

Prepared for Persecution

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[0:00] 1 Peter 3, if you're there, find verse 15. The Apostle Peter says, But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

Now, dealing with submission in Sunday school, we came across this passage and showed you how to do with government and if you suffer for righteousness' sake.

And the verse, we read it. And I think that phrase that's kind of at the beginning, be ready always to give an answer to every man, like that's the only portion of that verse that I feel like I've ever really heard expounders or spoken.

And it always comes when it's kind of like somebody asks you a question about the Bible. Well, brother, be ready always to give an answer. It always seems to be applied like that.

And it's not to be applied like that. It's a misapplication of it, thinking that you're supposed to know everything about the Bible that if somebody asks you about the Antichrist or the Tribulation or some obscure reference and you're supposed to be ready, that's not what the verse says at all.

[1:06] And so if that's what you've heard, then let's dispel that notion right now and let's get it to actually what Peter is saying. Peter's talking about when somebody asks you specifically about a reason of the hope that is in you.

Somebody asks you a question specifically about something that is in you that's causing you to act different, to be different, to react differently to something.

He says when they ask, when they see that and they ask you about it, now you need to be ready to tell them why you have something in you they don't. That's the context of this.

But even clearer than that, it's about suffering. Look at verse 14, the verse right before that. So he says, But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye.

And be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer. So Peter is absolutely talking about suffering for righteousness' sake.

[2:14] For when you do what's right and you get in trouble for it or you get in some way suffer for it. What we might call it today is being persecuted for your faith.

Now there's persecutions going on all over this globe and there always has been, whether you're familiar with it or aware of it or not, or whether anybody's talking about it. It's going on where people believe in Jesus Christ and it has cost them something.

And persecution though, this is why I feel like you might start to divorce yourself already from this notion because you have never had anybody burn your house to the ground or no one's coming in here with machetes or doing anything to try to harm us.

We don't even understand this as Christians in America. We're soft. We have it so easy. And you don't understand what real suffering is.

But I want you to at least, I still want this to apply to you in some way today. And so at least understand that persecution can come in various forms. It's not just being hauled out and whipped out in front of the church by somebody who is against Jesus Christ or like I said, burning it to the ground or going to prison because you have a Bible.

[3:24] There's more levels of persecution than just the extreme. I would define it like this. Any negative consequence for doing what's right.

We could call it persecution. It could be a one out of ten or a ten out of ten. But any negative consequence for you doing what you believe is right in the eyes of God. It could be for you today that you could get shunned at work because you're the one that has the Bible on their desk.

Or that you open up your Bible at lunchtime and you read it. Or people see you bow your head. They could be mocking you. They could talk about you. It's a small thing. But it's a part of a persecution because you're doing what's right. It could be at school. Your peers or your classmates make fun of you. You could get cussed out on the street corner if you're out there holding up a sign that says Jesus saved. Are you saved? And just putting that out there, somebody could laugh at you. I've heard of guys getting bottles thrown at them out there on the street when they're not instigating anything. They're just trying to preach the gospel and people come up to them. [4 : 30] I've even heard of some getting in scuffles and pushing and punching. That's so, so super rare. But I know it happens. It has happened. And sometimes you go to somebody's door and you knock on their door.

You try to talk to them, give them a track. You try to put a door hanger on it and they see you and they yell at you, get out of here. One guy, I put a door hanger on his door and he came up and he said, hey, no soliciting. They're getting ripped it up. And like, ooh. That didn't bother me a bit. And I just, and I shouldn't have said anything but I'm so dumb. I just, I'm like, I'm not selling anything. I said, it's just an invitation. Which it is, but that didn't do nothing to him. He already ripped it up. He was mad. No matter what I said, he was already angry that I showed up on his doorstep. So I couldn't have just left it be. But nevertheless, that's nothing big, right? But still, that falls into a negative consequence for trying to do what's right. And when people react in a way negative towards you or mock you or even in some way even attack you, whatever it could be, you can get angry and you can get flustered and you can just be like, you know what? [5 : 33] This isn't for me. I don't, I'm not doing this anymore. And you could turn that attitude of this just isn't, I thought it was going to be good. I thought good things were going to happen when I do what's right.

