

Early Christians were persecuted for their faith at the hands of both Jews from whose religion Christianity arose and the Romans who controlled most of Europe and the countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, the areas in which early Christianity was spreading.

According to the International Society for Human Rights, a secular group with members in 38 nations worldwide, 80 per cent of all acts of religious discrimination in the world today are directed at Christians. The war against Christians is becoming global.

For the first time, the United States has been added to an annual list of the world's persecutors of Christians and countries that are regressing in religious freedom. The United States, Mexico and Russia were listed as "new and noteworthy" nations in the 2016 "[Hall of Shame Report](#)" published by the Washington, D.C., based human rights group International Christian Concern.

Not since the first couple of hundred years in the Church's history has Christian persecution been this violent and widespread. Being a faithful and true Christian comes at a cost. The cost of being a Christian varies greatly depending on the country they live in. The question is as Christians are we able to defend the gospel in a manner that is not only true but also in ways that make sense to non-Christians? As Christians we are called to love all people, even our enemies. We need to ask ourselves, are we willing to suffer for our faith in Christ – even unto death? We must remember who we are!

Remember Our Calling

To all this unrest and persecution in the world Paul says, "[Therefore do not be](#)

ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (v. 8-10) To the brethren in Rome Paul wrote, “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” (Romans 8:15–17) We Christians are called to share the gospel with love, grace and mercy. Conquering the world with love subjects us to abuse by the unbelieving world motivated by power to control. Islam is motivated by power and control for Mohammed gained control and increased his power through violence and conquest. Christianity on-the-other-hand has spread through love of others and that meant allowing others to persecute them.

When the Jewish leaders arrested Jesus, Peter drew his sword and cut off the servant of the high priest’s ear. Jesus responded, “**Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.**” (Matthew 26:52) Was Jesus speaking of dying physically when one lives a life of violence? Yes physically, but I believe He was also speaking of our spiritual life. The world may persecute us and even kill us physically, but they cannot take away our eternal spiritual lives with God.

Living and dying by the sword is a lifestyle that is the opposite of living by the love, grace and mercy of Christ. If Islam decided to lay down their sword and no longer attack others the result would be peace between Jews, Christians and Muslims. When

Christians and Jews have said, “we have no sword and we will not fight to protect ourselves” the result is Jews and Christians are slaughtered.

When we are dedicated to live a life by standards given by Christ; the overcoming of sin through the power of the Holy Spirit, a life of moral standards, a life of love for everyone, a life calling for people to repent and to come to salvation through Christ, we will be resented and persecuted. Suffering is the unavoidable cost of living a godly life. But as we grow in our spiritual knowledge through the Word of God we realize that suffering for Christ is more of a privilege than a sacrifice, more of a blessing than an ordeal. This is why Paul tells Timothy in verse 8 “[share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.](#)” Paul relates his suffering to that of the Lord’s Supper and the crucifixion of Christ when he wrote to the believers in Philippi, “[Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.](#)”¹⁸ [Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.](#)” (Philippians 2:17–18) My beloved, you and I, should share the selfless attitude of Paul and the apostles in Jerusalem who were arrested for preaching Christ, who “[left the presence of the Jewish council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name \(of Jesus\).](#)”⁴² [And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.](#)” (Acts 5:41–42) As we remember our calling to live a Christ-like life we also understand that experiencing persecution and suffering becomes easier because we know its purpose.

Our suffering is a witness to the lost world of a love that transcends the chaos, brutality and injustice of this world. Our spirit is strengthened, allowing us to better love and serve others. We grow in the power of God as we grow closer to Christ, submit to the Holy Spirit and this is the power to love our enemies.

