

THE **1** *ONE* series

Standing Firm

...together

**Part 2
Persecution**



...when the rest of the world is ***Falling Away***

Part 2, February-March 2015

From the Pulpit Ministry of Christ E Free Church

"...contend for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints."

--Jude 1:3

...while the rest of the world is falling away.

Jesus Christ

Our Highest Calling

Our Greatest Purpose

Our Soul's Source and Joy

And Our All Consuming Passion

...while the rest of the world is falling away.

STANDING FIRM, while the rest of the world
is ***FALLING AWAY***.

Jude Pt2

Table of Contents

Jude, Pt 2

Behold the Lord Comes with Mercy, p7

Blessing and Benediction, p22

Part 2 – Christian Persecution, p32

Persecution, Introduction, p33

Persecution: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, p34

Troubled?? Pray!! p.43

Losing Life. Finding Life p58

Additional References, p74

Free downloadable resources p83

...while the rest of the world is falling away.

“Behold the Lord Comes

with mercy for those awaiting”

Text: Jude v17-23

February 22, 2015

Theme: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

-Matthew 5:7

“...keep yourselves in the love of God,
waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ
that leads to eternal life.” – Jude 21

All the great things are simple, and many can be expressed in a single word: freedom, justice, honor, duty, *mercy*, hope.

-Winston Churchill

Jude 1:17-23 ESV But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. (18) They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." (19) It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. (20) But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, (21) keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. (22) And have mercy on those who doubt; (23) save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

INTRODUCTION

Jude is like a letter written during wartime, in which a General sends word to his troops. He writes in order to warn, inform and prepare them to recognize and defend the ranks, against the enemy that has been sneaking in across enemy lines. Its that serious!

In vs14-16 Jude introduces The Coming of the Lord with judgment for those ungodly and reveals the traits of those who will experience the fiery judgment of God. In v.17, he follows with the Coming of the Lord with Mercy for those awaiting, and reveals the traits of the End Times, of which the prophets foretold.

v.16) traits of Godless people | v.17 traits of End Times to come.

Feb.15: “**When the Lord Comes With Judgment for those who are Ungodly**” i.e. those unbelieving God and Truth rejecting people.

Feb.22: “**When the Lord Comes With Mercy for those who are Awaiting**” i.e. those who are trusting and living for Christ, and patiently and perseveringly awaiting the return of the Lord.

1. Up to this point, Jude has established the “need” for his readers to contend earnestly for the faith..., with reminders of God’s righteous condemnation of the ungodly (v5-7b). He has also given a vivid depiction of the ungodly people who have crept into the congregation, unnoticed (v 9-16,19).

2. Now Jude provides a series of exhortations designed to make sure that they stand strong in the faith “*once for all delivered to the saints*” (vs7-23) [from M.Copeland, *the Epistle of Jude*, p18, 1.,2.]

An exhortation is being compelled by concern, to plead for action.

Jude transitions from giving warnings regarding godless intruders infiltrating and influencing the church, to offering exhortations to remain strong in the faith and to strive toward **STANDING FIRM**, while the rest of the world is **FALLING AWAY**.

Many label this section as ***Exhortations to the Faithful***.

First, Jude refers to the

THE PROMISES OF OLD (v17-19)

Scripture has always contained warnings of those who would present themselves as men and women of God, who proclaim a message from God, yet failing to present Gods' Truth in the manner in which God meant it to be understood and communicated to others. That misdirection most often begins by getting the central focus off God and directed onto the people. "God wants us happy". Or "God wants us healthy". Or "God wants me blessed." No. God wants you focused on Him. PERIOD. No other conditions, no other qualifications. Just God and God first.

When that happens, then everything else will begin to fall into place. When God is on the throne of the believer's heart, we won't worry about whether or not we're happy. We won't care whether or not someone said something we didn't appreciate.

Jude 1:17-18 ESV But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. (18) They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions

The Apostles Predictions (v17-18)

Jude tells us to remember the promise or prophecy of God. In the end times, there will be mockers, scoffers, and a growing abundance of false prophets.

As Evangelicals, we believe in what is referred to as, **Verbal Plenary Inspiration** of Scripture. Now you may be thinking, "I didn't know I believed in that!"

2Tim. 3:16-17 ESV All Scripture is breathed out [inspired] by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, (17) that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Verbal Plenary Inspiration of Scripture states that not merely are the concepts and principles, and history and geography of Scripture inspired by God, but that the grammatical syntax, verb form

conjugations and noun declensions are equally inspired by God and given for specific purpose.

Up till this point in Jude, he has given no commands to his readers. He has written to promote the church to action, using action verb forms, such as present active participles and infinitives to convey the importance or expectation to take certain action. But he has given no outright commands at this point.

But here in v.17, he issues his first *imperative* command to the church and here it is: “**Remember**, the predictions of the Apostles....” REMEMBER!

He emphasizes the importance of bearing in mind, what God’s word has always promised. He writes so the church will not be disheartened or disillusioned at what was going on around them, or be led astray by their teachings.

Jude 1:17-18 ESV But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. (18) They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions

1) Last days ... scoffers or false prophes (v18)

End Times traits: Growing interest in individual truth and personal spirituality, but a lack of interest in Gods’ Truth. Scripture is full of warnings against false prophets. Peter addressed it (2 Pet.2), Paul warned about it (Acts 20:29-30); The Apostle John wrote about it (1Jn.4) as did Jesus (Mat. 24). Now Jude addresses this all important and widely pervasive problem. (v18)

Scoffing at Truth at God Himself. Which is what Jude’s overall letter is addressing. This is a promise or prophecy of God. There will be mockers, scoffers, unbelievers, false professors of faith, disobedient and vile sinners, no matter how much we preach the gospel or attempt to make and teach followers of Jesus. That is a prophecy from God and something Jude commands his reading audience to **Remember**.

2) Following their own lusts (v18)

False prophets often fabricate their own prophecies and proclaim their own truth, only to allow for themselves to live their own sinful lives beyond the touch or authority of others. The idea is often, “you can’t argue with my truth”. [cp. v4, v7, v8]. These were living in sin, under the cloak of “religion”.

Causing Divisions (v19)

Those who deny absolute Truth of God will always cause divisions with those who hold fast to the absolute Truth of God’s holy word.

Jude 19 It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.

The danger sign is when Evangelicals themselves, attempt to remove the divisions between them and people who believe there is no absolute truth. These divisions must be so, and to attempt to remove those divisions is to remove the basis of what we believe and the foundational Truths of God’s Holy word, the Bible! We must never sacrifice Truth for the sake of unity. *NEVER!* Those who do so, prove to be *religious*, but not people of Truth.

1) Worldly people – animal like (cp.v10)

This refers to sensual or carnal living; desires driven by sinful human nature;

2) Devoid of Spirit - (the Spirit??)

These people are or devoid of or lacking the work of the Holy Spirit of God in their life. They are not led by the Holy Spirit but by their on sinful human lusts (v18), and animal like instincts (v7).

They evidence themselves to be spiritually empty, no matter how much they boast about themselves. (v16)

Here, Jude addresses...

THE POWER OF TOGETHERNESS (v20-23)

Prior to this section, Jude focuses on the dangers to be alerted to, regarding the religious heretics creeping into the congregation. I

emphasize and distinguish between the church and the congregation there. The church is the assembly of true believers in Christ, and the congregation are the sum total of everyone who is meeting or mingling together. Those Jude is warning about, are in the community outside the church, creeping into some of the congregational meetings of the church, but are not part of the church or the group of true believers in Jesus Christ.

It is the difference between the general church meeting and the true church family.

Now he speaks of the church being...

Inwardly Focused (v20-21)

This focuses on the church family concerns. Scripture highlights the importance of “*Togetherness*” or church family life. This is the ***internal ministry*** of the church to one another.

Here, Jude addresses the health and life of the Church and emphasizes an attitude of *togetherness*. This refers to nurturing, connecting, teaching, helping, strengthening, supporting, and encouraging.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”
-Matthew 5:7

Can you be a Christian and not be part of a local church family? Yes, because going to church does not make you a Christian. Can you be an obedient Christian and remain disconnected from a local church? No - at least not according to Scripture.

Some of the reasons, some people *claim* they don’t need Church.

TRUE OF FALSE

(1) “***I don’t need*** to go to a church to worship God.” T or F?
True.

(2) “***I don’t like*** being around people *and* the church is full of hypocrites.” T or F ? *Could be True.*

(3) “***I’ve been hurt*** by church and I’m never going back to church.” T or F? *Could be T or F.* Some people have been genuinely hurt or offended by a Christian or a church. Some people are somewhat glad this has happened, as now they have an

excuse not to go to church. But they only apply this to church. They've probably been cut off in traffic at some point in their life, but they still drive. They've stood in line at the checkout line for too long, while the cashier chatted with the customer in front of them, but they still go back to the store. Their boss has at some point, told them to do something they'd rather not do, but in order to keep their job, they did it anyway. But when it comes to church, there are some people who seem to rejoice that they now have an excuse why they never have to go back.

Some reasons why people *genuinely* don't want to go to church.

(1) “They have problems with authority in general”. They don't like anyone meddling in their affairs, telling them what to do or giving any kind of constructive input into their lives. I have known people who have started a house church, just because they didn't want anyone telling them what to do and they wanted to be in charge.

(2) “They are living in sin and in rebellion to God and don't want to have to change their life style nor give up their pet sins”.

(3) “They are genuinely ignorant of the Bible and God's instruction for the church, and its purpose.”

Jude (20) But you, beloved, **building yourselves up** in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,

Togetherness: How can we help others to Stand Firm in their faith and not fall away?

1) Building “yourselves” (one another) up (v.20)

Within the body of Christ, we have the responsibility of “togetherness.” This is one of those “togetherness” references Jude uses, reflecting mutual interest and responsibility toward the overall health for the church family. “*Building one another up*”, refers to positive, constructive, input into the lives of one another. Each of us are a work in progress. We are under construction and God can use another person, maybe you, to help build up another person, in helping them to become the person He wants them to become. This is the concept of “togetherness”.

ILL) Not long ago, on a Wednesday night, we were going through one of our studies on worship. And the curriculum made an inference that we should not go to a worship service to be emotionally stirred. And Initially I agreed with it, as that should not be the *main* reason we worship. But our gatherings are more than merely worship services. Worship is giving to God what He alone is worthy to receive. But what we call the *Worship service* is a lot more than that, and it should be.

So one person said, “well I don’t know about you, but I need encouragement and I get that when we gather together. Its like getting filled back up again, so I can go back out and deal with the world around me and at work.” And I think we all wound up agreeing, even though it was not in complete agreement with what our curriculum was presenting.