And instead, I'm getting beat down for this. I'm getting accused. And you could start to think about it differently. And that's why I want to give this message to you. I want you to see, no, that response is wrong.

You can be prepared for persecution. You can be prepared inside before it ever happens and you won't respond wrong to it when you're anticipating it. And so Peter tells believers to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you. He wants us to be prepared in the face of persecution and know how to handle it in whatever form it comes. So you say, how can I be ready? When such a situation arises in my life and I didn't expect it, how can I be ready? What if you get accused at work of something you didn't do or slandered by someone because they just want to get at you? [6 : 39] You could be lied about. Christians have been lied about for centuries and generations. You could be on the wrong side of some confrontation and you could feel like, I'm just trying to do what's right.

Why are these things happening to me? It could come from the government. It could come from your family. It can come from your own familiar friend can turn their back on you and falsely accuse you.

So I want to preach this message. I'm titling it Prepared for Persecution. And as I say these things, I want you to know, don't let your mind go to the current events or anything going on.

I'm not worried about some Iranian attack on California. I'm not trying to prep you for something like that. This has nothing at all to do with that. Absolutely nothing. This is in the Bible and it's been in the Bible long before any of us were ever born.

So that's what this is about. It's a mindset. It's something that we need to be fixed upon in our hearts when somebody speaks evil against us. Let me give you a quick example before we move on.

[7 : 40] Look at chapter 4. 1 Peter chapter 4. Look at verses 3 and 4. This is talking about when you change your lifestyle because you are a Christian, you believe on Christ and there are certain things you're not going to do anymore and people you're not going to hang out with.

And look what it says in verse 3. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, abominable idolatries, wherein they think it's strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot.

Notice, speaking evil of you. Your old crowd, your old friends or family start speaking evil of you when for the first time in your life you're just trying to do what's right.

You're not doing anything wrong and now they're accusing you. And this is a form of persecution that comes for righteousness sake.

And so let's adopt a mindset from the scripture about this. Let's be prepared for it before it ever shows up in any level from a 1 to a 10 so that we respond right and so that we don't stumble and so that we don't quit on Jesus Christ because something happened to us.

[8 : 54] Let's pray. Father, please help us to preach and help your people to hear and to believe the words of God and Lord, fix this mindset within us that we're prepared. I am not trying to scare anybody.

I'm not trying to pretend that there's some bigger threat than there is. I'm not doing any of this, this straw man build up to preach against him. Lord, you know my heart here. Please help your people to hear it and to know clearly the intentions and to receive the truth and do a work in our hearts. Help us to be powerfully strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. All right. So let's consider something here. I'll give you three quick things here about this thought of being prepared for persecution.

and the first thought I want to give you from that verse we read in verse 15 is to exercise the hope that is in you, that is inside of you. When you get saved, God puts something inside of you and we know by studying this out in the Bible it's the new man and in the new man who's created after righteousness and true holiness and knowledge after the image of him that created him and in that new man is the ability to serve God and to do what's right and to access God and to understand spiritual truth and all of that is inside of you and that needs to be exercised daily.

You could just say walk by faith or walk in the new man or walk in the spirit and not fulfill the lust of the flesh. There's all kinds of ways to say it but I'm saying it from this verse. Exercise the hope.

That's what it's called the hope that is in you.

[10 : 22] First there has to be a hope in you before you could ever exercise it and then that hope has to be evidenced outwardly before anyone would ever ask a reason for the hope that is in you.

Does that make sense? They're never going to ask you about something that doesn't exist or isn't evident within you and so that hope has got to be exercised that what Jesus Christ the change that he seeks to make in your life has got to be evidenced in you before anybody is ever going to say so with all this going on how is it that you're so calm?

