of The Heavenly Father:

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit...Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him” -- 1 Peter 3:18 & 22

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” -- Colossians 3:1

“Who being the brightness of His Glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they” -- Hebrews 3:3-4

“But he (Stephen), being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God” -- Acts 7:55

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is in a Divinely, Unique Position of HONOR with The Heavenly Father, and for those who “lose their lives for the sake of righteousness (Mark 8:35 states “the gospel’s”) and Christ, then we as Christ’s “sheep” shall be placed in a position of honor on His right hand also:

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together” -- Romans 8:17

“And before Him (the Son of man - v. 31) shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And He shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” -- Matthew 25:32-34

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!!!”

The Lord reserves this Blessing for those who selflessly sacrifice themselves and suffer for the sake of Christ’s Will & Purpose, for those who “offer” up their lives as a holy sacrifice before God and seeking that our lives would be a “sweet-smelling savour” (Ephesians 5:2) before God, and to bring Him glory - - Note: The Lord promises us that we shall inherit the kingdom and assures us of “Access” to His Kingdom, but know that the Lord provides us “Access” to His Kingdom as we live our daily lives...2 Kings 6:8-23 demonstrates the “Access” that the prophet Elisha had to the Kingdom of God. The king of Syria was troubled because the king of Israel was being warned of the planned Syrian attacks. The king of Syria was informed the prophet Elisha was briefing the king of Israel of his plans, therefore he decided he would capture Elisha. The Syrian king came with his great host by night and surrounded the city with horses and chariots. Elisha’s servant awoke to this horrific scene and being overcome with fear he ran to Elisha for his response. Elisha told him not to fear because “They that were with them were more” (Access). Elisha prayed the Lord would open his servant’s eyes to see just that. When his eyes were opened, he saw they were surrounded by the Heavenly Host of God (horses & chariots of fire). He saw Elisha’s “Access” to the Kingdom of God - - God Responded!

In living righteously and suffering for the sake of righteousness and the gospel, we represent Christ (who is the Light of the world -- John 8:12) as “the light of the world” (5:14) - - and since this is a world filled with darkness (sin), then as those who are “light” and represent righteousness, we shall encounter persecution (hostility, hatred, etc.) Jesus said, “...men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” - - (John 3:19). Christians experience persecution because the righteous living we display brings light upon or EXPOSES the dark, sinful ways and character of those who live in an unrighteous manner. Our way of living in obedience and sacrifice to the Lord causes those who live in disobedience and in bondage to their carnal will, lust, and desires, to feel exposed, ashamed, insecure, guilty, unclean, inferior, etc. This provides the genesis for hostility, scorn, hatred, and overall persecution to be birthed. It is highly likely that this is one of the reasons why it can be challenging to persuade one who is living a life “in darkness” to present themselves before God and the saints in the house of God (church) - - because their heart becomes deeply pierced to the extent of how short they come of God’s Glory (Romans 3:23). (Note: We must be very humble and wise because in our “pursuit of holiness & righteousness”, those who “walk in darkness” will target us because we “walk in Light”, and will accuse us of self-righteousness! They will utter statements such as: “they think they are better than us...they think they are too good for clubbing...they just think they’re soooooo holy!”

The Lord said, “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord” (Matt. 10:24) - - Jesus was hated by men and since we are His disciples, because we have embraced Him as Lord & Saviour, we shall endure the same hatred. The Lord declares in Matthew 10:22 (Mark 13:13 & Luke 21:17), “And ye shall be hated of all men for My name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” - - Therefore: “BLESSED are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely (lying), for My (Christ’s) sake” (Matthew 5:11). The Lord Jesus endured relentless criticism (crucifixion) even before His Crucifixion on Calvary...the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, elders, chief priests, etc. perpetually persecuted the Lord because of His “Oneness” (Relationship) with The Father, His Perfect, Unblemished, Holy lifestyle, and His Knowledge & Wisdom of the Scriptures. They hated the Lord so madly and deeply that they had to fabricate a lie on Him (blasphemy -- Matt. 26:65) to have “justification” to Scourge & Crucify the Lord!!! Throughout history, believers in God / disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ (those with Relationship with Him and those living righteously for the sake of Christ) have been hated and persecuted even to the death. We encounter scorn, disdain, hate, hostility, imprisonment, persecution because of our Connection to the Father and Lord Jesus Christ...the Apostle Paul wrote, “Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all THE LORD DELIVERED ME. YEA, and all that will live godly in CHRIST JESUS shall suffer persecution” - - 2 Timothy 3:11-12

