

LESSONS FROM THE HISTORY
OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
FOR MODERN CHRISTIANS
Living in an Increasingly Anti-Christian Society
Part II

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Persecution Today

According to the Bible, persecution will not cease in this life but will continue until Christ's return.¹ "From Abel to the end of times, the people of God will always suffer persecution on their journey through time," Augustine once said.² Persecution didn't end with the legalization of Christianity. Neither did persecution end with the advent of the modern era. Christians still die on account of their faith.

Today the persecution of Christians tends to make the headlines only when it is violent and systematic or when governments perpetrate it.³ But the reality of anti-Christian activity is more common than that. Looking at it from a purely human level, persecution comes from world-views competing for influence, ruling powers feeling threatened by people who hold to a higher power, human greed and envy, and the threat of something new and strange. As a result of this variety, not all persecution tries to smash the church physically.

It is safe to say that anti-Christian persecution is not restricted to the early church, nor is it found only in places far away. Martyrs continue to be made today. Church statistician David Barrett defined martyrs as "believers in Christ who have lost their lives prematurely, in situations of witness, as a result of human hostility."⁴ He estimated that around 70,000,000 Christians have been martyred since the church began. Severe episodes of martyrdom are found throughout church history, but there has been an increase in such incidents and in the number of Christians killed since 1900. In some places Christian mission

¹Matthew 24:9-14.

²Quoted by Christof Sauer and Thomas Schirrmacher, "Father, forgive them," *Christian History* Issue 109, p. 4.

³The Voice of the Martyrs website gathers news on anti-Christian activity from around the globe. (<http://www.persecution.com/>). Similar sites include International Christian Concern (www.persecution.org) and The Voice of the Martyrs Canada (www.persecution.net). A recent issue of *Christian History* magazine (Issue 109) is entitled "Eyewitness to Modern Persecution."

⁴Quoted in Sauer and Schirrmacher, *op. cit.*

work is seen as a foreign intrusion and Christians are regarded as a fifth column of the West.

A civil war in Sudan that started in 1963 led to the killing of 600,000 Sudanese Christians and 64 missionaries at the hands of government backed forces. A newspaper at the time reported, "Some one hundred missionaries—Italian, American, British and Australian—were expelled from the southern Sudan without any given reason during the last two months. They were told they were 'just unnecessary.'"⁵

In the twenty-first century Islamic persecution, while nothing new, seems to be on the rise. Today Islam's attacks against Christians are harshest in Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Arab Emirates, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, and northern Nigeria, and to a much lesser extent in more secularized countries with a large Muslim contingent: Egypt, Indonesia, Tunisia, and Turkey.

Karl Marx (1818–1883), Communism's founding father, famously wrote that religion is the "opiate of the masses" and that "Communism begins where atheism begins." In his view the state was to be the only object of devotion. In 1917, when the Russian monarchy collapsed, Vladimir Lenin came to power. Lenin shared Marx's dislike of Christianity. He once wrote in a letter, "Any religious idea, any idea of any God at all, any flirtation even with a God is the most inexpressible foulness."⁶ From 1921 to 1950, 15,000,000 Russian Orthodox Christians died in prison camps, many in persecutions ostensibly aimed at "political enemies."

The Soviets began to liquidate Roman Catholics in 1925, costing the lives of 1,200,000. Persecution hit Russia's "underground church" as well: 1,000,000 evangelicals and Pentecostals may have lost their lives under Communism. Among the persecuted were German, Estonian, and Lithuanian Lutherans, Baptists, and Mennonites.

Before World War II in Ukraine, 200,000 Ukrainian Orthodox believers lost their lives in one single year (1927), including 34 bishops and 2,000 priests. Eventually 95 percent of Orthodox parishes were destroyed. Shortly thereafter the Catholic Church in Poland was hard hit. 3,000 Polish Catholic clergy (18 percent) were murdered between 1939 and 1945; in some areas almost 50 percent of the clergy died. Nearly 2,600 priests from 24 nations died at the Dachau concentration camp from starvation or medical experimentation. While it is common knowledge that some 6,000,000 Jews died during the Holocaust, it is largely forgotten that 1,000,000 Christians died in those same concentration camps.

