

JESUS IS LORD OVER THE SABBATH

John 5:10-17

As Americans we are only beginning to get a taste of being persecuted for our faith. But we have many brothers and sisters around the world whose lives are in danger because they call Jesus Lord. Christ Himself was persecuted, and Christians over the centuries have been also.

This morning we will see why Christ was persecuted as we pick up on our study of the book of John in John 5:10, continuing through verse 17 ESV:

10 So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed."

11 But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk.' "

12 They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?"

13 Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place.

14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."

15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.

16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.

17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."

Imagine the lack of compassion on the part of these Jewish leaders. Here is a cripple who has not been able to walk for thirty-eight years, and on top of that he did not have any friends or anyone to help him get around, and they accuse him of breaking the law because he carried his mat as he walked away from this miracle of healing performed by Jesus. How broken-hearted God must have been to watch the reaction of these men who represented Him among the people. Imagine criticizing a cripple for something as trivial as carrying his mat after being healed. Then to make matters even worse, as we shall see, holding the man who performed the miracle in contempt for committing an act of mercy on the Sabbath. What hypocrisy! They all should have been jubilant, rejoicing in this cripple's good fortune and that God had sent someone to perform miracles for the healing of those in need. But no, they were jealous. They did not want anyone other than themselves to be recognized as God's select group of servants and they obviously were not about to grant the Miracle Worker the authority that was so rightfully due Him as the Son of God. But it was here and through this miracle, along with many more that He

would perform, that Jesus proved His authority to forgive sin and to establish the Law of God, and demonstrated that He spoke for God because He was God.

The man who had been healed seemed to have no doubt that the One who healed him must have had authority beyond that of the Jewish religious leaders simply by what He was capable of doing. After experiencing this miracle it is also possible that he may have even been frightened of what might happen to him if He did not obey. After all, anyone who could heal a crippling disease could also probably make it return. He would certainly not want to take that chance. But on the other hand, would anyone who was so kind and merciful to heal him of a lifelong illness, then turn around and be so unkind as to lead him into sin? So the healed man could well have made it quite clear to the Jewish leaders that he believed the Miracle Worker to be from God and he would therefore not dare disobey Him.

So whether they liked the man's answers or not, the man was not their real problem. Their real problem was Jesus and they knew it. Even before gathering the evidence, they seem to have made up their minds that Jesus would have to be pictured as a villain who would dare disobey a long-standing Sabbath law; and He would have to be dealt with according to their laws. So right from the beginning it seems that even if the leaders had given Jesus an opportunity to speak His message and prove who He was by His fulfillment of prophecy and by miracles, they still would have rejected Him as a human criminal. What a price mankind pays for allowing the greedy and power hungry to assume governing authority. We suffer the same consequences right here in the United States today and so do other countries all around the world.

These Jewish leaders did not love God. Rather, they used God's name to extend their "authority." They used God's Law to expand their own wealth and power, often disobeying it themselves when their own lusts and desires led them to do so. It was true in Christ's time on this earth, it was true in Moses' time on this earth, it has been true in the Church Age from the time of Christ until today, and it will be true from now until the day Christ returns to establish His kingdom here on earth, that the **love of** money and the **love of** power are the source of evil throughout the world. Money itself is not the problem. God has blessed many believers with money over the centuries for use in accomplishing good. But when a person loves what money can bring them more than anything else, that is when the problem arises.

You may be reminded here of the verse in 1 Timothy that speaks directly to this issue, 1 Timothy 6:10 NLT:

For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

This is exactly what the Jewish leaders were going to experience because of their desire for riches and power. It would not be long and they would suffer many sorrows because of their rejection of Christ for money and power. They should have paid attention to the

writings of their own prophets. Solomon, the wisest man in their history, wrote in Proverbs 30:7-9 NLT:

7 O God, I beg two favors from you; let me have them before I die.

8 First, help me never to tell a lie. Second, give me neither poverty nor riches! Give me just enough to satisfy my needs.

9 For if I grow rich, I may deny you and say, "Who is the Lord?" And if I am too poor, I may steal and thus insult God's holy name.

This was good advice. It is too bad that the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day did not accept and believe the writings of their own prophets. They were therefore unqualified to lead the people of Israel in the ways of the Lord. Instead they were leading the people astray by teaching them false doctrine that they themselves had created. Further they were now telling the people that Jesus was not the promised Messiah, the promised Savior to come. This was their great opportunity to bring in the Kingdom of God and their Savior for whom they had been waiting for almost 2,000 years. They were little more than a band of cutthroats using the people to accomplish their own agenda, and they were about to prove it by how they would treat the Savior of the world.

First Timothy has so much more to say about leaders who behave in the manner of those we encounter in John 5. First Timothy is a book written by the apostle Paul to his young protégé, Timothy.