The church meeting, as I see it, should serve several purposes. **(1)** It should be the expression of worship and adoration to God alone. But **(2)** it should also be a “filling station” – filling our tank back up; charging our batteries back up; Perhaps a medical center where we find spiritual healing and recovery from life’s draining challenges; Maybe even a counseling station where we can come along side one another and listen to the troubles of someone in our church family; where we support and encourage one another;

<p>1Th. 5:14 ESV And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.</p>
--

This can’t take place, unless we are gathering together in some form of meeting. I have had people say to me, “*well I don’t need people to help me with any of that*”. I don’t know, but does that sound really arrogant or self-reliant to you? Sounds a little, overly confident and self-focused to me. The truth is, God uses the Church to do much of His work in our individual lives. And if indeed you are strong enough so that you don’t need anyone helping you today, then guess what? God may want to use you in your time of strength to help someone else who is facing a trial or difficulty at that particular moment.

So if you think, “I don’t need the church”, just remember, (1) that is a colossal arrogant perspective. But (2) The church may need you.

1 Cor. 14:26 MKJV (26) Then how is it, brothers? When you come together, each one of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be for building up.

We have a responsibility of togetherness and we should be Building one another up in our most holy faith.

2) Praying in the Holy Spirit (v.20)

Jude (20) But you, beloved, *building yourselves up* in your most holy faith and **praying in the Holy Spirit**, (21) keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

This could refer to being led by **THE** Holy Spirit to be concerned regarding the needs of others in the church. But interestingly, this is translated with Capital Holy Spirit, and in doing so, implies the Holy Spirit of God, but this can just as possibly be translated “*praying in a spirit of holiness*”, indicating the need to pray reverently and compassionately for one another, in an appropriate Christ like attitude.

Interesting that we are to pray for one another and ask for prayer for one another. But we are never instructed to ask that angels or dead saints pray for us. Some logic would imply that, if angels are holy angels, or saints are really saints, then they would be the ideal ones we should have praying for us, as surely, their prayers would be of greater effect than any earthly human’s prayers.

But God has ordained that the living Church be involved in intercession *for* the church. Christians should be devoted to praying for one another.

James 5:16 MKJV Confess faults to one another, and **pray for one another**, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous one avails much.

1 Thes. 5:25 ESV (25) Brothers, pray for us.

3) Keeping one another in God's love (v21)

When confronted with his sin of murder, God asked Cain, "where is your brother?" (Gen.4:9) to which Cain answered, "Am I my brother's keeper?" or "Is he my responsibility?" The Truth is, we do have responsibility to one another by helping them stay on track and in the will, obeying His word and evidencing our love for Him and enjoying His love for us.

Jude 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

I believe if we could view Jude giving this message, he would not be pointing at individuals in the church, and encouraging them to keep him or herself in God's love. He is speaking to the Church as a whole. He is referring to the "*togetherness*" ministry of the church. He is speaking to each one as being somewhat responsible for the state and spiritual well-being of another; We are somewhat interdependent upon one another in the church family. *Can* we live without one another? Yes, it is possible, but we are not *meant* to!!

This expresses care and concern and brotherly family love toward one another. When I hear that someone called someone else to check on them or stopped by for a visit or prayed with that person, I am thrilled. Not because I'm thinking that it relieves me of my responsibility, but that it evidences that the church is doing and loving and caring and supporting and ministering as the church is intended to.

At one church we had a lady who was a "connector". She was always calling, visiting, connecting and contacting people in the church. She was a people person. Some viewed her as a busybody, but I always considered her a genuinely compassionate individual and valued her highly, as she was often the one informing me of someone who was in trouble or in the hospital or in need in some other way. I never felt she gossiped. In fact deep down my wife and I felt like we had no one else in the church like her. She was valuable and interested in others.

4) Awaiting for the Mercy of our Lord... (v21)

That is, His rewards at His return. This is the Internal focus, which is focused on church family concerns.

Heb. 9:28 ESV so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

When Christ returns, we will experience His mercy, but others will experience His judgment for sin. Jude refers to being Inwardly focused, as being an important aspect of church health.

But an Internally focus church must be balanced with also being....

Outwardly Focused (v.22-23)

These are church concerns towards missions. This is also in light of the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the concern for the world of lost sinners, who are facing the fiery, eternal judgment of Almighty God for the punishment for their sins. Here he addresses *the message and ministry* of the church.

Jude 22 And have mercy on those who doubt;

Here we realize that one of the important issues regarding the protection and “*contending for the faith once delivered to the saints*” is that, that faith has a message that must be protected at all costs. It is the message of the gospel of Christ, forgiveness of sins, salvation for the soul, escape from the fiery eternal judgment to come and the promise of the merciful gift of eternal life to all who believe.

This involves connecting, sharing, understanding, loving, discipling, evangelizing those still outside the family of God,

1) Merciful to those who doubt (v22)

We must be filled with mercy. This is outreach ministry. This is connecting with others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, the church.

2) Save those who don't believe (v23)

This is saving those who are in danger of the eternal judgment of God.

Jude (23) save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

cp.Amos 4:11

Amo 4:11 ESV "I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning; yet you did not return to me," declares the LORD.

This must involve snatching some from the fire (i.e. of eternal judgment), or praying for and sharing the gospel with those people.

1 This is every**ONE**, praying for some**ONE**, connecting with **ONE** any**ONE**, and bringing that **ONE**.

How easy it is to read this as American's and think, "yes, I want to save the godless unbelievers." But what about when real opposition comes to our faith and real life persecution?

What do we hate? Who do we love? And How should we respond?

Are we aware and do we care that every person belonging to ISIS is headed toward an eternity of fiery judgment of God for their sinfulness and their rejection of the One True God who loves them?

We read about martyrs in history who witnessed to their persecutors before their own death. Wouldn't it be something for those 21 young men who were beheaded on that beach, turned to their persecutors seconds before their own death and proclaimed with their last breath that God loved them and if they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ they would be saved? And what if those 40+ Christians who were burned alive the same week, cried out from their burning cages, proclaiming the love of God in Christ, urging them in their own death, to be believe in Jesus. Maybe that's just a bit far-fetched for us to grasp, so what about this:

We each have people we are in contact with each week, some each day of each week and yet we have been silent regarding the gospel message and of faith in Christ. We have not shared our own faith,

much less suffered persecution because of it. We have had conversations about freezing weather, but not the burning of hell. We have talked about the ball games and government, but not about the eternal destiny of a person's soul.

What will it take – for us the church – to open our mouths and share our faith in Christ, the gospel message and urge others to believe and be saved? Saying, *God bless you* doesn't cut it. Telling someone that *God loves them* is not enough. Inviting someone to church, has no eternal effect on that person, *if they never* make it to church to hear the Truth of God's word or the hope they can have in Christ.

What do we hate? Who do we love? And How should we respond?

3) hating garments stained with flesh (sins) (v23)

This is about balancing life and ministry; balancing church family concerns and missions concerns. *Building others up*, is all about helping other Christians to Stand Firm in the Faith, while the rest of the world is falling away. That is our responsibility - *each one of us*.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."
-Matthew 5:7

Snatching others out of the fire, is all about helping others escape eternal hell. This is our responsibility - *each one of us*. Both - both – are our responsibility.

One author put it this way: *It is the responsibility of the Church of Jesus Christ to attempt to extract people from the error of their heresy and the horror of their eternity without Christ.*

Application – Now What?

What are some heretical influences in our culture today:

1) Radical Islam: ISIS – We hate the error and the horrifically wicked sin of their activity.

American Atheists: We hate their activity and their beliefs, opposing God.

Homosexuality: The sin, not the person – we hate it – we hate its influence – we hate its deception. We hate its sins and its effects.

Much of our Government – people hate it – hate its Godlessness and hate the direction its taking and affect on our once, God focused nation.

You may be thinking, “well we shouldn’t hate it”. If we never hate it (it, being SIN), we will never effectively defeat it – any of it. We must hate these evil influences enough and love and show compassion to the people caught up in it enough, to do something really, really radical.

What do we hate? Who do we love? And How should we respond?

We must hate the error and activity of Islam, Atheist, Homosexuality and misled Government enough and love those caught up in its deception and facing eternal hell, to have a sense of horror as to the end result of it all.

We might want to drop the bomb on those influences, but that will not get rid of the evil. It will not redeem the ones caught up in its horror and destruction. It seems like the gospel is the only reasonable response for the church.

Prayer and the gospel of God’s love demonstrated through Christ, is the most powerful weapon we could hope to have and yet so many of us fail to fire that weapon week after week.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”
-Matthew 5:7

1) Pray for others:

(1) inside the church family

(2) and outside in our mission field

1
ONE

* This requires connecting relationally with people inside the church family as well as outside, in order to be God’s available tool to share His love and grace.

2) Look for opportunities For God to answer you previous prayer and to speak with someone about Christ.

1) to encourage another brother or sister in Christ

2) And connect with someone outside the church family to believe in Christ. This is Person-to-Person and Life-on-Life. This requires us to share the gospel and urge them to believe.

3) Plead with others – talk with others courageously about your faith and Jesus Christ. Urge them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved, so they might experience the mercy of God at the time of His coming.

2Cor. 5:10-20 ESV For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (11) Therefore, knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade others.... (14) For the love of Christ compels us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; (15) and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (18) All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. (20) Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We plead with you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

COMMUNION: -- 1 Cor.11:23 –



“A Blessing and Benediction”

Text: Jude v24-25

March 1, 2015

“They collapse and fall away,
but we rise and stand firm.”
--Psalm 20:8

The purpose of our lives is to be happy.
---Dalai Lama

The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

-The Westminster Shorter Catechism:

STANDING FIRM

Ps. 20:8 ESV They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright.

FALLING AWAY

Ps.101:3 I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me.

Blessings and Benediction

In this passage, Jude shares blessings and benediction which brings us to our purpose and reason for Standing Firm in the faith.

Jude 1:24-25 ESV Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, (25) to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q. 1. What is the chief end of man? A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

INTRODUCTION

When someone falls, there is always a danger of injury. A wrist, hip, elbow, ribs, knees or even your head can be injured. When someone Falls Away, from Scripture and from God, there is danger of spiritual injury, sin, separation from God, destructive influences on life and relationship consequences.

Frederick Douglass once stated: "It is easier to build strong children, than to repair broken men."

To put that in the context of the book of Jude, we might say: It is better to take care not to Fall Away from God and His Truth, than to FALL Away and have to be brought back. Some come back stronger; some come back but never fully recover; and some never come back. Those are the ones who fall away and never recover.

Jude ends his letter with A Blessing and A Benediction, for his readers and it extends to us today.

NOW UNTO HIM... (v24)

The Reformation or as Catholics refer to it as: *The Protestant Rebellion* lasted from around 1517 to 1648. There were 5 statements of faith at its core, out of which the reformation was formed.

1) SOLA SCRIPTURA = Scripture Alone, as opposed to other influences, voices or sources of Truth.

2) SOLA GRATIA = Grace alone – that is we are saved by Grace alone, it is a gift of God

3) SOLA FIDE = faith alone – as opposed to salvation being dependent on any work, act, ritual, rite, ceremony or sacrament. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone.

4) SOLA CHRISTOS = Christ Alone = referring to being saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, and His shed blood, apart from trusting or hoping in any meritorious good works.

5) SOLA DEO GLORIA = all in life is to be done for the glory of God Alone!

Some would even go so far as to say that these 5 Sola Statements , are the only doctrinal statement needed. This brings us to our purpose and reason for standing firm in the faith.

