

# PERSECUTION OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS

**BIBLE TEXT** : Acts 19:21-41; Matthew 10:16-28; Luke 21:12-19.

LESSON 346 Junior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22).

## **BIBLE TEXT in King James Version**

### **Acts 19:21-41**

<sup>21</sup> After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

<sup>22</sup> So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.

<sup>23</sup> And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.

<sup>24</sup> For a certain *man* named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;

<sup>25</sup> Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.

<sup>26</sup> Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:  
<sup>27</sup> So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

<sup>28</sup> And when they heard *these sayings*, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians.

<sup>29</sup> And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in

## **BIBLE REFERENCES:**

### **NOTES:**

#### **For the Lord**

If the Lord should tarry, the boys and girls in the Sunday School today will have work to do as citizens, and even now some may be thinking about their future work. It is possible to choose a trade, which can be used in the Lord's work. Many of the men and women who now give of their time for the Lord's work have been trained in their occupations. Some have made a living by that work. When the Lord called them to work for Him, many have been called to do that very same kind of work. Some give of their time, talent, and skill when there is an opportunity, but others have the privilege of giving all their time in the service of the Lord.

When young people consider their life work, is it not pleasing to the Lord that they choose an art or trade, which can be used in the service of God? When one seeks God, and serves Him, that person has a desire to do something for the Lord. When one loves God, he wants to give of his time, of his talent, and of his skill to the Lord.

#### **A Silversmith**

There were craftsmen in Ephesus who moulded and shaped different kinds of metal into ornamental and useful articles, but they did not live for the Lord nor work for Him. Rather, the work that they did was for Satan, because they were making idols. Demetrius was a silversmith of Ephesus. He could have made useful articles but he made idols, because by so doing he could make more money. He not only worked for Satan in that way but he also caused trouble for the Christians.

When Paul was preaching the Gospel in Ephesus, this Demetrius caused a stir. He called a meeting of all the silversmiths who were making idols. He talked to his fellow craftsmen, reminding them that they had received their wealth by making idols. Demetrius told them that they had seen and heard how Paul had preached to the people. Many people in Ephesus and other parts of Asia had believed the Gospel, and were no longer idol worshipers. Demetrius' chief complaint was that their work was endangered. If people quit worshiping idols there would be no need for idol makers. Demetrius had a selfish motive in stirring up the people. On second thought he appealed to them to be loyal to their religion lest the idol temple be despised and destroyed.

#### **The Truth**

In Demetrius' speech before the craftsmen, he gave testimony of Paul's work and preaching. Perhaps without meaning to do so, he admitted the spread of the Gospel in that "much people" were persuaded and turned into believers. According to Demetrius' words, Paul had said that "they be no gods, which are made with hands," Paul spoke the truth. Because he preached the truth, those who believed were set free from their false beliefs. It is the truth, which will set men free.

Jesus said to the Jews which believed on Him: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know

travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

<sup>30</sup> And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.

<sup>31</sup> And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring *him* that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.

<sup>32</sup> Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

<sup>33</sup> And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people.

<sup>34</sup> But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians.

<sup>35</sup> And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from Jupiter?

<sup>36</sup> Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.

<sup>37</sup> For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

<sup>38</sup> Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.

<sup>39</sup> But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful

the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31, 32).

The people who heard Demetrius did not love the truth enough to forsake a religion of lies and deceit, and to quit their work of making idols. Who would want to worship a god who could not defend his temple?

#### **Mob Action**

The speech of Demetrius aroused the silversmiths. They left the meeting with shouts and in anger. Soon they had the whole town in confusion. A riot broke out and the mob seized two companions of Paul, Gaius and Aristarchus. With one accord the mob rushed to the theatre, the city gathering-place. What confusion! Some said one thing! Some said another! Most of the people did not know why the crowd had gathered. They did not know what was happening, but they came to look.

The angered mob, which had seized the two Christians were intent on punishing them. No doubt they hoped to frighten Jesus' followers so they would leave the city and would preach no more.

#### **Love for Brethren**

Paul wanted to work his way through the crowd to help his friends who were in trouble. The other disciples and some of the chief men of Asia, who were Paul's friends, would not let Paul go into the theatre lest the mob would turn on him, too. In the face of danger Paul was not afraid to let people know that he was a Christian. He was not afraid to go to the rescue of his brethren, because he loved them. Jesus said that to love the brethren was a proof that one was His disciple. He said: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

Trying to defend the two captured disciples, Alexander stepped from the crowd. He raised his hand to silence the people that he might speak. We remember that the Ephesians were Gentiles. When they saw that Alexander was a Jew, they would not listen to him. They set up a clamour, and for two hours shouted praise to their idol, which could neither hear nor help.