1 Timothy 6:2-5 NLT:

2 Teach these things, Timothy, and encourage everyone to obey them.

3 Some people may contradict our teaching, but these are the wholesome teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. These teachings promote a godly life.

4 Anyone who teaches something different is arrogant and lacks understanding. Such a person has an unhealthy desire to quibble over the meaning of words. This stirs up arguments ending in jealousy, division, slander, and evil suspicions.

5 These people always cause trouble. Their minds are corrupt, and they have turned their backs on the truth. To them, a show of godliness is just a way to become wealthy.

Did the Jewish leaders contradict the word of God spoken through Christ? They sure did, from the very beginning as we see in John 5:16. They were arrogant and lacked understanding just as Paul mentions to Timothy in verse 4 that we just read. They were always willing to quibble over the meaning of words and the real meaning of God's Law. Consequently they were the ones who stirred up arguments among themselves and among the people they were supposed to be serving. Arguments that ended in jealousy, division, slander, and suspicion. These leaders created an atmosphere where no one could trust anyone. They always caused trouble, they were corrupt, putting their own desires ahead of the best interests of the people they were supposed to be serving. They turned their backs on God's truth. If they knew God's word from the writings of His servants in their Old Testament, they paid no attention to them. Many of the laws they added to God's

Holy Law were out of their own heads, and their primary focus was on their own wealth and power. They were godless men in spite of their positions and titles.

And we have many of the same kind of men in our government today. Do you believe that most of our elected leaders in Congress have the best interests of the people as their priority? If you do you are among 12% of the people in the United States who hold that opinion. Do you believe that the governors and individual state legislators have your best interests at heart? Do you believe that Church leaders around this country and around the world have the best interests of the people as their top priority? Perhaps some do, but unfortunately many do not. They are like the leaders of Israel at the time of Christ. They want money and they want power and they do not really care about what God wants. Most are not true Christians and most do not believe that the Bible is the authoritative, infallible Word of God, and most do not believe that Jesus Christ is God and the only way to salvation and eternal life.

How do I know that? Because they do not pay any attention to God's Word in the Bible. If they believed in the one true God, The Father, Son, and Holy spirit, they would not spend all their time disobeying His commands for living as laid down in the Holy Scripture. Those who do stand up for their Christian faith are considered radicals or people who cannot win because no one is going to vote for someone who stands for what many people consider to be the intolerant teachings of Jesus Christ.

If the majority of the leading presidential candidates, and all the United States senators, representatives, governors, and all other elected officials at both the state and local level believed in the God who is revealed in the Bible, we would not be discussing issues like whether or not homosexuality is acceptable, whether abortion is acceptable, whether we should provide our teens with condoms in high school, whether it was okay to have sex with anybody you could find on any given day, whether it was okay to get a divorce, whether it was okay to tell lies, allow illegal immigrants in our country, spend more money than we make, speak out against our nation when we are engaged in a war, or talk about establishing hate-crime bills to eliminate our first amendment right to speak out against the subjects we have just listed. None of these things would be going on in a God honoring, God fearing country that believed in the one and only true God. Most of these men seek power, wealth, and glory, things which they should instead be offering to Christ. If any were sincere men or women of faith they would not hesitate to stand up for Christ and biblical values, even if it meant they would lose a lot of votes and possibly the election itself.

That is the same kind of leadership Israel had early in the first century when Christ began His ministry. They hated Him then; they lied about Him, had Him beaten, and finally had Him killed. And do you know what? If Christ came down in radiant glory tomorrow in full-view of news cameras all over the world and He worked miracles and spoke of love and unity and that there is only one way to salvation and eternal life, the leaders of this world and this country would reject Him, lie about Him, imprison Him for hate-crimes, and attempt to murder Him all over again. But there is going to be a big difference when Jesus comes again because He is not going to come as the Lamb of God as a sacrifice for

all the sin of the world, but rather He is going to return as King and as Judge, and all that reject Him are going to be toast. There will be massive numbers of people killed all around the world. In fact every person who has not received Jesus Christ as their one and only personal Savior will be destroyed and cast into Hell until the end of the Millennium, Christ's thousand year reign upon the earth, and then cast into the Lake of fire for all eternity. Not a pretty sight, but the Bible itself is much more descriptive of the details of the carnage. "*Not fair,*" you say. It is perfectly fair according to God's righteous judgment, and He allows everyone, no matter what kind of sin they have committed, right up until the day they die to make a decision for Christ and have those sins forgiven. What could be more fair than that? After that it is too late and there are no second chances.

Well, we have come a long way since we started out in John 5:10 but we have covered thoroughly the reason that people do not want to accept Jesus. He simply gets in the way of a person's greed, selfishness, narcissism, pluralism, and self-worship. That was the problem with the Jews. They did not want the God of the universe to stand in the way of what they wanted.