To HIM... (v24

Jude 1:24-ESV Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy

“To Him” = This represents God as the central figure in all of history. His is the core focus of all of Scripture. “Him”, that is God alone is the main character in this play we call life. He is to be our greatest purpose, our highest calling, our soul’s source and joy and our all-consuming passion. “To Him” is the core focus of every Christian heart.

From Genesis, we understand that all things exist because of Him and for Him. Ps.19 proclaims that all of creation is the workings of God Almighty and the message of creation is that there is a Creator!

Gen 1:1 ESV In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

In Colossians, we understand that all things exist because God almighty created them. And they were created for Him, for His purposes and for His praise and Glory.

Col 1:16 ESV For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him.

Not only did God create all things, but He sustains creation, and holds it all together and keeps it all functioning properly; [as in Heb.1]

“To Him” is the proper and intended focus of all of creation. The Apostle Paul writes, revealing that Jesus Christ is the key figure in secular history and sacred religion.

Rom 11:33-36 ESV Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! (34) "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" (35) "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" (36) For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

God is the proper focus of every person on earth, whether saved or unsaved. He is the source of all good and the reason for all praise and glory to be given.

To Him who is Able (v24

Jude 24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy,

He alone is able to keep us **STANDING FIRM** and keep us from, **FALLING AWAY**. To God alone we reserve all glory, because He alone is our sole source of help to keep us from Falling.

Able to keep from falling (v24

Whether a nation or a town, a church or a person, God alone is able to keep us from Falling, because He alone is...

OMNIPOTENT – He has all power belongs to Him.

OMNISCIENT – He possess all knowledge and understanding are His alone. He is also, all wise.

Eph 3:20-21 ESV ***Now to him who is able*** to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, (21) to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

We are to be ascribing glory and directing praise to God, who alone, is worthy to be praised and worshiped. He alone is **SOVEREIGN** and able to make all things work according to the purpose of His perfect will. (Eph.1:11)

He alone is **FAITHFUL** to accomplish His will, demonstrate His sovereignty in all things. He alone is always faithful, always the same, unchanged and unchanging, in the past, present or in the future. (Lam.3:22)

He is able to keep us from falling, and He is also...

Able to preserve you blameless (v24

Rom 8:1 ESV There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

How can any of us be blameless or faultless before God? For those who believe in Christ, He has intercepted God's wrath for our sin and by that we are saved, redeemed and reconciled to God.

Col 2:13-14 ESV And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, (14) by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

He has taken our sins and by His Grace, and through our Faith, we receive His forgiveness and new life. He has paid for our sin, saved our soul, eternal life has been received and His righteousness has been credited to us!

Before the eternal presence of his glory (v24

In the eternal presence of God, at the judgment seat – judgment for sin for the ungodly unbelievers, but there will be mercy and joy for those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and been saved.

With great joy (v24)

Is this our joy, or His joy?? I have no doubt that our joy will be full to overflowing, when we stand before Him in eternity. Also, we know that in procuring our eternal redemption, Jesus' Himself was joy-filled as He took our place.

Heb 12:2 ESV looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

But also, the joy of God the Father is great in the working of salvation for His children. In Luke 15:4-24, Jesus presents 3 parables dealing with God's interest and concern for those who are outside His family. In vs.7, 10, and 24, we are told that all of heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents and receives eternal life in Christ.

Jesus has accomplished for us, what we could never do for ourselves. He deserves to be our greatest purpose, our highest calling, our soul's source and joy and our all-consuming passion.

TO THE ONLY GOD (v25) *Sola Deo Gloria*

This is from a Biblical, Christ focused perspective. The ⁽¹⁾OT gods, the ⁽²⁾Native American gods (spirits) and ⁽³⁾the Greek mythological gods were all gods of men's own making. "gods" are gods that we have made in our own image. They are what man imagines them to be. They are what man wants them to be and they do what man tells them they can do. It is all man centered. False gods and idols are always men centered.

Jude 25 ESV to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

This focuses on the identity, accomplishments and worth-ship of God. v.24 focuses of God's capability in redemption and v25,

focuses on the identity of God and what He is worthy to receive from His children.

God is Our Savior (v25)

God is our Savior, through Jesus Christ.

Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might have supremacy.

False gods are idols. Idols are man made objects ascribed with super hero power.

No God is like our God! He is the only One, True God.

1Ki 8:23 ESV and said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart;

God of Gods and Lord of Lords

Deu 10:17 ESV For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe.

True and Living God

Joh 17:3 ESV And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Through Christ our Lord

Jesus Christ is God's means of accomplishing eternal salvation to any who believe. God accomplishes the payment for sins, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, for the salvation of human beings, who truly believe.

Col. 2:13-15 ESV And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, (14) by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he

set aside, nailing it to the cross. (15) He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Be glory, majesty, dominion and authority

Eph 3:20-21 ESV Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, (21) **to him be glory** in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

The heavens, creation and those redeemed are to give or ascribe glory to God

Psa 29:1-2 ESV A Psalm of David. Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. (2) Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

We are to ascribe to God, the glory which He is due Him. When we affix a post-it note to another piece of paper, we are attaching one thing to another. And when it come to giving God glory, we are to ascribe or affix or attach to God, the glory that He alone deserves. This is in our mind, our heart, our attitude and our worship, and even in our lifestyle. We are to designate Him as glorious or deserving of glory; we give, declare and live for His ultimate glory.

Before all time – in the past (Jude 25)

* as He forever was... that is, He has always been worthy of glory.

And now - in the present

* as He forever is... that is, He is deserving of glory at every present moment.

And forever – in the future

* as he forever will be...that is, He will always and forever be worthy of receiving glory and worship. He does not change, therefore His worthiness never changes and our giving Him glory must never change or diminish or fade.

He is the Alpha and Omega, who is, who was and who is to come (Rev.1:8); the first and the last; the beginning and the end (Rev.21:26); The same yesterday, today and forever (Heb.13:8)

Book Summary & Lesons

Jude 25 ESV to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

STAND FIRM while the rest of the world is **FALLING AWAY**.

STAND FIRM by...

1) Being warned about those people around you. Be Alert to false teachings, which lead to sinful living. We are to contend for the faith.

2) Being Guarded from the influence around you. Be Vigilant, not allowing these influences to seep into and influence any one person's faith.

3) Being Devoted to God and His Truth, in Christ. Be Faithful to the foundation handed down to the church of Jesus Christ, never sacrificing Truth for unity.

4) Be Focused on the Return of Jesus Christ . Be Living, worshiping, glorifying Him daily in all our endeavors and activities.

5) Be involved in the lives of others around you. Being Connected through "Togetherness", of church, family and fellowship; building Christians up and Pointing others to Christ. We must always keep Christ as the central figure of history and the core focus of Scripture and of our lives.

One hand extended in Christian fellowship, with one hand reaching out to connect with the Lost.

Mat 7:13-15 ESV "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. (14) For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. (15) "Beware of false

prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

STAND FIRM while the rest of the world is **FALLING AWAY**.

Its never over and we can never relax so as to think the battle is over. Jude ends with the ultimate reason for Christians to Stand Firm while the rest of the world is falling away. It is for the glory of God. (Jude25)

Sola Deo Gloria:

This is the motto of the reformation. It is what Johann Sebastian Bach wrote on all his musical compositions.

It is why the early church lived. It is how martyrs throughout church history have died.

Sola Deo Gloria – for the Glory of God alone! It is how each and every true believer and follower of Christ is to live.

It must be our ultimate reason for doing what we do and gathering as we do. The glory of God is to be our greatest purpose, our highest calling, our soul's reason and joy and our all-consuming passion.

Sola Deo Gloria!



STANDING FIRM while the rest of the world
is ***FALLING AWAY***.

Part 2

– Christian Persecution –

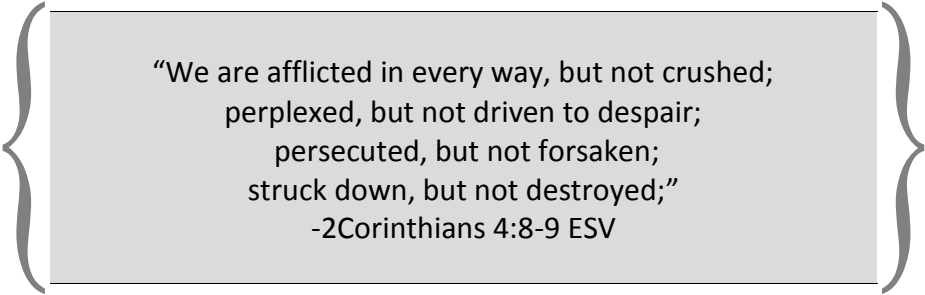
“For the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus”

--Revelation 1:2,9

INTRODUCTION To Persecution

It is estimated that over 70% of the world's population lives under strict religious restrictions or persecution.

It is certain that there are many believers around the world who are suffering for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ and for no other reason. They are choice servants of the Lord God who are most often, unnamed, unknown, unnoticed in their endeavors. Only in Heaven's eyes are they observed and considered as great and worthy of great reward.



“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed;
perplexed, but not driven to despair;
persecuted, but not forsaken;
struck down, but not destroyed;”
-2Corinthians 4:8-9 ESV

Persecution: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow”

Text: Multiple passages

March 8, 2015

Theme: Standing Firm when faith is opposed

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” -John 16:33 ESV

1
ONE

Knowledge of God's Word is a bulwark against deception, temptation, accusation, even persecution.

-Edwin Louis Cole

2 Tim. 3:10-14 You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, (11) my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra--which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. (12) Indeed, **all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,** (13) while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. (14) But as for you, **STAND FIRM** in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it

INRODUCTION

Last week, we lost a great TV character. His greetings and salutations to his friends was, “Live long and prosper!” It was Mr.Spock. “Live Long and Prosper is a Vulcan blessing. It also somewhat reflects the American Dream. But it is not necessarily a Biblical reality. What is a reality, at least for the Christian, is the reality of persecution.

STANDING FIRM transitions from Jude urging us to be alert to the heretical teachings and sinful living which was seeping into the church and to contend for the faith. And we transition toward *STANDING FIRM* in the face of Christian persecution, due to the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ.

Persecution: p rs kyōSH()n/ (noun)

Definition: systematic hostility and ill-treatment from one individual or group to another individual our group; especially because of race or political or religious beliefs; synonyms: Oppression; victimization; maltreatment; abuse, discrimination, persistent harassment;

Standing Firm looks at...

PERSECUTION AROUND THE WORLD

Consider the words of Christ from every gospel writer on the topic of life and persecution. All four gospel writers record the promise from Jesus’ regarding true discipleship and possible persecution.

Mat.10:39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Mar.8:35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

Luk.17:33 Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.

John 12:25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Persecution is not a sign of weakness or wrong doing. Persecution or martyrdom is not losing.

Let's look at...

Persecution Around the World

Over 70% of the world's population lives under some form of religious restriction and threat of persecution. Persecution is most often the result of national leaders, rather than the citizens themselves.

