

The Other Side of Persecution

Word

Scripture Reference

Acts 4:1-5

Discussion Questions

1. How do you respond to criticism in general?
2. A lot of wonderful things happened in the pioneering stage of the Christian church in Acts 3. People saw the miracle of the healing of the crippled beggar, they heard the preaching of Peter and have repented from their sins. Thousands of people were converted from their Jewish religion and became the followers of Jesus Christ. But since then and until today, church growth will not stay unchallenged. Persecution of the church comes in different forms: personal, physical, religious, and at times political. The greatest persecutor of evangelical Christianity today is called liberal Christianity. What is liberal Christianity? What do you think is the worst persecution a Christian could experience in your time?
3. **PRINCIPLE #1: See persecution from heaven's viewpoint.** Read Acts 4:1-5. Why did the religious leaders approach Peter and John (v. 1-2)? As a result, what did the officials do to the apostles (v. 3)? In spite of hostility and opposition, how did the early church work out (v. 4)? What blessings did persecution bring to Christianity in this situation? How would you consider a persecution of faith a blessing in your life?
4. The desire for acceptance and status is the most effective way to ruin the beauty of the church, especially in our current generation.
 - a. **Persecution EXAMINED.** The techniques that Satan uses today have a very subtle but tremendous effect. The most

effective way that Satan is using to kill the church is through the following:

- *Making the church to become complacent (saved, seated and satisfied).* Discuss how Christians live in the kingdom of God but with no kingdom value and use. What makes you a complacent Christian? How can you undo it?
 - *Making the church to become indolent (lazy and insensitive), rich, and fat.* Discuss what happens when a Christian is not involved in any spiritual or church activities.
 - *Making the church to become socially oriented and forget her real mission.* What should be the real mission of the church? How could social and spiritual needs be balanced in reaching out the lost in Christ?
- b. **Persecution EXPECTED.** For the first 300 years of the church, believers experienced severe persecution. Stephen was stoned to death. Apostles were murdered in a hateful manner. Christians were sewed with other Christians under Nero. Christians were seared and broiled then burned under Domitian. During the next wave of persecution, believers were scourged until their flesh is gone. But the most effective way today of persecuting Christians is to render them as good for nothings--a believer with no kingdom value. Discuss how a Christian could be a good for nothing. Is it even possible for a Christian to be useless if he or she truly loves the Lord? What are the reasons why a Christian could be fruitless in his Christian journey?
5. **PRINCIPLE #2: See it from SOURCE (v. 1).** Knowing the source of your persecution would help you cope with the hardships of being persecuted.
 - a. *Religious persecution* is one of the common persecutions that the early church encountered. How did the religious factions persecuted the early church? What differences in churches or denominations weaken the strong testimony and influence of the church today?
 - b. *Political persecution.* Discuss when or what issues should Christians stand up to political groups.

6. **PRINCIPLE #3: See it from its RESULT (v. 5).** It takes persecution to grow a church. As a result of persecution, the early church grew, multiplied, and was edified (encouraged and strengthened). Discuss how your local church could grow in numbers, multiply, and be stronger in faith and testimony to give glory to God.

Walk

“If you suffered with Him, you will also reign with Him in glory.”

2 Timothy 2:12

“The persecution during the early church is totally different from our own context. The subtlety of our persecution today is more than the infliction of pain or coercion; Satan uses our ego and pride to destroy the Lord’s body--the church.” (John MacArthur)

How are you actively serving the Lord with humility instead of being complacent and indolent? Are you one of those who are so busy meeting the social needs of others and yet do not share the gospel, which is the real mission of a Christian? What should you do to change the situation?

Worship & Prayer

Heavenly Father, I may not fully understand why Christians have to suffer persecution but You know why it has to happen. Help me to trust and accept Your sovereignty even if many times, I don’t understand Your ways. Thank You that Your grace is sufficient to those who suffer for You. In fact, You have special rewards for them. Lord, help me to be useful for Your kingdom, instead of being a good for nothing Christian. I understand that the enemy can use my complacency and indolence to weaken the testimony of the church, the body of Christ which I am a part of. Help me learn to stand up for You and to withstand any persecution that may come my way. In Jesus’ name. Amen.