

# Why Christians Are Persecuted

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Preacher: David Antwi

[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you for tuning into this message by David Entry. Every true revival is a product of the strong preaching of God's Word. May you receive a word from this message that will spark a revival in you.

Acts chapter 4 verse 1 to 7, And as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them.

And they were also, being grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead.

And they laid their hands on them and put them in hold unto the next day, for it was now eventide. How be it many of them which had the Word believed, and the number of the men was about 5,000.

[ 1 : 01 ] And it came to pass on the morrow that they are rulers and elders and scribes, and Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindreds of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power or by what name have you done this?

Here ends the reading of God's Holy Word. Shall we please pray? Father, we thank you for bringing us together. The most important aspect of our gathering is when we hear your Word taught.

It gives us opportunity to hear your voice, and you hear you speak. We pray that open us up into Scripture, that as we get into the Scripture, grace will be abounding towards us.

As we get into the Scripture, you will get into us. As we get into the Scriptures, our lives will be transformed and not be the same. Let us pray. Disperse doubt. Diffuse fears.

[ 2 : 12 ] Generate and infuse encouragement into our hearts. Let faith be born. Let faith come alive. Let sicknesses be healed.

Let convictions happen and salvations take place. We pray that as your Word is taught, let grace be dispensed in unlimited measure this morning.

In this building and beyond, as many as will get to hear this message. We thank you. In Jesus' name. Amen. Hallelujah. We saw in our previous teachings from chapter 1 to chapter 3, in the book of, how the church was born.

I remember when I was in Bible school, there was this discourse. When was the church actually born? Was the church born at the resurrection, on the day of resurrection? Or was the church born on the day of Pentecost?

I want to submit to you that the church was actually born on the day of Pentecost. So that's why Jesus said, you can't go out to preach until you are endued with power, until the big day happens.

[ 3 : 25 ] So the church was born on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. And when the church was born, the first activity that the church carried out was not kindness, or showing love outside, or kindness, or any form of activity.

What was not building schools, was not building houses, building hospitals, helping the homeless. That was not the first activity that occurred when the church was born.

The most important activity of the church is what happened on the day of Pentecost, which was preaching. So that opened the gates for the preaching of the gospel.

And when I say the preaching of the gospel, I'm talking about the preaching of Christ. Anything that falls short of explaining or revealing of Christ is not the gospel.

The gospel is about the person of Christ and the works of Christ. So any preaching that falls short of revealing or explaining of the person of Christ and revealing or explaining of the works of Christ is not the gospel.

[ 4 : 39 ] Very important. So the first preaching of the church was what happened in Acts chapter 2, and Peter was the one who preached that powerful message.

And after the preaching of the message, the Bible says, Acts chapter 2, verse 41, about 3,000 souls were saved. And the Bible says the church continued to grow daily.

In Acts chapter 2, from verse 46, 47, the Lord added to the church daily. So it was a daily affair. It was growing. It was growing daily. And their presence was being felt.

Then in Acts chapter 3, we saw how Peter and John, they were going to pray in the temple because they didn't have a place of their own. The church didn't have systems in place, nothing.

So they were using what was available to the Jewish community. So they went to go and pray in Jerusalem. As they went to pray, they saw that, as you know the story, the cripple got healed.

[ 5 : 39 ] It was God who did that and created another scene for the preaching. So God created a scene and it got the attention of the people and that became the platform for second preaching of the church.

And the second preaching of the church, the first preaching of the church, about 3,000 souls were saved. According to Acts chapter 4 verse 4, the second preaching of the church, 5,000 men, men were added to the church or were saved.

So that launched the second preaching of the church and we studied that and we looked at it in detail in the previous sessions, the content of the preaching of the church.

Now, that preaching opened up what I might call a can of worms. That preaching launched the church into what is called persecution.

So the first preaching brought 3,000. The second preaching brought 5,000 men. And it started persecution.

[ 6 : 53 ] Persecution has always been part of Christianity because of the disturbance of Christianity. The disturbing effect or the disturbance of Christianity will always generate persecution.

So when you look at chapter 4 verse 1, it says that, And as they speak unto the people, the priests and the captains of the temple and the Sahindrin came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people.

When you read some other translation, New American Standard Version, verse 2, it says that, They came being greatly disturbed. The disturbance of Christianity.

The people came because they were disturbed. This word, the Greek word was used only twice.

The other time it was used was when Paul went to Athens in Bible, Acts 17, 16, where it talks about his spirit was stirred up in him.

Bible says, While Paul waited for them in Athens, his spirit was that greatly disturbed. He was troubled when he looked at how the city was wholly given to idolatry.

