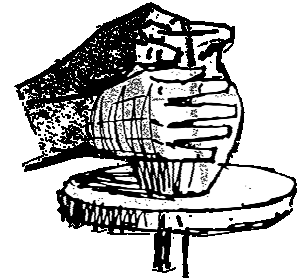


# His Workmanship: Westside

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.”*  
—Ephesians 2:10



Vol. XXIII

August 31, 2014

No. 35

Isaiah 64:8

## Blessed Are the Persecuted, Beatitudes, Part 10, by John Piper

**Is Jesus' Teaching on Persecution Outdated?** Are Christ's words about persecution are relevant in these days? Has modern society become so tolerant that talk of persecution is outdated? Let's mention two reasons why this teaching on persecution is still relevant today.

**1. The Global Perspective.** The first reason comes from a global perspective. Nearly twice as many Christians died for their faith in 2013 than in 2012, according to Open Doors International's 2014 World Watch List.

Open Doors International, a charity that supports Christians under pressure for their faith, said 2,123 Christians were reported to have been killed during the 12 months ending Oct. 31, 2013. That compares to 1,201 during the previous 12 months. During the most recent period, more Christians were killed in Syria alone than were killed globally in the previous year.

The World Watch List, which annually monitors the media worldwide for all reported incidents, emphasizes that this is the “very, very minimum” count—only those who have been documented as killed. Estimates of the total number killed range from around 7,000 or 8,000, according to the International Institute for Religious Free-

dom's Thomas Schirrmacher, to the 100,000 estimate of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity.

Beyond those killed, the World Watch List recommends that three more categories of Christians should be considered: Christians whose death is never reported; Christians killed due to increased vulnerability, such as those in conflict areas; and Christians who die due to long-term discrimination.

Taking these into account, as well as those whose deaths are reported by the media, the World Watch List suggests Schirrmacher's estimation of 100,000 is roughly accurate, although the figure may be higher still. “Christians aren't always directly killed, but are so much squeezed with regulations and vulnerabilities that they just perish—not at once, but in the course of years. If we included them in the counting, it would be an enormous number of people. However, the precise number of Christians who die due to these factors is very difficult to quantify,” says the World Watch List.

Not surprisingly, Syria heads the list of the countries in which the most Christians were killed for their faith (1,213), followed by Nigeria (612), Pakistan (88) and Egypt (83). Of the top 10, six are in Africa—with Kenya

(20), Angola (16), Niger (15) and the Central African Republic (9) joining Nigeria and Egypt on the list.

The World Watch List states that the number of Christians killed in the Central African Republic is especially likely to have been under-reported because “most analysts still failed to recognize the religious dimension of the conflict.” The list says the same is true of North Korea, where “it is extremely difficult to get public information.”

Beyond the number of Christians killed, the World Watch List lists other instances of violence, including physical aggression; threats; destruction, attempts to destroy, or the closure of buildings or property; house expulsion or destruction; kidnap for ransom or intimidation; sexual assault; arrests; and displacement.

Considering only the sum of violent incidents recorded, Egypt (167) tops the list, followed by India (125) and Nigeria (118). So the least we can say is that from a global standpoint the words of Jesus are relevant, and indeed very precious, for millions of our brothers and sisters who live under the pressure of constant surveillance.

**2. Convictions About Sinfulness and New Creation.** Second, these

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**“Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now. I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you.” 1 Corinthians 4:12-14**

words about persecution are relevant today is because Paul said, *“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,”* 2 Tim 3:12; see Ax 14:22; Jn 15:20; Mt 10:25. How could Paul make such a sweeping statement? *“All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”* He made it on the basis of a deep conviction about the nature of a life with Christ and the nature of the sinfulness of man. He was convinced that there is such a tension between the message and way of life of Christians on the one hand and the mindset and way of life of the world on the other that conflict is inevitable. This conviction is rooted in the nature of sinful, fallen man and the nature of the new creation in Christ. Therefore it does not go out of date. It is still true today. Sooner or later a deeply God-centered Christian will be mistreated for the things he believes or the life he lives.

So these words of Jesus about persecution are relevant for today not only because millions of Christians are being persecuted for their faith this very day, but also because to one degree or another all of you who are earnest about putting God first in your work and home and school and leisure will bump into some form of opposition sooner or later. None of us knows when our freedoms may cease or when we may be called by God to go to a dangerous place or take a stand here that will cause many to dislike us.

**Why the Persecutions Come.** This is important because not all persecuted people are blessed. Only those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness are blessed. (The crabby man is disliked because of his sinful character, not because of Christ. **Righteousness in the Structure of**

**the Beatitudes.** Recall the structure of the beatitudes. There are two groups of four, and each group ends with a reference to righteousness. The first group ends with v. 6: *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.”* And the second group ends with v. 10: *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’s sake.”* The three beatitudes that lead to hunger for righteousness are descriptions of a holy emptiness. Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn over their needy condition, and the meek who hand their cause over to God. It’s natural that these three descriptions of emptiness and need should be followed by a description of hunger. If you don’t have something, you hunger for it. Then the next three beatitudes are descriptions not of emptiness but of fullness. The hunger is beginning to be satisfied by an overflowing mercy, a pure heart, and a power to make peace. So the righteousness longed for in v. 6 is given in the form of mercy, purity, and peacemaking. The result is persecution for this very righteousness.