Peter writes, “For what glory is it if, when ye be buffeted (suffer) for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving for us an example, that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him (The Father) that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:20-23). Christ receives glory when we suffer because we are living according to His commands and as a Christian ought - - In that we can truly rejoice. The Lord is not glorified when we suffer because we have transgressed His commands and/or transgressed against others. In our sufferings for the sake of Christ, righteousness, and the Gospel, as Jesus Christ being our example, we do not entertain revenge against our persecutors. We commit ourselves to God’s Will and allow Him to bring His “rod of correction” upon the persecutors...For “vengeance belongs to God” (Deut. 32:35, Nahum 1:2, Psalm 94:1, Hebrews 10:30). (Note: The Lord did not “fight” those who Persecuted Him - - He said He could have called “twelve legions of angels” to His defense (Matt. 26:53). But He wanted the “...Scriptures be fulfilled” (Matt. 26:54). The Lord, even as He was dying on the cross, He said to The Father, “Father, FORGIVE them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Stephen, even as he was being stoned to death (Acts 7:54-60), did not seek vengeance against his persecutors and killers, but he “...kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, LAY NOT this sin to their charge.” (Example: If a Christian is falsely accused of a crime by a co-worker to their superiors, it is acceptable for the Christian to inform them of the truth, but it is unacceptable & ungodly to seek vengeance on the false accuser, or even revile or falsely accuse them. Paul defended the truth against accusations of false apostles against his ministry in 2 Corinthians 10 & 11).

The Lord is our Holy Example and when we endure persecution (for the sake of Christ, righteousness, Gospel) and fiery trials, we have been given a Divine Decree to rejoice and be happy / glad... “But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, HAPPY are ye...Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ASHAMED that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing” (1 Peter 3:14, 16 & 17). “Behold, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But REJOICE, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, HAPPY are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified...Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Peter 4:12-14 & 16). God is glorified through “honourable suffering” - - He is not glorified through “dishonourable suffering.” Dishonourable suffering brings SHAME to the name of the LORD. (Note: Peter was imprisoned because he preached Christ and His Resurrection, and was ordered not to speak nor teach in the name of Jesus - - Acts 4) Let us not suffer because we have transgressed against the LORD and / or against our fellowman... “But let NONE OF YOU suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters” (1 Peter 4:15). For a Believer in God and the Lord Jesus, this suffering is without honour & glory, but comes with dishonour & great shame!

Glory to God because there is an entire book in the Bible about a man who was almost persecuted beyond comprehension and suffered with unimaginable shame, agony, and torment because he loved God and was loyal to God alone - - he suffered for the sake of righteousness...our brother Job. Satan hated with a passion the love God had for Job and the love Job had for God. He hated the harmonious Relationship the Lord God had with this man He created (Satan hated the Relationship God had with His Creation from the very beginning and this is why he was determined destroy that Relationship in the Garden of Eden. Satan places this same hatred & jealousy in the hearts of men to cause them to hunger and “lust after” Believers in seeking to persecute and destroy them). Satan relentlessly tried to, as God declared, “...movedst Me against him to destroy him without cause” (Job 2:3). Job had not transgressed, it was Satan’s hatred and jealousy of Job’s righteousness and the Relationship he had with God (Note: At one time in his existence, before he sinned against God, he had a relationship with God as Lucifer. When he sinned, God renamed him to Satan or the Adversary).

Job suffered through the loss of his children, possessions, social status/acceptance, and health, yet... “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged (attributed folly to God) God foolishly” (Job 1:22). This was “honourable suffering” and God HONOURED Job before his friends and the community, and made him whole. Note that the Lord God was extremely angry with Job’s friends for falsely accusing him of sinning and He was ready to punish them: “And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thy two friends (Bildad & Zophar): for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of Me the thing which is right, like My servant Job” (Job 42:7-8).