[ 8 : 11 ] He couldn't believe this. You know, when you're a Christian, you work with God, there are things that will trouble your spirit. You will see things people are doing, things that people say, things that governments do, things that organizations do, things that families do, things that husbands can do, things that wives can do, things that boys can do, things that girls can do.

You'll see things online. That greatly disturbs your spirit. They were greatly disturbed, the leaders, because, why were they disturbed?

Because of what happened there, verse one. They were disturbed because, actually, let's look at verse two. It tells us very clearly, verse two says, disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus.

A lot of things were happening. Teaching the people. Look at this scenario. Can you imagine we have church and after church, some people come in and start talking to people about some things that we don't believe in.

And everybody's listening. Don't you think we have to be disturbed? We have to be very disturbed. Very, very disturbed. You can't go to schools and hospitals and start teaching about things that will create social unrest.

[ 9 : 32 ] So, these people have come among us and we need to consider what we are teaching. It wouldn't have been too problematic if it was only Peter preaching. Look at verse one again. It said that.

The verse one said, now, as they spoke, not as he spoke. Now, it's like these people, the believers, now were speaking to the general population in the temple who have come to worship.

As they spoke to the people, the high priest came because the verse two says that they were teaching the people. The problem is, what was the content of their teaching?

One, the teaching was a kind of a problem, but their content, the topic of their teaching was bad news for their sound hindering, for the elders of the people.

What was their content? Do you know, it was their sound hindering according to Matthew chapter 26, verse 57 and 59. Let's go to verse 57 and 59.

[10:30] I want to just draw attention to something. And those who laid hold of Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest. Let's go to 59. It says, now the chief priest and the elders and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put him to death.

They put him to death. It's the elders of the people who oversaw, supervised, and enforced that Jesus be crucified.

They put him to death. For what reason? Because Jesus was getting too much clothes. And he was not drawing attention to himself as the son of God, drawing attention to himself as the Messiah.

No, no, no, no. The chief priest, Bible said, when you read the scripture, Bible said, they plotted to kill him. In John chapter 11, when Lazarus resurrected from the dead, 11 and I think there's 12.

People got that. In fact, many people were gathering and following Jesus because of Lazarus' resurrection. So they actually, they plotted to put him to death. And they also planned to kill Lazarus.

[11:41] Because, because of him, many people were believing in Jesus. So it was, it was a real problem for the Jews to see what Jesus was doing. He was working miracles. And the miracles he was working were bringing attention to him.

And he was teaching the people. Now, they killed him. It was a successful plan. They were able to be successful in getting rid of that Jesus. Finally, we have peace. Then these followers of Jesus came to work another miracle.

It's like the same thing Jesus was doing. The guy started and then they began to teach our people. In the temple, not even in the marketplace, in the temple, your people have come to worship.

They have come to do spiritual activities. And we, this is where we are more relevant. Even though they're relevant even outside the temple. The temple was their jurisdiction. Now you are coming there to teach the people what are you teaching them?

About this Jesus who killed, that means you are making us look very bad. And we have to stop it. We have to stop it. And that was what was going to spark their persecution. They had to put an end to this.

[12:45] And it wasn't only that they were preaching Jesus. Guess what? Look at the verse. They were teaching the people and preaching in Jesus. So they are trying to say, the people, the guy's killed, he's alive now.

No, no, no, no, no, no, no. This is bad politics. It's not good for us. The person we executed, the person we got rid of, now you are preaching that he's alive and we were wrong and you've come to our jurisdiction and you are preaching and thousands of people are listening to you.

The disturbance of Christianity. It is more. Christianity causes a lot of disturbance everywhere. Not negative disturbance but it's positive but people don't like it because of the message.

And let me just jump way ahead of myself and come back. Look, the services they asked them by what power? Some translations use what authority.

What power? Is this a magical power? Because when we talk about power, we have the power here. So what power have you guys introduced into the system? They said, in the midst and they asked them what sort of power or what kind of authority are you doing these things?

[14:09] By what name? Where are you getting these things from? Peter said that if we are being questioned about a good, verse 9, we are being questioned about a good deed done to a helpless man.

You are charging us on that? But they were teaching us. The people were disturbed. They left the teaching and asking them, by what authority have you done these things? And he's giving you the right to teach.

Peter says that. Let it be known that by the name, this is very serious, let it be known to you all and to all the people of Israel by the name of Jesus. Look at what it is.

By the name of Jesus Christ, whom you people crucify. Did you see that? Do you think they were taken lightly? It was in their face. They tried to get rid of Jesus to have their peace of mind in their

community.

And now, we thought, now we have peace, everything has been done and dusted. These guys have come back and are preaching Jesus and are preaching that he's alive. They have to squash this thing.