**Righteousness and a Relationship with Jesus.** Another way to define the righteousness of v. 10 is to look at its parallel in v. 11. In v. 10 the persecution is *“on account of righteousness,”* but in v. 11 it is *“on account of Jesus.”* *“Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.”* *“On my account”* and *“on account of righteousness”* mean the same thing.

So what we learn from this is that true righteousness—the righteousness that surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, Mt 5:20—always involves a relationship with Jesus. True righteousness is not done for its own sake. It is done for

Jesus’s sake. The mercy and the purity and the peacemaking of a disciple of Jesus comes from Jesus (*“without me you can do nothing,”* Jn 15:5) and is done for the honor of Jesus. It’s this attachment to Jesus that gives our righteousness its distinct character.

#### **Why Is Righteousness Persecuted?**

But that raises a question: if that is what righteousness means—being merciful and pure and peaceable by relying on Jesus and living for His glory—why would anybody persecute that? It doesn’t seem very offensive.

The answer that goes to the root cause is found in Lk 16:14-15. Jesus had just said, *“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”* Then came the persecution, the mockery. *“The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they scoffed at him,”* v. 14.

There was persecution and part of its explanation: *“they were lovers of money.”* In other words, Jesus’s teaching toward money was an attack on their love of money. Then came the rest of the explanation of their mockery. *“But he said to them, ‘You are those who justify yourselves before men,’”* v. 15. So here is the root of persecution with its two shafts. One shaft is the love of something evil or untrue and the other shaft is the need to justify that love. This is the root cause of persecution.

Jesus came on the scene with a way of life and a message that implied that the love of sin is treason against God. *“You can’t serve two sovereigns!”*

This is not an antagonistic insult. It is part of his purity. It is true. It is essential to know if you are going saved. But it goes against the Pharisee’s love of money. So to justify themselves

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Psalm 133:1

**Let your faith be seen in 2014**  
“I rejoice to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.” —Colossians 2:5

**Persecuted**, from p. 2  
they put Jesus down. This is standard operating procedure for self-justification. And this is the root of all persecution.

**A Life Devoted to Righteousness Will Be Persecuted.** So we can see why a life devoted to righteousness or godliness will be persecuted or reviled or spoken against.

- If you cherish chastity, your life will be an attack on people's love for free sex.
- If you embrace temperance, your life will be a statement against the love of alcohol.
- If you pursue self-control, your life will indict excess eating.
- If you live simply and happily, you will show the folly of luxury.
- If you walk humbly with your God, you will expose the evil of pride.
- If you are punctual and thorough in your dealings, you will lay open the inferiority of laziness and negligence.
- If you speak with compassion and without cursing, you will throw callousness into sharp relief.
- If you are earnest, you will make the flippant look flippant instead of clever.
- And if you are spiritually minded, you will expose the worldly-mindedness of those around you.

**Two Responses to a Righteous Life.** When you desire to be godly in all your affairs and relationships—when you follow the righteousness of Jesus in His strength and for His glory—there are two possible responses people can have who stay around you. These are described in Jn 3:20-21: “For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not

## Discipleship Here At Home

come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. [That is one possible response: hating the light and not accepting it.] *But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God.* [That is the other possible response: doing the truth and coming to it and freely admitting that all good in us is accomplished by God.] The two options are persecution or conversion. (See these two options in Mt 5:10 and 16.) But, we ask, what about all the unbelievers in my life who are neither converted nor persecuting—who are just civil, or even polite? There are at least two possible explanations, which we will discuss next week. ©2014 Desiring God Foundation. Used by Permission

### Respect Elders, from p. 4

Listen to what they have to offer. In general, older means wiser, but some older people may not be wise: you must weigh their advice against the scriptures. “Wisdom is with aged men, and with length of days, understanding,” Job 12:12. However, “Great men are not always wise, nor do the aged always understand justice,” Job 32:9.

**3. Offer to help.** Older people will appreciate any assistance you're willing to give them. Ask to help carry groceries in, hold a door open, or something else that is simple but genuine. A simple *please* and *thank you* can mean a lot. Always be polite and sincere. “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous,” 1 Pet 3:8.

**4. Show an interest in their lives.** Ask them about their childhood, or how they did things in the past. They'll be happy that you're interested and glad to tell you all sorts of stories. Be a friend. Offer to go to coffee together.

**5. Be patient.** With age, some people lose their logic; they may be confused. Gently remind them of who you are; they will appreciate the reminder.

