

## Hostile Assurance

*“This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake ...” Philippians 1:28b-29.*

There are two subjects that are of great concern to Christians, and understandably so. One is hostility from others for our beliefs. Not many Christians enjoy receiving hostility for being Christians. The other is an assurance of our salvation. Not many Christians enjoy not knowing if they've been saved or not. We want an assurance of our salvation, and we don't want to receive hostility for our beliefs.

On one hand, no one (or, at least, a large majority of people) wants to experience hostility from others. Hostility from strangers is uncomfortable both in the moment and out of the moment. Confrontation is unpleasant in the moment, and once we leave a hostile situation, we then carry the remains of the confrontation with us. Hostility, then, is not only unpleasant in the moment but outside of it, too, because we must continue to deal with it.

On the other hand, everyone (or, at least, a large majority of Christians) wants to believe that their salvation is written in stone. The thought that God looked at our charts and checked a “maybe” next to our name is not of any comfort. However, we know that God wants us to trust our salvation in Him, which means that God doesn't want us to be unclear about it. God wants to be trusted, and we can't very well trust Him if we think our salvation could be lost at any moment.

What is so interesting about this passage is that Paul through inspiration puts these two issues together for the church in Philippi. Paul not only assures the church that they will endure hostility, but that their enduring hostility from others is a clear sign not only of the destruction of their enemies, but especially of their salvation. The evidence of the assurance of their salvation is in the fact that they endured hostility from others. It is an assurance not only from the words of Paul, but explicitly from God.

We will endure hostility because of our beliefs. In fact, even non-Christians endure hostility for their beliefs. Hostility is unpleasant and difficult to endure and everyone must be prepared to endure it because it is a part of life whether we like it or not. But only Christians are assured that the hostility that arises from being a Christian is direct evidence from God that we are saved. Suffering for Christ does not indicate a “maybe” next to our names on our charts, but a strong and resounding “yes.” **[DJR]**