[15:11] So, that generated a desire in them to squash this thing with an iron fist. Hardest once and for all. But that sparked the pit of persecution.

And persecution is a necessary part of Christianity. Because of the disturbance of Christianity. Christianity has been persecuted by governments, by communities, by society, by loved ones, by friends, by enemies.

It's always been like that. And Christianity has been through major persecution. Some of the persecutions are lethal. Lethal persecutions. Like, almost all the disciples of Jesus Christ, none of them died a death of natural causes.

They were all executed. They were all killed through persecution. And Jesus actually told them that, expect persecution because it's part of the deal.

It's gonna come. And, so I think it's, it's good to look at something. But, before then, I want to just, look at, let's look at verse 1 again. Verse 1 says that, as they speak to the people, the priests, let's say the priest, the captain of the temple.

[16:29] Let's say the captain of the temple. And the Sadducees. Who are these people? The priests, where did they come from? Who are they? Because these guys were doing God's work.

you think it should be the priests who should support them. And, it's not just God's work they were doing. They had also done good things to the people. The priests, the captain of the temple, what's he doing there?

The temple had a captain who are Sadducees. First of all, the priests are people who God appointed from the days of Aaron to be the intermediaries between God and the people.

And, when it comes to the day of atonement or other important festive or sacrifices, it was the priests who had the right from God to offer the sacrifices.

So, for instance, in Hebrews chapter 5 and chapter 8, chapter 5 from verse 1, it talks about how high priests, high priests are taken from amongst men and appointed for men in things pertaining to God that they may offer both gifts and sacrifices.

[17:36] sacrifices. So, in the Old Testament system, you need that priest. If you were not a priest and you went to do things that priests were only allowed to do, you'd be punished.

So, there was a king, I think, Uzziah. he decided to go and offer sacrifices in 2 Chronicles chapter 26. He decided to go and offer sacrifices when God, he wasn't in his place to do it.

He was the king, but he wasn't meant to do it. So, that is the job of the priests. And the judgment of God came. The Bible says that his heart, his heart, when he became big, his heart was exalted to his head.

So, he began to do things, here I've heard of it. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction. For he transgressed against the Lord, his God, by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar.

That was not a job of a king. He transgressed against the Lord. So, God executed punishment right away. So, it's only the priests. And there were, listen to this very carefully, there were 24 sets, sets, in those days, of priests.

[18:45] Right? 24 sets. And every set was supposed to have a chance to offer sacrifices in the temple throughout the year. So, out of the whole year, the 24, every set must have their chance in the year.

So then, every order of priesthood or groupings of priests would have two weeks in every year to offer their or carry out activities.

So, in that two weeks, if it's our turn this season, they will cast lots. And then, if he falls on you, today, you have to go. So, morning and evening, and then tomorrow, somebody else will go.

And in every set, let's say, a set of priests can be a whole group of people, a lot of them. So, the lot falls on you and you get a chance to go and offer. That's why Zachariah, if you remember, John the Baptist's father, Bible says that the lot fell on his order in Luke chapter 1 about John the Baptist, I think, somewhere from verse 6.

It fell upon him, the order, for him to offer sacrifices. So, he was in the temple carrying out, verse 9, right, it says that according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense which he

went into the temple of the Lord.

[ 19 : 57 ] And that's where he had encounters. And it happened that that was the same time the angel was coming. God had, you see, God is a master planner. He was behind it. Anyway, so, that was the job of the priest. And, so, they were very powerful people.

And when it comes to the temple, they were primarily in charge. And now, how about the captains? This captain, the captain, in the temple, they had temple police.

Temple police. to make sure there was always order. Yeah, temple. Because they used to sell things in the temple and ship it, to buy, you know, yeah. You know, Jesus went to the temple and with people.

Yeah, so they had police. Now, next time, come again. But what Jesus did in the temple was a milder version of what was happening now with Peter and John and their cohorts.

So, now, listen to this very carefully. The Roman authorities, they had a custom. When they conquer a people, they leave the people to rule their people.

[ 21 : 00 ] So, they delegate from amongst the people to represent Rome, to rule the people. So, that's why they were so successful. So, it kind of, they don't interfere too much. But what they never tolerated, Romans like order.

So, they built a lot of roads, they built a lot of infrastructure. The Romans were very organized, so they liked order. So, when, anytime a people have been conquered, they, I'm pointing among from you, some people, so tax collectors were Jews, but they were working for the Romans.

May I surprise you, for you to know, even the high priests, just like the ag bishop of Canterbury in our country, is chosen by the authorities.

So, either the king and the prime minister, the parliament must approve it. So, it's not like spiritually we went to pray and the Lord said, choose, no, it's not a political appointment, but the authority of the land must have a say, must appoint.