Now we need to ask a very important question before we go back to John 5. Why did the people of Israel, who obviously out-numbered the leadership by perhaps 100,000 to 1, allow their leadership to do this? The answer is that they did not know their Scriptures any better than the leaders did. But the people, thinking that leaders should be smart, trustworthy, and know what they are doing, trusted them to do the right thing. What a terrible mistake they made. Just think, here was Jesus Christ right in their midst and they would not believe Him in spite of all the miracles and all the prophecies He fulfilled that were written over thousands of years throughout the Old Testament period. There were some short periods of time that they were interested in what He had to say, but when everything was said and done they begged Pontius Pilate to save a thief and a murderer Christ. And why did they do it? Because their leaders told them that was the right thing to do.

If they had taken the time to read, study, and apply the Word of God from their Bible, they would have overthrown these pompous, religious hypocrites and placed true believers, true servants of the Living God in positions of authority in the Sanhedrin. It is our opinion that they were to blame for what happened to Jesus, not just the leadership. And do you know something else? We who do not stand up for Christ in this country under the circumstances that exist, we who allow 3,000 babies per day to be murdered by abortionists without crying out in revulsion, we are guilty of crucifying Christ all over again. Those who allow such things to go on without attempting to do whatever they can to stop it are responsible for this inexcusable carnage in America. And believe me, that is only one issue, but it in itself is more than enough. Fifty million helpless little ones brutally murdered in their mothers' wombs since 1974, a place where they felt safe and cared for until someone cut off their life, a life that God formed. Do you think their blood is not crying out to God for justice?

Paul went on to tell Timothy this in 1 Timothy 6:6-21 NLT:

6 Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth.

7 After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it.

8 So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content.

9 But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction.

10 For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

11 But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness.

12 Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have confessed so well before many witnesses.

13 And I charge you before God, who gives life to all, and before Christ Jesus, who gave a good testimony before Pontius Pilate,

14 that you obey this command without wavering. Then no one can find fault with you from now until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.

15 For at just the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords.

16 He alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will. All honor and power to him forever! Amen.

17 Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.

18 Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others.

19 By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life.

20 Timothy, guard what God has entrusted to you. Avoid godless, foolish discussions with those who oppose you with their so-called knowledge.

21 Some people have wandered from the faith by following such foolishness. May God's grace be with you all.

What a message! This is how Paul told Timothy to live and it is the way he wants us to live our lives as well. And do you know what else? This is the way he wants the government leaders that serve this Christian nation to live. And in case anyone doubts that this is a Christian nation founded by believers in Christ and formed and molded by believers in Christ, and maintained for 200 years by believers in Christ, then you are simply beyond hope and unaware of our country's history.

There are any number of ways we can be educated to the truth in our country. The first step is to turn off the news that you watch on television. Most, if not all, of it is slanted and inaccurate. There are many Christian news organizations on the web that will provide you with truth and help you to communicate what you want to your elected officials. Start today and I will be more than happy to recommend a number of these websites to you where you can get information you can trust.¹ But an even better place to learn the truth is in your Bible. That is the only thing in this world that is 100% reliable. Then you can do your part to ensure that the people of this country know Jesus Christ and why those of us who love Him want to preserve it for His glory. Remember He died for us, let us be willing at least to stand up for Him, and yes, if necessary, die for Him as well.

Now let us take a deep breath and get back to John 5.

14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."

15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.

16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.

17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." (ESV)

Now it would seem entirely reasonable that if this man, whom Jesus healed, had not been able to move or have someone help him get around, he probably had not been to the Temple for all of those thirty-eight years. If I were this man that is probably the first place I would go to give thanks to God for selecting me for such a miracle. In fact listen to what the Psalmist wrote after God saved him from death in Psalm 116:16-19 NLT:

16 O Lord, I am your servant; yes, I am your servant, born into your household; you have freed me from my chains.

17 I will offer you a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord.

18 I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people—19 in the house of the Lord in the heart of Jerusalem.

Praise the Lord!

We believe that is exactly what this man did, and while there he ran into Jesus again, and Jesus warned him not to sin again or something worse might happen to him. We do not believe Jesus was referring to another physically crippling disease. It would follow, knowing what we know about Jesus, that He was referring to the man's soul. He wanted him to know that sin could bring eternal death in the worst place imaginable, and that suffering as a paralytic would be a walk in the park compared to an eternal Hell. Are we reading between the lines here? Perhaps one might think that, but we believe that knowing the Jesus of the Bible as we know Him, He would have made certain that this man knew exactly what the miracle of his healing meant and that His faith and trust in

¹ www.villagechurchofwheaton.org

Jesus would bring him eternal life. We know that Jesus is interested not only in our physical health but we know that He is far more interested in the health of our soul.