⁵Quoted in Sauer and Schirrmacher, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁶Quoted in Sauer and Schirrmacher, *op. cit.*, p. 6f.

In the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), many Christians died at Soviet hands through deportation, although a number were shot or killed in prison. In Lithuania 100,000 were among those killed by Nazis and later by Soviets. In Yugoslavia first Nazis and then the civil war of the 1990s killed an estimated 100,000 Roman Catholic clergy and laity; 350,000 Serbian Orthodox were massacred by the Croatian state.

Early in the twentieth century, 200,000 Christians were martyred in China in civil wars or by bandits and guerillas. From 1950 to 1980, Chinese leaders attempted to liquidate churches in the "Great Leap Forward" and the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution." Nearly 700,000 Christian workers, pastors, priests, and laypeople died, churches were razed, and believers imprisoned.

During the Korean War (1950–1954), Communist troops massacred 150 Catholic priests and 500 Protestant pastors, and since 1950 in North Korea hundreds of thousands of laypeople have been killed. By the twenty-first century, this totalitarian regime had outdone any other persecutor of Christians in cruelty and intensity. Countless Christians died in prison and labor camps, and an estimated 200,000 still languish there in the early twenty-first century.

Since African church father Tertullian wrote (ca. 200) that "the blood of the saints is the seed of the church,"⁷ African Christians have never lived without persecution. When Ethiopia was conquered by Italian forces in 1937, 500,000 Ethiopian Orthodox believers lost their lives, scores of priests and monks were massacred, and churches were razed. Under the seven-year terror of Idi Amin in Uganda (1971–1978), 300,000 Christians were killed, including many Anglican and Catholic clergy. Yet in the midst of the suffering, Christianity in Africa has not been crushed; rather it has blossomed. Christians, less than 10 percent of Africans at the beginning of the twentieth century, were almost 50 percent at the beginning of the twenty-first. The Christian church flourished and multiplied all over the continent.

Because of the recent kidnappings of girls in Nigeria the radical group Boko Haram ("Western education is sinful") has made the news, but little is heard when the group bombs a church and dozens are killed and injured. In February 2011 Boko Haram demanded that Christians leave northern Nigeria in three days. Countless Christians fled to the south, leaving villages and possessions behind. Church burnings and bombings there continue to kill hundreds of Christians.

⁷*Semen est sanguis Christianorum* ("The blood of Christians is the seed"), *Apologeticum* 50.13.

Likewise there has been little dissemination of news of recent anti-Christian activity in other parts of the world. In Colombia militants killed a pastor when he refused to close his church despite threats. In Iran the courts condemned Christians to death or years of imprisonment on charges of apostasy. Churches were raided and congregation members arrested. Pastors were randomly held and released. In Algeria the government required churches to register but denied registration when they tried to comply. In China persecutors bulldozed a church in Shouwang and arrested legitimately licensed bookstore owners and managers. In India extremists incited racial and religious hatred, disrupting Christian prayer meetings and beating believers. They accused Christians of forcing people to convert, of disturbing the peace, and of insulting Hindu deities. Local authorities in one Mexican town held and tortured four evangelical Christians for three days, until state authorities rescued them.

Much of what happens to Christians in other parts of world is unknown to American audiences. It seems religious persecution is not a popular subject in Western media. Since Western churches seem to be experiencing little if any physical persecution, the media looks elsewhere for “breaking news.” Unfortunately even church people often see the issue as too negative to fit in with the “good news” of the gospel. Others fear that if Christians expose and combat persecution too vigorously, it might jeopardize interreligious dialogue. But the Bible reminds us, “Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.”⁸

A Modern Definition of Persecution

How do you define persecution? The Bad Urach Statement of the International Institute for Religious Freedom⁹ says persecution is any “unjust hostile action which causes damage from the perspective of the victim.” It can be the result of a variety of motivations and take multiple forms and degrees.