So, in those days, the high priest was appointed by Rome. And every year, Rome will appoint the high priest. So, you must be really in bed with Rome to be appointed.

[ 22 : 08 ] Sometimes you have to lobby to get that post. So, what Rome expected of the rulers of the people was order. They don't like chaos.

Because of that, it was the responsibility of the leaders to put in systems to maintain order because Rome does not like disorder. And when there's disorder in your territory, Rome will have to send some forces to come and deal with it and squash you all.

That's why I remember somebody says that instead of all the nations dying, it's better, Caiaphas said that, it's better for one person to die for the people. Because of Jesus, if there's going to come tension, the Romans will come and run over us.

So, let's just kill this guy and give him as a scapegoat. He dies and they'll be calm. So, John chapter 11, do you consider that it's expedient for us that one man should die for the people and not that the whole nation should perish?

Because the Romans, they are brutal. When there's disorder, they'll come and they'll kill so many people. So, let's kill Jesus. That's the understanding. So, they had this temple police and their leader was the captain.

[ 23 : 15 ] And so, when Jesus was about to be arrested, actually, they sent the high priest and some of the temple police to go and arrest Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.

They had some of those guys to go and arrest Jesus Christ. So, just so we understand, there was this temple police. They were supposed to maintain order. Now, what's the third group?

Let's look at the text again. It says that the priests, verse 1, Acts chapter 4, verse 1, the priests, the captain, and the Sadducees. Who are these Sadducees?

Some people say they are sad to see. And the Pharisees are far to see. But it's really sad. Who are the Sadducees?

These Sadducees were like the governors of the people. They were more powerful than the priests. Very politically, very powerful.

[ 24 : 11 ] There are just a few of them. But it's a sect. It's a Jewish sect. So, in those days, the Jews had all kinds of sects. There were the Zealots, there were the Sadducees, the Pharisees.

That's why when Christianity started, they call it except as well. Acts chapter 24, verse 14. They said, they are a sect. A sect of the, in fact, there was a place he calls them the sect of the Nazarenes.

Yeah, the sect of the Nazarenes. So, Christians were even called sects in those days. So, when we talk about the Sadducees, they were a sect who did not believe in resurrection.

They didn't believe in supernatural power. They didn't believe in angels. So, if you remember Paul in Acts, when he perceived that they were Sadducees, he perceived that some people, some of them were Sadducees, he said, listen, I'm a Pharisee, a son of the Pharisee.

He said, but when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, say council. We'll come to that.

[ 25 : 19 ] In the council, he said, men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead and being judged. No, he knew that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection and the Pharisees did believe in the resurrection.

Pharisees did believe in angels. Pharisees did believe in spirits. Sadducees did not believe in resurrection. Sadducees did not believe in angels. Sadducees did not believe in spirits. They only believed in intellectualism.

So, it was the Sadducees who came to ask Jesus Christ, if you say we believe in the resurrection, seven guys, they were all married to one woman in the resurrection. Whose wife would he be? Yes, they knew they've asked a very good question.

Matthew 22, in the resurrection, whose wife would he be? And Jesus said that, you see, you don't understand. You don't understand the scripture, nor do you know the power of God. He said in the resurrection, there shall not be married.

So, they were, watch this, this is very important, the Sadducees operated primarily based on the Torah, or the books of Moses. They were authorities.

[ 26 : 20 ] They knew it. And in the books of Moses, there was nothing mentioned, five books of Moses, there was nothing mentioned about resurrection, all these things. So, when it comes to the books of Moses, when it comes to the Torah, they were authorities.

They were very intellectual. That is why they came and asked Jesus that question that Moses said. And then Jesus, in response, told them that, you don't understand the law. He showed them a question that even Moses in the law calls him the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

He's the God of the living, not the God of the dead. So, Jesus told them back to the book that made them very powerful and displayed their ignorance. So, they were people of the books of Moses.

So, then, they were very powerful and the priests were subject to them in the temple. This group of people. So, you have the priests, the captains, the Sadducees, and sometimes, including the Pharisees and others, they are called the Sanhedrin.

Sanhedrin. They were like the parliament, yeah, the house of, of laws, or the house of commons, or whatever you want to call it.

[ 27 : 29 ] And they were more powerful than the house of laws. They are more powerful than the house of commons because whatever decision they made was final. Whatever they made was final. You don't need to refer to any other. They were like the house of commons, the Supreme Court, and everything bound together.

They were very powerful people. And so, they made decisions about who should be punished and who shouldn't be punished. And now, these people, the Sanhedrin, look at verse 2 again in Acts chapter 4.

Being grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead, they laid hands on them and put them in hold unto the next day for it was now eventime.