With all this coming at you how can you be so confident? They're going to ask if it's evidenced in your life. Why doesn't this bother you?

You know if you read about church history you know that our spiritual ancestors this is like the level 10 stuff they were literally burned alive tied to a stake with fire and fags all around them and twigs and lit that thing up and while their flesh is burning they sang songs of praise to God.

I'm sure some of them screamed in horror I'm sure it was terrible but there is recorded evidence that these men and women sang with their voice to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[11 : 49] Boy that would make you ask the question what is the reason of the hope that's in them when they're suffering for righteousness sake they're responding in this way.

Hope is a feeling of trust and expectation. It rests upon the promises of the word of God.

It is built up upon the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not just some wishy-washy emotion that just floats around inside your pretty little heart but no it's something concrete some substance that God puts inside of you and it's like the scripture when you get more Bible in you it starts to build it starts to like collect to that hope it's like a magnet to it and it starts to get bigger and bigger and stronger and stronger and when things come your way it doesn't faze you because you believe the word of God.

You believe that Jesus Christ is going to see you through this. You believe that you have something better waiting for you no matter how this thing goes down. Let me show you that from this passage here.

Hope that is in you is evidenced in certain ways. Look at chapter 3 and verse 14 again. 1 Peter 3 verse 14 he says but if you suffer for righteousness sake happy are ye and then he says be not

afraid of their terror neither be troubled when it might be some government some mob some whatever people whatever you're not afraid of their threats you're not afraid of what they say they're going to do to you if you keep doing this there's a hope inside of you that causes you not to fear what man can do unto me look also at chapter 4 in verse 16 not only are you not afraid but that hope makes you not ashamed as well chapter 4 in verse 16 yet if any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God on this behalf you know why you're not ashamed is because the

[14:02] Lord Jesus Christ did this same thing he suffered for righteousness sake he suffered matter of fact look at chapter 4 verse 1 for as much then as Christ hath suffered for us look back in chapter 3 verse 18 for Christ also hath once suffered for sins the just for the unjust look back one more time at chapter 2 and look at verse 21 for for even here unto where you called because Christ also suffered for us leaving us an example that you should follow steps there's there's something Christ when Christ is in you he's already done all of this and when it comes to evidence in your life he's the same spirit the same Jesus Christ that endured the cross is there to say hey we can take this too I can take a little bit from them no problem and you're not ashamed you're not afraid to admit that he's your savior you're not ashamed of this you're not ashamed to suffer for

Jesus Christ and you're not afraid to do it because he's in you that hope that hope that's in you also has an answer it speaks one thing that it'll confuses in a clear righteous conscience say hey I know I didn't do anything wrong that's why I can take this that's why I don't have to get all bent out of shape and and wild about it and quit on God because I know that I didn't do anything wrong and God is my judge he knows I didn't do anything wrong you can have a clear conscience and that can this gets you know where you're going look at chapter 3 and verse 18 again it says Christ 3 18 Christ also hath once suffered for sins the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God so no matter how bad it would get if it goes from a one to a ten on the persecution scale my hope answers saying

I know where I'm going bring it on I I don't want to get mocked but I know where I'm going no matter what it gets to no matter how deep it gets there's a hope in me and that hope can be exercised it'll speak some things there's one more thing in chapter 4 in verse 19 look at that one 1 Peter 4 verse 19 therefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing is unto a faithful creator what your hope will say and what it will speak and answer is that I trust God to take care of this that's why I'm not going to fight back I'm not going to get a lawyer I'm not going to start this whole process I'm not going to defend myself in certain ways because my father my faithful God has my back if I suffer for doing what's right he sees it he knows it he can handle this if he wants to get me out of this he'll get me out of this if he wants me to suffer for his sake to God be the glory

