

ACTS#4 CHAPTER 5 ENDURING PERSECUTION

Acts 5:12-42

From the beginning
Persecution was part of the Christian experience.
Nero, the Roman Emperor from AD 54-68 blamed
The Christians for burning Rome and had them
Imprisoned, thrown to wild animals, burned alive and crucified.

Apostle Peter was crucified upside down.
The Apostle John was exiled to Patmos,
The first century saw thousands of Christian killed
including the Bishop of Rome for not offering sacrifices to him as emperor.
Diocletian AD 284-305 tried to eliminate Christianity
He had church buildings burned, bibles confiscated, pastors tortured, Christians and civil
servant executed who refused to recant.

Tertullian a second century North African church leader and historian,
Grimly noted: "Kill us, torture us, condemn us, grind us to dust....
The more you mow us down, the more we grow."

Last August 2nd two Christian villages in Pakistan were attacked by Islamist mobs
motivated by an alleged "desecration" of a Koran dozens of homes, shops and churches
were burned, and 7 Christians, including 2 children, were killed.

October 2nd Ethiopian Muslims Attack and burn Churches 3 injured.

On Thursday October 8, two young Iranian women who converted from Islam to
Christianity were to be sentenced by an Iranian court with execution or life imprisonment
for "apostasy" and "propagation of the Christian faith",

October 9th the Pastor and president of the Chinese House Church Alliance and his wife
were released from a forced vacation – in prison. However authorities report they still
remain detained.

Asia, China, South America, Russia, Middle East, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Africa,
Are boiling pots for Christians.

SLIDE Bishop Malik, leader of the 800,000 Christians in the Church of Pakistan,
is asking the Pakistani government to amend or revoke its Blasphemy Law,
which allow radical Islamists to justify violence against religious minorities,
on the presumption of defaming Islam's founder or scripture. One can't abuse the Koran
or take Mohammad name in vain lest you be killed.

Yet around the world we can curse Jesus name in vain
And profane the God of Abraham with no penalty.

Jesus warned of persecution.

If they Persecuted me, they will persecute you also John 15:20

Was Jesus thinking about how that verse would fit the rabid Jihad Muslims of today?
Hating Christians to the point of killing them in the name of their god.

**They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills
you will think that he offers God service. John 15:20, 16:2**

Friends this is the age old conflict between the living truth and a dead faith.
 Between a Living Savior and a dead orthodoxy.
 The English Martyr Hugh Latimer said: “Whenever you see persecution, there is more than a probability that truth is on the persecuted side.”

In the early church the tension mounted between the Pharisees and leaders of the Jewish council and the new Christian and finally

One day the tension broke

I. THE TRUTH IS ATTACKED Acts 5:17-28

“Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.” Acts 5:17-18

Isn't it interesting that the early persecution began,

Not because of a difference in theology,

Not because of a difference in tradition

But because of Jealousy.

The Sanhedrin, and elders of Israel

Ordered Peter and John not to teach anymore about Jesus

Why?

Because they were jealous

And their teaching was gaining in popularity.

¹²The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. Acts 5:12

Whenever there is success

Someone is jealous,

The religious leaders had them all arrested and thrown in jail

Whenever there is a breakthrough in medicine and science,

Someone is jealous.

Whenever a church is growing

Someone is jealous

How many times has jealousy ruined our lives?

Besmirched marriages,

Split a church

Bankrupt a business.

Disrupted a teachers lounge,

Changed the friends in a coffee group

The Sadducees were jealous of the Apostles Health care system,

So they had them thrown into jail.

The Sadducees and Elder of Israel

Didn't care that their own people were being

Healed and helped.

Or that more and more men and women were being saved.

¹⁴Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. Acts 5:14

Their ministry was so successful that the sick were

Brought out into the open.

Lepers who were previously cast outside the city and .

Pushed into the darkness of the cellar or
Kept in attics by superstition and evil spirits, were
Suddenly being brought out into the open.
So that the shadow of Peter might fall on some of them,

As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Acts 5:15

What impact does your shadow have on your children, your spouse, your friendship, your neighborhood as you walk to exercise, as you sit in a restaurant to eat?

I remember giving someone a ride in my car,
When he saw a lady from the neighborhood walking,
That Lady who happened to be from our church
He said: I wish that woman would pray for me.

Great danger has been done in the church by trying
to accommodate the behavior of Christians
to the conscience of the lowest common denominator,
to the lifestyle of the weakest brother in the church.
Our attitude is : Well at least I'm not as bad as Bill or Susan or Joe or Ruth.
This does not help the church to grow at all.

¹⁶Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed. Acts 5:14-16

Folks from Groton and Condee came
From Frederick and Leola
Because the Jerusalem Christian church had such great success.

II. THE TRUTH IS AFFIRMED

When we set a high standard we
Lift the atmosphere around us.
We benefit the environment to greater heights.
Because God can be trusted to be there for us,
And he has different ideas about his people
about his word and his will.

**The apostles were arrested and jailed but that
Didn't phase God and his purpose.**

"But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life." At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people Acts 5:19-21

These dazed apostles witnessed the miracle,
Seen the supernatural occurrences of angels with keys.
Got out of jail when they weren't expecting it.

This didn't change their conviction,
They didn't take it easy and go home.
They obeyed God and Trusted Him to take care of the consequences.
And went back to preaching and healing.

We still have places where we need to see courage and faith.

Persecution exists on our college and university campuses,
And in our educational system.