How many people believe. Verse 5 says that, And it came to pass on the morrow that the rulers and the elders and the scribes and Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindreds of the high priest were gathered together.

That gathering is what is called the Sanhedrin. That gathering. And it was a very powerful gathering called the Sanhedrin. Look at verse 15.

[ 28 : 41 ] Acts chapter 4, verse 15. But when they commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred together. When you look at another translation, the council is called the Sanhedrin.

In NIV it says that. So they ordered them to withdraw from their Sanhedrin. That is, the Sanhedrin, they're very powerful people. So if you are called before Sanhedrin, men, it will define your doom or your peace.

The Sanhedrin were very powerful people. It was the Sanhedrin that God Jesus murdered. Matthew chapter 26, verse 59. They got Jesus murdered.

Matthew 26, the chief priests and the elders and all the council sought. You see, that council there is the, all the, when you read a different translation, they tell you that Sanhedrin. So sometimes it's translated council.

The whole, do you see that? The whole Sanhedrin. And in Matthew chapter 10, verse 17, you can also see that there. Matthew 10, 17, it says that Jesus was telling them, beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the Sanhedrin and scold you.

[ 29 : 55 ] That's it in the synagogue. Jesus told them that this is about to happen to you. It's Sanhedrin. It's some translation. When you see council there, some translations render it Sanhedrin.

Mark chapter 15, verse 1, it's there. It's replete everywhere in scripture, the Sanhedrin in the New Testament. Very early in the morning, the chief priests with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, they are the ones who made a decision, reached a decision.

They bound Jesus, led him away, handed him over to Pilate. So they killed him. It's the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin, very powerful people. And these same Sanhedrin now have taken counsel about these guys who are preaching the Jesus things.

Persecution was now about to start. Now, permit me to say something a little about persecution. In 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 12, Paul says that, and all those who live godly in Christ Jesus, what happens to them?

I know you will say it. What happens to all those who live godly in Christ Jesus? What happens to them? What happens to them? What happens to them? What happens to them? What happens to them? Are you sure? All those who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

[ 31 : 13 ] And in, when you look at what Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 5, 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 5, he says that, for us, the suffering of Christ abound in us, so our consolation persecution is part of your Christian life.

I'm going some way. It's very important. So, if you want to live the actual Christian life, then expect, it might not be lethal. In some places, there are over 100 million Christians who have been persecuted all over the world.

Everywhere. Christians are persecuted. Persecution takes different forms. Sometimes, social exclusion. People lose their job because of their Christian stance. people lose their business because of their Christian stance.

Companions are excluded because the founders or the leaders believe in Christian norms. Lecturers, even in our days, are losing their position.

Professors are losing their position because of their Christian convictions. Some of your working places, you are afraid to even make it clear that you are Christian because you are afraid of persecution.

[ 32 : 24 ] To read your Bible on the train, you are afraid someone will look at you funny.

Persecution is rife in our times. If you want to stand for public office, you better hide your Christian identity in United Kingdom.

Hello? Even if you are a boxer or you are a sportsman, you do not have to show that you have Christian convictions.

Even if you are a priest, Christian, you do not have to do not have to do it. You do not have to do it. You do not have to do it. You do not have to do it. You do not have to do it. You do not have to do it. But listen, listen, brothers and sisters, we should expect it.

We should expect it because Jesus said they will lay hands on you. Mark chapter 13, verse 13.

They will lay hands on you. They will come after you. Oh yes. And you will be hated by all, not some, all, for my name's sake, by he who endures to the answer, for my name's sake, in John chapter 15, verse 20.

I'm preaching a very interesting message, isn't it? The starting of persecution started from the Bible. So if you're a Christian, don't think it's something straight. Look at what Jesus said. This is serious.

[ 33 : 41 ] Shall we all read it from the screen? Let's go. A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

Ah! If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. He said, you are not greater than your master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

But as I said, not every persecution takes a lethal form because that is not normal in United Kingdom and in the West. But in a lot of places, in a lot of places, people are giving their lives for the gospel.

People are being imprisoned for the gospel. People, not because they are criminals. This is how Peter puts it. In 1 Peter 1, verse 5, it says that, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

In other words, when we are going through all these things, there's something behind the scenes that keep us. Oh, do you know, persecution is really good for the church because it sanitizes the church very easily.

[ 34 : 47 ] I told you in the Nazi times, some group of Christians are guarded because it was banned. They are guarded. They were having fellowship. And suddenly, the Gestapo came in.

I think the Gestapo, or rather in Russia, about three soldiers came in with guns. Came in the room. They were having, some Christians have guarded about 15 or 20.