NIGERIA- Oct. 14, 2014 , armed Muslims stormed two churches in Taraba state and killed 31 Christians as they worshipped [according to Morning Star News]

CHINA- Oct. 17 2014, About 4am, hundreds of uniformed Chinese agents blocked all the entrances to Kaiyang village, then climbed over the Kaiyang Church wall, broke into the church building and forcibly removed its cross. [By Joseph DeCaro, Worthy News Correspondent BEIJING -InternationalChristianConcern]

IRAN-Authorities have sentenced Behnam Irani and two other Christian leaders to six years in prison for their involvement with Iran's underground house churches. [according to Morning Star News]

NIGERIA- Four schoolgirls seized by Boko Haram several months ago have escaped from a camp in Cameroon run by the Islamist group, [according to Barnabas Aid]

PAKISTAN- The conviction and death sentence of Asia Bibi under Pakistan's blasphemy laws has been upheld by the Lahore High Court. [International Christian Concern]

SUDAN - Feb 2015- The Sudanese Air Force dropped four bombs on a church in the Nuba Mountains.

EGYPT- Feb. 2015 – 21 Coptic Christians from Egypt are beheaded on a beach in Lybia.

IRAN-Feb. 2015 - 40+ Iranian Christians were reportedly burned alive in steel cages.

SYRIA-Feb. 2015 – 220 + Syrian Christians are abducted. According to World Watch Monitor, sources from Syria's embattled Hassaka province confirmed that at least 72 Assyrian Christian families - thought to be around 200 people - from three villages have been captured by the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS).

He estimates 1,000 families who have fled from Khabour are now displaced in the cities of Hassaka to the south and Qamishli close to the Turkish border. [OpenDoorsUSA]

LAOS-Feb.2,2015-PRAYER IS A CRIME - Five Christian leaders in Laos were charged with medical malpractice after praying for a sick woman who later died. The Christians were ordered to serve nine months in prison and pay a fine for causing Mrs. Chansee's death.

NIGER-Feb.27, 2015 -After more than 45 churches, homes and other Christian properties were looted and burned down by Islamic protestors in response to the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris, Nigerien Christians still came together to worship the following Sunday. In some instances, believers were at the site of their church one day after the church was burned and they lost everything they owned. [VOM].

Immediately following the attacks, many believers were shocked and discouraged, but Brent and Shelley shared that Christians remain hopeful and continue to meet together for worship. After learning of the attacks on Christians in the village, one teenage member of the church said, "I guess God found us worthy."

EGYPT- Feb. 2015; The Egyptian church is praying for the Islamic State (IS) terrorists who recently beheaded 21 Coptic Christians in Libya. These martyrs refused to deny their faith to stay alive. The sound of prayers requesting mercy and life, not revenge and destruction, calling on God's name to come and change the hearts of the killers, is loudly heard across Egypt. [by Janelle P in Africa]

"But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..." Matthew 5:44 (NIV)

BEIRUT-Associated Press; By Ryan Lucas, (AP) — The Islamic State group released at least 19 Christians on Sunday who were among the more than 220 people the militants took captive in northeastern Syria last week, activists and a local leader said. I believe this is the result of praying Christians around the world, praying to God on their behalf!

At least four churches were torched during the raids. A car bomb exploded in Tel Tamar on Tuesday (24 February) and three mortars exploded in Tel Nasri, but no casualties were reported. A local Christian wrote to Barnabas Fund urging Christians to pray

for their desperate situation, stating, “Everyone has begun to hate us, as if we were a spike in their throats.”

The fate of nearly 200 other abducted Christian Assyrians still in the Islamic State group's hands, remains unclear.

Let's be aware of...

PERSECUTION IN SCRIPTURE

John 16:33 ESV I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

The Beatitudes are typically wonderful promises of encouragement for the believing Christian. Yet Jesus' words on persecution is concerning to us, as it may not be what we prefer to hear.

Mat. 5:6, 10-12 ESV (6) "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. (10) "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (11) "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. (12) Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

As Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel recently stated: Persia has persecuted the Jews; Hitler persecuted the Jews, along with many others; The Islamic State In Syria and the Islamic Republic of Iran want to and plan to persecute the Jews and Christians. ISIS wants to persecute the Christians and even all of America, thinking America to be a Christian nation, referring to us as “the Nation of the Cross”.

We know that persecution is a Biblical, as well as an historical reality. Acts 12 King Herod, killed the Apostle James with the sword. Then Herod also arrested the Apostle Peter and imprisoned him and would have also killed him, but he was kept until after Passover. But before Herod could execute him, an angel of the Lord rescued him out of prison.

Matthew 14 John Baptist was beheaded in prison.

Acts 7 (v51-60) STEPHEN preached about the rejection of Christ and his murder by the Jews and he was stoned to death.

Acts 14 the Apostle Paul was stoned and left for dead; every indication was that he did die and seemed to be raised;

Acts 16, Paul cast a demon of fortune telling out of a slave girl; and having lost their money making slave, her owners had Paul and Silas thrown into prison.

In Dan. 6 - Daniel is thrown into the LION's den because of his faith and prayer. (Dan.6:16)

Dan. 3 – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are cast into the fiery furnace for not bowing down to the pagan image. [our God can save us, but even if He doesn't... (Dan.3:17)]

In the book of Esther, the Jewish people are persecuted and targeted for annihilation.

In the book of Exodus the Israelites were persecuted under the heavy hand of the Pharaoh of Egypt.

The purpose of Persecution

But why does God allow persecution?

For one thing, persecution brings the enemy out of hiding. It puts a face on the enemy and is more readily identifiable. In times of persecution, there is little question who the enemy really is.

Also, persecution brings false Christians to light and awakens God's true people. Persecution may be needed to awaken God's people, out of the stupor of deception, of loving God falsely, because He has blessed us bountifully. Or to bring us back to the proper focus of true worship, that is to worship and glorify God for all that He is, rather than for all He has given. Persecution may be God's discipline for His people.

Deut. 8:1-20 ESV "The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers. (2) And you ***shall remember*** the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, ***testing you to know*** what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. (3) And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna,

which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might **make you know** that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. (4) Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. (5) Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, **the LORD your God disciplines you.** (6) So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. (7) For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, (8) a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, (9) a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. (10) And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. (11) "**Take care lest you forget the LORD** your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, (12) lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, (13) and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, (14) then **your heart be lifted up**, and you **forget the LORD** your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, (15) who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, (16) who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. (17) **Beware lest you say in your heart**, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' (18) You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. (19) And **if you forget the LORD** your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. (20) Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, **so shall you perish**, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God. [Deut.8]

For a nation who is blessed by God, yet forgets God, persecution can bring them back to the state of desperate dependence all over again. It seems like America may have enjoyed the blessings of God but laid God aside somewhere along the way. Perhaps

persecution may be in our future, to cause the church of Jesus Christ to awaken from the intoxication, that our blessings and good fortune has had upon us, numbing us of our need for God.

Persecution Brings about dependence and prayer

When Peter was imprisoned and awaiting execution, the church prayed and Peter was miraculously set free. If we believe that persecution won't come to America simply because we are American's and our government won't allow it, then our faith is misplace.

THE PRAYER OF THE PERSECUTED

The prayer of the persecuted is most often a prayer of dependence and desperation which heaven hears and God answers.

ILL) Years ago I had the opportunity to take Bibles into USSR before the fall of Communism. We met in several underground churches, in secret worship services. I remember one Russian Christian man told us; "the church in the Soviet Union is praying for persecution for the church in America." What do you say to that? "Thank you?" At that time, I had no clue what he meant, and certainly didn't know how to respond. At that point, I basically felt that persecution was little more than an unfortunate experience of some ill-fated Christians. But now, I understand more, that persecution is a powerful and purposeful tool of God, in purifying His church and spreading His gospel message.

In Acts 4, When the church was being persecuted, the church prayed – but the content of their prayer is worth noting. This is persecution because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Act 4:29-33 ESV And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, (30) while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." (31) And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. (32) Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.

(33) And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

When the church was being persecuted, persecution squeezed them to the point of desperate prayer. And the early church, was dramatically, changed, by a small congregation, in united prayer.

They prayed in desperation to God – not to escape, not to be spared suffering; but they prayed that in their suffering, God would grant them the courage to continue proclaiming His word, which was the very thing they were being persecuted for. And He Did!! And They Did!!!

v.31) ... they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. And **v33)** And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

For some this may be an uncomfortable thing to admit: But there is a clear and unmistakable connection between Christians boldly obeying God, Christians being brutally persecuted for obeying God and the demonstration of supernatural, miraculous, power of God in their situations.

I tell you what I think: I think that, as the church in America, we don't experience as much of the miraculous power of God today, because there is not much ISIS level of persecution and suffering in our lives today. That's my perspective.

I fully expect that when that kind of persecution breaks out in the Church in America or other places, that the unexplainable, undeniable, supernatural, miraculous workings of God will be demonstrated through His church in Biblical proportions. The desperate prayers of the persecuted gets God's attention and receives answers.

I personally, am not praying for persecution, but I am expecting it.

Closing: time praying for the persecuted Christians around the world.



“Troubled?? *Pray!!*”

Text: Multiple passages

March 15, 2015

Theme: Standing Firm when faith is opposed

“Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them,
for it is the LORD your God who goes with you.
He will not leave you or forsake you.” -Deuteronomy 31:6 ESV

Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow
will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own
trouble be sufficient for the day.

--Jesus Christ

1Co 12:24-26 ESV which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, (25) that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. (26) If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

Article from The Blaze.

Christopher Cornell; ISIS WannaBe.

www.theblaze.com

March 9, 2015

The Islamic State's supporters have a message for America: They're in your country, in your state, ready to wage jihad on American soil.



One Islamic State supporter, Christopher Cornell, called three times from jail to make sure that message was heard in an unexpected interview with WXIX-TV. The Ohio man is being held at the Boone County Jail in Kentucky, and on Thursday he got in touch with WXIX reporter Tricia Macke after calling the television station three times from his cell.

What Cornell said in the interview was so blunt and disturbing, his attorney tried to get a judge to prevent WXIX from airing the interview — but the court refused to suppress Cornell's right to free speech. "I got orders from the brothers overseas because I'm with the Islamic State," Cornell said in the interview, which aired Friday. "My brothers over there, in Syria and Iraq, gave me specific orders to carry out jihad in the west, so I did so."

Cornell refused to say how he first got in contact with Islamic State leaders but he readily predicted a future full of Islamic State attack in the U.S.

"There will be many, many attacks," he said. "Like I said, we are ready for the battle over the Capitol." What would Cornell have done if he had not been arrested on that day back in January as he purchased weapons?

What would I have done? I would have took my gun, I would have put it to Obama's head and I would have pulled the trigger," he said. "Then I would have released more bullets on the Senate and the House of Representative members, and I would have attacked the Israeli embassy and various other buildings full of kafir [non-

Muslims] who want to wage war against us Muslims and shed our blood. That's what would happen."

He pinned the blame for his planned attack on the U.S. and Israel. "Yes, they might say I'm a terrorist, but we see the American troops as terrorists as well, coming to our lands, invading, stealing our resources and killing our people, raping our women," said Cornell. "Have you seen the photos and videos of the innocent children being killed, bodies upon bodies, stacked inside the back of a truck? You know, that's what's happening to our kids. America is funding and giving weapons to Israel. Israel is using these weapons to kill our children in Palestine every single day."