Fulfill Our Duty

In some ways it is difficult to break down and separate these verses. I drive my wife crazy sometimes, as she was an English and Reading teacher, with my long run-on sentences. Maybe this is why I like Paul, because verses 3 to 18 are one long sentence. The translators have added punctuation to make its reading easier. Paul is writing that we are not to be ashamed of the gospel and understand we will suffer for our faith and we have a duty to share the gospel of Christ. Paul continues in verses 11 and 12 saying, it is the gospel “for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher,¹² which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.” Paul draws from his own life experience that one is not to be ashamed of the gospel. Paul says he has a duty towards Christ and the gospel because he was appointed as a preacher and apostle. Paul is saying Christ appointed him and therefore he has the authority given by Christ and it is his duty to preach the gospel. Paul took his duty to Christ seriously and took the Word of Christ to heart, “Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline at table’? ⁸ Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink’? ⁹ Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? ¹⁰ So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’ ” (Luke 17:7–10) Fulfilling God’s commands in one’s life is our duty, Paul lived to fulfill his duty. We have all been saved and called by Christ, is our duty to Christ any less than Paul’s? Where we not like Saul before Christ made him into Paul? We are the fulfillment of scripture, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” How I clung to this verse when I was saved. I was unworthy, but He saved me. If I clung to this verse how could I not see my responsibility and duty in the words that

followed verse 17? “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17–19) My beloved, it is you and it is me that God has entrusted with the message of reconciliation. There is only one message of reconciliation and that is the gospel of Christ. We should be grieved by those who are lost and will for eternity be separated from God if they do not come to have Jesus the Christ as their Lord and Savior.

So much of the American Church has become consumer Christians; they want to come to church and be feed and there it ends until next Sunday. You are spiritually fed through the Word of God, prayer and preaching so that you will “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19–20) How are we doing at going? Are we settled into our lives, our job, family, home, church and friends? We are to find satisfaction with Christ, but not be satisfied with the fact there are so many who are lost. If fact, the deeper our relationship grows with Christ and the more satisfied we are in our relationship with Christ the more dissatisfied we become knowing the great need to preach, teach and share the saving gospel of Christ.

Faithful ministry to Christ is bittersweet for it brings suffering but joy in our suffering. We experience great disappointment when we have poured ourselves into helping someone see their great need for Christ and they reject Christ but this also gives us a deep gratitude for our own salvation. We should experience the same as Paul did; suffering is a small price because our joy will always outweigh our suffering when we are faithful. Our deep satisfaction in our relationship with God the Father through Christ the Son always outweighs our disappoints in this life and

those we love who choose another path than Christ. When we fulfill our duty with a grateful heart we say along with Peter, “If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God.” (1 Peter 4:16) We say this by our trust in Christ.

Place Our Trust in Christ

As we continue to dissect Paul’s long run-on sentence to gain deeper understanding we now turn to the second half of verse 12. Paul continues, “But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.” Here Paul is summing up his previous testimony based on his own experiences. Why is Paul not ashamed? Because he knows Christ in whom he believes. Paul knows without a doubt who Christ is. Jesus said, “your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” (Matthew 6:8) God knows us completely and knew us before we were born. On a human level Paul is saying he knows God through Christ as deeply as possible. History has validated who Christ is through the Bible, but the Holy Spirit that lives within proves who Christ is in even a deeper sense. Should we, you and I, not be so deeply convinced of who Christ is and who we are in Christ that we are able to live faithfully “until that day” as verse 12 says? Paul reveals what “that day” is later in his letter writing, “Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:8) The day Paul is referring to is the day that believers will stand before the judgment seat of God as he wrote in Romans 14:10, but as we stand before God He sees us through His perfect Son. Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.³⁰ I and the Father are one.” (John 10:27–30)

When our lives belong to Jesus, nothing in this world, not even Satan can take away our eternal salvation. This is eternal truth.