Of course, our brother the Apostle Paul is known for how he himself relentlessly persecuted Christians, even to the death - - but is known for the relentless persecution he endured also. Once he became a Believer, his life was in peril and he suffered greatly for the sake of righteousness, the sake of the Gospel, and the sake of Jesus Christ... “Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no central dwellingplace; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless: being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring (scum) of all things unto this day” (1 Corinthians 4:11-13). Paul, for the sake of righteousness, the Gospel, and Christ, was treated as if his life was not even worth scum: “And he (Paul) spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him” (Acts 9:29). Paul freed a young girl from demon possession (spirit of Python) in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 16), and the result for him was being beat with “many stripes and cast into prison.” Paul provides a synopsis of the suffering he endured throughout his life in 2 Corinthians 11: 23 - 28 (NLT):

“They say they serve Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served Him far more! I have worked harder, been put in jail more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jews gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled many weary miles. I have faced dangers from flooded rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the stormy seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be Christians but are not. I have lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. Often I have been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food. Often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. Then besides all this, I have the daily burden of how the churches are getting along...” Our brother Paul acknowledged that we would have trouble and persecution in this life, yet, he considered all of these things “light afflictions” in the temporary, and focused on an eternal reward: **“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed...For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal”** (2 Corinthians 4:8-9 & 17-18) - - Hallelujah!!! In being assured of our eternal reward, we shall do as our Saviour exhorts us, **“REJOICE, and BE EXCEEDING GLAD: for GREAT is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you”** (Matthew 5:12)

The Lord Jesus promises, **“And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life”** - - Matthew 19:29

Men of God Persecuted For The Sake Of Righteousness

- A) Elijah (1 Kings 18 & 19) -- Jezebel sought to slay Elijah for him successfully challenging the 850 pagan prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel and then slaughtering them all**
- B) Daniel (Daniel 6) -- Cast into a den of lions because he disobeyed the king’s decree regarding no “petition of any God or man for thirty days.” He refused allow a decree or any man to cause him to cease praying to the Lord God of Heaven and Earth**
- C) Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Daniel 3) -- Cast into Nebuchadnezzar’s burning, fiery furnace for worshipping the Lord God instead of his 90 foot golden “monster” (idol)**
- D) Micaiah, the prophet (1 Kings 22 & 2 Chronicles 18) -- Cast into prison by the wicked king Ahab of Israel because he refused to prophesy to please Ahab’s heart. Micaiah boldly stated, “As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak.”**
- E) Hanani, the seer (2 Chronicles 16) -- Cast into prison by king Asa of Judah because he reprimanded Asa for relying on the king of Syria (Ben-hadad) for help against Baasha king of Israel, instead of relying on the Lord God. Hanani prophesied to Asa, “...thou hast done foolishly: therefore from hence forth thou shalt have wars” (16:10)**

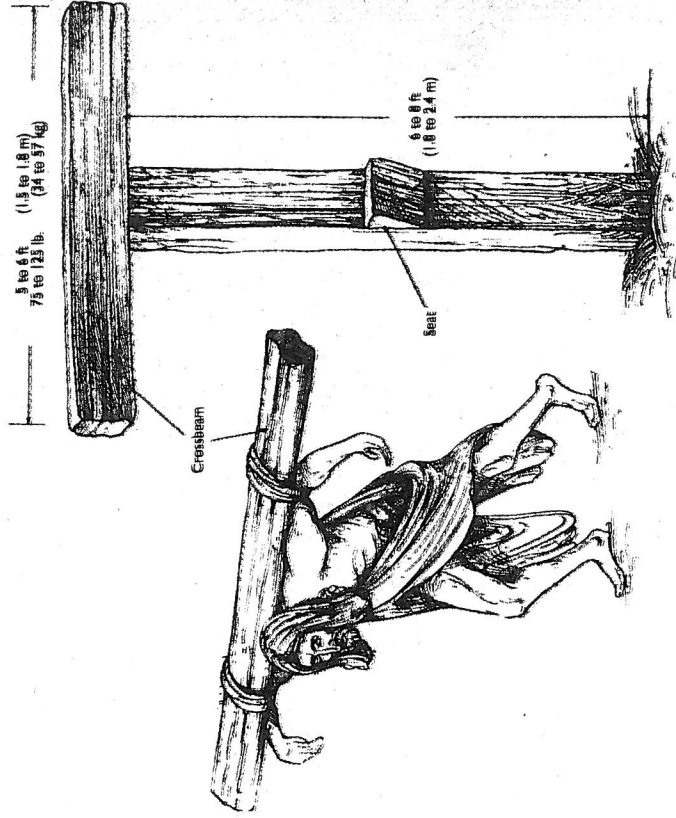
Martyrdoms: For The Sake of Righteousness, Christ, & The Gospel