The Jewish leaders did not pursue any legal action against the healed man for breaking the Sabbath Law, but they certainly were about to begin a severe persecution of the Miracle Worker, Jesus. As the supposed guardians of the faith these members of the Jewish Sanhedrin were responsible for evaluating any new teachers who appeared in Israel. They had recently scrutinized John the Baptist and now they had their sights focused on Jesus. You may recall when they put John's feet to the fire in John 1:19-28 NLT:

19 This was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Temple assistants from Jerusalem to ask John, "Who are you?"

20 He came right out and said, "I am not the Messiah."

21 "Well then, who are you?" they asked. "Are you Elijah?" "No," he replied. "Are you the Prophet we are expecting?" "No."

22 "Then who are you? We need an answer for those who sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?"

23 John replied in the words of the prophet Isaiah:

"I am a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Clear the way for the Lord's coming!'"

24 Then the Pharisees who had been sent

25 asked him, "If you aren't the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet, what right do you have to baptize?"

26 John told them, "I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognize.

27 Though his ministry follows mine, I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal."

28 This encounter took place in Bethany, an area east of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.

How cruel it was to go after Jesus like they were for committing an act of kindness. But their fury would only escalate. And Jesus certainly was not about to back down. He was letting them know openly and honestly who He was, and that as God's Son He had power over the Law and the Sabbath. When Jesus told them that His Father continually worked on the Sabbath to provide for the needs of His children and that He, Jesus, was simply following His Father's example, He was telling them that He and God were one and shared the same authority. Had they given Him the opportunity to prove His claims, Jesus would have most certainly provided them with whatever additional proof they requested. However, they were faced with two choices at this time: They could accept Jesus' claims and allow Him to present His case to the Sanhedrin, or they could reject Him. It would seem quite clear that for whatever reason they simply did not want to accept Jesus for who He was, so they chose to reject Him.

We are continually reminded of the fact that no matter how much evidence one presents, it is impossible to change the mind of a fool. When someone rigidly plants themselves in

their own pre-conceived ideas, the only way of changing their minds is through the supernatural power of God. The very best thing you can do for such a person is to demonstrate that you care about them and continue to pray for God's intervention in their lives.

A brief glimpse at Scripture will show us that Jesus did not stop working miracles on the Sabbath in spite of the threats of the Sanhedrin, which was only further proof of His deity. John later recorded the cure of a blind man on the Sabbath in chapter 9. Then there was the grain-picking (Mark 2:23-28), the healing of a shriveled hand (Mark 3:1-5), curing a woman who had been crippled for 18 years (Luke 13:10-17), healing a demon possessed man (Luke 4:31-37), and healing a man with dropsy (Luke 14:1-6). All of these took place on the Sabbath.

So Jesus continued to challenge the legalistic traditions of the Scribes and the Pharisees. They had taken the Sabbath, which was God's gift to mankind, and had turned it into a long list of requirements to establish their own authority over the people. They, in effect, violated the Sabbath by changing it from what God originally established it to be, a day of rest and a day to reflect and be thankful for all God's provisions. God knew better than anyone that a person could not work seven days a week, 52 weeks a year without experiencing burnout. So the Sabbath was established for men, women, and children to revitalize their bodies and their minds.

God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3) from His work of Creation. But Jesus pointed to the continuous work of God in keeping the sun shining, the trees producing oxygen, etc. as a justification for His Sabbath activity. God does not take the Sabbath off, but keeps the universe running. Further, Jesus pointed out in Matthew 12:8 that *The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day*. But here Jesus further adds to that statement. He claims that He is the Son of God, which is plainly suggested by his calling God his Father (ἰσὸς τοῦ πατρὸς, His *own* Father).

Jesus goes on to point out that therefore it is not wrong for His Son to do works of grace and mercy on the Sabbath. So of course Jesus works also. This identification of Himself with the creative works of God was the equivalent of a claim of deity.² The words "**My Father**" should be noted. Jesus did not say "your Father" or even "our Father." His opponents did not miss this not so subtle claim to being God.

The Jewish leaders would now launch a full-scale offensive against Jesus in order to find a justification for killing Him (John 5:16, 18; 7:19, 25). But God had a lot more for Jesus to do before He would allow this to happen, as we will learn as we continue our study in John.

As you enter this week, you may run into some form of persecution, whether it is mild ribbing at work for not entering into the sharing of dirty jokes, or something more serious as being told you cannot pray or hold a Bible study in the lunchroom. Let Christ be your model and your encouragement. He quietly and firmly took His stand and so must we

² Richards, Larry: *The Bible Reader's Companion*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1991, S. 682

who call ourselves Christ-followers.