

# sermonindex.net Simulcast 2012: The Body of Christ and Persecution

by Sandeep Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a global view of the church, recognizing that it's not about individual Christians, but about the body of Christ as a whole, and preparing for persecution by being an active member of a local body of believers.*

**Duration:** 8:50

**Scripture:** Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:27, Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 5:23, Hebrews 10:24-25

**Topics:** "Church Unity", "Body Of Christ"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the true nature of the church as the body and bride of Christ, highlighting the need to shift focus from personal experiences to the collective identity in Christ. It addresses the global perspective of the church, urging believers to see beyond national boundaries and embrace unity. Additionally, it stresses the significance of active participation in the local church, moving away from individualistic pursuits of holiness towards genuine fellowship and community.

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## Transcript

I'm thankful that Brother Greg has asked me to speak at this coming conference, and I'm looking forward to it. You know, as I was reflecting on speaking at this conference, usually speakers of conferences are typically ones who are experts on the subject. So for a conference on the church and the coming persecution, one should probably have a strong background in the area of building and raising churches, or in the area of dealing with persecution.

Well, let me tell you right away, I have neither. I'm not a veteran with several years under my belt in church building, leading a church, or anything like that, and I definitely don't have any personal experience in persecution. Any so-called persecution in my life is just mere touches of a feather compared to what so many others have suffered through the ages and are even now going through.

I remember as a young person reading this book called Fox's Book of Martyrs and learning about the horrific ways in which Christians were persecuted through the ages. So it's hard for me, in light of that, to characterize anything from my own life as persecution. But I'll tell you what I am passionate about, and it is the church.

You know, for many years, I viewed the church as a place where believers got together to worship God and interacted with one another and with God through songs, prayer, and listening to God's word. And even as I spoke at churches, I don't think I really saw the spiritual significance of the church. I think I saw it more as a social construct prescribed in the Bible where Christians got together to guard their point of view and met together and reminded one another what was really important.

And of course, I knew that the Bible called the church the body of Christ and the bride of Christ and that we were brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ and the family of God, but it never really became personalized until a few years ago. I think part of the reason for myself was I submitted to other people's ideas of what church looked like and I never really took the time to study the Bible to understand very simply what the Bible talked about the church. But as I'm going to see the church as the very body of Christ, and it's not my church and your church, not this denomination, not this theology, I've started to see things very differently.

So I personally appreciate that Brother Greg has called this subject, the subject of this conference is the church and the coming persecution. So I don't have to give you tips and tricks on how Sandeep is going to deal with the coming persecution or how Johnny or Mary have to deal with it because for me that would just be a whole lot of empty theories. It is Jesus's body and the bride of Christ and the family of God that the devil is trying to attack and that will face persecution and it is only because I am a member of that body and a part of that bride and a part of that family that I too might face persecution.

So here are just three points that I wanted to give you as we prepare to meet at the conference. First of all, it's not about me, it's not about you, it is about Jesus Christ. What do I mean by that? I must work hard to make sure that in any persecution that I face, I don't make it personal that the devil has an agenda against me so much as the devil has an agenda against Christ and the fact that I'm a part of Christ is the reason why I'm facing the persecution.

It is the precious body of Jesus that the devil attacked 2000 years ago and is still attacking today. It's the bride of Jesus that the devil is after and the reason I say that is because some Christians I think can take on unnecessary persecution which they're really guilty of bringing on upon themselves. I think it's possible for some of us to have a persecution complex where it's only when other people are hating us that we feel we've been true followers of Jesus Christ.

But I see that there's also a proud stubbornness in this kind of mindset that I do not see in Jesus and what might have begun as trying to stay connected with Jesus Christ and making sure we were following Jesus Christ might now have become a personal crusade rather than continuing to reflect Jesus and his values. So I think that's something we must all keep in mind that while we may have started out trying to genuinely defend Jesus and be a part of his body we must ask ourselves and constantly ask ourselves if the persecution or whatever troubles we're facing is just something where we are on a personal crusade and somehow lost Jesus in the process. That's point number one it's not about you or me personally it's really about the body and the bride of Jesus that's facing persecution.

Secondly the church of Jesus which is the body of Christ is global and when I say global I think we especially in America have to work hard to maintain a global view of the church and differentiate it from the American church. Look God cares for the Angolan church just as much as the American church and it is an evidence of our selfishness that we don't see it this way. We speak out of both sides of our mouths if we send missionaries to other countries telling them that they need to receive Jesus and they need to be

part of the family of God but then we subtly believe or buy into this belief system that God has a special feeling or place for the American church.

One specific burden that I see about God in his new covenant that he made and the new agreement he made with man is that he sought to destroy national divisions that persisted and were even allowed under the old covenant. So I think we're still trying to live in God's obsolete old covenant when we put a special premium on the church of one country and specifically as in this case the American church. So we must fight hard to maintain a global view of the body of Christ.

That's my second point and the third point is this while the church of God is global it is also local. So while God does not put a premium on the national church he does put a premium on the local church that is in every locality and that is where things become very practical for every one of us no matter what our gifting is and no matter what our role is in the church. So whether we're an elder or a teacher or just an attendee whether we're father, mother, young boy, young girl, we all have a role to play in the local church.

So each of us must fight hard to make sure that our local church experience is not a bland Sunday morning activity not an internet forum that we listen to messages in a vacuum and where we contribute to posts here and there. I believe that God wants every single believer to connect with other believers in a real sense with people not in a virtual world but build fellowship with other people in their locality and we should not comfort ourselves that we are the only ones in a locality that are truly for God because we're the only ones who seek for purity and for revival because we're the only ones who listen to Andrew Murray or Charles Finney or things like that. Now that's probably some ways in which we can deceive ourselves.

We could be all alone because we're hard to get along with. We could be all alone because we are obstinate in our point of view or our theological frame of references or maybe and this was the case in my particular situation we are all alone because we simply don't have an exalted view of the local church because we think that individual holiness is all God primarily is interested in. We don't deeply yearn and long for one or two others or three or four others to gather together with us and for us to be part of the church.

That was my problem for many years. I was interested in personal holiness. I was interested in making sure that I remained holy but didn't realize what God's vision really was for me in that holiness was that I could be united with other people and be one with them.

So brothers and sisters let us prepare for any coming persecution by being an active and fully functioning member of a local body of believers that is called the body of Jesus Christ. Let us keep our global view of the church not submitting ourselves to any nationalistic point of view and let us also remind ourselves as I said in the very first point that it is not against you or me it's never personal but it is because of our devotion and our allegiance to the body of Jesus Christ that we will face persecution from the devil. So finally I'm looking forward to the conference and I'm praying that the Lord might be glorified through everything that happens and I pray that brother Greg and the other organizers will have much wisdom as they prepare for all the needs in advance.

God bless you.

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