I'll glorify Jesus Christ verse 16 I'll glorify God on this behalf it doesn't feel good but look at verse 13 of chapter 4 let me back up to verse 12 4 12 and 13 beloved think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you but rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings that when his glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy and Peter later says in where's that verse that the spirit of glory resteth upon that's in verse 14 if you be reproached for the name of Christ happy are ye for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you and there's something coming to you chapter 5 verse 1 Peter says at the end of that verse I'm a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed you're going to get rewarded when this thing when God you commit the keeping of your soul to him I'm going to suffer for righteousness sake I'm not going to fight it

I'm not going to get all big and bad and tough I'm not going to argue I'm going to let God handle it and if he sees fit for me to suffer for him it's nothing compared to what Jesus Christ did for me but if he sees for me to suffer all the way to the end of my life for his glory I know from the Bible that I'll get something for that he is faithful and he is righteous and his glory I'll be a partaker of that glory when it's revealed that's what Paul said in Romans chapter 8 that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us that's part of your inheritance Christian if you're suffer for him so exercise the hope that's in you it's going to have to be in you first you understand that it's going to have to be evident you're going to have to be living this out and then what happens there's so many things you're not afraid you're not ashamed you have an answer of a clear conscience you have an answer that you know where you're going and you have an answer that God will handle this for me

[19 : 34] I can trust him in all of it so let's consider something else not only do you exercise the hope that is in you but to be prepared for persecution you must number two expect opposition you expect it to happen then you're not surprised think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is the trial you know some strange thing like expect that this is going to happen if I'm going to live for Jesus Christ in this life the world is not going to be happy about it it's not going to receive me and love me and help me along the way so I'll expect living for Jesus Christ is going to have some consequences in this world and you're warned about its potential just right here all over this book but it's not just Peter that warns us and if you could keep your place do we need to keep our place no you can lose your place here we're not going to come back let's go to the left to find Philippians chapter 1 a few pages to your left just a lot of small books in there find the book of Philippians it's Galatians

Ephesians Philippians Colossians in that order Philippians chapter 1 I'm going to run you through a couple of these passages we'll just read them together to show that that Paul warned the church in his day to expect opposition afflictions abounded amongst the Christians chapter 1 and look at verse 27 to the end 27 to 30 Philippians 1 27 only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ that whether I come and see you or else be absent I may hear of your affairs that you stand fast in one spirit with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel so they're living it out this gospel of Christ now verse 28 says and in nothing terrified by your adversaries which is to them an evident token of perdition but to you of salvation and that of God for unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake having the same conflict which you saw in me and now here to be in me it's nothing new how pleasant that is for Paul to say hey it's given to you on behalf of Christ to not only believe on him what a wonderful blessing but then also to suffer for his sake like is there anything else to this is that it's like I'm going to believe on and then I'm going to start suffering is that what this is what I'm entitled to in this life the answer is yes yes and we don't pray for it but we're not terrified by our adversaries because we understand it we believe it could come and when it comes we're not shocked we're not knocked down to our knees well maybe we are we fall to our face in prayer but we're not cut off at the knees maybe is a better way to say it because we expected this could happen this day could come we're not surprised look at chapter 3 Philippians 3 18 he says mentions the enemies of the cross of Christ yeah they're still out there 318 many walk of whom I've told you often now tell you even weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ whose end is destruction God is their belly glory in their shame who mind earthly things they're not going to help you if they're enemies of the cross of Christ then they're going to be the ones that are persecuting you who are believers in Jesus Christ and so they're there keep coming to your right and skip over Colossians and find 1st Thessalonians 1st Thessalonians chapter 3 just keep moving to the right a little bit 1st Thessalonians 3 and look at verse number 4 ah let's go to verse 3 3 and 4 can it be any plainer 3 3 and 4 that no man should be moved by these afflictions for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto for verily when we were with you we told you before that we should suffer tribulation even as it came to pass and you know before it happened Paul warned them expect it it's coming understand it now the levels of 1 to 10 I'm not telling you what levels coming for you here in America it might just stay 1 or 2 and that's great but you better be faithful in those because there's been others that have gone through the 9's and the 10's and you can't hold a stick a candle to them but we have the same God in us the same spirit in us so let's go on to the next book 2

