

Lifebyte 56

Kingdom Living (Part 6)

- Stand For The Truth But Avoid Fruitless Controversy
- Persecution — *The Privilege Of Serving The King*

Jesus Proclaims A Kingdom



*For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?
Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14)*



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Introduction

Our discussion of life in loving service to our Lord and King Jesus builds on **Lifebyte 55**, developing our King's character through suffering. *Suffering* embodies the many "altar experiences" in which you respond to our Father's grace. In effect, you exchange reliance on your sin-nature controlled soul to being ruled by the Spirit of Jesus through your spirit. Suffering takes place *within you* in the unseen realm of your soul and spirit.

Persecution, on the other hand, is the negative response of others toward your faith. A direct result of the stance you've taken for your King, persecution runs the gamut from rejection and mistreatment to torture and martyrdom. A cloud of



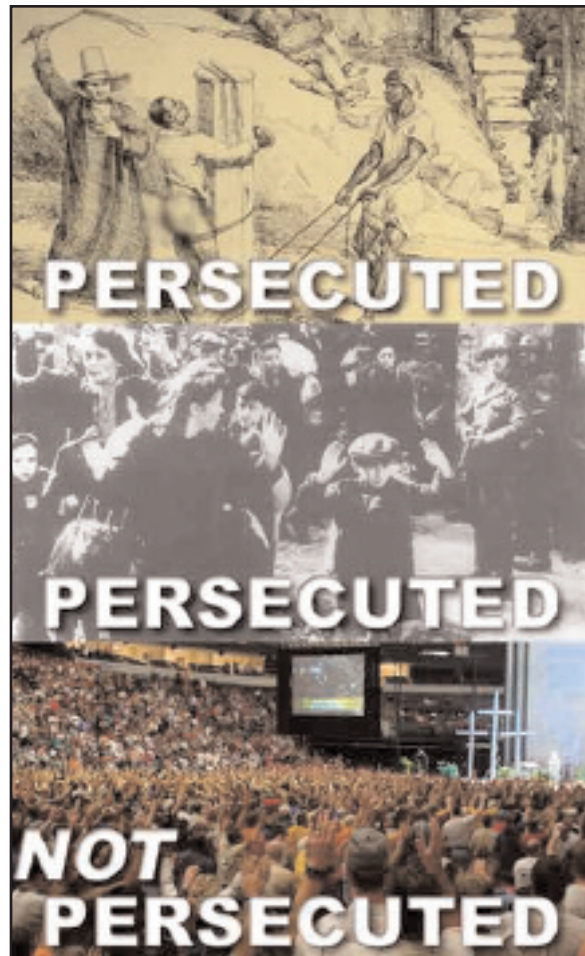
heavenly witnesses cheers His own on to embrace the privilege of being persecuted for the name of Jesus. To do otherwise would deny Him as Lord of your life.

Followers of Jesus have endured persecution for centuries, often at the hand of the Nicolaitan religious establishment in its various forms. Sadly, many expressions of organized Christendom have become so paganized in compromising with the world system and its ways that they're no longer a spiritual threat to the forces of wickedness in the heavenlies. Therefore they encounter neither opposition nor persecution from the unrighteous around them.

"Both prophet and priest are profane; even in My house I find their wickedness," declares the LORD"

(Jeremiah 23:11).

We happened upon the following illustrations of persecution on the Inter-



net. The top two pictures depict men who probably considered themselves Christian to be tormenting mercilessly those whom they despised: slaves and Jews. (We could have added Native Americans being persecuted by self-justifying "Christian" soldiers and reservation authorities as well.)

The bottom picture, however, graphically shows an image of *syncretism* as the entertainment-hungry world system is eagerly welcomed by a receptive church audience. That which *blends in* with the world's ways is acceptable in man-centered worship; there's no difference of *holiness* that would prompt persecution.

Can you find biblical precedent for a self-gratifying, pleasure-bent "walk of faith"? Those Jesus has called out as His

own are called to be *servants of a Great King*, even at the cost of our lives for His name's sake.

Stop for a moment and read the article below about our sister in Lord Jesus, Noviana.

Her suffering and the death of her friends is very painful to consider. But if you're a parent, think what it must be like to have to live among those imprisoned by the evil principality that took your child's life. Put yourself in the place of those grieving parents:

• **Will the thought of what the Muslims did to**

your children make you bitter so you seal yourself in an emotional prison of hatred?