He also said the Islamic State has operatives in every single U.S. state. "We are pretty strong," he said. "Yes, yes. In every state like I said. We're in Texas. We're in Ohio. We're in New York City. We're in Washington, DC. We're in every single state you can name, just about."

He told the interviewer to "stick around and watch" for the future of jihad in America.

INRODUCTION

Refer to the article on Christopher Cornell: self-proclaimed ISIS member. Whether he is an operative of just a fanatically deluded "wanna be" swept away by the hatred, violence and terror of militant Islam, we see that persecution in America is real and may soon be on the rise.

Persecution: systematic oppression, hostility, harassment or ill-treatment from one individual or group to another individual or group; especially because of race or political or religious beliefs;

3 Points focused on **STANDING FIRM** in the face of Persecution.

STANDING FIRM AND THE SPARK OF PERSECUTION

* What good can come out of Persecution?

Deut. 31:6 ESV Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."

IT is easy to be afraid of those who take so much pleasure in planning to kill so many people who believe differently than they do. But we cannot shrink back or insulate or isolate ourselves, or disconnect or run away from or attempt to avoid contact with those to whom God has called us to reach with His gospel and for His glory!

Even if those we are called to reach are devoted to killing us, as in the case of Christopher Cornell.

Phil. 1:27-29 ESV ...let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind contending side by side for the faith of the gospel,^[Jude3] (28) and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. (29) For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,

We must come to expect persecution, and an oppositional culture. Don't be surprised when it happens. Understand that God uses persecution to bring about good things of eternal value. We must not allow fear or terror to fill our hearts, so as to rob us of our courage to obey our Master.

**“THE EARLY CHURCH WAS DRAMATICALLY CHANGED,
BY A SMALL CONGREGATION IN UNITED PRAYER.”**

Persecution - a Spark and fire

This was in the context of persecution. Historically we know that..

¹PERSECUTION SPARKS POWERFUL PRAYER

* Persecution sparks prayer – fervent prayer.

Jas 5:13 ESV Is anyone among you troubled? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.

* The Church was being persecuted and they prayed fervently. And God answered. In Acts 4:3, their prayer reveals their own weakness, need and dependence upon God. Are you troubled? Pray!

* In 2 Chronicles ch.20, multiple armies are amassing united against Jehoshaphat, king of Judah (v3). Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to seek the Lord and he proclaimed a fast for all of Judah. And people came from every town in Judah to pray fervently about their predicament.

²PERSECUTION SPARKS HOLY BODLNESS

The Church was being persecuted and they prayed fervently and God answered. Acts 4:31 tells us that they continued to speak the word of God with boldness. Following that, in Acts 5:17 persecution arises, the apostles are arrested and thrown in jail. (6:8)

In 6:12, Stephen is brought before the council. With his boldness, he preaches a very convicting sermon, which brought great opposition and resistance. It ultimately led to his death in ch.7.

Once their boldness was fired up, persecution was also fired up. It was this persecution in 8:1 which was responsible for scattering the church from their place of comfort out into the mission field. In that persecution there was demonstration of great spiritual powers resulting in Paul's conversion in ch.9. (After which Paul himself was persecuted in Acts. 9:23.)

³PERSECUTION SPARKS A MIGHTY MOVE OF GOD

Acts 2:43 / Acts 4:33

** Persecution is the fire of God for burning away apathy and complacency. Christians risked their lives, living and refusing to deny Christ. Along with that came great demonstrations of the Spirit's power (Acts.8:6, 13)

**Persecution is a fire of purity for purging the religiosity out of the church of Jesus Christ. Not Sunday Christians or cultural Christians but True followers and persecuted for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

** Persecution is a fire of passion, for the promotion and spreading the gospel message. Acts 1:8 / 8:1ff. They continued doing what they were doing which was the very thing they were persecuted for. But they did not allow fear to rule. They prayed for boldness. God answered their prayer. They continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

There was a burning in the hearts of God's people, with a fire that could not be contained nor quenched. Persecution caused the people to flee for their lives. While fleeing, they shared and spread the message of the gospel wherever they went. It sounds wreckless, but it was wreckless faith in motion which could not be stopped by the enemies of Almighty God. This is the Holy Spirit, Supernatural empowered boldness that quenches fear, and fires up courage to a level, previously unexperienced.

The Remedy of Luke Warm Christians

Persecution presents a platform for proclaiming and demonstrating Jesus. He that desires to live godly in Christ Jesus, will suffer persecution. (2 Tim.3:12). In persecution, true disciples will seek to be spreading the gospel- fired up by the word of Christ, "if you lose your life for my sake you will find it".

In persecution, cold Christians will be seeking to align themselves with their persecutors and stay in line, keeping the status quo, with no thought of what Christ desires, or the mission to which they had been called. Cold Christians are easily swayed due to shallow convictions and being ruled by fear- fear of suffering – fear of loss or fear of death.

Luke Warm Christians

Persecution can take Luke Warm Christians and make them either burning hot or frigid cold.

Rev 3:15-17 ESV "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! (16) So, because you are, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. (17) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

Persecution enables the need for and dependence upon God to be more keenly felt in deeper and more powerful ways.

In the book, *The Privilege of Persecution*, Carl Mohler and Craig Hodgkins make these observations.

But persecution, pressure and pain seem to bring about different results depending on where they occur. In America, pressure and pain seem to drive people away

from God. But in the global church outside America (i.e. the persecuted church), it tends to drive people toward Him and there is often a genuine sense of honor that they get a chance to suffer for Jesus Christ.” (p19)

Persecution has different effects on different people. For some, persecution pushes them TO God as their only hope and source of need, even when earthly resources are stripped away. For others, persecution tends to push them away from God, who for them, has failed them or allowed their loss as part of His will and plan. For some, persecution purifies their faith and passion. For others it quenches the spark of any passion they may have had.

There are not many lukewarm fence straddlers in times of persecution. Persecution is a remedy for lukewarm Christianity.

THE PURIFYING PURPOSE OF PERSECUTION

* Do not be mistaken, God has a definite purpose for persecution.

Effect of Persecution

In the history of ISRAEL they often experienced brief seasons of freedom. This occurred initially while the nation of Israel was growing while in captivity within the nation of Egypt. Egypt was an incubator for Israel. Then freedom deteriorated into spiritual complacency as they drifted away from God and His Truth.

Then God allowed persecution to rise up through their slavery brought about by the fear of the Egyptian leaders. Eventually, their abuse reached such a level, that the people began to cry out to God for deliverance. God answered their fervent prayers and provided a deliverer and Moses led them out of Egypt into freedom – for a time until they began to drift toward complacency and the cycle repeats itself.

In the history of the CHURCH there was a brief time of freedom for the church to be born and an opportunity for growth. Then complacency set in and the church began to fall into sin. God allowed the spark of persecution to spread until the people began to see their need and dependence on God and cried out to Him in prayer for help. And so this cycle repeated itself, as well.

In the Old Testament, God established His law, then the rest of the OT is God calling His people back to Himself. Then in the New Testament we have the gospels, the life of Christ and the birth of

the church. Then the rest of the NT is Christ calling the church back to their first love, through the various NT writers.

Persecution emphasizes the differences between kingdoms. And it accentuates the influences of evil and God-lessness.

Persecution forces the light of the fire of Christ in the lives of His church, to shine all the brighter and make a greater difference. Or persecution will snuff that light out. It will either fan the flame of passion for Christ or it will quench it. How will persecution affect America and the church here?

We must not ignore it. We must expect it. As Christians, we must prepare for and expect persecution.

2Cor. 12:10 ESV For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The effect of persecution is that it reveals our own weaknesses causing us to depend all the more on God's greatness.

Purpose of Persecution

(cf. Matthew 25:31)

The purpose of persecution can separate the true and false Christians or the sheep and the goats. The proclamation of the Persecuted: In Acts 8:1ff, the gospel sparks the fire of persecution, and in turn, persecution sparks the fire of the spread of the gospel. This too, seems to be a repeated cycle in the Bible, and throughout the history of God's people.

The biggest stumbling block before the people of God, has always seemed to be, His own blessings.

- God's Leading.
- God's Blessing.
- God's Warning.
- God's People's failure.
- Persecution and Israel and the Church being called back to God.
- God's People desperately cry out to Him for help.
- God answers and brings relief or deliverance – for a time.

When people are blessed, initially the blessings may cause them to temporarily look to God in thanksgiving, but to often is the case that blessings from God turns a person away from God, so as to find the blessings themselves to be the supreme object of affections.

In Deut.8 God warned Israel not to allow the blessings from God to cause them to forget God. And that is what happened in Deut. 9:16 [Ex.32:19], they took the blessings of God, all the jewelry, precious metals and gold which God blessed them with, through the donations from the Egyptians . Then they took that and with it, made the golden idol which they worshiped and declared that golden idol to be the one responsible for bringing them out of Egypt and delivering them out of their slavery. Now there is delusion.

These kinds of idols and distractions can come to those who possess such blessings or from those who do not possess them yet covet them. A covetous heart can arise from one who has nothing, but lusts for what he/she does not have. Or it can come from a heart which has much possessions, and idolizes those possessions.

Persecution is God calling His people back to Himself.

PERSECUTION AND THE OUTCOME ON THE CHURCH

The gospel is a key element in Christian persecution – even between “Christian” groups and denominations. The Gospel and how it is implemented is the watershed issue that fosters Christian fellowship or religious divisions.

the gospel and resistance

We should never seek or purposefully cause persecution, but if some level of rejection or persecution is not being experienced, then just maybe we aren’t really doing what God has called us to be doing.

Gal 5:11 ESV But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.

The gospel message of the cross and the message of the cross is an offense to many and the spark for persecution, both from governments and from opposing religions.

Christians should not grow to depend upon a culture, a government, a right or entitlement, or a court system which is sympathetic to Christian freedoms. The Gospel will always bring some resistance. When that resistance comes, we are not to be surprised nor discouraged. We are to continue on, not afraid, or discouraged, but must keep sharing our faith and the gospel message.

Persecution is often God's purging precursor to Revival.

The court system did not come through for Peter and John
The court system did not come through for Paul and Silas
The court system did not come through for Barnabas or James.

Stephen was not supported or defended by the culture, government or the judicial system. Nor was Jesus.

So Why do we think we will?

[Jack McClintock]

2Tim. 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, (13) while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. (14) But as for you, Stand Firm in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it.

The life of Christ and our lives

How does One reflect the other?

We are a nation and perhaps even the church- which demands our rights. We base a lot on our past freedoms. We trust a lot in our present rights. We expect to enjoy rights, freedoms, cultural acceptance and favorable treatment, but that may not be realistic for very long.

Why should we expect the world to treat us well and show us favoritism? When speaking about Christians and our acceptance by our culture Leonard Ravenhill makes these comments.