We might call any unjust action against a believer or a group of believers motivated by religious reasons “religious persecution.” Other

⁸Hebrews 13:3.

⁹24 participants from at least 18 different countries of origin and residence met from 16-18 September 2009 in Bad Urach, Germany, for a consultation on “Developing an evangelical theology of suffering, persecution and martyrdom for the global church in mission.” This was organized by the International Institute for Religious Freedom, sponsored by the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission, together with the Theological Commission and Mission Commission and the Lausanne Theological Working Group in preparation towards the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, Cape Town 2010.

motivations, such as ethnic hatred, gender bias, or political ideologies may also contribute. Glenn Penner, author of *In the Shadow of the Cross: A Biblical Theology of Persecution and Discipleship*, calls persecution against Christians “a situation where Christians are repetitively, persistently and systematically inflicted with grave and serious suffering or harm.”¹⁰ Also Christians may be deprived of basic human rights—or threatened with this—because of “a difference that comes from being a Christian that the persecutor will not tolerate.”

In 1998 the United States Congress passed the International Religious Freedom Act. In it Congress announced that severe and violent acts of religious persecution exist: detention, torture, beatings, forced marriage, rape, imprisonment, enslavement, mass resettlement, and death. All occur because of a person’s faith or decision to change his or her faith. To that list we may also add death threats, assassination attempts, economic suppression, extortion, prohibition from enrolling in institutions of higher education, kidnapping, and being forced to live in substandard housing. Less violent but psychologically devastating forms of persecution include slander, mockery, insults, exclusion from community social events, ridicule, harassment, threat of lawsuit, loss of jobs, and the seizure of property.

When Pakistan was given its independence from largely Hindu India in 1947 as a homeland for Muslims, its founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah said, “You are free; you are free to go to your temples; you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan.” Pakistan originally reserved 5 percent of higher education, army, and government positions for Christians. In 1972 Islam was made the state religion. The quota system was laid aside, and many Christian schools were nationalized. In 1991 *sharia* (the strict interpretation of Islamic law) was made Pakistan’s supreme law. Pakistan’s blasphemy code—in existence since 1860, originally to protect all religions from each other—was narrowed to focus on blasphemy against Mohammad and the *Qu’ran*. As of 2014 at least 16 people were on death row in Pakistan for blasphemy, with 20 more serving life sentences.

Pakistan is not the only place where Christians and Muslims clash in the twenty-first century. Ongoing political violence in Egypt led to extensive attacks on the Coptic Christian minority. Copts were the target of revenge attacks by Muslim mobs in 2013 after Muhammad Morsi, Egypt’s first Islamist president, was overthrown in a military coup. Over 40 Christian churches were looted and burned to the ground. At one church only miles from the pyramids, looters took everything they could carry, even down to the plumbing.

¹⁰Quoted in Roy Stults, “Start seeing persecution!” *Christian History*, Issue 109, p 34.

Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan have also prescribed the death penalty for apostasy from Islam. The curriculum taught at many Islamic schools reads, "An apostate will be suppressed three days in prison in order that he may repent . . . otherwise, he should be killed, because he has changed his true religion."¹¹ In 2006 the Algerian parliament approved a law requiring imprisonment for two to five years and a fine between 5,000 to 10,000 euros (\$6,000 to \$13,000) for anyone "trying to call on a Muslim to embrace another religion."

In Pakistan, the Palestinian territories, Turkey, Nigeria, Syria, Somalia, and Kenya, vigilantes have threatened, beaten, and killed converts. In the Central African Republic in 2013, some 450,000 people fled after the Muslim-dominated Seleka alliance took power and began persecuting Christians.

John Allen Jr., the author of a new book, *The Global War on Christians*, writes,

One often gets pushback: don't Christians bring persecution on themselves by being overly aggressive or insensitive? Christians do need to be respectful and responsible about how they propose their faith to others. But at the same time, Christianity is a missionary religion. It's not irresponsible to introduce people to the faith.