Guarded, studying the Bible. Soldiers came in. And they knew they were dead. Said, you are doing this against the law? You are gathering? And then they said, those of you who are not Christians, leave their room right now.

If you know you are not a genuine Christian, you are not a Christian, leave their room so that we can deal with those who say they are Christians. Some people took their Bible. This other one took their Bible.

Yeah, about 10 or nine of them left. The other said, we'll stay our grounds. We are Christians. When the guys left the room, the soldiers said, now shut the door. They shut the door.

[ 35 : 53 ] They put their grounds and said, now we can have fellowship. We wanted to find out the fake Christians. After the fake Christians leave, we can have, because the soldiers were Christians. But if the fake ones will go and snitch on them, soldiers have to get rid of the fake ones.

Christianity, Christianity, in fact, when later persecution comes, it's so good. It's so good because it purges the church. A lot of people will not be quick to say, I'm a Christian.

Mega, mega church and all those things will begin to go down because there's so much infiltration. When there's persecution, that's when we get to know who are the true Christians.

Turn up the fire. Yes. When persecution comes and rises, that's when we get to know it helps to purge the Christians.

Purges the church. So Jesus said, expect it because it's going to come. Persecution is going to come. Tell somebody, persecution is necessary. In 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 12, verse 13, verse 14, see what Peter told them.

[ 37 : 06 ] Beloved, do not think it's strange concerning the fiery. He calls it trials. Most of our modern day, what we call trial is our personal problems. You didn't have enough money, so you are going to trial.

They've cut your electricity. Trial. Your husband has become a menace because he's sleeping around. Not because he's preaching or you are preaching and he's there, but because he's sleeping around.

I'm not saying those things are good, but that's our modern day Christian trials. Your sky subscription has been cancelled. Trial. You lost your job because you are sleeping at work.

Trial. That's not trial. That's not trial. That was necessary to save the company. You are caught with some drugs and the police are searching your house.

You call it, I'm going to trial. You are not going through trial. It's not trial. This trial is talking about, in fact, it calls it fear-it trial.

[ 38 : 18 ] Because some of them were tortured. They were set as torches to light the garden parties of Nero. Some of them were sown.

See, like they will catch you a human being, a Christian, and then they will take maybe a sheep, skin the sheep, and put the skin on you. And they'll search you. So, the lion or the wild animal, the Haina thinks that you are sheep.

That's what they did to them. Very, very. Some of them, they pour, call on them. Yes. Food. Call on them. To burn them alive.

It says that, don't, watch this, somebody's going through this and Peter, Peter, Peter said, do not think it's strange concerning, don't think it's strange, concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you as though something strange was happening to you.

It says, it's not strange. It's not strange. You lost your job because you will not do something that is against your Christian conscience. It says, it's not strange. It's not strange.

[ 39 : 27 ] Look at the next verse. But rejoice. Ah! Rejoice to the extent that you are part, did you see that? You are also being given the privilege to share in the sufferings of Christ.

You are a partaker of Christ's suffering that when his glory is revealed, you will also be glad with exceeding joy. Wow. Verse 14 says that when you are suffering, look at verse 14, if you are reproached or if you go through all these things for Christ, blessed are you for the spirit of glory and of God raised on you.

Wow. On their part is blasphemed, but on their part is glorified. It's part of the deal. Persecution is right. Quickly, let me just give you one or two points and then we can end.

On persecution, I know you don't want to hear about persecution, but persecution is necessary because it's, persecution comes because of the disturbance of Christianity.

The disturbance of Christianity is not just because you are Christian. The message of Christianity is so exclusive. The message of Christianity is so exclusive and later on you see, Peter says that there's no, can you imagine verse 12, he said there's no salvation.

[ 40 : 39 ] No, is there salvation in any another? Ah, and there's no other name under heaven by which we might be saved. Tokyo, this is the scandal of particularity.

You, your message is very offensive that you say there's no way anyone can be saved apart from Jesus Christ. That's the Christian message. If you don't believe in that, maybe you're not a proper Christian.

That's also another statement altogether. If you don't believe, the Jesus the Bible describes, and you don't believe Jesus is the son of God, I put it to you, you are not a Christian.

You are not. Maybe you think you are, but today, I know you are not here. You are listening to me. Today, I'm telling you, you are not a Christian. What makes you a Christian is not your behavior, but your believing in Christ.

Your believing in the gospel is what makes you a Christian. Not your nice behavior, anybody at all can behave nicely. Anybody at all with a sense of decency can behave nicely.

[ 41 : 45 ] Else, if it's the behavior, if it's behavior-based, the thief on the cross wouldn't have been told today when he hadn't gone down from the cross to do reparations and restitution.