- (1) John the Baptist was decapitated by Herod (Matthew 14:1-12 & Mark 6:14-29). John was imprisoned by Herod, for his wife's Herodias' sake. John preached to Herod that it was wrong for him to marry Herodias because she was his brother's (Phillip) wife. An evil grudge was seeded in Herodias' heart towards John and she wanted him dead. However, Herod looked upon John as a "just man and an holy", so he spared his life. Nevertheless, during a birthday celebration for him, Herodias' daughter danced for Herod and he was so infatuated that he swore she could ask for what she wanted and he would give it to her (up to half his kingdom). Upon the instructions of her mother, she asked for John the Baptist's head on a tray - - choosing to "save face" before his guests, he ordered his executioner to behead John the Baptist in the prison.
- (2) Simon Peter was believed to be crucified upside down. This was reported by a church leader named Origen in 200 AD
- (3) Andrew the brother of Peter was believed to be crucified on an X-shaped cross, according to the Acts of Andrew (a book written in the AD 200s)
- (4) James, son of Zebedee, was executed (probably beheaded) by King Herod Agrippa with a sword (Acts 12:2)
- (5) Philip was believed to have been crucified in what is now Turkey
- (6) Bartholomew was skinned alive and beheaded for preaching the gospel in India, according to one tradition. According to The Martyrdom of Bartholomew, he was stuffed in a sack and dumped in the sea
- (7) Thomas was believed to have been speared to death in India after starting a number of churches there
- (8) Matthew was believed to be martyred with an ax or sword in Ethiopia. Other stories claim that he was burned to death
- (9) James, son of Alphaeus, was believed to be crucified in either Egypt or Iran
- (10) Thaddaeus, son of James, was believed to have been crucified or hacked to death along with Simon the Zealot in what is now Iran
- (11) Simon the Zealot was believed to have been martyred with Thaddaeus in Iran. Other traditions claim he was "sawed in two"
- (12) Matthias, the disciple who replaced Judas Iscariot, was believed to be stoned and beheaded
- (13) Stephen who was deeply hated because he preached the Gospel, was falsely accused of blasphemy against Moses and God (Acts 6:11), and was stoned to death (Acts 7:58-60)

The Lord Jesus said, "And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" - - Revelation 22: 12-13

