

The Persecutors and the Persecuted

By Jesse Larsen

While most of the persecution against Christians in America has been mild compared to what Christians are enduring in other countries, I believe that could change very quickly as I see hostility towards Christians quickly increasing in America - and much of it is coming from within the professing church. Others who recognize this should not consider the words to the following Bible passage to be far-fetched: "*The time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service*" (John 16:2).

One of the things I have noticed over the years is that many of the persecutors of true Christians often consider themselves to be under persecution. For that reason, I have decided to write this article to show some of the biblical distinctions between the persecutors and the persecuted. The following words that Jesus spoke clearly reveals some of the characteristics of both the persecutors and the persecuted:

*"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. **If you were of the world, the world would love its own.** Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, **because they do not know Him who sent Me**" (John 15:18-21).*

This passage reveals that the persecutors are "of the world," and they love others who are also of the world - but they hate and persecute those who are not. The end of the passage also reveals why they persecute: they do not know God. And if you talk about knowing God to people like this, it is likely that you will get a blank stare or be accused of being legalistic and a "Pharisee," simply for sharing your testimony of how God delivered you from the carnal life that you once lived.

Much of the music that I used to listen to before my Christian life was hateful, and I was respected by like-minded people who were into the same music during that time. Yet now that I desire for people to be delivered from the bondage that I was under, I am considered to be a hater or a trouble-maker by some of the same types of people who once respected me.

A song by the band *Stuck Mojo* titled "Hate Breed" includes the lyrics, "This hate makes me a better man, my hate helps me to take a stand."

The *Nine Inch Nails* song titled "Wish" includes the lyrics, "Don't think you're having all the fun, you know me, I hate everyone." The *Nine Inch Nails* song titled "Somewhat Damaged" includes the lyrics, "Lick around divine debris, taste the wealth of hate in me."

The *Korn* song titled "Trash" includes the lyrics, "My heart inside is constantly hating." In case anyone thinks that the singer for this band is bluffing, I will also point out that the *Korn* songs titled "Need To," "Daddy," "Mr. Rogers," "My Gift To You," and "Right Now" all include the lyrics "I hate you." The *Korn* song titled "Kill You" includes hateful lyrics which are so perverse that I will not quote them in this article. I could go on and on about some of the hateful lyrics that I have heard, but I just wanted to give some of the most obvious examples that I could recall.

So why is it that those who are "*of the world*" (John 15:19) are the most respected (even though some of them whom I have quoted here have admitted to being hateful) while true Christians are regarded as being hateful simply because they disagree with certain groups of

individuals? While Christians are regarded as being hateful simply for disagreeing with the world's way of thinking, many who **frankly admit** to being hateful are respected by some of the same people who accuse Christians of being hateful! That seems to indicate that hateful people are not really what much of the world is taking issue with. In many cases, the accusation that Christians are hateful often appears to be an attempt to obscure real issues, which brings me to my next point.

One more characteristic of the persecutors is that they will often attack a person **RATHER** than that person's argument. This would seem to indicate that they really have no honest defense against the argument. Whether they are atheists or religious people, it is common for those who have no honest defense for their position to demonize or marginalize those who disagree with them. I see that continually today, but it is not new. Here is a clear example of an attempt to demonize a wise Believer in the time of the Apostles: *"Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. Then they secretly induced men to say, 'We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God'"* (Acts 6:9-11).

The mindset that is revealed in this passage is one that I see throughout much of the world today. We have reached a time when people are called "hateful" for disagreeing with anything that is based on false teaching (teachings that are not scriptural). (unless it is "another Jesus" - 2 Corinthians 11:4). Not only are Christians today demonized as being hateful for disagreeing with the world's way of thinking, but there is also an attempt to silence Christians as well. I see that attempt not only through some of the legislation that has passed but also through the fact that I have witnessed many of the Christian websites that I visit getting hacked since 2008, including "Voice of The Martyrs" – a ministry that serves persecuted Christians around the world. I have also seen it through the fact that my posts are continually deleted on a message board called "Internet Movie Data Base" whenever I post something there challenging atheism or evolution or when I post something challenging unbiblical theology in a certain religious movie.

None of this surprises me since John 15:18-21 makes it clear that true Christians would be hated and persecuted, but I am pointing it out simply because I find this common response to be very informative. When someone has the truth on their side, they are not afraid of opposing views being expressed, and they therefore do not feel the need to silence those who disagree with them. So the very fact that anyone would silence those who disagree with them only reveals that they have no honest defense for their position. That is one of the main differences between the persecutors and the persecuted.

Colossians 3:2 says, *"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."* Yet one of the characteristics of the persecutors is that they are worldly-minded, which is why Jesus made it clear that they are *"of the world"* (John 15:19). So don't be surprised if they view you as an oddball for not being as worldly-minded as they are. Such worldly-mindedness is certainly seen in those who mock Christians for believing in a pre-tribulation rapture (which is a mockery that has come from both the world and the professing church), but their mocking of this just proves the words of the following passage to be true: *"Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of His coming?"* (2 Peter 3:3-4)

That verse even reveals that lust is their motivation. This reminds me of a verse which refers to worldly-minded as *"grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage"* (Jude 1:16). So their motivation is commonly self-centered personal gain, because their minds are set on the things of

earth rather than the things above. The motivation of true Believers should be compassion for the lost, as it was with Paul in the following passage: *“I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites”* (Romans 9:1-4).

Sadly, many who show such a compassion today are often hated by those who are *“walking according to their own lusts”* (Jude 1:16). This was also the case with Paul when he stated, *“I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved”* (2 Corinthians 12:15). We are seeing an increase of what the Bible describes in 2 Timothy 3:1-5, and it is for that reason that I will conclude this article with the following words of comfort for true believers.

“Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”
(Galatians 6:9)

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”
(2 Corinthians 4:17)

That last verse shows one more difference between the persecutors and the persecuted. Any affliction that the persecutors may face is working against them, but the affliction of the persecuted is working **for them**. Like Paul, the true believer should *“consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Romans 8:18).