• **Will you begin to *compromise* as is the way of so many Christians in the United States?**

• **Or, will the thought of what the Muslims did to your child(ren) make you bolder about your own faith? Describe what you would do if these were your child(ren).**

INDONESIA: Medical Update on Beheading Survivor

September 21, 2006

The sole survivor of a radical Muslim attack on four Christian high school girls has successfully undergone medical treatment. When Noviana Malewa and her three friends were walking home from school on October 29, 2005, they were assaulted by a group of jihadists wielding machetes. Three of the girls were decapitated by the assailants, yet Noviana survived a severe slash to her head and neck in an unsuccessful beheading attempt. Today, Noviana still deals with emotional and physical torment from the brutal attack.



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Suffering from nerve damage and a dislocated jaw, Noviana had problems with her right eye winking spontaneously, as well as the involuntary twitching of the right corner of her lip. She was also treated for the severe and sudden pain she experienced in her head. VOMedical was pleased to provide for her much-needed medical support.

After being under close police protection for several months, intense negotiations took place to transport Noviana from her hiding place to the location of her hospitalization. Noviana incurred many complications from the machete wound extending from her right cheek to the back of her neck, and recently received surgery in Surabaya, Indonesia to relieve the symptoms and heal the scarring.

For more on today's persecuted Christians, go to: <http://www.prisoneralert.com>.

For most western followers of Jesus the persecution being inflicted upon our brothers and sisters so far away has little effect on our lives. But not so in our Lord's eyes! His precious sons and daughters who are being persecuted anywhere in the world are laying down everything because of *their love for Him*. They have counted the cost!

"If one part suffers, every part suffers with it..." (1 Corinthians 12:26).

"Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering" (Hebrews 13:3).

You may not find yourself being persecuted now, but you can involve yourself and your family in helping those who are. When you can see these dear ones through the eyes of Jesus, you'll wholeheartedly share in their sufferings with His compassion as His instruments of comfort and relief. You can begin by going to <<http://www.prisoneralert.com>> and writing a letter to a suffering brother or sister. At this site you can select phrases of comfort and strength as well as Bible verses which will automatically be translated into your prisoner's language. Postage will cost you less than a buck.

But for the grace of God those being persecuted could be you and your family. What would you want others to do for you? (See Matthew 7:12.)

Persecution—Opposition From The Spiritually Dying

"Hear Me, you who know what is right, you people who have My law in your hearts: Do not fear the reproach of men or be terrified by their insults"
(Isaiah 51:7).

Are you able to appropriate for your own life the beauty of our Lord Jesus' purpose for suffering: *to help you become more like Him*? If so, then persecution holds no fear or threat for you. He Who embodied suffering out of love to fulfill His Father's will is sharing in the suffering you're experiencing within as you walk in His steps of righteousness. The persecution others inflict on you is because they reject your trust in Jesus.

Below we offer Scripture passages concerning *persecution* and *controversy*. Certain consequences confront you when you belong to and serve our Lord Jesus in His Spirit. We want to strengthen and encourage you to remain true in your trust in our King:

For we must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God
(Acts 14:22).

Some of the passages cited below entail controversy, while others focus on persecution. It's important to note that if you have an aversion to **suffering** and are reluctant to stand up for the truth in the face of **controversy**, you'll most certainly find it difficult to face **persecution**.

We've divided the Scripture passages into different groups. Please read all the verses in each grouping and then answer the questions for that group. Discuss your answers with those close to you.

Persecution By The Religious Establishment

"Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On My account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

*‘Brother **will betray** brother to death, and a father his child; children **will rebel** against their parents and have them put to death. And you will be **hated by all** for My name’s sake. But he who **endures to the end** will be saved’* (Matthew 10:17-22).

*“Then the Pharisees went out and **plotted against Him**, how they might **destroy Him**”* (Matthew 12:14; see also 12:24; 26:3,4).

*“Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were **filled with jealousy**. They **arrested** the apostles and put them in the public jail”* (Acts 5:17,18).

*“Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. **Opposition arose**, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)... These men began to **argue with Stephen**, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke. Then they **secretly persuaded** some men to say, ‘We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God.’ So they **stirred up** the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They **seized** Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. They **produced false witnesses**, who testified, ‘This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us’”* (Acts 6:8-14; see also 7:1-60).

*“Now after many days were past, the Jews **plotted to kill [Paul]**....And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they **tried to kill him** (Acts 9:23,29; see also 12:1-3; 13:45,50; 14:1-22; 17:5,13).*

- **Do you believe that followers of Jesus in this nation will be persecuted by the Nicolaitan religious establishment? If yes,**

how do you think this will come about?

Controversy: Discern Between Effective Confrontation And Vain Argument

*“But some of the sect of the Pharisees who **believed** rose up, saying, “It is necessary to **circumcise** them, and to command them to **keep the law of Moses**”* (Acts 15:5).

*“I know that after I leave, **savage wolves** will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and **distort the truth** in order to draw away disciples after them”* (Acts 20:29,30).

