

# GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



## GIG243 – Christian Persecution

Greetings and welcome to the podcast today, so glad you are able to join with me in this. I want to talk a little bit as we get into the new year 2025, before we get too far into the year, about the whole reality of Christian persecution that is taking place around us, because I think it is something that we do not tend to focus on. I know in this ministry we have not focused on it a great deal; we have been very focused on Israel and the Jewish people, and what has been going on there in Israel for over 500 days now with the war and the continued strife in the Middle East. But there is also transpiring during these days, and has been ongoing for years, true persecution of the Church; and I do not want it to get out of view for us.

There are two purposes behind this podcast that I want to impart to you. One is that we should be praying for our Christian brothers and sisters around the world that are suffering; and we should be one with them and we should be aware of them and crying out to God for them, and being involved in what is going on surrounding them in their faith as believers.

I wanted to start off by reading the Scripture out of Revelation 2. This is kind of what got me into this. I was reading these verses out of Revelation, and it just struck me so deeply that we should have this awareness. Revelation 2, starting at verses 8-9, says, “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.”” So God is very aware of the tribulation and the poverty. And there are many Christians, there is much of the body of Christ that does live in the midst of tribulation and also suffers from a great deal of poverty, and we need to be aware of it.

The Lord is saying, “I know your tribulation and your poverty,” and I want us to know and be aware. We should put some time into studying these things as believers, and keeping our eye on it. If you are part of a church, I would recommend that you involve yourselves in the [Open Doors](#) ministry reports that come out. They make you aware of the different countries and the different persecutions that are going on around the world.

I am going to continue reading with verses 10-11. It says, “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.” This verse 10 is something that I think we need to really pray over in our own lives. He is telling us not to be fearful. One thing that I see so readily, looking around at different believers in different places and having to search my own heart, is, are we fearful of these days? We hear so much about the end-time, and that we live in the end-time, and that it is the time of the end; and I know there is a sense of fear that people can have. You need to take that before the Lord. We all need to bring that before the Lord and be praying so that we are not fearful about the things that we are going to suffer.

You may be part of a church that believes in the rapture, and you say, “I am not planning on suffering because I believe in the rapture.” Well, number one, there is nothing about it that is a guarantee that

really that doctrine is correct; and number two, even if it is correct, there is nothing in it that says there is not going to be suffering before that event would take place. This is speaking to the churches – it says very clearly, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.” So if you are part of the church, even if you are believing in events that are going to deliver you, then this is speaking to us. It is speaking to all the churches. I know it was to the angel of the church of Smyrna, but at the end He is saying, “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” And, “He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.” So when we see this verse 10, I just encourage you, apply it in your own life. Reach in, do not fear what we are about to suffer. We may suffer many things, and we need to realize that there are many – even if you say, “Well, I am not suffering” – be aware that your brothers and sisters are suffering potentially great tribulations, and also poverty.

This idea of avoiding tribulation and avoiding poverty, and avoiding difficulty, is not something that any Christian believer really can count on. So, we need to reach in for a faith before the Lord that gives us a freedom from fear, and allows us to recognize that satan is on the earth raging; and that he is casting believers into prison, and people are being tested in their faith, and there will be tribulations that come. This is not saying this is the great tribulation, but there are testings and there are poverties and there are things. So He says, “Be faithful until death.” There are Christians who are dying today, and there are more Christians who are going to die under persecution as the days go forward. But we have the promise that there will be a crown of life for those, and they will not be hurt by the second death. So there is much to look forward to in our faith; just as He says in verse 9, talking about tribulation and poverty, “but you are rich.” There is a richness that we have in our faith that we should be aware of.

I wanted to read a few things from the World Watch List that is put out from those who are involved in these things. Again, I mentioned the Open Doors; you can research them online and you can find their material. It will give you a great deal of details about Christian persecution that is going on now as we speak, and has been going on for years.

So let me read just a few things from this World Watch List Report. It was “released January 15 and found that 3,100 Christians were killed and 2,830 Christians were kidnapped in Nigeria in 2024.” This is just one country of Nigeria. When you go and research, you will find that the Open Doors does research all the countries, and it tells you how much persecution is taking place in many different countries. Nigeria, however, is suffering far more than other countries. “The report also said that the country with the most Christians arrested in 2024 was India at 2,176, and Rwanda experienced the most attacks on Christian churches or buildings with 4,000.” Imagine 4,000 churches being attacked and burned down, bombed, whatever.

