

FROM THE SERVANT GENERAL
LESSONS FROM LAMENTATIONS
(Part 2)
PROPHETS AND PERSECUTION

The role of CFC-FFL in the world today is prophetic. That means that we speak on behalf of God, that we take on His mind and heart, and that we confront a world that is in sin and seek to bring it to repentance and faith. It is doing the very work of God, being His very mouthpiece, reflecting His very image, and bringing His light to a world in darkness.

Now darkness and light are contradictory. The meeting of the two brings conflict.

Evil cannot stand the light. It exposes sin. In fact, “the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil.” (Jn 3:19). As such, those who prefer darkness can be expected to oppose those who bring light. The prophets that God sent were persecuted and executed. Then God sent light itself, His very own Son Jesus who was the light of the world (Jn 8:12). But the people extinguished that light by crucifying him.

At times, persecution might come even from our own brethren. This is what we experienced in the crisis in CFC, and such persecution continues even up to now. Why does this happen?

There are indeed those, even those who are supposedly in the Lord, who still cannot accept truth and the light. We were persecuted because of our prophetic actions.

We spoke about the veering away from our authentic calling, but there were those who persisted on pushing their hidden agenda.

We averred that all had sinned, but there were those who claimed to be sinless.

We called on the top leadership to let go of power and position, but there were those who clung to these even more.

We exhorted brethren to go into lamentations mode, but there were those who mocked this and impatiently proceeded with their own human priorities.

We looked to obeying the hierarchy that was helping us, but there were those who insisted on legalities and followed their own human will.

So persecution of prophets is a reality.

The reflection in “40 Days of Lamentations” for today is very relevant. It is worth revisiting, as we now do.

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Day 33
Persecution as a Gift

*“I love you, Lord, my strength,
Lord, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer,
My God, my rock of refuge,
my shield, my saving horn, my stronghold!”
(Psalm 18:2-3)*

March 30
Jeremiah 20:10-13
Psalm 18:2-7
John 10:31-42

Today’s readings are all about those who are persecuted—from Jeremiah, to David, to Jesus. People who stand up for God can expect to be persecuted—those who are prophets, those who govern God’s people, those who do the very work of God. Prophets are persecuted by those who do not want to hear the truth God has to say to them. Governors are persecuted by those who disagree with the way they pastor the community and by those who want to take their place. Those who do God’s work are persecuted by those who oppose God and who are aligned with the enemy.

Jeremiah was persecuted even by his friends. David was persecuted even by his king. Jesus was persecuted even by his own people, the very people of God, the ones whom God had entered into covenant with.

So you who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, you are in good company. Know that you are blessed, for the kingdom of heaven is yours (Mt 5:10). You who are insulted and slandered because of Christ, “rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Mt 5:11-12). This is the overturning of the wisdom of the world. Those who suffer are blessed. Those who ought to be sad and miserable are those who should rejoice. This is because God will turn your seeming defeat into victory, whether here or hereafter.

Know that “the Lord is with (you), like a mighty champion” (Jer 20:11). Just entrust your cause to Him, and then sing and praise the Lord (Jer 20:12-13). Know that the Lord is your strength, your rock, your fortress, your deliverer, your refuge, your shield, your saving horn, your stronghold (Ps 18:2-3). God is all these, so what more do you need! Even when surrounded by the breakers of death, by the menacing floods, by the tightening cords of Sheol, by the snares of death, all you need do is call out to the Lord, and He will hear your cry from heaven (Ps 18:5-7).

In this world we can expect troubles, pain and even persecution, but we can always look to God for our deliverance. ***This is what covenant is all about.***

As such, we need never fear. In fact, we rejoice in all circumstances. “Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 4:4)

Then you can always say: “Praised be the Lord, I exclaim! I have been delivered from my enemies.” (Ps 18:4).

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Did you catch the title of that day? It is “Persecution as a Gift”!

Now since when did persecution become a gift? It is indeed a gift, if it is allowed by God, in order to fulfill His divine purposes. What purposes are those? It is purification for holiness. It is the privilege of allowing God’s instrument to follow in His footsteps to the cross and to be “crucified” with him. It is training and empowerment to be effective for mission. It is to deepen trust in God’s divine mercy.

Remember that we are being used as God’s instruments. As such, we are into raging spiritual warfare. Satan will throw everything he has against God’s prophets. He can even use our own brethren to afflict us.

We must know the fate of prophets. We must be willing to endure for the sake of Christ. We must persevere, knowing God is working out His divine plan in our lives, and using us to touch the lives of others.

In this Lenten season, I again bring you to another one of the many lessons of Lamentations (from Forty Days of Lamentations).

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Lamentations 245 – **Willigness to suffer**

“I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting.” (Is 50:6)

When we evangelize, we encounter the enemy. The evil one will not want to let go of his dominion over the lives of people. Those who belong to the enemy camp will not cede ground and will fight us with full force. Those who are in bondage to darkness will not welcome and will even resent being presented with the gospel, for it becomes an indictment on their way of life and their choices in life.

Thus we can be persecuted. No, we *will* be persecuted. We must then be willing to suffer for Christ. “For your sake I bear insult, shame covers my face.” (Ps 69:8). We must realize that it is then that we are truly blessed and our reward will be great in heaven (Mt 5:10-12).

But when we suffer for the gospel, we can rejoice. The buffets and spitting will be our badge of honor. We would have gone the way of Christ, that of the cross.

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Now did you catch that last part? When we suffer for the gospel, we can rejoice!

No wonder Jesus spoke that way about prophets. In his sermon on the mount, Jesus warned his people about being persecuted for the sake of righteousness. He said that “they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Mt 5:12c). But Jesus called those

so persecuted as blessed! “Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.” (Mt 5:11).

Because we are blessed, then we can “rejoice and be glad” (Mt 5:12a). We are filled with joy, for our “reward will be great in heaven” (Mt 5:12b).

We are merely pilgrims in this life, just passing through, with the goal of making our way to heaven. While here, we serve God, and He enlists us as prophets. As prophets we can expect to be persecuted. As we are persecuted, we are blessed. The ultimate blessing is precisely our very goal—making it to heaven.

“Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Mt 5:10).

The way of Jesus is the way of the cross. We say that we are centered on Christ, that we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. If that is so, then everything now has fallen into place. Jesus himself has shown us the way. “For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame” (Heb 12:2b).

Our privilege and joy is to follow in Jesus’ footsteps. All the way to heaven.

(April 3, 2009)