



The Persecution of the Godly and the Green Pastures

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“Remember the words that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.” (John 15: 20a) And, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” (2 Timothy 3: 12)

In these verses and in many others the Lord Christ and the Holy Scriptures both foretold of persecution and was shown it by the Lord Jesus Christ’s example. The Apostles, Church Fathers, confessors and martyrs all said the same and showed it by their own example. This is the narrow gate by which one must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

On the other hand we should not be saddened by this prediction, for the Lord Jesus Christ the Shepherd promised in other verses not to leave us as orphans during these persecutions. “Certainly I will be with you.” (Exodus 3:12) And, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” (John 14:18) And, “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” (John 15:26) And, “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may remain full.” (John 15:11)

Saint Paul emphasizes the same joyful promises and explains the reasons behind the sorrowful trials: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.” (Romans 8:16-17) And, “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.” (2 Corinthians 4:17) And, “We also exult in our tribulation, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance,



Icon representing the Blessed Virgin Saint Mary, Lord Jesus and Saint John the Baptist at His feet with a lamb symbol of “the Lamb of God”. Al-’Adrâ Al Ezbawiyah, Cairo.

proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint.” (Romans 5:3-5) And, “God keeps faith and He will not allow you to be tested above your powers, but when the test comes, He will at the same time provide a way out, by enabling you to sustain it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Thus the Lord Jesus Christ foretold of the inevitable persecutions and at the same time promised to send us the Comforter and Helper. The Psalmist says, “He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.” (Psalm 23:2) To a persecuted soul, water refreshes and brings relief. The Shepherd Himself is the water. “If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink.” (1 John 7:37)

When we are persecuted and feel alone, the Lord Jesus Christ is our shelter. When we are afraid, He is our stronghold. Sorrow must come, but when it comes,

He is the first to comfort and reassure us and His comfort is proportional to the amount of sorrow. “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:3-5)

When feelings of insecurity and inferiority mount, He reminds us that we belong to Him and in Him and our eternal destiny is secure. Therefore we ought to keep our eyes, heart, and minds fixed continuously on the Lord Jesus Christ seeking union with Him. “Fixing your eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith.” (Hebrews 12:2) And, “Is any one among you suffering? Let him pray.” (James 5:13)

Thus praying continuously, reading and contemplating in His words, believing, trusting, living by the principles read, and participating in the Church Sacraments, may achieve this union.