

Audio Transcript of Sermon
August 15, 2026
Signs of the End Time – Persecution

Hello. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Tom Laign with Sabbath Bible Study. Henry Kissinger was United States Secretary of State during the administrations of President Nixon and President Ford. He was active in negotiating an end to the Vietnam War and opening up dialog with both China and the Soviet Union. Born in Germany, his family fled in 1938 to avoid Nazi persecution, and he became a citizen of the United States in 1943. That same year he enlisted and served in the Counterintelligence Corps in the army over in Europe. Had Henry Kissinger not fled Nazi persecution when he did, he probably wouldn't have lived the long life that he had. After the war he attended Harvard University later becoming a professor there where he developed a reputation as an expert on foreign policy. He began advising governmental agencies and candidates for office and was appointed by President Nixon as the National Security Advisor before his appointment as Secretary of State. After leaving public office he remained influential and died just a few years ago. During his lifetime he developed several concepts including Realpolitik, which focused on power rather than ideals, and this approach helped to ease Cold War tensions, opened the door to China, and navigated the difficulties of the Middle East. He is also attributed with the concept that, "he who controls the food controls the people." This concept was designed to show how political power and control is linked to the food supply, and most people are impacted by the food supply by what they pay at the grocery store.

When I bought my most recent loaf of bread the price had jumped by fifty cents, and even though it was only fifty cents it made me take note. What most people don't realize is how a few big companies have a huge grip over the world's food supply. Did you know that it's thought that four major companies control three-fourths of the global grain market. When these four companies charge more for grain the price of bread goes up. When it comes to what farmers plant, there are a small number of companies that control seeds for commercial farming. There are dozens of supermarket chains and many of these chains are closely linked to ten parent companies, and when it comes to meat processing in the United States, most is done by four conglomerates. Think about the implications of controlling the food. If a company declines to make available a certain type of

seed for farmers, farmers won't be able to easily plant that crop, meaning when you and I go the grocery store, we either won't be able to buy food made from crops grown by that seed, or we will pay a much higher price. When food recalls happen because of the risk of some type of food contamination at a processing plant, that tends to have ripple effects through broad areas of countries where certain food items are not available. We will revisit the concept of, "he who controls the food controls the people," later in today's sermon."

Going back to Henry Kissinger, he fled Germany because of religious persecution, and being persecuted for one's beliefs is a theme we can find in many different places in the Bible. When Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem in the third year of Judah's King Jehoiakim many children of Judah were taken back to Babylon. They were selective in which children would be taken looking for those who could ultimately serve the royal court of Babylon. They looked for children who were well-versed in learning and had the ability to learn the language of the Chaldeans. These children had to be individuals who were thought of as good children, not what we might think of as juvenile delinquents. These children would be well provided for, so that ultimately, they could be of service for the king, and among these children taken to Babylon were Daniel and his three friends. Daniel would go on to serve in the court of the king, and his three friends had responsibilities over the province of Babylon.

Eventually, King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden image sixty cubits high. The people were expected to fall down and worship this golden image when they heard a musical prompt telling them it was time to worship the golden image. Those who did not fall down and worship on cue would be thrown into a furnace and incinerated. Soon after that accusations were made against Daniel's three friends about not falling down and worshipping the golden image at the musical prompt, which prompted Nebuchadnezzar to have them brought before him, and he gave them a chance to promise to fall down and worship the golden image. The three friends of Daniel refused and directly told the king they would not serve his gods or worship the golden image that had set up.

That didn't set well with the king who became angry, and ordered that the furnace be made as hot as possible, and that Daniel's three friends be bound and thrown into that furnace. The furnace was so hot that the men who took the three friends to be tossed into the furnace all died from the heat, that's how hot

the furnace was. Somehow, it must have been possible for the king to see what was happening inside the furnace because it didn't take long for Nebuchadnezzar to see four people walking in the flames of the furnace all unhurt. Nebuchadnezzar also noticed the fourth person looked like the Son of God. Daniel three verse nineteen.

Daniel 3:19-30

19. Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

20. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.

21. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

22. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

23. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

24. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

25. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

Seeing no harm was coming to them, Nebuchadnezzar came to the mouth of the furnace and called for them to leave, acknowledging that they were servants of the most high God. The powerful and elite of Babylon who were there that day noticed that not only had the fire not harmed their bodies, but their hair was also not singed, they were wearing the same clothes they were wearing when tossed into the fire, and neither they nor their clothes had any scent that would suggest they had been in a fire. Nebuchadnezzar then blessed the most high God and made a new law that protected those who worshipped the God of Israel. Those who violated this new law along with their family would be composted for future use. Verse twenty-six.

26. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed–nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed–nego, came forth of the midst of the fire.

27. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

28. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed–nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

29. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed–nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.

30. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed–nego, in the province of Babylon.

Moving from the account of persecution in the Book of Daniel to the prophecies of Revelation, we come to a place where we can read about the two witnesses. Who these two witnesses are, we do not know for sure, though it appears they will be centered around the temple of God. Reading Zechariah chapters three and four suggests that one of the two witnesses will have a genealogical priestly lineage, through the mention of Joshua the High Priest, and the other will be a civil leader of the area, through the mention of Zerubbabel, who oversaw the rebuilding of the second temple. As Christians when we think of the temple of God, we think of the physical temple that once existed in Jerusalem, and our human bodies which are described as the temple of God. The temple in Revelation is described as having an altar, worshippers, and a courtyard, so from Revelation it seems like an actual physical temple is described, and that would mean between now and the return of Jesus Christ there would be a need to have a temple built. Recently, large beams thought to be from Solomon's temple were unearthed in the area of Jerusalem outside of the temple mount area, which could make for interesting developments.

The two witnesses will be given incredible powers through the Holy Spirit, as their mission is to be a final witness to this world. From Revelation we can see they will serve for three and a half years, and during that time no harm will come to them. Any who seek to harm them will find their mortal life quickly leaving them. They will have the ability to control the weather, not through any scientific feat, but through the power of the Holy Spirit. They can also turn water into blood, likely meaning they can bring what is known as red tide to any location in the world, and red tide can bring respiratory problems to people and even neurotoxin shellfish poisoning, for those who eat shellfish. Fish are typically killed by red tide, meaning a vital food source would be gone. The two witnesses also have the power to bring any and all diseases to mankind.

Think about how easy it would be for those who do not do what God expects, to hate these people. The two witnesses do not do what they do out of hatred for mankind or because they are sociopaths. They do what they do because they are on a mission from God to provide a final witness about the sins of mankind, and they are given wide latitude by God to do what needs to be done to fulfil their mission. The world who rejects God will hate these people. Think of some of the most hated people in either the world today or through our understanding of history. The hatred towards the two witnesses will be greater than the hatred shown anyone else, because when the time of their witness is completed, three and a half years, they will be killed in the streets of Jerusalem, and the world celebrates by sending gifts to others who also hated the two witnesses. Three and a half days later, the party is over when they are resurrected and ascend to heaven in a cloud for everyone to see. When this happens there is a large earthquake that brings damage and death to the city. These events combined lead many to fear God. Revelation eleven verse one.

Revelation 11:1-14

- 1. And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.**
- 2. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.**
- 3. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.**

- 4. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.**
- 5. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.**
- 6. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.**
- 7. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.**
- 8. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.**
- 9. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.**
- 10. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.**
- 11. And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.**
- 12. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.**
- 13. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.**
- 14. The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.**

The two witnesses are given incredible power, and the people of the world see these two as tormenting the planet. They are protected for three and a half years, but during this time they are hated, meaning they suffer persecution up to anything short of what brings physical harm. When this time happens, people will learn not to threaten harm on these people because it will boomerang on them, but that will not undo the deep-seated hatred of the two witnesses. Their death brings an end to the second woe and opens the door to the third woe.

Also in Revelation, we read that the dragon, Satan, is cast to Earth, and persecutes the woman, a reference to the church. We can also see that God intervenes and for three and a half years protects the woman from the serpent. The dragon is described as being angry and goes to make war with the remnant of the woman, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. This shows widespread persecution. Revelation twelve verse thirteen.

Revelation 12:13-17

13. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

14. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

15. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

16. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

From Revelation we also see two beasts that have great influence in this end time tribulation. I'm thinking those who reject God during this time will not understand who the two beasts are, because the world thinks of an end time antichrist, singular, and not two beasts. These two beasts will impress virtually all of the world and deceive nearly everyone. The second beast can cause fire to come down from heaven and will make an image to the first beast that people will worship, much like the people worshipped Nebuchadnezzar's image, though this image will appear to be alive. The mark of the beast will also be introduced, and people who do not have the mark of the beast will not be able to buy or sell anything, including food. The faithful and all who fear God instead of the two beasts will be persecuted and face death. Revelation thirteen verse eleven.