Thessalonians chapter 1 it's the last place for

Paul's warnings and reminders about persecution expecting the affliction and the opposition to come if you're going to live for God 2 Thessalonians and look at chapter 1 verses 4 and 5 verse 4 so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which ye also suffer the first time he wrote to this church he said I told you it was going to happen don't act surprised it's coming and then it's been going down and he's saying you're doing a great job you're exercising patience and faith in all of these persecutions and tribulations you're enduring them for Jesus Christ keep up the good work God and he finishes this saying that God's going to recompense to your persecutors wrath but to you rest and you'll experience when God makes it all right

[25 : 36] Peter warns his audience of persecution and suffering for righteousness sake the apostle Paul warns multitude of churches so should we ignore all of this Bible because we live in the United

States of America because we have the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence Should we ignore all of this and say well that doesn't apply to me because I live here because I have this document that's protecting me you might think I know some of you you're like this doesn't even resonate these scriptures because you've lived a long life you've never experienced anything like that not to some major degree but you have to admit if you've tried to walk with God and be a witness for Christ and witness to your lost family and friends you've got to admit that somewhere along the line somebody pushed back if you haven't felt any pushback then you're just undercover that hope in you is not even evident for somebody to ever ask a reason that it's in you and if that comes as a rebuke to you then it probably should and you should take it serious because the Lord Jesus Christ judgment seat is right around the corner for you you're going to want to have something to show for your life I'm not saying go pick a fight with somebody to tell them that Jesus saves here hit me in the face don't go that direction but just start walking with God and be public about it just pray about it what could he have you do that you fulfill your role in this some of you say well I'll never get tortured for my faith and likely you won't likely if things continue the way they are I won't either I won't ever experience what some of our forefathers men and women and children have undergone because they claimed faith in Jesus Christ and would not bow the knee to Baal or to the Roman popes or to whoever there was that was forcing them with a sword or with fire or with chains or with some stretching machine torturing them to get them to recant even the apostle Paul's testimony he did that to Christians but anyway one of the greatest ways to be ready to give an answer is to expect there to come a day that you have to give it expect the opposition it doesn't have to be behind bars it doesn't have to be in front of a judge or a firing squad it could be in front of your boss it could be in front of your children or your parents your grandparents it could be in front of your family gathering sitting around the table and one of them turns to you and says you've been going to church an awful lot lately so why is that what am I going to hell looking around because they're signaling you out and trying to pick a little fight with you in front of everybody challenging you any negative consequence for living for Jesus Christ is some level of persecution suffering as a Christian expect it that's how you'll be able to have an answer you know in the court of law when a witness takes the stand the lawyers have already prepped them ahead of time of what potential questions that they'll get from the other attorney the other attorney is the opposing counsel opposition and they're expecting that opposition to come at them with something and so they prepare for it they prepare the witness before they ever take the stand and so for you and I to be prepared for persecution in whatever form it comes we ought to expect opposition let me read you a short passage of the Lord Jesus Christ words from John chapter 15 I'm just going to turn and read if you want to catch it you've got to be quick John 15 verses 18 through 21 Jesus says this he said if the world hate you you know that it hated me before it hated you if ye were of the world the world would love his own but because you're not of the world but I have chosen you out of the world therefore the world hateth you remember the word that I said unto you the servant's not greater than his Lord if they have persecuted me they will also persecute you if they have kept my saying they'll keep yours also but all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake because they know not him that sent me the persecution that comes to you is for his name's sake if you just drop him if you just just renounce him they're not going to come after you they're not going to mock you they're not going to put the pressure on you or try to get you to say something but if you walk with Jesus Christ just expect it to come and when it comes you're going to be ready to give the answer so exercise hope that God placed in you and expect the opposition to come for living for Jesus Christ and then the third thing I'll just say it by way of the outline exalt your relationship with Jesus Christ meaning make him and that relationship the priority relationship in your life put him above all the others now it's always a good thing to stay close to the brethren that is the church folks that are saved that are your people brothers and sisters I'm a firm believer in that God puts us together puts us in each other's lives we are to bear one another's burdens we are to take our prayer requests before the Lord one for another we're to support and encourage one another and I'm forced staying close to God's people but if there's a relationship that needs to be prioritized stay close to Jesus Christ don't let your Christian life just be the friends that you have at church and the Christians that you know you need a personal relationship with Jesus Christ when persecution shows up in your door it shows up at work it shows up in your family it shows up in any way when it shows up the other believers may love you but they may not be able to help you and hold you up