### PRAY FOR healing, protection, help, and comfort here and away

**Hannah Huelsman**—diagnosed with polycythemia, thickening of blood; and acid reflux  
**Mark Campbell**—seizures and blood clots  
**Giles Free**—seizure and black eye from fall; confined at home, no driving for 3 mos  
**Pat Wilkes**—recovering from knee surgery; pain  
**Judy Sartin's son David**—lost his cousin **Billy Hughes**, age 61, to hanging (suspicious circumstances) last week  
**Brittany Tope's grandmother**—dialysis  
**Ed Fink**—prostate cancer; current treatment for brain tumors. Undergoing chemo this month.  
**Judy Sartin's friends—Vicky Keyes**, mastectomy 9/8; **Summer Jensen**, multiple tumors, cysts on both kidneys  
**Andrea Arvola, Justin Hambrick, and Gary Boyd**—spiritual strength  
**Marit Nerland**, family friends of Hadderses—infant who needs financial support: see <http://www.youcaring.com/medical-fundraiser/help-baby-marit-get-the-best-care-/219321>

### CHRONIC CONDITIONS

**Logan Corray; Addison Tope; Christian Harrod; Rocco Jr; Pat Wilkes**—asthma  
**Bill Dennis**—heart issues  
**Autumn Hadders**—epilepsy; celiac disease  
**Danielle Huelsman**—vertigo, CV syndrome  
**Kirk Johnson**—MS  
**Menards**—aging; **Lloyd**, diabetes, weak; **Virginia**, macular degeneration; high BP  
**Sandra Perry**—neuropathy from diabetes  
**Cheryl Reames**—diverticulitis; fibromyalgia  
**Nell Free**—pacemaker, heart; back pain  
**Judy Sartin**—spinal stenosis; arthritis  
**Judy and Mike Strand**—hepatitis treatment  
**Lynda Szymanski**—COPD, lung weakness

### Job concerns Linda Szymanski

**Rejoice** Mina Gonzalez is the proud grandmother of **Asher Craig Gonzalez**, born 8/25 to **Lauren and Lorenzo**.

**Travel** DeWayne and Kim Howell in Ouray until Mon. **Campbells** are in AR. **Reingrovers** are on vacation.

**Bereaved** Sarah McMurray is in IN with family whose grandmother, **Grace Felzien**, passed away Monday at age 97.

**Thanks** to the men who are teaching and preaching in the leaders' absences today.



## Exposing current thoughts & trends

### Five Ways to Respect Your Elders by Annie Zaidi

*"You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I AM the LORD," Lev 19:32; see Deut 28:50.*

Respect of elders is simply recognizing their place in society as being more experienced and have a wealth of knowledge that is greater than yours. Isaiah said the culture was upside-down when the children were the rulers and lacked respect, Is 3:12. Now why should we respect somebody just because he is older? Scriptures tell us to honor everyone, but especially to your elders because they are ahead of you—in age, in wisdom and maturity, in experience and education. Older people have done a lot for us, directly or indirectly, and most of us owe everything to their kindness and love. Elders have also been through all the phases we are going through and know a little more about the world than we do. Another reason to honor the aged is to learn humility, Pr 15:33; 18:12; 22:4; 29:23.

With changing times and cultural influences, youngsters no longer know what is interpreted as disrespect to elders. For instance, in earlier times, children would not yell back. Yes, there were disagreements and debates; there always have been. But youngsters would quietly express their views and if there were arguments, they would not raise their voices. Nowadays, children fight back, causing even more aggravation. The result is an ugly war of words, with each person trying to out-shout the other. Another example: according to good manners, children did not sit when their elders stood. Therefore, if there were no space on sofas or chairs, children would immediately give up their places, and sit on the floor. In buses and trains, youngsters were expected to give up their places to older people.

This is not a question of who has more rights. It is simply that those who are younger have the strength to bear discomfort, or tolerate unpleasantness, so it is natural to show consideration to those who are older and perhaps at a slight disadvantage. When you do simple things as a mark of respect, elders become aware that youngsters care for them, and they respond with affection and kindness.

**1. Never refer to them by their first name, unless asked to.** Always address their last name with "Mr.," "Mrs.," or "Miss." This is an important sign of respect. Always call the person by whatever they prefer, whether that is "Miss Smith," "Lily," or even just "Ma'am."

**2. Listen to their advice.** Your elders have lived a lot longer than you, which means they have probably experienced more and have grown wise.

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#### Preacher

Jim Reingrover (303) 973-5102

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## Assembly Schedule

### Sunday

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

### Wednesday

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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### Sunday morning

- **adult Bible class**, *Lessons from Deuteronomy*, "God's Protection of Women," Kenny Boyd

- **Sermon**, "The Blessed Man," Jeff Wilkes

### Sunday afternoon

- **Sermon**, "The Fruit of the Spirit is... Gentleness (Kindness)," Kory Tope

**Wednesday night adult Bible class**, *Pearls from Proverbs*, Jim Reingrover