

Two Prayer Strategies for Persecutors and the Persecuted

March 22nd, 2015 - Gary Hutchison

SERMON SUMMARY:

We are to pray for the persecutors and we are to pray for the persecuted. It is through our prayers that we overcome the enemy in the last days. Paul began his life as a persecutor and God was putting things in His life to draw Him to Himself. These are called “goads” in Acts 26:14. What are the kinds of things Paul was struggling against?

- His doubts because he certainly knew of Jesus and had probably experienced him firsthand.
- The life and martyrdom of Stephen. (Acts 6:15, 7:58-60, 6:9-10, 7:56). Paul’s growing fanaticism against the early Christians was surely a sign of his growing internal doubts.
- Paul’s own conscience. He knew that He was unclean in God’s eyes and needed forgiveness.

Jesus says in Matt 5:44 that we need to be praying for the persecutors of the followers of Jesus. Just as God changed Paul’s life He is also changing modern day “Pauls” from persecutors into followers of Jesus.

We are also supposed to pray for those who are being persecuted that they would remain faithful till the end. Acts 12 opens with James dead, Peter in prison and Herod triumphing and it closes with Herod dead, Peter free, and the Word of God triumphing.

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Have you ever experienced persecution because you were a follower of Jesus? What are some examples of groups who are persecuting Christians today?

Paul was a persecutor of the early Christians. What are some things that he did to support the persecution of the early Christians?

In Acts 26:14 Jesus tells Paul to stop kicking the goads. What does this phrase mean and why did Jesus say this to Paul?

What are some modern day goads that God might use to draw a persecutor to himself.

Gary said that the prayers of the saints matter more than any decision made in Washington DC or Beijing, China. Do you think this is true? Why or why not?

Gary shared a story on video of a modern day Muslim who encountered Jesus. ([Here is the link](#)) Does this story amaze you? Do you believe that God still turns persecutors into followers of Jesus today?

In Acts 12:13-16 we see a picture of the early church praying in faith for Peter who is in prison. When God answers their prayer what was their initial reaction? Do we believe when we pray that God wants to answer our prayers today?

God can answer our prayers for the persecuted in two ways: miracles or martyrdom. Tertullian, an early church father, said this, "We multiply whenever we are mown down by you; the blood of Christians is [the] seed [of the church]." Sometimes God answers by a miracle with Peter and sometimes he allows martyrdom like with James. What does victory look like in each situation?