Jesus said today, Luke chapter 24, verse 43, today, you shall be with me in paradise. If Christianity is repository, is built on behavior, just a pure behavior, then, then the thief wouldn't have been saved.

I submit to you, we are not saved because we behave. We are saved because we believe. And so, that means, if Christianity, you are in based on what you believe, then the content of your belief must be an important subject matter.

if it takes believing to be saved, then what you believe will determine whether you are saved or not. Hello? Yes. And the believing that produces salvation, as I normally say, salvific believing is that Jesus Christ is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

He died to shed his blood, not for his sins, but for our sins. So, in him, we have forgiveness of sin. In him, we have propitiation. In him, we have justification. In him, we have reconciliation with God.

[ 42 : 58 ] In him, we have right standing with God, forgiveness of sin. That is what makes a person a believer, a Christian. And that is important. And the early church never stopped teaching that.

That was the focus of their preaching. And that is what brings persecution. Because sometimes, it can be very annoying. He says that, we preach Christ, Paul, 1 Corinthians chapter 1, we preach Christ to the Jews, a stumbling block.

To the Greeks, foolishness. How many of you have heard someone say, I can't believe in this foolishness. Yes. To the Greeks, who ask, I want something that will tantalize my thinking.

This, somebody who lives after I go die for my sin, is border dash, foolishness. But it says, to those who are called, both Greeks and Jews, from within the Jewish community and from within the Greek community, those who say it's foolishness, those who say it's a stumbling block, the same message saves some of them.

Same message. Christ crucified. Christ crucified. So that's what he preached. Now, quickly, the benefits or implication of persecution. What it does. Because if it's that important, then why?

[ 44 : 12 ] God designed, watch this, persecution is a design by God. For what purpose? To produce spiritual growth. To produce spiritual growth.

So, persecution produces spiritual growth. It produces spiritual strength. It strengthens the church. That is why God has designed persecution.

He is not a persecutor, but the message will always generate persecution. Remember what Jesus said in John chapter 15, verse 20. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you because a servant is not greater than his master.

So, number one, it brings strength. Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 7, he said that for this reason, a thorn was given to me in my flesh, for which I went to God three times, and he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in your weakness.

So, as you are going through these painful times, that's when my strength is made perfect for you.

So, persecution produces spiritual growth. Number two, persecution also perfects our faith.

[ 45 : 20 ] It perfects our faith because the most important, this is very important, for the believer, the most important thing in your life is not your job.

The most important thing in your life is not your marriage. The most important thing in your life is not your association and friends. The most important thing in your life is not your money or your certificate, not your material possession.

The most important thing in a believer, the most precious thing in a believer's life is your faith. So, he says that, count it all joy. James chapter 1, verse 2, and then verse 12.

Verse 2 says that, count it all joy. My brothers, count it all joy when you fall into various trials. You see that trial has appeared here again. That's making reference to persecutions.

When you fall into various trials, why? Because it is, look at verse 2, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

[ 46 : 25 ] It's your faith that is being tested when you go through trials. And it produces patience.

Verse 12, look at verse 12. It says that, blessed is the man who endures temptations.

That word is what testings and triumph. Every faith will be tested to check his authenticity. For when he has been approved, he will receive a crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him.

When you love him, you go through something and he prepares you for a crown. So, first of all, it produces spiritual strength. Number two, it produces, it develops your faith.

It develops, look at 1 Peter. I want to show you this text. I think this text will, 1 Peter chapter 1, I think it should be there verse 7. 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 7.

Did you see that? It says that, I'm reading from the King James Version, the trial of your faith being more precious than of gold, that perishes. Did you see that? Of anything material. So, the trial of your faith being much more precious than anything material.

[ 47 : 32 ] That's what gold means. That perishes. Though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. So, your faith is so precious.

It's so important. It's better and it rates higher than anything material, than gold and silver. And it said, the trial of your faith will be found to the praise of God's glory.

And number three, quickly, you heard me read it earlier on. In James chapter 1, verse 12, it says that, anyone who endures trials or temptations will receive a crown.

Hallelujah! He will receive a crown! He will receive a crown! Of life! Who gives it? It's that which God the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Paul said that, because of this, I go through all these things.

2 Timothy chapter 1, verse 11 particularly. Verse 11 said, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. Look at verse 12. For this reason, I suffer these things.

[ 48 : 34 ] Because of my preaching. Because of what I'm called to do. Because of my Christian stand. I suffer these things. Never delay. I'm not ashamed. Why? For I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He's able to keep that which I've committed until that day.

There's a day coming and it's a day of reward. Paul said, I've fought a good fight. 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 7, I've fought a good fight. I've kept the faith. I've finished my call. I've fought a good fight. I've finished my race. I've kept the faith. Look at verse 12. Therefore, finally, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness with the Lord. The righteous will give to me on that day.