#### **A Way of Escape**

God was watching the scene. He did not allow His disciples to be harmed by the mob. He permitted the persecution to go just so far; then He worked out a way of escape for His people. In contrast to the howling mob, which worshiped an idol, God's people stood in a quiet and orderly manner. They trusted God who always helps His people.

The town-clerk, who was probably not one of Jesus' disciples, addressed his fellow citizens. He said that everyone knew that the Ephesians worshiped the idol, which fell down from Jupiter (the superstition which they believed). He advised the mob to be quiet and "to do nothing rashly." The court of justice would judge any case that was put before them if there was a question of law. If Demetrius and the other silversmith had a matter against the disciples of Jesus, they should take it to the authorities. However, the town-clerk said that these men of Christ were neither church-robbers nor idol-blasphemers. They had done nothing unlawful. The mob had seized them unlawfully and was causing an uproar without any real cause. The town-clerk dismissed the crowd lest they would be called by the authorities to give account for this peace-disturbing scene.

#### **Persecution**

How do you suppose the disciples felt about this experience? Were they ready to give up their Christianity because they had suffered a little persecution? Undoubtedly it put more faith into their hearts. They had trusted God, and He had delivered them. They probably felt as the other disciples did who, being

assembly.

<sup>40</sup> For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

<sup>41</sup> And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

### **Matthew 10:16-28**

<sup>16</sup> Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

<sup>17</sup> But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

<sup>18</sup> And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

<sup>19</sup> But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

<sup>20</sup> For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

<sup>21</sup> And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death.

<sup>22</sup> And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

<sup>23</sup> But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

<sup>24</sup> The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord.

<sup>25</sup> It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house

imprisoned for Christ's sake, "sang praises unto God" at midnight (Acts 16:25), and as the Apostles who rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41). These men certainly did not turn back from following the Lord. We find their names mentioned throughout the writings of Paul.

### **Preparation**

Jesus prepared His followers to suffer persecution. He warned them that as He had been hated so they as His followers would be hated; and if He was persecuted they would be persecuted. (**John 15:18-20** <sup>18</sup> If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it *hated* you. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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)

Jesus' followers knew that they could expect persecution, but God had put such peace and love into their hearts that they could endure it. Yes, they even were thankful for it. Paul was forewarned that he would suffer a great deal at the hands of persecutors. Yet, as he suffered, these are his words: "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Paul said that nothing could separate him from the great love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. He felt that it was worth any suffering that he might "win Christ." He said: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Philippians 3:10, 11). Paul wanted to be ready for the first resurrection, and in order to be a full overcomer he was willing to suffer.

### **Promises**

There are many promises given to those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. The Lord has promised to be with them. The Holy Ghost will tell them what to testify when they are brought up before the authorities. "Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer."

Those who suffer for righteousness' sake shall also rule with Christ. "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" (II Timothy 2:11, 12). The Beatitudes speak of persecution: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:19-12).

God's people today are sometimes called on to endure persecution. In our land it may come in the form of false accusations, separation from our families, or mistreatment. In some lands it may be a matter of life or death. In whatever way it comes, we are to take it patiently, knowing that we can prove true to Christ and His cause. We have started to live for Christ and we will be ushered into Heaven if we are faithful. "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22).

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Who was Demetrius?
2. How did he use his talents?
3. Why was he concerned about the preaching of Paul?
4. Why were Paul's companions seized?

Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household?

<sup>26</sup> Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

<sup>27</sup> What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops.

<sup>28</sup> And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

### **Luke 21:12-19**

<sup>12</sup> But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute *you*, delivering *you* up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

<sup>13</sup> And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

<sup>14</sup> Settle *it* therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:

<sup>15</sup> For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

<sup>16</sup> And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and *some* of you shall they cause to be put to death.

<sup>17</sup> And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake.

<sup>18</sup> But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

<sup>19</sup> In your patience possess ye your souls.

5. How were they released?

6. What is persecution?

7. In what ways can Christ's followers be persecuted today?

8. What can a person do when he is persecuted?

9. What are some promises to those who are persecuted?

10. What is promised to those who endure to the end?