

Wednesday in the Word

Digging Deeper

April 14, 2021

1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

Who Are Our Persecutors?

When the church first developed it was birthed out of the Jewish religion. Jesus was the one and only Hebrew who perfectly kept the Law of God and honored Him with pure motive. Matthew 5:17-19. In His fidelity our faith is counted as righteousness. Romans 10:4. More than that His keeping of the Law set us free from the bondage to it. Galatians 5:18, Romans 8:2. This framework was set up by God to release the nation of Israel from the laborious restraints of the law but because of the hardness of men's hearts it actually had the opposite effect. Ephesians 4:18, John 12:40. Many Jews believed among them the disciples and even some pharisees and scribes. Still those first Christians as they were called (Acts 11:26) were small in number and mostly considered a fringe group. The problem was that their leader Yeshua Jesus claimed to be Israel's messiah and even their God. John 8:58, 10:30, 36, 14:9. Even a small, seemingly harmless marginalized rabbi making such claims had to be shut down. Matthew 26: 63-68. Many had come before with these outlandish claims and many experienced the agony of the cross. This Christ was different though. His death did not end the frustration he caused for the establishment. This Christ rose from the dead and His followers were ignited into an explosive and popular new force. 1 John 1:1-5. This "joy" did not impress the keepers of the Hebrew religion. Christianity became a threat to their closely guarded power and an embarrassment to their ridiculous collection of man made rules. Hence began the persecution of the early church. It is a symptom of hypocrisy among mankind to destroy anything that presents a threat to an arbitrary way of life. The first generation of believers in Christ were predominantly persecuted by the Jews. We see this referenced in our text for today in 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16. Things have changed. For the rest of history up till today the Jewish faith is one of the most hated and persecuted of all peoples. Their persecution of Christians is all but gone. Our faith though, is troubled and pressured more than ever now. In verse 18 Paul mentions our greatest adversary, Satan. (Greek Satanos for accuser) The first line of persecution is false accusation. Gentile persecution started with Rome when Nero blamed our fellows for destroying their city and burning them for punishment. Today Christians are accused of every conceivable evil as we are lumped into the disdain of the "Christian right". We know who we are and we are content in our Lord Jesus Christ. Philippians 4:11-13. The peace we have in Christ is a threat to the world. Our love of His law and our surrender to His Providence in our lives causes others to look down on us as weak or arrogant. Persecution has plagued our faith for millennia. It was and is a horror for our brethren around the world. It has come from political and military regimes as well as from other religions, nations and cultures. Christian's suffer today from the hand of Islamic countries in particularly horrific ways. It has begun here in the United States. Even though America was founded on Judeo-Christian principles and all of our public schools and finest universities were Christ centered at their onset they have rejected our Savior removing all scriptural and Christian references. Most have removed bible quotes that were displayed at the entrances. Our political system, especially lately, has turned against the teachings of Christ. Sad to think that this nation was built as a refuge from persecution but is evolving into a bastion of it. As we endeavor to share the gospel we are hindered by the highest demonic forces. Ephesians 6:12, 2 Corinthians

10:5. We need not fear though and must remain faithful because we are surrounded by so many brothers and sisters. See our text verses 19-20. We will join them when the Lord appears and we will rejoice.