The standard I have adopted is if someone is putting themselves in a situation where it is reasonable to think they will be in danger because of their Christianity, then that counts as part of the global phenomenon of anti-Christian violence.¹²

Are Christians in America under attack?

It's been said that the U.S. is becoming a "secular country." There is a clash between "man's laws and God's laws." So, are Christians in America under attack? Compared to the violence against Christians in many places around the world, the answer is "no."

What *is* happening in America is an increasing hostility and intolerance toward Christian beliefs and values. In current American culture, you are free to be a Christian as long as you don't actually live out your faith, vote your faith, take a stand in relation to your faith, or believe others should embrace your faith. In other words, your faith can be privately engaging, but must remain socially irrelevant.

There is a real concern that the growing insistence that faith be privatized has now been turned into a demand for faith to be compromised. It's not enough that your beliefs can't influence society; you must

¹¹Quoted by Sheraz Khan, "Imprisoned over a glass of water," *Christian History*, Issue 109, p 40.

¹²John Allen, Jr. "Is there a global war?" *Christian History*, Issue 109, p 52.

also embrace society's beliefs. The opposition to many Christian values has become an "if you're not with us, you're against us" mentality.

Cultural influences on our lives

In an interesting translation of Romans 12:2, Paul encourages, "Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold."¹³ It's hard to live as a Christian in an anti-Christian world. Consciously or sub-consciously the world we live in is influencing us. This battle is being fought in all areas of our society. As always the battle is fought first in the way people think, and this then flows through into the way we act. "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks."¹⁴

Underlying our culture are philosophies that strongly influence the way we think and what we hold to be important in our society. These philosophies are consistently attacking God as well as core Christian beliefs and values.

These philosophies have always been around but they re-emerged strongly in the 1960's with a rejection of Christianity and a rebellion against traditional values. They became part of the 'New Age' and then in the 1990's were institutionalized. As a result people speak of the "politically correct" ways of thinking/doing things. Consider how the following have become common and are being strongly promoted today.

- **Rejection of the authority of the Bible.** The Bible is undermined, ridiculed, criticized, adjusted, and rejected.
- **Rejection of God's authority.** In a pluralistic society any god is OK! Man is god, people are gods, things are gods. Underlying this is a strong return to Gnostic philosophies (an attempt to harmonize reason and Scripture), paganism, and an aggressive rejection of the one true God. No longer is credence given to "I am the LORD your God. . . . You shall have no other gods before me."¹⁵
- **Free sexuality.** Heterosexuality and monogamy are consistently being undermined. This results in today's acceptance of homosexuality, destruction of male/female and family roles, and free sex with no boundaries.
- **Open spiritual experience.** Whatever turns you on is OK! Seek spiritual enlightenment and experience from within and from beyond, and by whatever means you choose. The goal is par-

¹³J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English* (NY: HarperCollins, 1962). The NIV translation states, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world."

¹⁴Luke 6:45.

¹⁵Exodus 20:2-3.

adise on earth, to be master of your own destiny and reach perfection in death. Sin and guilt are eliminated.

These philosophies are now widespread. Many have been introduced into portions of the visible church and are affecting people's attitudes toward the Bible and approaches to faith. More significantly they have become mainstream in society, becoming part of law or common practice.

The recent debate over whether to require most religious institutions—including hospitals and schools—to pay for contraception, sterilizations and the “morning after” pill is simply the visible tip of the philosophical iceberg. Right now, the real flash point is the one between religious liberty and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) rights. For example:

- Catholic Charities in Illinois shut down its adoption services rather than place children with same-sex couples (as the state required).
- A Christian counselor was penalized for refusing to advise gay couples.
- A court clerk in New York was told to issue same-sex marriage licenses, despite religious reservations.
- A wedding photographer was sued for refusing to shoot a same-sex wedding.¹⁶

In each case the Christians involved were not attempting to impose their religious views on others. They simply didn't want to be forced to participate in or offer tacit support for something they felt was in violation of their religious conscience. The argument is, of course, that taking such a stand is the equivalent of discriminating against someone on the basis of their race. But this is misleading. Refusing to serve a person on the basis of their race has little in common with refusing to support a particular lifestyle that your religious beliefs deem immoral.

