



## PLEADING CHRISTIANS: How to Serve the Persecuted Church

---

Revelation 12:7-17; Genesis 3:1-7, 13-15; Matt 5:9-12; 2 Cor 8:1-7

### OPEN

What was your response to the opening stories of persecution of Christians around the world: beatings, torture, sexual assault, shootings, enslavement, dismembering and beheadings?

Are you aware of the persecuted church?

"Each month, an average of 322 Christians are killed for their faith. 214 churches and Christian properties are destroyed. 722 acts of violence are committed against your brothers and sisters."

### DISCUSS

#### Understanding the "Why" of Persecution

- Why do you think severe persecution is growing in our world?
  
- Read Revelation 12:7-17.
  - What is going on in these verses?
  - What does 12:17 say about the motives of the *ancient serpent* (ref. Genesis 3:1-15)?
  
- Discuss this quote from the sermon in how evil has cleverly manifested itself in our world against the church (children of God):

"This intelligent Evil is far too crafty, of course, to present himself in a red suit with horns. His strategy is far more subtle and sophisticated. He simply fans the flames of humanity's most selfish and insecure passions and lets these wildfires do their work. Those flames spread through THREE MAJOR IMPULSES that run through so many cultures today:

  - First of all, persecution arises out of tribalism – the belief so prevalent in ethnic, political, religious and even school conflicts that only our kind is good and others are a threat.

- Persecution is also driven by secularism – the conviction alive in communism and many campuses today that until God is dead humanity cannot truly live.
  - And persecution grows as well in the soil of authoritarianism – the persuasion that we can build a better world through command and control.”
- Have you ever connected these impulses to evil and attacks on Christianity?
  - Respond to the Christian response to these three impulses:
 

“But the God we meet in Jesus Christ begs to differ. Contrary to the spirit of TRIBALISM, God says: “I love people of every tongue and tribe and give my life for them all.” Contrary to the idol of SECULARISM God says: “Recognizing and aligning oneself to my existence and generous character is the hope of human life.” And contrary to the impulse of AUTHORITARIANISM, God says: “It is not through command and control but through service of others that the power for human flourishing gets unleashed.” It will not be the squeezers and the smashers who finally define history. But “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matt 5:9). ”

### **How Are We (Christians) to Respond?**

After you have read the responses below along with each of the verses, provide your summary thoughts and reflections to this study. What emotions are your feeling? How are you challenged?

1. Don't be surprised by persecution. (John 15:20)
2. Pray for our brothers and sisters under attack. (1 Thes 5:25; James 5:16)
3. If you want to help your brothers and sisters, then advocate for the cause of persecuted Christians with our government.
4. Give to the Mission Fund of Christ Church. (2 Cor 8:1-7)
5. Write a letter of encouragement to a persecuted Christians and give to our Missions Dept. for delivery. (Heb 10:23-25)
6. Build a loving relationship with Muslims within your reach. The world needs moderate Muslims shouting in outrage over the heinous things being done to people of Christian faith.
7. Commit to deeper discipleship yourself. (Luke 9:18-20, 23-27)

“Can you imagine how discouraging it would be if you were desperately working under the most severe kind of pressure to advance the Kingdom of God... if you were seeing your brothers and sisters suffering and going to their death as people of the Cross... and you looked across the world and saw Christians in America not even able to get along with one another? Not able to imagine how they could prioritize worshipping or reading the Bible over sleep, sports, and TV? Not able to summon up the courage to challenge simple wrongs in their workplace or share their faith with people across the street? Not able to conceive of how they could possibly give away more than 2% of their income to Kingdom causes? Not able to forgive people who simply hurt their feelings?”<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> All quotations are from the weekend message of Christ Church of Oak Brook on 5/3/15: <http://cc-ob.aspireonemedia.com/>

## YOUR NEXT STEP...

- Attached you will find a summary of the most severe areas of persecution. Spend this week praying as the Spirit leads you for your Christian brothers and sisters under heinous persecution.
  - How can you align your life to the responses listed above in this study?
- 

### Nations Where **EXTREME** Persecution of Christians Goes On:

- North Korea
- Somalia
- Iraq
- Syria
- Afghanistan
- Sudan
- Iran
- Pakistan
- Eritrea
- Nigeria

### Nations Where **SEVERE** Persecution of Christians Goes On:

- Maldives
- Saudi Arabia
- Libya
- Yemen
- Uzbekistan
- Vietnam
- Central African Republic
- Qatar
- Kenya
- Turkmenistan
- India
- Ethiopia
- Egypt
- Djibouti
- Myanmar

### DRIVERS OF PERSECUTION:

<b><u>Impulses</u></b>	<b><u>Expressions</u></b>
------------------------	---------------------------

<i>Tribalism</i>	Religious extremism Ethnic antagonism Political partisanship Family bias
<i>Secularism</i>	Communist oppression Aggressive atheism
<i>Authoritarianism</i>	Totalitarian paranoia Organized crime Military abuse