Attorney David French of the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) is moving to make colleges and universities free speech zones. He contends there is a lack of free speech on the campuses. In fact, he says about 70 percent have policies that violate the Constitution. He wants to restore campuses as the marketplace of ideas , to roll back censorship against Christian students and Christian professors on campus," He said if Education, information, counseling does not succeed in protecting students rights, Then we have no hesitation to go into court and protect the First Amendment." Do you think our secular campuses will just let this happen?

When the Sanhedrin convened the next morning,
They sent for the apostles and found the cells locked but empty,
The guards were still at their post.
The Sadducees were bewildered because the official stance on miracles is that they didn't occur.
In their confusion
Someone came in and announced
The two men were back in the temple courts teaching.

Imagine their outrage.
So they sent the captain of the guard to re-arrest them.
But they did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.
Acts 5:26

They brought them back to be questioned before the Sanhedrin.
²⁸"We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." Acts 5:27-28

Now threats and intimidation didn't change the Apostles message
They stuck to their theme
"This Jesus you killed
Was raised from the dead.
exalted by God to heaven.
he is sitting at the right hand of God
The place of honor,
Power, and authority."

Peter had said to them:
You killed the prince of life, but God raised him from the dead, We are witnesses of this. Acts 3:15kjv

Prince means a Pioneer
One who leads the way, an originator.
The Sanhedrin was not interested in pioneering anything
All they wanted to do was protect their vested interests
and keep things exactly as they were.

Friends, The Christian life is not a parking lot,
It is a launching pad.

We must not be just born again,
We must grow spiritually

III. THE TRUTH IS DEFENDED

The Apostles defend their action,
By defending their faith.

This must be our course of action.
My argument against government and secular policies are not
Because of my own personal interests
Or because of political correctness,
But because of my moral conscience
And my biblical faith.

I'm not interested in giving everyone an equal share of this physical world,
But I am interested in giving everyone an equal opportunity of the Spiritual world.
Even if it means standing against our government,
And its unbiblical policies.
We must defend our faith,
Because we must obey God rather than man.

²⁹Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men! ³⁰The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead--whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. ³²We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."
Acts 5:27-32

Maybe the Apostles had wavered, uncertain and frightened during their jail time.
They were completely outnumbered,
They realized the danger they were in.
"IF they could kill Jesus they wouldn't have any qualms about killing us."
Where is God when Christians are persecuted?
He is there.
He answers on our behalf.

The Angel said:
**"Go, stand in the temple courts...and tell the people the full message of this new life."
Acts 5:20**

What are we to do when we stand between the call of God and
The government, or family, or teachers or employers, or neighbors?
We are to obey God.

We don't need angels to give us instruction today.
Because we have the word of God.
And our obligation is to serve God not man.

What does a Christian do when the situation is out of our control?
We trust God.
We let God work through us.
It is not easy to follow through.

Civil disobedience carries consequences...some time serious.
and the apostle paid a price.

The Sanhedrin agreed to release the apostles,
But only after a flogging,
This type of whipping typically was so severe that
many prisoners died afterward from blood loss.
It was what was done to Jesus before he was crucified.

How should a Christian handle suffering that comes
with having faith in Jesus.
The apostles showed the way.

After the flogging they left. "Rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Acts 5:41

How could they take physical and psychological suffering?
They did because they saw it as an honor.

**"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for this is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:
Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
Matthew 5:10-12**

To close today I want to bring you up to date.
Friend persecution is not limited to the Roman Empire 2000 years ago.
In fact there were more martyrs for Jesus Christ in the twentieth century
than in all the previous nineteen centuries combined.

SLIDE ----Our 21st century today sees persecution in Vietnam,
North Korea, China, Sudan, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia,
and many other countries.
We may be comfortable as American Christians
But suffering for Jesus is very real for 1000's of people around the world.

Just a few month ago on May 3, 2009 in the Philippines
Albert and his little cousin Mial Rose a little 9 year old girl
walked out of the jungle to a plantation to get banana's.
They were startled with loud noise and gunfire.
Albert grabbed Mial Rose hand and they began to run.
Albert was pulling her along running as fast as they could
When men dressed in army uniforms jumped out of the jungle.
They were not the Philippine army but a Muslim terrorist group.
They forced little Mial Rose and her cousin to the ground.
Albert tried to cover Rose protecting her.
The Muslim terrorist shot Albert and killed him
The bullet also hitting Mial in the foot.

Then the Real Philippine army came.
When Mial Rose's father came he found her on the ground.
Under her Cousin Albert who was shot dead.

Three other villages were attacked that same day.
 The Muslim do not want Christians living there.
 They claim this as Muslim land,
 Attacks on Christians happen a lot on Mindanao,
 Mial Rose spent more than three weeks in the hospital.
 Her mother change the bandage they put on her foot every day.
 Little Mial Rose said it hurt each time, but she was very brave.

The bullets are real even for the children
 The pain is real whether it be from
 1. disapproval, 2. ridicule, 3. Loss of an educational opportunity, jobs, or property 4.
 physical abuse 7 mob violence. 8 harassment 9 kidnapping, 10 imprisonment 13 torture
 14. or murder

Persecution is real in our world.
 We must pray for Christian
 For strength to endure
 And a boldness to share.
 The Apostles were willing to go anywhere, do anything,
 and suffer greatly for Jesus Christ their Lord.

Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ. Acts 5:42

What about you?
 Are you willing to stand up for your faith?
 To take a hit for your lord,
 And make your witness know?
 God is calling you to obedience.