

"PRAYING FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS"
ACTS 12:1-19

INTRO: Christians remain one of the MOST PERSECUTED RELIGIOUS GROUPS in the world. In fact, it has been said that **MORE CHRISTIANS ARE BEING PERSECUTED AROUND THE WORLD NOW THAN EVER BEFORE IN HISTORY**. Recently I spoke with Todd Nettleton, with the VOICE OF THE MARTYRS, who confirmed this statement. Christians throughout the world continue to risk imprisonment, loss of home and assets, torture, beheadings, rape and even death just because of their FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST. TRENDS show that in CERTAIN AFRICAN NATIONS persecution is INTENSIFYING, particularly among women. Every day NEW REPORTS OF CHRISTIANS BEING PERSECUTED ARE REPORTED. The OPEN DOORS WORLD WATCH organization has reported that EACH MONTH:

- 255 Christians are killed
- 104 Christians are abducted
- 180 Christian women are sexually harassed
- 66 Christian churches are attacked
- 160 Christians are detained without a trial and imprisoned

In addition, it is reported that 215 million Christians are persecuted annually, which is ONE out of TWELVE Christians world-wide.

ISLAMIC OPPRESSION fuels Christian persecution in EIGHT of the TEN top countries of that world that persecute Christians. Those nations include, in order:

North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Pakistan, Eritrea, Libya, Iraq, Yemen and Iran.

HOW IS CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION DEFINED? Christian persecution is ANY HOSTILITY EXPERIENCED AS A RESULT OF IDENTIFICATION WITH JESUS CHRIST.

WHAT ARE THE STAGES OF CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION?

- 1) DISINFORMATION - Christians are robbed of their good reputation and their right to answer the accusations made against them. Mostly done by the media.
- 2) DISCRIMINATION - Christians are relegated to a "SECOND CLASS" citizenship with inferior legal, social, political and economic standing by others.
- 3) DENIAL - Christians are denied of protective measures from the state, the police, the military, extreme organizations, mobs, paramilitary groups, representatives of other religions.

OBSERVATION: The PERSECUTING OF CHRISTIANS has been the plight of believers since the formation of the CHURCH and will continue until we get to heaven.

SPIRITUAL REALITY TO CONSIDER: When ONE PART of the BODY HURTS, ALL OF THE BODY HURTS - 1 Corinthians 12:26

A CHALLENGE TO THE BODY OF CHRIST: HEBREWS 13:3

THE POINT: We should do our best to identify with those who are persecuted and show them sympathy. WE SHOULD DO FOR THEM WHAT WE WOULD WANT DONE FOR US IF WE WERE IN PRISON - Matthew 7:12 - THE GOLDEN RULE.

THREE WAYS TO SHOW SYMPATHY TO THOSE IN PERSECUTION:

(APPLIED HERE TO PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS)

- 1) By Being There for Them - (Visits to Iran)
- 2) By Giving Direct Help - (Financial, Medical Spiritual help)
- 3) By Praying For Them - (Recent prayer for Asia Bibi and Andrew Brunson)

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A BIBLICAL STUDY ON PRAYING FOR THE PERSECUTED
ACTS 12:1-19

I. THE PROBLEM OF PETER - VSS. 1-4

-Peter was put in prison by King Herod who hated the Jews, who also killed the FIRST CHRISTIAN APOSTLE - James

A. Persecution began within one year after the Church was founded.

B. Peter's persecution took place in 42 AD, 9 years after the founding of the Church, which was the FIFTH RECORDED PERSECUTION IN NINE YEARS.

ILLUSTRATION:

II. THE PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE - VSS. 5-19

- A. Their Prayer was Continual - Vs. 5
-Lit. **"INSTANT AND EARNEST IN PRAYER"**
- B. Their Prayer was Orchestrated - Vs. 12
-**THEY "GATHERED TOGETHER PRAYING"**
- C. Their Prayer was Answered - Vss. 6-17
-**"THE LORD HATH SENT HIS ANGEL AND DELIVERED ME"**

ILLUSTRATION:

III. THE PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED

-AS REQUESTED BY THOSE WHO ARE CURRENTLY PERSECUTED

- A. That They will sense God's Presence
- B. That They will feel Connected to the Greater Body of Christ
- C. That They will experience God's Direct Comfort
- D. That They will have More Opportunities to Share the Gospel
- E. That They will have Boldness to Make Christ Known
- F. That They will Forgive and Love their Persecutors
- G. That Their Ministry Activities will remain Undetected by Authorities
- H. That They will be Able to Rejoice in their Suffering
- I. That They will be Refreshed Through God's Word and be Refreshed in their Faith
- J. That They will be Strengthened Through Fellow Believers

ILLUSTRATION:

IV. THE POSSIBILITY OF PERSECUTION

-By All True Christians

- A. It is a Reality - 2 Timothy 3:12
- B. It is God's Will at Times - 1 Peter 4:19
- C. It is Our Calling - 1 Peter 1:21
- D. It is Beneficial - 1 Peter 5:10

ILLUSTRATION:

APPLICATION/LESSON

WE MUST SYMPATHIZE WITH THE PERSECUTED - HEBREWS 13:3