How to Respond to Persecution

In the face of anti-Christian activity what is our response?

Our aim as individual Christians and as a church is to glorify God by fulfilling the two great commandments (to love God fervently and to love one another selflessly) and to fulfill the Great Commission (proclaiming the gospel to the lost). In the face of persecution, we need to affirm these three priorities.

¹⁶Matt Slick, “Are Christians Under Attack?” <https://carm.org/are-christians-under-attack>.

Respond to persecution by affirming our commitment to God.

Persecution will either drive a person away from God, or it will drive him/her closer to God. We affirm our commitment to God through prayer. When Peter and John were released, they went back to their companions and told them what had happened. Their spontaneous response was to pray.¹⁷ Corporate prayer reveals our focus. It reveals whether we are too focused on ourselves and not enough on God's kingdom. Prayer lifts our eyes to God's mighty, inexhaustible resources. The God to whom we pray spoke the universe into existence. He owns it all and he can provide for us whatever we need to carry on his work. He is able to do far more than we can ask or even think.¹⁸ But we often fail to ask in faith.

Prayer brings answers. In Acts God immediately answered by shaking the place where they were praying, and he enabled them to speak the Word with boldness. God does not always answer so quickly. He knows that sometimes we need to wait on him longer. Sometimes he has a different plan or way than we conceive of. But God works through believing prayer. When we face persecution or trials, let such problems bring us together with other believers to bring our needs before our Almighty God.

The best prayers are often based on Scripture, applying it directly to our present situation and needs. But we won't be able to apply God's Word in a time of crisis unless we are saturating our minds with it on a daily basis. In Proverbs 1:24-33, God's wisdom warns fools and scoffers that because they had neglected wisdom when she cried out to them, later in a time of crisis when they cry out to her, she will be silent. In other words, the time to seek God's wisdom through his Word is *before* the crisis hits. If we know God's Word through a daily time with him, we will be able to apply it when we face persecution or trials.

We affirm our commitment to God by looking to and imitating Jesus. We are not our own; we have been bought with a price. Therefore, we glorify God with our bodies, even if it means facing persecution.

Respond to persecution by affirming our commitment to the Lord's people.

The apostles were a part of a caring fellowship. As soon as Peter and John were released, they went to their companions and shared what had happened to them. Luke records that the whole congrega-

¹⁷Acts 4:24.

¹⁸Ephesians 3:20.

tion (over 5,000 by this time) was of one heart and soul. They were marked by unusual generosity and care for one another.¹⁹

Persecution can strip us of our materialistic focus. It helps us remember that things do not last. God's Word instructs those of us who are rich to be generous and ready to share.²⁰ If we see the church as family, members of Christ's body, then we will be more inclined to obey this command.

Affirm our commitment to the Lord's work in the world.

The apostles did not run away from their persecutors and form monasteries inside of well-fortified walls (that only happened later). They did not fall into self-pity or fear or revenge. Rather, they responded by praying for more boldness to witness, and "with great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus."²¹ The Lord has us here in the world to be witnesses of his death and resurrection to those who desperately need a Savior. Often, it is our attitude when we are persecuted that opens the door for effective witness.

Conclusion

Christians are quite different from the cultures in which they live. Consequently, the non-Christian society will often view Christianity with suspicion and hostility. In the society to which the apostle Peter wrote, foreigners were often viewed with suspicion. They had different values and practices. People were worried that such differences might disrupt the order and stability in society. Consequently, foreigners needed to demonstrate the respectability of their beliefs and customs.

Peter sees this concept of a "foreigner" as instructive for how Christians should act in a society that is suspicious or hostile to Christianity. Peter says that "by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men."²² Just as a real foreigner would be advised to demonstrate that his culture's values and customs are not harmful or disruptive to the well-being of society, Peter instructs Christians to live in such a way that is honorable even to the surrounding society, within the parameters that Scripture allows.

Therefore Peter says, "Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though

¹⁹Acts 4:32ff.