“And there’s no room for Him in the inn. He got a bit older, there was no room in His family, His family turned on Him. He went to the temple, no room in the temple, the temple turned on Him. And when He died there was no room to bury Him, He died outside of the city.

Well why in God’s Name do you expect to be accepted everywhere? How is it that the world couldn’t get along with the holiest Man that ever lived, yet it can get along with you and me? Are we compromised? Have we no spiritual stature? Have we no righteousness that reflects on their corruption?”

At some point, the gospel will bring resistance. We would do well to expect it. It has to, if it is truly the gospel. We must not be afraid of resistance or even rejection because of its message. It is the message of the cross and that message is promised to bring offense.

How do we live and how should we act when persecution arises?

THE PRACTICE OF THE PERSECUTED

So how should we act when being persecuted? *Application*

- THE PRACTICE OF THE PERSECUTED -

1) Praising God in the midst of Sufferings - Acts 16:22; Paul and Silas singing praises in prison. The courts did not rescue them. Governments did not come to their aid. They didn’t declare their freedom or demand their rights. They praised God in their persecution and suffering and God came through!!

2) Rejoicing in the sufferings of Christ -

Rom 5:2-4 ESV Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (3) Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, (4) and endurance produces character, and character produces hope..

We rejoice because of the promised outcome.

1Pet. 4:13 But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy.

Persecuted Christians are rejoicing around the world. Perhaps that kind of joy will never be experienced, until that level of persecution is experienced.

3) Practicing Loving our enemies – persecutors – antagonists -

As Christians, we must fight against hating our enemies, whoever they may be. If we can't love the people who oppose us in this land of freedom, we will not be prepared to love those who oppose us by taking our tax exempt status away; or who refuse us the freedom to gather for worship without reporting to them first; or those who hold a gun to your head or a knife to your children's throats.

4) Praying for our persecutors.

Mat 5:43-44 ESV "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' (44) But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Pray for terror and confusion upon Israel's and the Church's enemies.

Psa 14:3-5 ESV They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one. (4) Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread and do not call upon the LORD? (5) There they are in great terror, for God is with the generation of the righteous.

[Is.2:17-21]

Exo 23:27 ESV I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.

We can pray for the Terror of Almighty God upon our the enemies of God and confusion of their mission upon ISIS. And we must love young men who hate us, like Christopher Cornell, ISIS leaders, your boss at work, those who were once your friends, but now talk about you viciously behind your back. We must!

This is a call for genuine Christian concern for the spiritual state and eternal destiny of the persecutors. We must have God's love in our hearts, in order to care and pray for ISIS, Iran, and North Korea.

Christians across Egypt are praying for the conviction and conversion to Christ for those in ISIS. Christopher Cornell is not the only one like him.

From the Mission field: Thanks so much for the updates, Jeff. There are around 3500 European young people that are estimated to have joined ISIS. Most of them are from unreached or unengaged people groups living in countries in Europe – the very people groups we mentioned in our concert and are trying to reach. One thing you will not read about in the media: There are more than a hundred missions and church groups in Europe that are proclaiming the gospel to Muslims in Europe, most of whom are refugees from the fighting in the Middle East. They are very open to the Gospel. Please keep praying for revival in Europe!!

How will we be concerned about the eternal souls of those who kill and behead other human beings in the name of their god?

Only God can put that in our hearts.

Mat 5:38-39 ESV "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' (39) But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Pro 25:21 ESV If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink,

We must pray for our persecutors!

1
ONE

4) We are to Evangelize our persecutors

Col 4:3-6 CEV Be sure to pray that God will make a way for us to spread his message and explain the mystery about Christ, even though I am in jail for doing this. (4) Please pray that I will make

the message as clear as possible. (5) When you are with unbelievers, always make good use of the time. (6) Be pleasant and hold their interest when you speak the message. Choose your words carefully and be ready to give answers to anyone who asks questions.

Whatever level of persecution we may be experiencing or observing; Don't waste the persecution. Be a blessing to your abusers. When Joseph was imprisoned, he served and was a blessing to those who held him prisoner.

1Pet. 3:9 ESV Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

When Peter was imprisoned, he ministered peace and gave a terrified jailer hope. (Acts 16)

1Pet. 3:14-15 ESV But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, (15) but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

This is a scripture that we often quote in the context of evangelism, but the context of this is in the face of persecution. So if we die, we die praying for those who are persecuting us. If we die, then we die sharing the gospel of hope and evangelizing our tormentors.

Too many Christians harbor resentment, hold grudges and act vengefully, just like non-Christians. If that is how we live now in times of little or no persecution, how do we think we will act when real persecution arises?

I have heard some Christians say, "well, when that time comes, I'll treat my abusers like that...". The implication, is that "but until then, I'm still going to tell people what I think and keep people from walking all over me."

If we are not practicing that in a time of relative peace, there's certainly not going to be anything in our heart to make us do that

when real persecution arises. Pray for God to work in our hearts and to prepare us to love those who abuse, persecute, torment us as enemies. May God place in our hearts love to love and reasons to praise God in times when persecution is at its worst.

There are Christians who are risking their lives every day in sharing their faith and the gospel of Christ. I say let's pray for and give towards those people who are in those kinds of mission fields.

We must care enough to go, send or support those who are risking so much and reaching these nearly unreachable groups with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Close Sermon in Prayer for the persecutors and terrorists.

Pray for the church of Jesus Christ and Standing Firm,

Pray for the terror of God upon groups like ISIS, Iran, Hamas, Al Qaeda, Hezbolah, North Korea and others who persecute Christians.

Pray for the salvation of those who are tormentors and persecutors of other human beings because of their faith.



“Losing Life Finding Life”

Text: Multiple passages

March 22, 2015

Series: *STANDING FIRM* in the face of persecution.

Theme: Persecuted Missionaries

Mat 10:22 and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Mat 24:9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake

1
ONE

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep,
to gain what he cannot lose.”

—Jim Elliot

2Tim. 3:12-14 (12) Indeed, ***all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*** (13) while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. (14) But as for you, **STAND FIRM** in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it

Question: How have you suffered this week? How have you been abused, persecuted and terrorized this week? You haven't? The Bible tells us that when one part of the body suffers we all suffer.

1Cor. 12:24-26 ESV which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, (25) that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. (26) If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

When Christians around the world are suffering, the Church in America should be suffering, if we are aware of it.

INRODUCTION

When it comes to persecution, the enemy of God is the enemy of God's people.

Mat 10:22 and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Mat 24:9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

There was a time in the history of missions when passion for Christ and the gospel was so high and the missionaries future was so uncertain, that missionaries would pack their belongings in a simple wooden coffin instead of suitcases. The regions God called them to often did not participate in the practice of burying their dead. Their destination was often unfriendly and disease ridden.

The trip was often one-way, because of cost and the extensive time to arrive. Aside from sporadic letters through the postal service, the missionaries sent so far away were rarely heard from again. Some missionaries kept good personal records of their experiences, but many did not. For those who did not leave behind their own records, their service for Jesus Christ will only be revealed in the last days, at heaven's judgment.

The Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) began in 1893. Canadians Walter Gowans, Roland Bingham, and American Thomas Kent had a vision to evangelize the 60 million unreached people of sub-Saharan Africa. Unable to interest established missions—most of which said reaching the Soudan was impossible—the three set out alone.

Malaria overtook all three. Gowans and Kent died of the fever in 1894, and Bingham returned to Canada. On his second attempt, he caught malaria again and was forced to go back home. Unable to return to Africa, Bingham sent out a third team. They successfully established a base 500 miles inland at Patigi in 1902. From there, the work of SIM began in Africa.

Here is an excerpt from Walter Gowan's Diary attesting to the desire to reach a lost people. He writes this during his final days on Earth and is dying of Malaria. Please take the time to read this, it's quite amazing... August 9, 1894

“Written in view of my approaching end, which has often lately seemed so near but just now seems so imminent & I want to write while I have the power to do it.

*Well Glory to God! He has enabled me to make a hard fight for the Soudan and although it may seem like a total failure and defeat it is **not!** We shall have the victory & that right speedily. I have no regret for undertaking this venture and in this manner my life has not been thrown away. My only regrets are for my poor dear mother. For her sake I would have chosen to live.*

Mother Dear: And what a mother you have been. It seems I appreciate you now more than ever I did. Oh how often I have thought while lying here of your love and how I have longed to see you again in the flesh. Don't mourn for me darling dearest mother. If the suffering was great, remember it is all over now and I think of the glory I am enjoying and rejoice that your boy “was permitted to have a hand in the redemption of the Soudan.” Oh! How I did wish to live for your sake.....

*.....Goodbye dearest, till we meet at Jesus feet,
-Walter*

Walter Gowam was not killed for his faith, but he did die for his faith. This was the fate of many a foreign missionary.

MARTYRDOM-*Many missionaries experienced...*

REAL LIFE AND DEATH PERSECUTION

The pursuit of God's calling in the area of foreign missions has given us many modern day heroes of the faith.

John and Betty Stam

China Inland Mission – In 1934, John and Betty Stam were new missionaries to China, with their 3-month-old daughter, Helen, working in the small eastern town of Tsingteh (today called Jingde) in Anhui Province. The town's magistrate came to the Stams and warned them that the Communists were coming for them. After John confirmed this, the Stams prepared to leave. However, the Communists caught up to them and when the soldiers did, they demanded all the money the Stams had; and it was handed over. The Communists then arrested John and took him to their headquarters. They left Betty, baby Helen, the maid and the cook in the Stams' house. The soldiers later came back and took Betty and Helen. The maid and cook begged to go along, but they were threatened they would be shot if they did. Betty and Helen were taken to be with John. That night, John Stam wrote a letter to CIM authorities, but it was never delivered. The letter was found later bundled up in some of Helen's clothes. It stated that the Stams were being held by the Communists for a ransom of \$20,000. John Stam also wrote to the mission authorities of how he and his wife had been captured, then wrote, "Philippians 1:20: 'May Christ be glorified whether by life or death.'"

John, Betty and Helen were then taken to the local prison where some of the prisoners were released to make room for the Stams. In the midst of hustle and bustle, Helen started crying, and a soldier suggested that they kill her, since she was only bothering them. Then one of the prisoners who had just been released asked why they should kill the innocent baby. The soldiers turned to him and asked if he was willing to die for the foreign baby. The man

was hacked to pieces in front of the Stams; thus Helen was allowed to live.

Martyrdom at Miaoshou

The next morning, the Stams were forced to march 12 miles west with the soldiers, to the town of Miaoshou (which is just under 9 miles due west of Jingde). The group stopped for a night, and Betty was allowed to tend to Helen; but in fact, Betty instead hid her daughter in the room inside a sleeping bag. The very next morning, John and Betty were being marched down the streets of Miaoshou to meet their deaths. Curious onlookers lined both sides of the streets. A Chinese shopkeeper stepped out of the crowd and talked to the Communists, trying to persuade them not to kill the Stams. The soldiers ordered the man back into the crowd, but he wouldn't step back. The soldiers then invaded his house where they found a Chinese copy of the Holy Bible and a hymnbook. He was led alongside the Stams to be executed for being a Christian. After marching for a short while longer, John Stam was ordered to kneel, and he was beheaded. His wife and the shopkeeper were killed moments later.