“The Open Doors Watch List confirmed that Christian persecution continued to grow ‘in absolute terms’ among the about 100 countries the group monitored in 2024, with 13 countries classified at ‘extreme levels’ of Christian persecution. The group estimates that over 380 million Christians worldwide experienced at least a ‘high level’ of persecution and discrimination because of their faith.” The report goes on to name the 13 countries that were classified as having extreme levels of anti-Christian persecution, and goes on with a lot of details in the report.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncregister.com/cna/nigeria-tops-report-for-number-of-christians-killed-kidnapped-in-2024-o3om3mov>

I was reading in another report that was sent to me about the 21 courageous Egyptian Christians who were beheaded by ISIS just ten years ago. And as information, there was a movie made called *The 21*; it is a very powerful thirteen-minute film. This was so good that it wound up on the short list for an Academy Award nomination, so that may be something that you want to try to go watch. Again, it is a gruesome subject, but it is bringing to reality what is surrounding us as Christians today around the world; and we should be aware of it, and we should be prepared. Again, we should not be fearful, and we should be ready to give our lives for our testimony of Christ.

I want to read out of Revelation the twelfth chapter, because I think this brings to life for us what potentially awaits in the days ahead. Revelation 12, starting at verse 9, says, “And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.” This is recounting the battle that took place in the heavens after the birth of the man child, saying that there was this war that transpired in heaven, and as a result of this war, satan was thrown out of heaven. As you remember reading the Scriptures, like in the book of Job, we see that satan has had access into heaven, had access into the throne room of God; and in Revelation 12, we recognize that with the birth of the man child and the catching up of the man child to heaven, there was a war which cast satan and his angels out of heaven.

Let’s continue reading at verse 10. “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven [remember, this is taking place in heaven], saying, ‘Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.’” Now remember, again, this is taking place and transpiring in the heavens, this war and this battle against satan, who is now being cast down; but he was having access to God and accused the saints before God day and night. All of a sudden, we have a shift. Let’s look at how that was able to happen. How was he able to be thrown down?

It says in verse 11, “And they overcame him [in other words, they won this war] because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.” This is again talking about the war in heaven. After the war in heaven, we know that satan was cast down. So let’s read verse 12: “For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them [because he was cast down out of heaven]. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.” So satan, being cast out of heaven, was thrown down into the earth, and he rages; and you can go on and read this. I encourage you to go back to Revelation 12 and read the whole story; I am just taking bits and pieces out of it to try to get the concept across to us. But satan was cast out of heaven down to the earth, and he rages, knowing he has but a short time. A short time for what? A short time before he is cast out of the earth and thrown down into the abyss.

So, we now find ourselves in this war with the accuser of the brethren. That is why we have this warning in Revelation, saying, “Look, do not be fearful about what you are going to suffer, because the devil is about to cast some of you into prison so that you are going to be tested, and you will have tribulation. So be faithful even unto death.” Why? Because that is how they won the war in heaven, wasn’t it? “They did not love their lives, even unto death.” And that is what we are being told here in Revelation 2, that we, likewise, as believers in this day and age facing the raging of satan in the earth in this time, we must not be fearful. We must not love our lives unto death, and we must be ready to sacrifice and give our life, if that is what is necessary, because this battle will rage; but we know that the battle will be

won, because it has already been won on the cross. We are simply executing that which has been written and that which has been accomplished by Christ upon the cross.

It is given to us as a privilege to bruise satan under our heel, and to administer that final judgment which sees him not only cast from the heavens, but also cast out of the earth; so that, like it was said about heaven, "Rejoice, because now is the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ come." It came into the heavens, and it will come also in this earth, as we live faithfully to the Word, we do not fear, we do not hold our lives as dear to us, and we are willing to lay down our lives for the testimony of Yeshua, the Messiah who has come.

I bless us all. I encourage you, make sure that there is no fear in your heart; and let's study and be aware of what is really transpiring throughout Christianity in this world in which we live. I think you will find it interesting, and I think it will open the doors for us to intercede for the body of Christ in this day and age, and intercede for the Church and what it is going through as satan rages, knowing that he has but a short time.

And we say, Lord, cut short that short time.

I bless this word to your hearts, in the name of the Lord.

Amen.