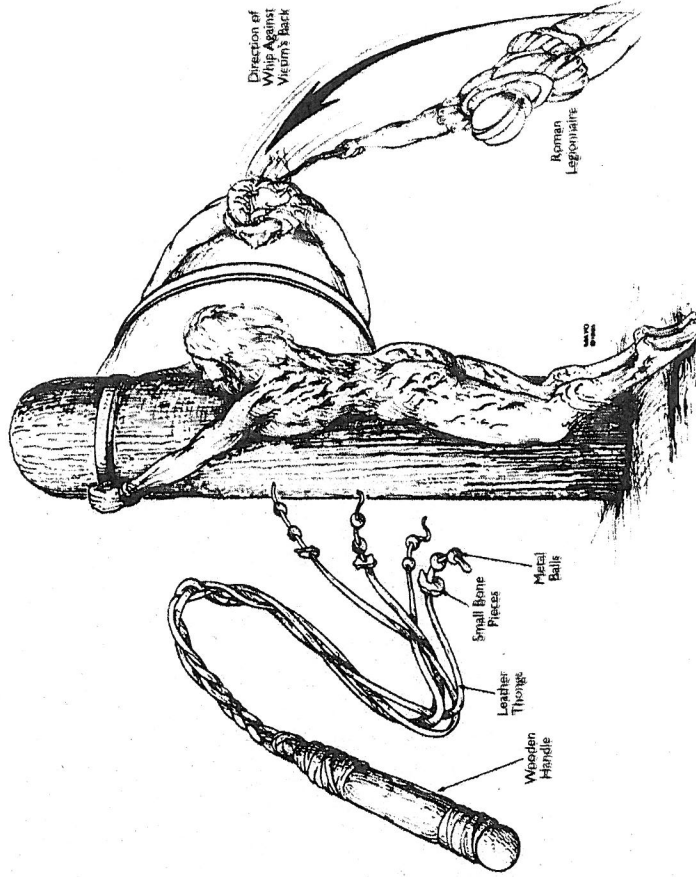
A DOCTOR'S GUIDE TO JESUS' CRUCIFIXION

Illustrated by the Mayo Clinic



2. Dead man walking

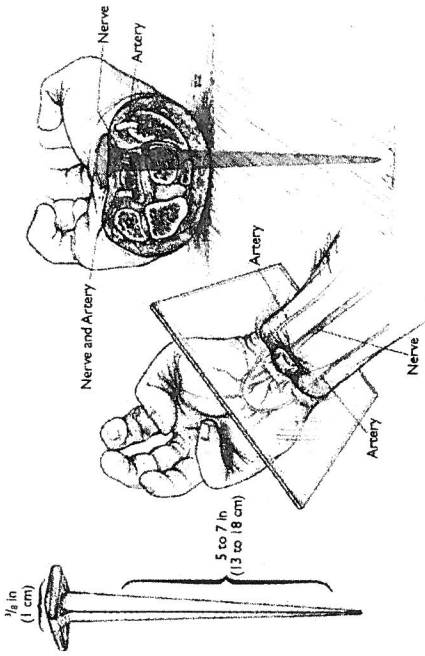
- Victim carries crossbeam to execution site.
- Crossbeam is attached to vertical pole.
- Seat prolongs the torture, making it easier to breathe.



1. The beating

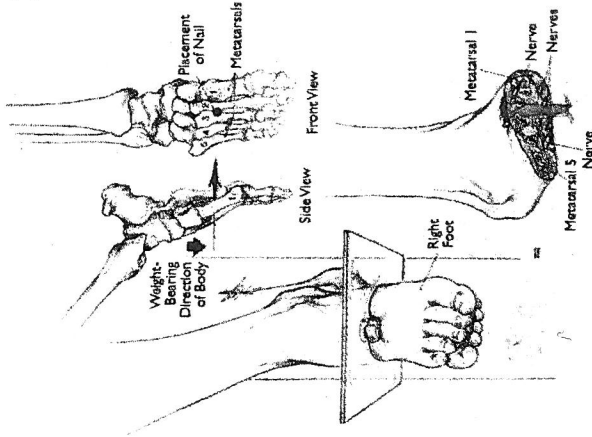
- Victim is stripped and tied to a pole.
- Shards of metal and bone are laced into the leather whip.
- Romans aren't limited to 40 strokes, as are the Jews.
- Pain and blood loss set stage for shock.

Source: "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Details about crucifixion are taken from the Bible and from other ancient sources.



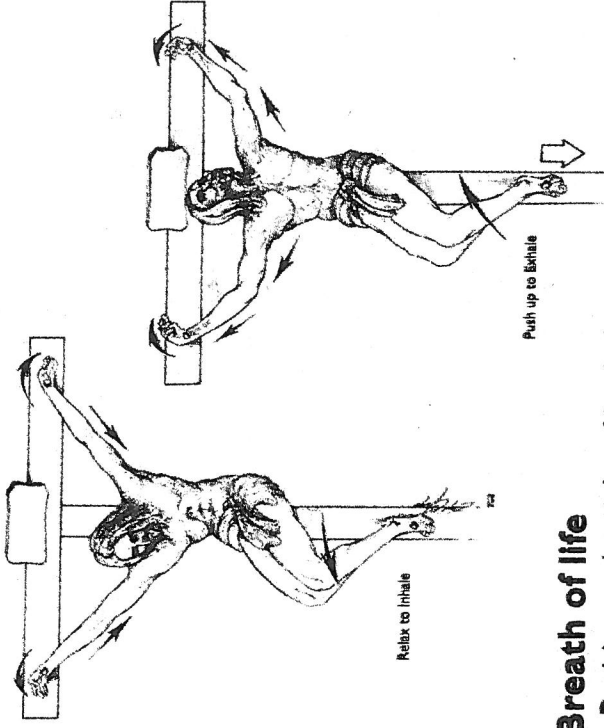
3. Nailed

- Iron nails pin wrists and feet to cross.
- Nails miss main arteries and bones.
- Wine laced with painkilling myrrh or frankincense is offered. Jesus refuses.



5. Speared

- Soldier confirms death by stabbing the heart.
- By this time, shock has started separating blood into two basic elements: cell clusters and amber-colored serum.
- “Water” pours out of Jesus’ chest—serum from inside and around the heart.
- Possible cause of death: a combination of shock, exhaustion, asphyxiation, and heart failure.



4. Breath of Life

- Position and weight of body forces victim to push up to exhale.
- Breaking legs speeds death. It forces arms to do all the work, pulling victim up to exhale.
- Jesus dies before breaking the legs becomes necessary.