they certainly can't endure this for you their prayers are great but they may not be able to go through it with you some of them some of your closest friends in Christ may desert you just like the disciples of Jesus

[32 : 03] Christ deserted him some of them like Peter may deny even knowing you how could they say that about me how could Peter say that about Christ Jesus warned his followers that when persecution arises even their own families would turn against them but even if the brethren are supportive they can't endure the persecution for you they can't give you grace they can't give you peace inside of your troubled spirit to help you continue on only the Lord Jesus Christ can do that so one of the greatest ways to be prepared for persecution is to have a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ if everybody in this church gives up and falls to the pressure it should not affect your relationship with Jesus

Christ because that's supposed to be the priority relationship I want to take you to two places in the Old Testament and then we're going to be done find Psalm 27 Psalm 27 would you flip to this Psalm very fitting for somebody going through it and then the second place I'd like you to find is Daniel chapter 2 and 3 so I'll give you a second here find Psalm 27 and I want to read with you the entirety of this Psalm it's 14 verses and then find yourself to Daniel chapter 2 we'll get there in a moment I'll begin in Psalm 27 verse number 1 the Lord is my light I'm talking about this being the priority relationship exalt your relationship with Jesus Christ above all others that's how you'll be ready you'll be prepared for persecution the Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear the Lord is the strength of my life of whom shall I be afraid when the wicked even mine enemies and my foes came upon me to eat up my flesh they stumbled and fell though when hosts should encamp against me my heart shall not fear though war should rise against me in this will I be confident one thing have I desired of the

Lord that will I seek after that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple for in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me he shall set me up upon a rock and now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy I will sing praises unto the Lord hear O Lord when I cry with my voice have mercy upon me and answer me when thou sayest seek ye my face my heart said unto thee thy face Lord will I seek hide not thy face far from me put thy servant away in anger that thou hast been my help leave me not neither forsake me O God of my salvation when my father and my mother forsake me then the Lord will take me up teach me thy way O Lord and lead me in the plain path because of mine enemies deliver me not over to the will of mine enemies for false witnesses! are risen up against me and such as breathe out cruelty I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of wait I say on the Lord so when persecution arises nothing can outperform a personal relationship with the Lord nothing father and mother forsake you you better not be holding on to them putting your faith and trust in their ability to love you and hold on to you hey God forbid that you have to deal with any of that stuff with family members but it comes up in the Bible quite a bit so you should expect it be prepared for it but make the priority relationship in your life Jesus Christ I want to give you an example of how this happened find Daniel then now chapter number two Daniel chapter two that relationship with Jesus Christ is where your strength is going to come from like that passage said that's where the grace to help in time of need is going to come from that's where the mercy is going to come from the relief and the love and the confidence it's going to come out of that relationship with

