

## From the Pastor

Week of June 22, 2008

---

The church faces many challenges in today's world. In Europe and America, society has become more and more secular, with the church and Biblical truths having very little influence on people's lives. At the same time, in many countries, persecution against Christians has intensified at an alarming rate. How are we as Christians to respond in a nation that has little regard for church or God's Word? How does the persecuted church respond in nations where violence against Christians is often supported by the government itself?

Jesus foretold that people would persecute His followers for His name's sake. Peter wrote that we are "blessed" when reproached for the name of Christ, but that we should be sure that our reproach is unjust -- for doing what is right.

1 Peter 4:12-16

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; <sup>13</sup> but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. <sup>14</sup> If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. <sup>15</sup> But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. <sup>16</sup> Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.  
NKJV

Jesus taught His followers were to be the "salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-14). Randy Hurst points out that "throughout history the gospel's power has transformed cultures and nations as redeemed men and women influenced the societies in which they live. The gospel in the power of the Spirit changes people...and people change the destiny of nations."

May we be influencers of our world through the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. May we so live that others may see Christ's love revealed through us and be drawn to Him.

Touching Hearts...Changing Lives