Know True Doctrine

In order not to be ashamed of Christ one must know the true Christ. Paul wrote, “Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.” (v. 13-14) There are a number of religions that claim they know the true Christ, but the true Christ can only be found in the Bible. Before you put your life on the line for what you believe, you must have tested it to be sure it is true. Outside of Christianity, that is based solely on the Bible, what religion tells its people to ask questions, to challenge what is taught and says if it is true it will stand up to any questions, challenges or doubts you have. Only the Bible, of the all holy books, has stood the test of time and the onslaught of men and the attacks of Satan and been proven true over and over and over. You have a responsibility to know what you believe and why you believe. One cannot expect to just come to church to know God – you must study the Word and test it and then you will know it is eternally true.

Every Christian is called to know what is true and false. Paul wrote to the Galatians, “As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.” (Galatians 1:9) When false religions preach their false gospels those preaching are eternally accursed to hell. When the people of those false religions accept what is being preached as true, but are in truth false teachings, they believe in the lie, so they too are accursed. They did not test the books and the preaching to prove them true or false. It is this very problem of knowing truth and proving truth that is why so many who call themselves Christian do not have the courage of their so-called convictions. Christians in many parts of this planet put their lives on the line and because they have to pay dearly to

be Christian even unto death. They do so because they have tested and know the truth. Let me ask you, do you know the truth? Have you studied God’s Word and fought with it, struggled with it, challenged it and come out on the other side knowing it is truth? **Tell of leaving Mormonism. Reading all their books.**

If you know God’s truth then let me ask, as Paul wrote in verse 14, what are you doing to “**guard the good deposit entrusted to you.**” Are you, as Paul did and as Timothy did and as so many throughout history have done, are you protecting God’s Word from all heresies? It does not matter if the lie is small or big – God’s Word must be kept pure to be true. There is an old saying that is well understood by the people of the Middle East and Paul would have known this saying. Now let me teach it to you. “If the camel once gets his nose in the tent, his body will soon follow.” The camel’s nose is a metaphor for a situation where the permitting of a small, seemingly innocuous act will open the door for larger, clearly undesirable actions. It is easy to look around us and see this has happened in many churches, our government and society. In so many small areas they let the camel’s nose in.

Christ called Paul and he fought for God’s truth and now they both call us to hold to God’s truth without exception. My beloved, do not let the camel’s nose in.

Equally Yoked (v. 15-18)

One way to let the camel’s nose into the church and our lives is by not being careful of who we associate with. Paul closed out this chapter writing, “**You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus (foog-el-los) and Hermogenes (her-mog-en-ace).**”¹⁶ **May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus (on-ay-sif-or-os), for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains,**¹⁷ **but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me—**¹⁸ **may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day! — and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.** (2 Timothy 1:15–18) In these four

verses Paul mentions associates who are both true to the gospel and those ashamed of the gospel. Paul warned the church in Corinth, “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals.’ ” (1 Corinthians 15:33) If we associate with true believers and defenders of the gospel together we will grow stronger. On-the-other-hand associating with those who by their lives are ashamed of the gospel will be like the proverbial camel’s nose and soon the whole will be corrupted. Jesus warned his disciples in Matthew, “Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” (Matthew 16:6) The Pharisees and Sadducees knew the scriptures, but they were more concerned about their position of power. So they as Paul wrote were accused. So corruption comes from within and without. To the Corinthians Paul wrote, “Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” (1 Corinthians 5:6) Parents know this to be true. They have seen their children make friends that have brought their children lower. But often children model themselves after their parents. “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14)

So Paul commanded Timothy and now us to not be ashamed of the gospel. In order not to be ashamed Paul says we need to do the following; renew your mind through the study, meditation and prayer of God’s Word. Trust and rely on the resources of God for He will give you what you need to remain faithful. As His children be willing to suffer for the Lord by the power of God that lives within. Study and know sound and true doctrine and not let the camel’s nose into the church. Finally be very careful whom you associate with for the spiritually strong will strengthen you and the spiritually weak or corrupt will corrupt you. Take these commands serious and guard yourselves against the false and the fallen world. Go from here and live the true gospel of Christ. Go forth and share the gospel of Christ. Go and make disciples of all nations. Begin with those God has placed in your life.