Revelation 13:11-18

11. And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

12. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

14. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

15. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

16. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

17. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

Remember Henry Kissinger's concept that, "he who controls the food controls the people?" These two beasts understand that concept and implement it better than it has ever been implemented before. The more that government controls the food you can buy, the closer we get to a time when it will be easy for the two beasts of Revelation to implement the mark of the beast and persecute the faithful and those who fear God as this shows those who refuse the mark of the beast will be unable to buy or sell anything, including food. We should not be surprised by this future persecution and should take note that Jesus taught as one of the signs of the end time that the faithful would be persecuted. Jesus taught death of the faithful as a result of persecution tied to hate would be an end time reality and that this persecution would cause many to be offended and lead them to betray one another. Revelation shows that the Church in Philadelphia would be spared this persecution. Matthew twenty-four verse nine.

Matthew 24:9-10

9. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

10. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

Paul was persecuted during his ministry. Sometimes he would be imprisoned, beaten, or run out of town. Paul advised Timothy that all who live godly in Jesus Christ, meaning they keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, will suffer persecution. Second Timothy three verse ten.

2 Timothy 3:10-12

10. But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,

11. Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

12. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Jesus taught his disciples in the final night of his life that if they found the world hating them that they should remember the world first hated Jesus Christ, that they would suffer persecution because the world persecuted Jesus. John fifteen verse eighteen.

John 15:18-21

18. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

Peter wrote that we should not be surprised when fiery trials come our way, especially if we suffer because of our faith. Suffering because of our faith is a way how we can glorify God, because most people when given the choice to suffer or not suffer, will choose to not suffer. That's one of the reasons why so many seek pain medications or recreational or illegal drugs. Those who suffer because of

faith knowingly choose to suffer, showing that what they hope for is worth more than the current pain they endure. First Peter four verse twelve.

1 Peter 4:12-16

12. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

13. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

14. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

15. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

16. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Peter also wrote that when we suffer for righteousness' sake to not be afraid of the terror brought to us by those who persecute us. He advised that we should be ready to respond with meekness and reverential awe of God for the hope that is within us knowing we will likely be falsely accused. First Peter three verse thirteen.

1 Peter 3:13-17

13. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

14. But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

15. 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:

16. Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

17. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

In the Psalms we can read of enduring persecution where the human body is pushed to the limits with only hope keeping faith in place. Described for us is a

time when the pain of persecution is so intense that the pain almost overshadows the words of the Bible, where the faithful seem to be swallowed up in smoky darkness when all they have is their memory and knowledge of what God expects of them. The time of persecution will be so intense that the faithful will want to know how long they can physically last and when God will intervene to save them. They will see the proud of this world who reject God plan and plot how they can bring harm to the faithful. But we can also see the faithful who in this time of trouble will not forsake what God expects of them, and will remember that even as bad as it is, God will eventually save them. Psalm one hundred nineteen verse eighty-one.

Psalm 119:81-88

- 81. My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.**
- 82. Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?**
- 83. For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.**
- 84. How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?**
- 85. The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law.**
- 86. All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me.**
- 87. They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts.**
- 88. Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.**

In thinking about persecution to come during the end of time, we can look to what Jesus taught through the parable of the sower. In this parable, Jesus taught that we must be the seed that falls on good ground, where spiritually our roots will be strong and where we will produce bountiful spiritual fruit. We need to be among the faithful who hear the word of God, understand the word of God, and because we do what God expects of us, we also bear spiritual fruit. Jesus showed that those who are like seed cast by the wayside, or on stony ground, or cast among thorns, will not endure during times of tribulation. Matthew thirteen verse eighteen.

Matthew 13:18-23

- 18. Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.**

- 19. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the wayside.**
- 20. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;**
- 21. Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.**
- 22. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.**
- 23. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.**

Paul describes the Holy Spirit as being given to us in the present weakness of our human body to show that anything we do that could be thought of as good and great can be attributed to the Holy Spirit and not to the human we are. Paul writes that troubles surround us, and we find ourselves persecuted, but we are never bothered by it or consumed by it. When those troubles seem most intense we never feel abandoned by God knowing that Jesus died for our sins so that we can have eternal life. Even if what is before us leads to our human death, we have this hope of eternal life made possible through Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians four verse seven.