Rescue and aftermath

The baby, Helen, was found two days later by a Chinese pastor who took her home and took care of her. Reverend Lo Ke-chou and his wife then took the baby girl to her maternal grandparents, Reverend Charles Ernest Scott and his wife, Clara, who were also missionaries in China. The Stams' daughter later came to the United States and was raised by her aunt and uncle, George and Helen Mahy. As for Helen's parents, a small group of Christians found their bodies and buried them on a hillside. The Stams' gravestones read:

John Cornelius Stam, January 18, 1907, "That Christ may be glorified whether by life or by death." Philippians 1:20

Elisabeth Scott Stam, February 22, 1906, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." Philippians 1:21

December 8, 1934, Miaosheo, Anhui, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." Revelation 2:10

The story of their martyrdom was much publicized and inspired many to become missionaries. The Stams were killed because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. The enemies of God are the enemies of God's people. They hate Christians because they hate Christ Himself.

the Auca 5

Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Roger Youderian, and Peter Fleming were known as the “*Auca 5*”.

Elisabeth Elliot & Rachel Saint By Megan Grober

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." - II Corinthians 5:18-19

Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Roger Youderian, Peter Fleming and Ed McCully were five men that understood God's message of reconciliation for all peoples. The story of their lives is one of determination and sacrifice, as they took Christ's message of reconciliation to the tribal people of Ecuador.

Their legacy began in 1955. Jim, Nate, Peter, and Ed, all missionaries from the United States, set out to bring the gospel to the hostile Auca tribe near the Andes Mountains in Ecuador. The four had quite the task set before them. The Auca* Indians were known as a violent and murderous tribe that had virtually no contact with the outside world. Surrounding tribes labeled them "savages." So, the endeavor of reaching the Aucas with the love of Christ was a brave one.

While working in a nearby tribe, Jim, Peter, and Ed, heard about the Auca Indians and their need for Christ. The men decided that they wanted to move into the Auca region in an attempt to learn the Auca language, translate the Bible, and share the gospel. Jim, Peter, and Ed teamed up with Nate Saint, a missionary pilot for Missions Aviation Fellowship, to begin gaining friendly relations with the Indians. For the next three months the four men made flights over the Auca's village. They dropped supplies and gifts in

pursuit of friendship and trust. On Tuesday, January 3, 1956 the men decided to make their first ground contact. Upon that decision they also enlisted Roger Youderian a missionary to the Jivaro tribe, who had mastered life and survival in the jungle, to join them in the effort. The men chose to make their first land at a beach about 4 miles outside of the tribe. They quickly set up camp, and then made a flight over the village to invite the Aucas to visit their camp. The Aucas seemed to be hostile to the men, but their countenance changed as the men exchanged more gifts offering their peace and friendship. By Friday, the men had their first visitors. A couple and a teenage girl would prove to be their first and last encounter with the Indians. By Saturday morning all contact with Jim, Peter, Ed, Nate, and Roger had been lost. They were later found speared to death by the very people they were trying to reach.

Rev 12:11 “And they have overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.”

Jim Elliot said: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he can never lose.”

The effort to reach the Auca Indians was not abandoned. Spurred on by the death of their husband and brother, Elisabeth Elliot and Rachel Saint, quickly established a home among the Auca Indians. Rachel Saint, who worked for Wycliffe Bible Translators, was the older sister of Nate. She was passionate about taking the gospel to an unreached tribe, especially the Aucas, and translating the scriptures into their own language. The tragic event of her brother's death didn't deter her but rather intensified her passion to go to them.

The year before Nate's death, she began working with an Auca woman, Dayuma, who had fled the tribe during an intertribal war. Rachel formed a strong relationship with her and brought her to the states to publicize the missionary work in Ecuador. The trip extended to a year due to an illness Dayuma developed. Elisabeth Elliot, who had returned to a nearby tribe with her young daughter Valerie, made contact with two Auca women in Ecuador. In 1958,

Rachel and Dayuma were able to return to the Auca tribe. This marked the beginning of communications since the deaths of the missionaries in 1956. Rachel and Elisabeth were invited to live with the tribe.

Rachel stayed with The Auca tribe until her death and was buried there. They experienced first hand the Auca lifestyle and perfected their language skills. At that point the evangelization to the Aucas began and nine years after the tragic event, the Gospel of Mark was published in the Auca language. The pastor of the tribe, Kimo, who was also one of the killers, had the opportunity to baptize Steve & Kathy Saint, Nate's children. God had used these women, a wife and sister of the slain missionaries, to reconcile with the Aucas and bring them ultimate reconciliation of Christ's salvation.

Elisabeth Elliot returned home a year later to write her first book on the amazing story of the Auca tribe, the men who gave their lives to reach them, and her journey back. The book, *Shadow of the Almighty*, has become a well known story of commitment, determination, and faith in God's sovereignty and grace. Later in life she writes of loss, "The growth of all living green things wonderfully represents the process of receiving and relinquishing, gaining and losing, living and dying... The truth is that it is ours to thank Him for and ours to offer back to Him; ours to relinquish, ours to lose, ours to let go of if we want to find our true selves, if we want real life, if our hearts are set on glory."

Elisabeth Elliot has become one of Christendom's most beloved and well-known lecturers and writers. She has been an encouragement and challenge to woman in godliness, faithfulness and God's purpose in world missions. She wrote challenging one young woman, "If indeed He is directing you toward missions, BE GLAD! He will show you His way in His own time."

The legacy left behind by the 5 slain missionaries and their families still lives on today. The Auca Indians quickly realized their mistake in killing the very men that loved them enough to bring Christ's message of reconciliation to them. The Auca Indians were able to accept the message spoken of Christ's death because they were able to see the message lived.

William Borden

"Do not put out the Spirit's fire." -- 1 Thessalonians 5:19

Quotations taken from *Borden of Yale*, by Mrs. Howard Taylor, Moody Press, Chicago

In 1904 William Borden graduated from a Chicago high school. As heir to the Borden family fortune, he was already wealthy. For his high school graduation present, his parents gave 16-year-old Borden a trip around the world. As the young man traveled through Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, he felt a growing burden for the world's hurting people. Finally, Bill Borden wrote home about his "desire to be a missionary."

One friend expressed disbelief that Bill was "throwing himself away as a missionary."

In response, Borden wrote two words in the back of his Bible: "**NO RESERVES.**"

Even though young Borden was wealthy, he arrived on the campus of Yale University in 1905 trying to look like just one more freshman. Very quickly, however, Borden's classmates noticed something unusual about him and it wasn't that he had lots of money. One of them wrote: "He came to college far ahead, spiritually, of any of us. He had already given his heart in full surrender to Christ and had really done it. We who were his classmates learned to lean on him and find in him a strength that was solid as a rock, just because of this settled purpose and consecration."

During his college years, Bill Borden made an entry in his personal journal that defined what his classmates were seeing in him. That entry said simply: "Say 'no' to self and 'yes' to Jesus every time."

Borden's first disappointment at Yale came when the university president spoke in a convocation about the students' need of "having a fixed purpose." After that speech, Borden wrote: "He neglected to say what our purpose should be, and where we should get the ability to persevere and the strength to resist temptations. Surveying the Yale faculty and much of the student body, Borden lamented what he saw as the end result of an empty, humanistic philosophy: moral weakness and sin-ruined lives."

During his first semester at Yale, Borden started something that would transform campus life. One of his friends described how it began: "It was well on in the first term when Bill and I began to pray together in the morning before breakfast. I cannot say positively whose suggestion it was, but I feel sure it must have originated with Bill. We had been meeting only a short time when a third student joined us and soon after a fourth. The time was spent in prayer after a brief reading of Scripture. Bill's handling of Scripture was helpful. . . . He would read to us from the Bible, show us something that God had promised and then proceed to claim the promise with assurance."

Borden's small morning prayer group gave birth to a movement that soon spread across the campus. By the end of his first year, 150 freshmen were meeting weekly for Bible study and prayer. By the time Bill Borden was a senior, one thousand of Yale's 1,300 students were meeting in such groups.

Borden made it his habit to seek out the most "incorrigible" students and try to bring them to salvation. "In his sophomore year we organized Bible study groups and divided up the class of 300 or more, each man interested taking a certain number, so that all might, if possible, be reached. The names were gone over one by one, and the question asked, 'Who will take this person?' When it came to someone thought to be a hard proposition, there would be an ominous pause. Nobody wanted the responsibility. Then Bill's voice would be heard, 'Put him down to me.'"

Borden's outreach ministry was not confined to the Yale campus. He cared about widows and orphans and the disabled. He rescued drunks from the streets of New Haven. To try to rehabilitate them, he founded the Yale Hope Mission. One of Bill Borden's friends wrote that he "might often be found in the lower parts of the city at night, on the street, in a cheap lodging house or some restaurant to which he had taken a poor hungry fellow to feed him, seeking to lead men to Christ."

Borden's missionary call narrowed to the Muslim Kansu people in China. Once he fixed his eyes on that goal, Borden never wavered. He also challenged his classmates to consider missionary service. One of them said of him: "He certainly was one of the strongest characters I have ever known, and he put backbone into

the rest of us at college. There was real iron in him, and I always felt he was of the stuff martyrs were made of, and heroic missionaries of more modern times."

Although he was a millionaire, Bill seemed to "realize always that he must be about his Father's business, and not wasting time in the pursuit of amusement." Although Borden refused to join a fraternity, "he did more with his classmates in his senior year than ever before." He presided over the huge student missionary conference held at Yale and served as president of the honor society Phi Beta Kappa.

Upon graduation from Yale, Borden turned down some high-paying job offers. In his Bible, he wrote two more words: "***NO RETREATS.***"

William Borden went on to do graduate work at Princeton Seminary in New Jersey. When he finished his studies at Princeton, he sailed for China. Because he was hoping to work with Muslims, he stopped first in Egypt to study Arabic. While there, he contracted spinal meningitis. Within a month, 25-year-old William Borden was dead.

When the news of William Whiting Borden's death was cabled back to the U.S., the story was carried by nearly every American newspaper. "A wave of sorrow went round the world . . . Borden not only gave (away) his wealth, but himself, in a way so joyous and natural that it (seemed) a privilege rather than a sacrifice" wrote Mary Taylor in her introduction to his biography.

Was Borden's untimely death a waste? Not in God's perspective. Sometime prior to his death, Borden had written two more words in his Bible. Underneath the words "*No reserves*" and "*No retreats*," he had written: "***NO REGRETS.***"

<p>Mar 8:35 ESV For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.</p>
--

William Borden had died long before he ever left American soil. First he died to himself, crucifying Himself, taking up His cross and following Christ. Then he lost his life to disease, for Christ's sake and the sake of the gospel.

MY LIFE / GOD'S LIFE

John and Betty Stam, the Auca 5 and William Borden were owned and possessed by One greater than themselves. They were filled with a holy zeal for Christ, a deep compassion for those lost and bound for hell and a spirit of sacrifice in order for God to use them to accomplish His intended purpose.

