**2017 3 26**

**“Thought for the Week”**

***…*** ***In those days, Herod the king laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword; and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.”***

My beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ,

 In the blessed and glorious light of our Lord’s Resurrection, we now begin our reading of the book of Acts, which tells us how our church began to be persecuted. Herod killed James, the brother of John and then proceeded to arrest Peter. Those who killed our Lord, now want to kill all of His followers. We must ask ourselves, why would anyone want to harm a group of people who follow a Man Who preached love for all, even enemies? Why would anyone want to harm a Man who healed the sick and raised the dead? Why were they threatened?

First, this is nothing new. The prophets who brought the word of the Lord to the people were killed. John the Baptist preached repentance and was killed. And now the Apostles. If a person has a guilty conscience, either he will repent or he will try to destroy those who are making him feel guilty. The conscience is the voice of God speaking to us from our depths. However, many wish to be their own Gods. They do not wish to submit their wills to anyone, including the God who created them. They wish to pursue their own lusts and thoughts, and if anyone disagrees they will try to destroy them. Our Lord says this quite clearly. ***"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.”*** (Joh 3:18-20 NKJ)

Beloved in Christ Jesus, we should not be surprised by extremist attacks on our churches in Egypt or the Middle East. We should not be surprised if we are called “intolerant” and ignorant if we do not subscribe to the social and politically correct attitudes that are becoming the “Gospel of our Age.” This Gospel is one of self-indulgence and self-fulfillment, it is one of rejection of any moral authority outside of ourselves, and ultimately it is a rejection of God. The way of the world and our way (we, who love Christ) are incompatible. Our Lord Jesus said ***“If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*** (Joh 15:19 NKJ)

The good news my dear ones, we have nothing, absolutely nothing to fear. As Peter in today’s epistle shows us, the power of men is nothing before the power of our God. The chains and the guards were powerless and crumbled before the angel of the Lord. The Jews indeed killed our Lord on the cross, and yet He is more alive and more present with us today than He was when He walked this earth. They tried to kill the Apostles and yet our Church spread to the ends of the earth. The gates of hell will never prevail over our church because it is built on a rock- and that rock is Christ. ***“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?***” (Rom 8:31 NKJ) Beloved, Let us hold tenaciously to our faith and stand fast against the ways of this world because we are not of this world but we have been born of God. Let each one of us fulfill our royal calling by loving our God and seeking to please Him with our every breath. In this way we will be glorified both in this world and in the world to come. Amen.