



The Believers Response To Persecution **Sunday September 28, 2008**

Persecution : An expected occurrence

Jesus experienced it

Jesus told us we would face it

Matthew 10:22

And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

John 15:18-20

18 "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.

19 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.

20 Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

The Early Church and the Apostles went through it.

The Epistles are full of it.

Philippians 1:29

For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

Different forms of persecution

Passive

- Examples of passive persecution
- What persecution is not (1 Peter 2:20)

Aggressive

- Violent persecution

The outcome of persecution

- Purification
1 Peter 1:6-9
6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,
7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,
8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,
9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.
- Growth of the church (Acts 8)
- Unity of believers

How do we respond to persecution?

1, No Fear

Matthew 10:28, 31

28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

31 Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.



The fear of man is a snare (Proverbs 29:25).

When you make decisions prompted by fear, you usually end up in a trap – emotional trap, many times.

Let us not confuse fearlessness with foolishness or recklessness. Fearlessness does not mean we become unwise and do not protect our lives to what ever extent possible:

Matthew 10:16-18,22-23

16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

17 But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues.

18 You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

22 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

23 When they persecute you in this city, flee to another.

John 11:53,54

53 Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.

54 Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples.

Example: churches in Orissa, or Police protection for church services

2, Prayer

Matthew 5:44

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

What do we pray for?

- Pray for divine encounters with Jesus, for our persecutors
- Pray forgiveness over them
- Pray for increase boldness among God's people (Acts 4:29,30)
- Pray for our government

1 Timothy 2:1,2

1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,

2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

3, Demonstrate Love and forgiveness

Stephen (Acts 7:60)

Jesus at the Cross

4, Minister to your persecutors

Ananias sent to pray for Saul (Acts 9:10-18)

Some common questions

1, Is it correct to fight back?

When there is no chapter and verse, God requires us to use our best judgment.

My personal opinion is that it is fine for us to defend ourselves. Do what it takes to defend yourself, without retaliation or revenge (Romans 12:14-21).



I realize that this is a fine line, and not easily differentiate. But the heart issue is clear enough. Am I doing what I am doing in order to defend or out of feelings of revenge and retaliation?

Some related questions:

- What about turning the other cheek? The context of Matthew 5:39 is not directly that of violent persecution.
- What about John 18:10,11 : The reason Jesus told Peter to put his sword back was because the time for death had come and there was nothing any one could do to defend him at this time. He had to drink of the cup which the Father had given Him.
- Stephen in Acts 7 did not throw stones back. This is true. There will be times when we can do nothing more to defend ourselves. We at such times gladly yield and count it an honor to suffer for His names' sake.

2, Is it correct to appeal for our constitutional rights (in countries where this is applicable)?

appeal to higher courts of law, etc.

Is this depending on the "arm of flesh"?

Romans 13:1-7

1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.

4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.

7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

(See also 1 Peter 2:13,14)

Acts 16:35-39 (Paul emphasizes his Roman citizenship)

Acts 22 (In this one chapter we see Paul exercising his rights both as a Jew and as a Roman citizen!)

Acts 22:24-29

22 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him.

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?"

26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman."

27 Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes."

28 The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "But I was born a citizen."

29 Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

I appeal to Caesar

Acts 25:7-12



7 When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove,
8 while he answered for himself, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all."
9 But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?"
10 So Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know.
11 For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar."
12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!"

I believe in the light of Romans 13 and that of Paul's example that it is perfectly correct to appeal for our constitutional rights following the proper protocol (i.e. legal procedures) to do so.

3, Is it right to join with other religious groups whose constitutional rights are also being violated – to appeal to the government for the enforcement of law and security?

When there is no chapter and verse, God requires us to use our best judgment.

I believe that this is perfectly correct as well, in the light of Romans 13 and Paul's example. Since we are exercising our rights as citizens and respecting God appointed authority.

Matthew 5:45-47 God's providence extends to all.

4, What if we are told not to propagate our faith, i.e. to preach the Gospel?

Acts 4:18,19

18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.
19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.

