

# HEBREWS: THE INFINITE SUPREMACY AND SUFFICIENCY OF JESUS CHRIST

## XXI. Aligning With God's Use Of Unjust Persecution

(Hebrews 12:3-17)

### I. Introduction

- A. We live in an era of great need for an encouraging word amid man's discouraging spiritual failure, so a word from God on the infinite supremacy and sufficiency of His Son Jesus Christ is both desirable and fitting.
- B. The Epistle of Hebrews offers it, and Hebrews 12:3-17 calls us to align with God's use of unjust persecution in living by faith, and we view it for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

### II. Aligning With God's Use Of Unjust Persecution, Hebrews 12:3-17.

- A. We believers in Christ are to follow our Lord's example to resist sinning under unjust persecution even to the point of dying in our resistance of such sinning, Hebrews 12:3-4.
- B. A key reason for resisting sin under such persecution is that God uses that persecution to discipline us to separate all the more from the ungodliness of the parties who persecute us, Hebrews 12:5, 10b:
  1. In the context, the readers faced persecution pressure by members of a Judaistic cult to revert back to Judaism from the Christian faith. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 779 with Hebrews 10:32-34; 12:4)
  2. Hebrews 12:5 with 12:10b indicates that God was **allowing** this persecution to afflict the readers of the epistle that they might be partakers of His *hagiotetos*, from *hagiotetes*, "holiness," Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 10. "Holiness" essentially means "cleanliness" from defilement, and it carries the basic sense of **separation** from that which is **evil**. (Theol. Dict. of the N. T., vol. I, p. 88-114)
  3. The **separation** God intended for the readers of Hebrews to practice was to **retain** their **separation from false Judaism BY STAYING ALL THE MORE TRUE TO CHRIST**, Hebrews 10:32-36.
  4. Thus, God allowed the readers to face ongoing persecution from false Judaizers to teach them to be even more repulsed to false Judaism that they might cleave all the more to Christ!
- C. Thus, we believers are to view the unjust persecution we face as a divinely-allowed calling designed in God's sovereignty and love to mature and to separate us all the more from wickedness, Hebrews 12:6-10a:
  1. We must realize that God allows persecution pressure to arise to discipline us out of love for us to get us to be even more separate from the godlessness of those who wrongly persecute us, Hebrews 12:6.
  2. If we endure such chastening persecution, God deals with us as true believers, but were He not to do so, we would be illegitimate sons, or not true believers who are truly saved, Hebrews 12:7-8.
  3. If our earthly fathers disciplined us for our good, how much more will our heavenly Father allow us to face persecution pressures that drive us all the more to separate from sin, Hebrews 12:9-10.
- D. In practical terms, then, we believers who face unjust persecution must adjust our thoughts and actions to benefit from the unjust persecution that God allows us to face for our spiritual benefit, Hebrews 12:11-17:
  1. No such chastening where God allows ungodly persecutors to afflict us seems to be pleasant but painful, but later it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it, Hebrews 12:11.
  2. We thus need to take spiritual steps to adjust to God's use of unjust persecution to discipline us unto greater separation from the sin of our persecutors (as follows), Hebrews 12:12-17:
    - a. We need to lift up our drooping hands and strengthen our weak knees, a figurative expression, and we can rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to withstand unjust persecution, Hebrews 12:12; Galatians 5:16-23.
    - b. We need to make straight paths for our feet to heal what is lame, a figurative expression for streamlining our path in life to avoid needless afflictions where we can avoid them, Hebrews 12:13; Proverbs 4:26-27.
    - c. We need to strive to live peaceably with all men while also staying separate from sin, Hebrews 12:14.
    - d. We need to see that no believer in the body reverts to the apostacy of false religions [like Judaism] lest it be like a root of bitterness that causes trouble and defiles the local church, Hebrews 12:15-17; Deut. 29:18.

***Lesson:*** *We believers in Christ must follow our Lord's example to resist sinning under unjust persecution pressure even to the point of death, for God allows such persecution to arise to drive us to be all the more separate from the sin that foments such persecution. When we realize that God is allowing this trial to occur out of His intense love for us to be separate from sin like He is, we must rely on the Holy Spirit for power to stay faithfully upright, to streamline our living to temper persecution pressures, to strive to live peaceably with all men and to be intolerant of anyone in the body reverting to the evil views that motivate the persecutors' persecuting actions.*

***Application:*** *May we thus align with God's use of allowing us to face unjust persecution for His glory.*