There's a day coming. He said, not to me alone. All those who love is appearing. Because when we go through these trials, it prepares us for the days ahead. Remember 1 Peter chapter 4. I read it earlier on verse 13 and verse 14.

1 Peter chapter 4, verse 13, when it's talking about when you go to try and rejoice to the extent that you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad and exceeding joy.

[ 49 : 35 ] Because there's a day of reward coming. Look at verse 14. Verse 14. If you are reproached for Him, the Spirit of glory rests upon you. On their part, His bloodstream. So there's a day of glory coming.

So persecution prepares us for eternal reward. Prepares us for eternal reward. Number 4, quickly, persecution. Oh, I like this.

It's part of the Christian journey. It's just part and parcel of being a Christian. So don't think something strange is happening to you. I don't know why all my friends have excluded me from their WhatsApp chat.

Because of the nonsense they've been talking about and they know you stand for righteous cause, they will form a new group chat and exclude you. People will exclude you. Sometimes there can be family meetings but you'll be excluded.

Jesus said, don't think I brought peace. Matthew chapter 10, verse 36. I brought a sword. Huh? Oh yes. Let's leave that because of my time. It's part of the journey.

[ 50 : 34 ] Paul said in Colossians chapter 1, verse 24. When you choose to preach for Christ and you choose to keep the message of Christ in your lips, suffering comes. I now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up in my flesh that what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the sake of the body which is his church.

Philippians chapter 2, verse 17. He indicates that because of his preaching these things are happening but he doesn't have a problem with it at all. Yes. And if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and the service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

I'm glad that I'm going, I'm being poured out as a drink offering. That's a metaphor to say I'm dying. They are killing me. Paul puts it this way. We die daily. 1 Corinthians 15, 31.

We die daily. In 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 23, it said, in death often. In death, I die often. And in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 8 and 9, very scary thing.

He said, we don't want you to be ignorant, brethren, about the troubles which came to us in Asia that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we even despaired even of life.

[ 51 : 44 ] Now we are tired of living. This is too much. Look at the next verse. Very important. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves but God who raises the dead.

Hallelujah. That is a Christian. Look at how Paul puts it in Philippians chapter 3, verse 10. He says that, that I may know him. That I may know him and the power of his resurrection.

That's where the modern day Christians stop. We know him and the power of his resurrection. No, the other two things are coming. It's four. Don't take only two and leave the two. It says that, and the fellowship of his, I can't hear you.

And the fellowship of his suffering. The fellowship of his sufferings. Not suffering. Sufferings, plural, different shapes and different forms and types of suffering for his name and being made conformed, being conformed to his death.

The fellowship of his suffering. It's part and parcel of what it means to be a Christian. A true Christian for that matter, sorry. A true Christian. A true Christian. Am I preaching to somebody at all?

[ 52 : 47 ] If your boyfriend wants to go away because you are being a true Christian, he can go to... I didn't say you said it. But I think you read my mind.

Go to hell. Go to hell. Somebody's husband has been funding you and suddenly he said, no, I can't continue with that. I can't.

I can't. I can't. Now I'm in Christ. I can't. My conscience has helped me come. I can't. He said, okay, bring back the car. I can't. Bring back the chairs I bought for you. Bring back.

I need you to move out of the house because I'm not paying the rent. It's in my name. Move out. I'm gone. Move out. I prefer to be homeless than to be Christless. I'll be homeless than to be Christless. Go to hell.

So far, be willing. Have the backbone asked a Christian to suffer persecution. Let me add one more of the points. So number one is what?

[ 53 : 50 ] Spiritual growth. Number two? Perfecting faith. Number three? Eternary rewards. Number four? Part of the journey, Christian journey. And then finally, number five, is the privilege of our union with Christ.

It's a privilege that you have been called to suffer for him. You. He said, join me. Come on, join me. The privileges of our union with Christ.

So in Acts chapter five, the Bible says that they were beaten. Acts chapter five from verse 40, the Bible says, so they departed from the presence of the Sanhedrin. That counts on the 41. It's Sanhedrin.

They departed from the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's name. See their approach? That's the kind of Christian we are talking about.

That's Christianity. That's authentic Christianity. That is genuine Christianity. That is pure Christianity. They don't mind suffering for his name. They don't mind.

[ 54 : 51 ] But they did all this through the power of the Holy Ghost, which next week, I'll go. But for your information, the disturbance of Christianity, it brings persecution. Disturbance.

They were greatly disturbed and so he brought persecution. Did you receive something? Let's give Jesus praise. Hallelujah! Hallelujah for the power of persecution and the benefits of the persecution for the church.

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