²⁰1 Timothy 6:18.

²¹Acts 4:33.

²²1 Peter 2:15.

they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”²³

The goal of this behavior is simple. When a society that is skeptical of Christianity makes accusations against Christians, those accusations won't stick. Peter speaks of “keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”²⁴ In other words, they won't have a case. Instead, our actions will only give them reason to glorify God.

Believers are to conduct themselves in such a way that their actions adorn their faith, that their life matches with their witness, that they are not giving the society any more reason to be against us, and that ultimately their lives within society glorify God.

Peter indicates what this excellent behavior looks like within the realm of society. The Christian's focus is on all spheres of life. “Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.”²⁵ It doesn't matter whether we are talking about our relationships with our neighbors, our coworkers, our fellow Christians, God, or government; we are to conduct ourselves honorably. And although we have received many liberties under Christ, we are not to exploit them. “Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.”²⁶

While Peter's general focus is on how we conduct ourselves within society at large, he also narrows the focus to our relationship and response to government. “Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.”²⁷

Peter instructs us to submit to these governing authorities, which obviously involves obeying their laws and being a good citizen. That includes respecting and honoring the governing authorities. And this is the part we at times have trouble with. When the Bible tells us to honor our governing authorities, it's not saying, “Only if you like them.” “Only if you agree with their policies.” “Only if you voted for them.” It's not saying to only give them lip-service respect or pray cynically for their salvation because we all know what terrible politicians they are. Peter is talking about genuine, heartfelt respect and honor.

²³1 Peter 2:11-12.

²⁴1 Peter 3:16.

²⁵1 Peter 2:17.

²⁶1 Peter 2:16.

²⁷1 Peter 2:13-15.

Yet, at the same time, the Bible doesn't tell us to submit to and honor our government without reason. We have reasons for honoring our governing authorities. Governing authorities exist "to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right."²⁸ Generally speaking, governments are to promote good behavior and discourage evil. We have reason to respect and appreciate our governing authorities because even a poor government is almost always better than no government at all.

We submit to our government in obedience to God as "God's will." And the reason it's God's will, among other things, is that respectful submission to the government demonstrates the integrity and respectability of the Christian faith. It demonstrates that Christianity is not dangerous or volatile to government. Christianity is submissive, obedient, and respectable. In all this we also keep in mind that we obey God rather than man. If or when we are asked to do something which stands in opposition to God's will, it is understood that we follow what the Lord wants and asks of us.

Peter speaks of the salvation that Christ won, for "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed."²⁹ This is what keeps us going when we face difficulties in trying to live the Christian life in an anti-Christian society. This is what continues to motivate us as we seek to recognize and embrace our foreigner status in an increasingly secular world. The gospel is what propels us to live honorable lives within society, so that our conduct might adorn our witness to this gospel. And the pattern of Christ suffering in accomplishing our salvation is what we follow as we too seek to honor God by suffering well, whatever that suffering might be.

Christ took on himself the punishment for sinners and won for us and for all the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. This good news is what we trust in as believers as we wait for the final realization of our salvation. And this gospel we share with the world so that they too might be saved.

May God give us the vision to see opportunities to share the gospel. May he give us the wisdom to differentiate between those times and circumstances when we can submit and when we need to take a stand. May the Lord of the Church continue to strengthen and preserve us today, as he has done in the past.

Soli Deo Gloria

²⁸1 Peter 2:14.

²⁹1 Peter 2:24.

Appendix A.

Questions for Personal Consideration

1. How have Satan's techniques for persecuting the church changed over time?
2. How does Satan benefit from a Christian who has fallen in love with the world?
3. Why do some Christians succumb to Satan's persecution and never confront the world?
4. If you are a Christian and you aren't facing persecution in some form, is that a problem? What are the probable reasons for that?
5. What was the initial response of unbelievers toward the early church? When did they begin reacting negatively to the early church? Why?
6. What is the result of persecution?
7. What should be our attitude toward suffering persecution? Why?
8. Is the church victorious over persecution today? Why or why not?