Jesus Christ now Daniel chapter two the very last verse of this shows us that Daniel has been exalted in this kingdom and he got his friends put in exalted positions as well chapter two verse forty nine Daniel requested of the king he said Shadrach Meshach and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon but Daniel sat in the gate of the king so Nebuchadnezzar has these three guys four total but these three over the affairs of the province of Babylon he the king is their employer their government workers and officials and they've moved up in the ranks pretty high to be right there where the king is now in chapter three this king sets up an image and he tells all of these princes and judges and captains and all of anybody who's anybody in his kingdom all of the government people to come together at a time the music is going to play bow down to this image of me and so he sets up the image they all come together and he threatens them with a burning fiery furnace in verse six whoso falleth not down and worshipeth shall the same hour be cast in the midst of the burning fiery furnace so everything's understood now

[38 : 13] Daniel's three friends these three men have found themselves face to face with the king because they would not bow to the image and not only are they face to face with just having a conversation but the king is hot he's in a rage over this thing that's found in verse 13 Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach Meshach and Abednego and so now they're not just standing before this sovereign their boss the one who's given them this great great job but he is steaming mad at them and he's threatened them and he's ready to kill them and so they're faced with a furnace of fire right here but do you know what these three men were they were prepared for persecution you know why I know that because they placed their relationship with God above the relationship of the most powerful man that they've ever met in their life the king of the king that God had given the kingdom to of this earth

Nebuchadnezzar they were not afraid of him they considered God's relationship more important look at verse 16 Shadrach Meshach and Abednego answered and said to the king oh Nebuchadnezzar we're not careful to answer thee in this matter if it be so our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and he will deliver us out of thine hand oh king but if not be it known unto thee oh king that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou has set up these men found the relationship with God more important they were persecuted they were prepared for persecution because they served their God our God whom we serve they served him that relationship was the priority and it was above the king in their own lives now we're about to close here but maybe you've heard I've heard I read it this week and I know there's a few stories very similar to this a man in the LA county he sued the county because they posted a rainbow flag at his place of employment he worked for the county one of the branches and they put up this rainbow flag in there and celebrated all of that perversion and he had a problem with it he had to walk by it every day and he despised seeing it and he determined that he should not have to deal with this at work and so he requested of his boss that he could work at home and the boss denied him said no

I'm not going to let you work at home just because you don't like that flag up there and so the man took it to the next level and he sued the county for offending his beliefs now on a personal level I hope the outcome of that is that the government will be forced to recognize that all this inclusivity is excluding others and I wish they just drop all of that nonsense and stop trying to lift one up over the other all of that that's what I hope happens whether they do or they don't though listen our instructions for how to walk and to please God come from this holy bible this is where we get how we react and respond to things like this that man did not get from his bible sue the county take it to court they violated your rights the bible prepares us for persecution it prepares our minds to be ready for being faced and dealing with things that we don't like things that we do despise and knowing how to handle them and operate we are to exercise the hope that is in us and to work out the salvation that God has given us and put it on display we are to expect opposition to be present in our world every work of God faces opposition in one form or another so we should go into it expecting that we are to exalt our relationship with Jesus

Christ above every other relationship that relationship means more to me than the one at work than the one at home all of them if those things are in place and we observe them we can be ready to answer the government we can be ready to answer our families or our friends or whoever would come at us or ask a reason of the hope that's in us we'll be ready to answer them we'll be ready to handle the affliction and so this morning I want you to be prepared for persecution again this has nothing to do with current events it's just Bible 100% Bible it's a mindset that whether you live here or whether you live behind some iron curtain years ago or whether you're in some communist country today this is Bible this is for the New Testament born again Christian this is the mindset that we develop and we are fixed upon regardless of which way the politics in our nation goes and the younger you are the more likely you'll see changes the older generation would say without a doubt there's been a lot of change since they were a boy or a girl a lot of change you think it's going to start turning a different direction and start going toward

God it's going to drop off absolutely this nation is going to drop off absolutely so be prepared be prepared so that's where we'll stop today with prayer I'm not going to give you an invitation or do anything beyond this I'm going to close in prayer and thank you for being here for being attentive and I hope that these truths and some things you can fix up in your heart and know how you should respond when things go down Father thank you for the scriptures and thank you for the example of our love of our