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Life Groups / Connections / Baptisms
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Acts 5:12-42

Unwavering Faith in the Face of Opposition and Persecution

Christian Persecution Defined: Any mistreatment, intolerance, oppression, or hostility towards a person or group of people for their belief in, and righteous practice of, following Jesus as the Christ.

Old Testament Examples

- Cain kills Abel (Genesis 4:8)
- Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37:23)
- Moses and the Israelites in Egypt (Exodus 1:10)
- Prophets in Israel (1 Kings 19:1-18, Matthew 5:12)

New Testament and Early Church Examples

- Jesus: Crucified
- Apostles: imprisonment, beatings, and martyrdom
- Early Church: from Jewish authorities and the Roman Empire
- Christians tortured and killed under Nero, 37 AD–68 AD

Present Day Persecution Facts

- Out of 2.4 billion Christians worldwide, 380,000,000 are under persecution and oppression.
- Violence and Terrorism | Discrimination | Imprisonment | Constant Pressure and force to Conform and Convert | Vandalism and Destruction of Properties, Homes, and Churches | Abductions | Exile/Banishments | Legal and Civil Injustices | Confiscation of Property | Public Mockery | General Prohibition to Thrive | Torment/Torture | Death/Martyrdom

A Standard for the Church

Acts 5:12-42 ESV

- They “obeyed God rather than man”
- They became greatly influential
- They were:
 - Submissive to authority
 - Subjected to oppressions
 - But not subjective to self-preservation

We Were Warned

- Like master, like servant - John 15:18-25 ESV
- Living Godly draws persecution - 2 Timothy 3:12 ESV
- You will be hated - Luke 21:17

Understanding the Root Cause

- Spiritual forces - Ephesians 6:12 AMP
- Man following Satan - Ephesians 2:1-2 ESV
- Sinful nature - Romans 8:7 NLT

Proper Response Toward Persecutors

- Love your enemies - Matthew 5:38-48 ESV
- Forgive them - Acts 7:60 ESV (Luke 23:34)

Proper Attitude Toward Death for Christ

1. Deny self and love not your own life
 - a. Matthew 16:24
 - b. Revelation 12:11
2. Consider your life not your own - Galatians 2:20 ESV
3. Learn contentment - 2 Corinthians 12:10 ESV
4. Understand what you gain - Philippians 1:20-21 AMP
5. Count it as joy and be glad - Luke 6:22-23 ESV
6. Eyes on eternity - 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 ESV
7. Do not be afraid, but fear God
 - a. Isaiah 41:10 ESV
 - b. Matthew 10:28 ESV

Final Thought: Am I ready to give up my life for Christ?