But be wise. For example, if you are an employee at a certain company, do not preach on company work time, or using company property. You were hired to serve the company not preach.

5, Why does God allow His people to be persecuted and experience violent deaths?

Especially when we have great promises of divine protects (Isaiah 54:17, Psalm 91)

To answer very briefly, The earth has been entrusted to man (Genesis 1:27,28 Psalm 115:16) and there are many things that happen on earth that God does not approve, but God does not prevent from happening.

(for more details listen to the series: Biblical understanding of suffering, Sept 2005)

The apostles of the Lamb and Early Believers

Book of Martyrs by John Foxe (commonly known as Foxe's Book of Martyrs). First published in 1563. (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/foxe/martyrs/files/martyrs.html>)

CHAPTER I : History of Christian Martyrs to the First General Persecutions



I. Stephen

The first martyr. They cast him out of the city and **stoned** him to death.

About **two thousand Christians**, with Nicanor, one of the seven deacons, suffered martyrdom during the "persecution that arose about Stephen."

II. James the Great

The next martyr we meet with, according to St. Luke, in the History of the Apostles' Acts, was James the son of Zebedee, the elder brother of John, and a relative of our Lord; for his mother Salome was cousin-german to the Virgin Mary. It was not until **ten years after the death of Stephen** that the second martyrdom took place; for no sooner had **Herod Agrippa** been appointed governor of Judea, than, with a view to ingratiate himself with them, he raised a sharp persecution against the Christians, and determined to make an effectual blow, by striking at their leaders. The account given us by an eminent primitive writer, Clemens Alexandrinus, ought not to be overlooked; that, **as James was led to the place of martyrdom, his accuser was brought to repent of his conduct by the apostle's extraordinary courage and undauntedness, and fell down at his feet to request his pardon, professing himself a Christian, and resolving that James should not receive the crown of martyrdom alone. Hence they were both beheaded at the same time.** Thus did the first apostolic martyr cheerfully and resolutely receive that cup, which he had told our Savior he was ready to drink. Timon and Parmenas suffered martyrdom about the same time; the one at Philippi, and the other in Macedonia. These events took place A.D. 44.

III. Philip

Was born at Bethsaida, in Galilee and was first called by the name of "disciple." He labored diligently in Upper Asia, and suffered martyrdom at Heliopolis, in Phrygia. **He was scourged, thrown into prison, and afterwards crucified, A.D. 54.**

IV. Matthew

Whose occupation was that of a toll-gatherer, was born at Nazareth. He wrote his gospel in Hebrew, which was afterwards translated into Greek by James the Less. The scene of his labors was Parthia, and **Ethiopia, in which latter country he suffered martyrdom**, being slain with a halberd in the city of Nadabah, A.D. 60.

V. James the Less

He was elected to the oversight of the churches of Jerusalem; and was the author of the Epistle ascribed to James in the sacred canon. **At the age of ninety-four he was beat and stoned by the Jews; and finally had his brains dashed out with a fuller's club.**

VI. Matthias

Of whom less is known than of most of the other disciples, was elected to fill the vacant place of Judas. He was **stoned at Jerusalem and then beheaded.**

VII. Andrew

Was the brother of Peter. He preached the gospel to many Asiatic nations; but **on his arrival at Edessa he was taken and crucified on a cross, the two ends of which were fixed transversely in the ground.** Hence the derivation of the term, St. Andrew's Cross.

VIII. Mark



Was born of Jewish parents of the tribe of Levi. He is supposed to have been converted to Christianity by Peter, whom he served as an amanuensis, and under whose inspection he wrote his Gospel in the Greek language. **Mark was dragged to pieces by the people of Alexandria**, at the great solemnity of Serapis their idol, ending his life under their merciless hands.

IX. Peter

Among many other saints, the blessed apostle Peter was condemned to death, and crucified, as some do write, at **Rome**; albeit some others, and not without cause, do doubt thereof. Hegesippus saith that **Nero** sought matter against Peter to put him to death; which, when the people perceived, they entreated Peter with much ado that he would fly the city. Peter, through their importunity at length persuaded, prepared himself to avoid. But, coming to the gate, he saw the Lord Christ come to meet him, to whom he, worshipping, said, "Lord, whither dost Thou go?" To whom He answered and said, "I am come again to be crucified." By this, Peter, perceiving his suffering to be understood, returned into the city. **Jerome saith that he was crucified, his head being down and his feet upward**, himself so requiring, because he was (he said) unworthy to be crucified after the same form and manner as the Lord was.

