

The Lakeview Lamp

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” - Psalm 119:105

July 1, 2007

Impossible?

Mark Chatfield

Life-changing, seemingly impossible events have affected Christians in the past. Being a Christian has nothing to do with my physical plight; but when I consider what persecuted Christians encountered, it is easier for me to be patient while overcoming the effects of my own carelessness.

Early Christians were persecuted. We read about it and consider it briefly and then go back to planning our next trip to Wal-Mart. But let's take a moment to review a few things.

First, the persecution of Christians in the first century came from several sources. >From the perspective of one who had learned and obeyed Jesus, there were Gentiles who saw them as thieves and blasphemers. **Acts 19:37** says, *“For ye have brought hither these men, who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess.”* There were Jews who saw them in a similar way. False accusations by the Jewish hierarchy led to Paul's long imprisonment and journey to Rome. The persecution was not merely in the form of lies; but it was beating, stoning, loss of assets, imprisonment, lashing, and death by torture. **Hebrews 11:37** says, *“They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword: they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated.”*

Second, the persecution of Christians was incessant. Persecutors did not just come out to heckle until the preacher left town. They would follow the apostles and teachers from community to community in order to stir up people against them. **Acts 14:19** says, *“But there came Jews thither from Antioch and Iconium: and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.”* To the early Christian leaders, persecution was not a back ache, it was a chronic illness.

Third, in spite of the suffering that persecution brought to those who followed Christ, the

efforts to eradicate Christ's church and His teachings served a glorious and unexpected purpose. Perhaps Paul and Silas understood that when they broke out in songs of praise when imprisoned in Philippi. But most Christians at that time probably were guided through the difficult times by their faith and by the Holy Spirit. It must have seemed impossible to them that their lives had changed so much. Before they understood the love of God and the reward of eternity, they had been able to live their lives without much concern for their safety and with the companionship of their life-long friends and work associates. Once they received Christ and obeyed Him, their lives were very much different. Yet, as counter-intuitive as it seems, the early Christians embraced their new lives with joy and thanksgiving because they understood that with God nothing is impossible and that the changes in their emotional and physical lives were insignificant when seen in the light of eternity with God.

Have you refused to accept Christ for fear of the pain involved? Chances are that you don't know what real persecution is. It may seem impossible for you to go through the changes needed to be a Christian. It is not impossible. It is, rather, an opportunity to look beyond the back aches of modern-day persecution to a peace of mind that gives you endless joy regardless of the little suffering you may encounter as a result.

Small Groups

Jerry Jenkins

It's that time of year again, when we shuffle the small group members around. This will be the fourth, six month session.

The ladies have divided into two groups, a day and an evening group. They are hopefully in a group that best fits their schedule, so we better leave the ladies groups alone unless of course you need, or want to change.

One of the men's groups are staying together another six months, so only the remaining two groups of men will rotate. A copy of the new groups will be given to you, or can be picked up on the back table.

New groups will meet July through the end of the year. It is up to each group to work out the details.

“The Lord is great in Zion, and He is high above all the peoples. Let them praise Your great and awesome name: He is holy!” – Psalm 99:2-3

Family News

No Family News this week due to failure on my part to get the updates before I had to print the bulletin. Please listen for any updates with announcements. – Troy

New Reports: Ronald Chaffin (South Africa), Gary Hunt (NY).

Out of town, traveling, or visiting: Nicholson's (Gulf Shores till Thursday).

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"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks" (1 Thes 5:16-18).