

Bible Reading

Hebrews 13:3
Galatians 6:2
John 15:20
Acts 5:41

Philippians 1:29
Matthew 5:10
Revelation 2:10

Review Questions

In Hebrews 13:3, Christians are instructed to identify with whom?

What command is given in Galatians 6:2 which reminds believers that we have a responsibility to our brothers in Christ?

In John 15:20, what was the stark message that the Lord Jesus gave to His followers?

Read the account in Acts 5:41. When the apostles were persecuted, what was their reaction?

According to Matthew 5:10 and Revelation 2:10, what does the Lord promise to those who endure persecution faithfully?

Lesson 12

Attack on Liberty

“Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.”

Hebrews 13:3

Christian liberty has always been a treasured gift. Our liberty in Christ was purchased by His own blood and gives us freedom from the bondage of sin and death. Yet throughout the last two thousand years of history, religious liberty has relentlessly been under attack. Kings, governments, rulers, cultures, and even local communities have worked to silence the gospel and to persecute those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 13:3 reminds us that there are believers in bonds around this world who are suffering every day for the same beliefs in the Word of God that you and I have. The text encourages us not only to “remember those who are in bonds” but also to remember them “as bound with them.” We are to place ourselves, as it were, in their position. God’s Word reminds us of the great value of our religious liberty but also encourages us to remember those in other lands who do not have the privileges of freedom that we enjoy in the United States.

Notes

Our liberty in Christ was purchased by His own blood.

God’s Word reminds us to remember those who do not have the privileges of freedom that we enjoy.

Notes

The Remembrance of the Persecuted

A clear command in Scripture is given to all believers in Hebrews 13:3, “Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them....” This scriptural command is often overlooked, especially by those who live in lands that enjoy religious liberty. The past two thousand years of Christian history show us that religious liberty is not the norm, but rather the exception. For most of the history of Christianity, genuine believers were persecuted, ridiculed, imprisoned, and often executed, not for crimes, but because they believed the Word of God.

We should pray for other believers and seek to alleviate their plight.

Galatians 6:2 tells us, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” This injunction for believers to bear each other’s burdens enables us to see that we do not live independently of other believers around the world. Will we follow the command of Scripture to remember the suffering saints and pray for them?

The Reality of Persecution

John 15:20 states, “...If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” Jesus Christ taught that those who followed Him would be persecuted as He was persecuted. From the early days of the apostles in the book of Acts, we learn of their persecution (Acts 5:41).

In the first three centuries of Christian history, believers often met in secret, singing softly and praying fervently for safety and for those who were unbelievers. In the Roman Colosseum, Christians were commonly used as props for the entertainment of the pagan crowd. Men, women, and

children who believed in Christ were often thrown to wild beasts or gored by raging bulls. Throughout the Middle Ages, many who believed the Scriptures were persecuted by the authorities of European nations because they were seen as threats to the governments. The reality of the persecution of Christians has been a very tangible thing.

In the United States of America, we owe a great deal to our Baptist forefathers, who sought to emphasize that freedom of religion is an inalienable right given by God to every individual soul. The freedom that we have enjoyed in the last two hundred fifty years is unique in human history.

The Response to Persecution

Those of us who know freedom of religion and have been set free by Christ should use our liberty to serve others, especially those in bonds. Time and time again, Christians throughout the centuries have suffered persecution, and yet, have not persecuted others. Believers respond differently to suffering than the world does.

Philippians 2:19 instructs us that we are not to retreat in the face of persecution, but rather to stand. Christ is our perfect example in this matter. When He was nailed upon, falsely accused, and scourged, He did not retaliate toward those who hated Him. True liberty may never be taken from a genuine Christian because true liberty is rooted in Christ Himself.

Our Christian response to persecution is not to retaliate in violence, but rather to depend upon God’s grace in times of trial.

Notes

The religious freedom we enjoy is unique in human history.