X. Paul

Paul, the apostle, who before was called Saul, after his great travail and unspeakable labors in promoting the Gospel of Christ, suffered also in this first persecution under **Nero**. Abdias, declareth that under his execution Nero sent two of his esquires, Ferega and Parthemius, to bring him word of his death. They, coming to Paul instructing the people, desired him to pray for them, that they might believe; who told them that shortly after they should believe and be baptised at His sepulcher. This done, the soldiers came and led him out of the city to the place of execution, where he, after his prayers made, **gave his neck to the sword**.

XI. Jude

The brother of James, was commonly called Thaddeus. **He was crucified at Edessa, A.D. 72**.

XII. Bartholomew

Preached in several countries, and having translated the Gospel of Matthew into the language of **India**, he propagated it in that country. He was at length **cruelly beaten and then crucified** by the impatient idolaters.

XIII. Thomas

Called Didymus, preached the Gospel in Parthia and India, where exciting the rage of the pagan priests, **he was martyred by being thrust through with a spear**.

XIV. Luke

The evangelist, was the author of the Gospel which goes under his name. He travelled with Paul through various countries, **and is supposed to have been hanged on an olive tree**, by the idolatrous priests of **Greece**.

XV. Simon

Surnamed Zelotes, preached the Gospel in Mauritania, Africa, and even in **Britain**, in which latter country **he was crucified**, A.D. 74.

XVI. John



The "beloved disciple," was brother to James the Great. The churches of Smyrna, Pergamos, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and Thyatira, were founded by him. From Ephesus he was ordered to be sent to Rome, where it is affirmed he was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil. He escaped by miracle, without injury. Domitian afterwards **banished him to the Isle of Patmos**, where he wrote the Book of Revelation. Nerva, the successor of Domitian, recalled him. He was the only apostle who **escaped a violent death**.

XVII. Barnabas

Was of Cyprus, but of Jewish descent, his death is supposed to have taken place about A.D. 73.

Are you ready to die for Jesus?

How deep is your love? How strong is your commitment to the Lord? Is it strong enough that if it meant that you were to be a martyr for Jesus, you would gladly do so?

Revelation 12:11

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death

Paul under house arrest in Rome, knowing that at any time he would be beheaded, wrote:

2 Timothy 4:6,7

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Let your commitment to "love not your life unto death" for Jesus – translate into a daily commitment of living uncompromisingly for Him

Matthew 10:32,33

32 "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.

33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Some times it feels like it is easier to die in a moment for Jesus, than to live daily for Him in an ungodly world.

Take up your cross daily: Sacrifice, Suffering, Separation from the world

Luke 9:23-25

23 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

25 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?

1 John 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.

Call for commitment.

Are you ready to die for Jesus?.....daily?



USEFUL RESOURCES



Watch our online Sunday Church service live stream every Sunday at 10:30am (Indian Time, GMT+5:30). Spirit filled, anointed worship, Word and ministry for healing, miracles, and deliverance.

YOUTUBE: <https://youtube.com/allpeopleschurchbangalore>

WEBSITE: <https://apcwo.org/live>

Our other websites and free resources:

CHURCH: <https://apcwo.org>

FREE SERMONS: <https://apcwo.org/resources/sermons>

FREE BOOKS: <https://apcwo.org/books/english>

DAILY DEVOTIONALS: <https://apcwo.org/resources/daily-devotional>

JESUS CHRIST: <https://examiningjesus.com>

BIBLE COLLEGE: <https://apcbiblecollege.org>

E-LEARNING: <https://apcbiblecollege.org/elearn>

WEEKEND SCHOOLS: <https://apcwo.org/ministries/weekend-schools>

COUNSELING: <https://chrysalislife.org>

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