2 Corinthians 4:7-14

- 7. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.**
- 8. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;**
- 9. Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;**
- 10. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.**
- 11. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.**
- 12. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.**
- 13. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;**

14. Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

Paul came to the point in his life where he realized that illnesses, insults, limitations, persecutions, and the stresses that come to us because of faith make us stronger when we might see ourselves as weak. He showed how when he prayed that a thorn in his flesh be removed from him that God simply showed God's grace was sufficient because God knows His power is made evident when we are weak. Second Corinthians twelve verse seven.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

7. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

When God's power is made evident when we are weak, in a muted way it shows even though we may be ill, insulted, limited, persecuted, or stressed because of faith through the Holy Spirit we will ultimately be victorious, and the time of our victory will be easy for all to see at the return of Jesus Christ. Knowing we have this assurance of victory because we live our lives keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ, we should not be surprised when this world hates us. We live our lives with a focus on doing righteousness when those who are not of the faith may be completely caught up in doing what is aligned more to what Satan would do. If we want to examine ourselves on where we are on the righteousness of God to wickedness of Satan scale, we can begin by looking at the love we have for others. Naturally we will find it easier to have brotherly love for those who are also doing what God expects of them, and we must also find a place for love for those who are currently living their lives opposed to God, because we never know when through us God might call these people. First John three verse seven.

1 John 3:7-13

7. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

8. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

9. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

10. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

11. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

12. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

13. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

Jesus proclaimed a blessing for those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake showing they will be part of the Kingdom of God. Those who do what God expects and endure persecution to the end will be saved. Even though being persecuted for doing what God expects of us may not be enjoyable at the moment, we can take great pleasure and even rejoice knowing the gift of eternal life is awaiting us. Matthew five verse ten.

Matthew 5:10-12

10. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

When we suffer persecution at the hand of another person, typical human reactions include retaliation and anger. Jesus taught us to love our enemies, and to pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us. There is no being perfect like our Father in heaven is perfect without loving our enemies, because

God first loved us and called us from sin when we were living our life opposed to God. God has never given up on us, and while it's important we also never give up on ourselves, we also can never stop loving our enemies. Matthew five verse forty-three.

Matthew 5:43-48

43. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

44. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47. And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

48. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Paul wrote that we are to bless them that persecute us, to bless and not curse. Romans twelve verse nine.

Romans 12:9-14

9. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

10. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

11. Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

12. Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

13. Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

14. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

As bad as persecution may be, all that most persecution can do is make our human life more challenging. In the extreme, persecution could even bring an end to our human life. As Christians, our focus is not on the life we have here and now. That doesn't mean we ignore the here and now, and throw caution to the

wind. But it does mean our focus is on seeking first the Kingdom of God and God's righteousness. We know even if our human life were to end, even that would not separate us from the love of Christ. Human death brings us closer to eternal life because in our consciousness it will be like being human one moment and spirit the next, and will have the same type of feel for those who are alive in the faith at the return of Jesus Christ. Nothing, absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, not even persecution. Romans eight verse thirty-one.

Romans 8:31-39

31. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

32. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

33. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

34. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36. As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Bible shows many different accounts of people being persecuted for the faith. The three friends of Daniel were persecuted because they refused to worship the golden image created by Nebuchadnezzar. When they were tossed into the fiery furnace, it was the guards who tossed them in who died while they walked unscathed with somebody unknown who according to Nebuchadnezzar looked like the Son of Man. God protected them in the face of persecution. The Book of Revelation shows persecutions to come. The two witnesses who provide the final witness about the sins of humanity will be hated by humanity, and when the time of their testimony is finished, they will be killed. Unique to the two witnesses are

special powers given to them by God that they use during the time of their testimony which includes harming those who seek to harm them. The two witnesses endure persecution to the death, and then they are resurrected and rise up on a cloud to heaven. Even the church is persecuted, with prophecies showing the church at Philadelphia being spared. Ultimately the mark of the beast will be used to control people, because without it nobody can buy or sell, and during this time, the concept that, “he who controls the food controls the people,” is proven person by person except for those of the faith who refuse the mark enduring the persecution instead. When we are persecuted, it won’t be fun, but we can take comfort in knowing Jesus proclaimed a blessing on all who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, showing that we will be part of the Kingdom of God to come.

Thank you for joining us today. God-willing we’ll get together next time on the Sabbath. Until then, thank you for joining us today.