*“My brothers, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are **quarrels among you**... In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are **divisions among you**, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be **differences among you** to show which of you have God’s approval”* (1 Corinthians 1:11; 11:18,19).

*“I marvel that you are **turning away so soon** from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel which is not another; but there are some who **trouble you and want to pervert** the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, **let him be accursed!** As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches **any other gospel** to you than what you have received, **let him be accursed**. Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ”* (Galatians 1:6-10).

*“Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. [This matter arose] because some **false***

brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you” (Galatians 2:3-5).

“When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?” (Galatians 2:11-14).

“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk. They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm. We know that the law is good if one uses it properly” (1 Timothy 1:3-8).

“If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He is obsessed with controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind and destitute of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. Timothy, guard what has been entrusted

to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you” (1 Timothy 6:3-5,20,21).

“For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths” (2 Timothy 4:3,4).

“For there are many rebellious people, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain... Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who turn from the truth. To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him, being detestable, disobedient and unfit for every good work” (Titus 1:10-16).

“But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned” (Titus 3:9-11).

“But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long

time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber” (2 Peter 2:1-3).

“I wrote to the church, but Diotrefes, who loves to have the **preeminence among them**, does not receive us. So if I come, I will **call attention** to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. And not content with that, he himself **does not receive** the brethren, and **forbids** those who wish to, **putting them out** of the church” (3 John 1:9,10).

- Describe your inner feelings about controversy over faith issues. Do you readily stand up to defend your beliefs? Do you confront others who are teaching lies?

- Describe how you think faith-based differences should be handled.

- Would those who know you consider you someone who argues about religion for the sake of argument?

- Do you get hung up on a religious point and can't seem to let it go even though everyone else has?

- Explain what you believe the difference is between “confronting controversy over truth, yet avoiding controversy for controversy sake.”

Boldly Facing Any Type Of Persecution

“For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to trust in Him, but also **on behalf of Him to suffer**” (Philippians 1:29).

“But even after we had **suffered before** and were **spitefully treated** at Philippi, as you know, we were **bold in our God** to speak to you the gospel of God in **much conflict**...For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also **suffered the same things** from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans” (1 Thessalonians 2:2,14).

“so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your **patience and faith** in all your **persecutions and tribulations** that you endure” (2 Thessalonians 1:4).

“But recall the former days in which, after you had received the light, you **endured a great struggle with sufferings**: partly while you were made a spectacle both by **reproaches and tribulations**, and partly while you **became companions** of those who were so treated; for you had **compassion on me in my chains**, and **joyfully accepted the plundering** of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven” (Hebrews 10:32-34).

“Women received **their dead** raised to life again. Others were **tortured**, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of **mockings and scourgings**, yes, and of **chains and imprisonment**. They were **stoned**, they were sawn in two, were **slain** with

the sword. They **wandered** about in sheepskins and goatskins, being **destitute, afflicted, tormented**—of whom the world was not worthy. They **wandered** in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth” (Hebrews 11:35-38).

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the **fiery trial** which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but **rejoice** to the extent that you **partake of Christ’s sufferings**, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be **glad with exceeding joy**. If you are **insulted** because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone **suffers as a Christian**, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. Yet if anyone **suffers as a Christian**, let him not be ashamed, but let him **glorify God** in this matter. Now, “If the **righteous one** is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” Therefore let those who **suffer according to the will of God** commit their souls to Him **in doing good**, as to a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:12-19).

“Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the **world hates you**” (1 John 3:13).

“Then the **dragon was enraged** at the woman and went off to **make war against** the rest of her offspring—those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12:17).

- **Are you, your family and faith family prepared for the persecution that will accompany the Dark Days of Chastisement? If not, what do you lack?**

- **Are you raising your own children to be**

popular and successful by the world’s standards, or to be Jesus in the flesh, willingly and lovingly serving His purposes?

- **Describe how you’re spiritually preparing yourself for persecution to come.**

Conclusion

The Scripture passages we cited are clear: followers of Jesus WILL encounter controversy and persecution. If you shy away from either, you’re denying both Jesus as Lord and the truths His Spirit has entrusted to you. Ducking isn’t an option! “My **righteous one will live by trust**. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him” (Hebrews 10:38).

Use this Lifebyte to strengthen your resolve and that of your fellowship family to embrace suffering and persecution. Make sure none of you has an aversion to either. Keep reminding each other of the goal of suffering for His name’s sake” that you each may be more like Jesus. *His character being formed in you* evidences that you’re His beloved called-out one.

If you don’t avoid suffering, you’ll be better prepared to face persecution. May we all embrace the attitude of our King:

Looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).