Failures and Successes

Some have said that success is great advertisement and failure doesn't sell books. And yet, Scripture is filled with the life, death and examples of those who, though they lost their lives and may not have seen their vision fulfilled, are considered success stories by Heaven's standards.

Heb 11:33-39 MKJV who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, (34) quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the strangers. (35) Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

(36) And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yes, more, of bonds and imprisonments. (37) They were stoned, they were sawed in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. (38) The world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains and dens and caves of the earth. (39) And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, did not receive the promise,

It is wrong to view the first part as successful and the second part as failures. It is wrong to view those who died for their faith while serving Christ as failures, no matter how long or short their ministry may have been.

My Life / God's Life

Let me ask you a question. *What are you doing with your life??*

1Cor. 6:19-20 ESV Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, (20) for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Now let me ask you another Question? What are you doing with God's life? The price with which you have been bought, is the blood of Jesus. So, if you were bought with His blood and if you are not your own, but you belong to God, then your life is God's life or your life is God's possession. So what are you doing with God's life???

The Bible promises each of us will one day give account to God for how we lived, what we did with His life!

2Cor 5:10-15 ESV (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (14) For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; (15) and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised."

So what are you doing with God's life?

We will all be judged one day and we will be held to give account for the things we did, the way we spent our time, and the manner in which we managed God's life -- *our life*.

Every one of us will be judged by God. This is not to determine whether we go to heaven or hell, but this is judgment upon all Christians for their own, life, their choices, their actions, their pass times, their service to Christ or their lack of service to Christ.

2 Cor.5 is the judgment seat of Christ. What will your life have been lived for? The purpose and goal and mission and calling of your life – What is it?

When we stand before God for what we have done and how we have lived, John and Betty Stam will be there. Ed McCully, Pete Flemming, Nate Saint, Roger Youderian and Jim Elliot (the Auca 5) will be there. Bill Borden will be there. 21 young men recently

beheaded for the word of God and the testimony of Christ may be looking on. And countless unnamed, unknown Christians who gave their lives for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

At that point, what will we have done with our lives? Will we be able to give account to God with a sense of having been obedient even unto death? Or will we be shamed for being so very self-focused on our own pursuits and endeavors? Will you be confident or ashamed how you have spent your time in retirement for Jesus Christ.

BIBLICAL SUCCESSES OR FAILURES?

When you stand before God, will your life be a success – from heaven’s perspective – or a failure?

OverComers

Today, while we’re still alive on earth, we must ask that question. We must determine what adjustments or changes in my life must be made in order to make the most of my time on earth for Christ. Only then, will we have the opportunity to be considered a success.

1Jn 5:4 KJV For whoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

Rev 2:7 MKJV He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Rev 2:11 MKJV He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.
--

Rev 2:17 MKJV He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give to him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows except he who receives it .
--

--He who loses his life for My sake will find it--

Missionaries throughout history have contended for the faith once delivered to the saints, (Jude v.3/ Phil.1:27)

Even if those we are called to reach are devoted to killing us.

Phil. 1:27-29 ESV Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind contending side by side for the faith of the gospel, (28) and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. (29) For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,

Making Suffering Count

These were not people who lived, behind the scenes, copasetic lives. They were fighting to stay alive. They were fighting to follow and obey God.

When Peter was imprisoned, he ministered peace and gave a terrified jailer hope. (Acts 16)

1Pet. 3:14-15 ESV But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, (15) but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

This is a scripture that we often quote in the context of evangelism, but the context of this is in the face of persecution. So if we die, we die praying for those who are persecuting us. If we die, then we die sharing the gospel of hope and evangelizing our tormentors.

My friend, are you ready to suffer for Christ? Are you able to **STAND FIRM** in your faith, even while the rest of the world is **FALLING AWAY**?

If not, then perhaps you might consider your need to be strengthened in the faith and impassioned for your Christ focused service.

Are you able to contend for the faith? (Jude 3) It's not just what Christ deserves. It is what He requires of each of us!



**** Additional Bible References for further reading and review.**

Stand Firm in the Faith

Isa 46:8 "Remember this and *STAND FIRM*, recall it to mind, you transgressors,

Dan 11:32 He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall *STAND FIRM* and take action.

1Co 16:13 Be watchful, *STAND FIRM* in the faith, act like men, be strong.

2Co 1:24 Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you *STAND FIRM* in your faith.

Gal 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; *STAND FIRM* therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Eph 6:13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to *STAND FIRM*.

Php 1:27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are *STANDING FIRM* in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,

Php 4:1 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, *STAND FIRM* thus in the Lord, my beloved.

Stand Firm in the Faith, *cont'd*

2Th 2:15 So then, brothers, *STAND FIRM* and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.

2Ti 2:19 But God's *FIRM* foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

Tit 1:9 He must *HOLD FIRM* to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Heb 3:14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we *HOLD* our original confidence *FIRM* to the end.

1Pe 5:9 Resist him, *FIRM* in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

1Pe 5:12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. *STAND FIRM* in it.

Be Strong in the Lord

Eph 6:10 Finally, *BE STRONG* in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

(Deu 11:8) "You shall therefore keep the whole commandment that I command you today, that you may *BE STRONG*, and go in and take possession of the land that you are going over to possess,

(Deu 31:6) *BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS*. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."

(Deu 31:7) Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "*BE STRONG* and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it.

(Deu 31:23) And the LORD commissioned Joshua the son of Nun and said, "*BE STRONG* and courageous, for you shall bring the people of Israel into the land that I swore to give them. I will be with you."

(Jos 1:6) *BE STRONG* and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.

(Jos 1:7) Only *BE STRONG* and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.

Be Strong in the Lord, *cont'd*

(Jos 1:9) Have I not commanded you? *BE STRONG* and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

(Jos 1:18) Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death. Only *BE STRONG* and courageous."

(Jos 10:25) And Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid or dismayed; *BE STRONG* and courageous. For thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight."

(Jos 23:6) Therefore, *BE VERY STRONG* to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left,

(2Sa 2:7) Now therefore let your hands be strong, and *BE VALIANT*, for Saul your lord is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."

(1Ki 2:2) "I am about to go the way of all the earth. *BE STRONG*, and show yourself a man,

(1Ch 19:13) *BE STRONG*, and let us use our strength for our people and for the cities of our God, and may the LORD do what seems good to him."

(1Ch 22:13) Then you will prosper if you are careful to observe the statutes and the rules that the LORD commanded Moses for Israel. *BE STRONG* and courageous. Fear not; do not be dismayed.

Be Strong in the Lord, *cont'd*

(1Ch 28:10) Be careful now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; *BE STRONG* and do it."

(1Ch 28:20) Then David said to Solomon his son, "*BE STRONG* and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, for the LORD God, even my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished.

(2Ch 25:8) But go, act, *BE STRONG* for the battle. Why should you suppose that God will cast you down before the enemy? For God has power to help or to cast down."

(2Ch 32:7) "*BE STRONG* and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him, for there are more with us than with him.

(Ezr 9:12) Therefore do not give your daughters to their sons, neither take their daughters for your sons, and never seek their peace or prosperity, that you may *BE STRONG* and eat the good of the land and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever.'

(Ezr 10:4) Arise, for it is your task, and we are with you; *BE STRONG* and do it."

(Psa 27:14) Wait for the LORD; *BE STRONG*, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

(Psa 31:24) *BE STRONG*, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD!

(Isa 35:4) Say to those who have an anxious heart, "*BE STRONG*; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you."

Be Strong in the Lord, *cont'd*

(Isa 41:6) Everyone helps his neighbor and says to his brother, "**BE STRONG!**"

(Eze 22:14) Can your courage endure, or can your hands **BE STRONG**, in the days that I shall deal with you? I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.

(Dan 10:19) And he said, "O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; **BE STRONG** and of good courage." And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me."

(Hag 2:4) Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. **BE STRONG**, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts,

(Zec 8:9) Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Let your hands **BE STRONG**, you who in these days have been hearing these words from the mouth of the prophets who were present on the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.

(Zec 8:13) And as you have been a byword of cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing. Fear not, but let your hands **BE STRONG**."

(1Co 16:13) Be watchful, **STAND FIRM** in the faith, act like men, be strong.

(Eph 6:10) Finally, **BE STRONG** in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Falling Away / Apostasy

In the End times prophecies, God promises both seasons of revival as well as a *GREAT FALLING* away or apostasy from *the faith*.

Apocalyptic events shortened for the sake of the elect –

Judgment postponed due to God's patience toward repent –
2Pet.3:9

Love grows cold – Mat.24:12

Many fall away – Mat.24:10

Love of self – 2 Tim.3:2

Falling away 2 Thes.2:3; Lk.8:13; Jn.6:66

Forsaken – 2 Tim. 4:10

Turn away – 2 Tim. 4:4

Depart from the faith 1 Tim.4:1

They went out – 1 Jn.2:19



Don't close this booklet yet

without considering this all important question.

Is Jesus Christ the Savior or *your* soul and the Lord of *your* life?

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; --
Romans 3:23

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come from
God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten
Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,
but have everlasting life. --*John 3:16*

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him to die
in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal
life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
-- *Romans 6:23*

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of Jesus
Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still
sinners, Christ died for us. ---*Romans 5:8*

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved." -- *Rom 10:13*

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he
gave the right to become children of God, - *John 1:12*

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you are
truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

***Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your
sins and citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.***

The ABCs

A - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

B - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

C - Confess your sins to God. *He already knows.*

- also Confess Jesus as you LORD.

Prayer: Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

Connect with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

Commit yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Act 2:41-42 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:
Christ E. Free Church, PO Box 619, 19682 Hill Rd,
Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, www.christefca.org

We have a free booklet on:

Water Baptism: *The First Step of Believer's Obedience.*
and also

A New Creation: *Beginning Your New Life In Christ*

*It is our prayer that you find Jesus Christ to be, your greatest purpose,
your highest calling, your soul's source and joy, and your all-consuming
passion.*

Other Free Booklets

1 PETER, pt.1-2 (2Vol): *Suffering in Sojourning*

1 PETER, pt.3-5 (3Vol): *The Church God Always Wanted*

100 YEARS OF MISSIONS: *So Where Are We Now?*

A NEW CREATION: *Beginning Your New Life In Christ*

ADVENT: *The Submission of Christ*

AMERICA ADRIFT: *A Culture in Crisis and the Challenges Before the Church*

CHALLENGES OF FAITH *From Characters in the Bible*

CHRIST'S COMING KINGDOM: *What Will Be Will Be*

CPR Evangelism: *Helping others Step from Death to Life*

DIRTY DISCIPLESHIP: *Preparing the Soil of the Heart for the Seed of the Word.*

ETERNITY: *What Will It Really Be Like?*

GIFTS AND FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: *A Match Made in Heaven*

GOD'S BLUEPRINT FOR THE FAMILY: *The Intelligent Divine Design*

GROWING THROUGH GRIEF: *When Pain Won't End and Hope Seems Lost*

HOLY WEEK QUESTIONS: *Life After Death & How Dead Will We Really Be?*

IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ALMIGHTY: *Life Transforming Prayer & Communion*

IN THE SHADOW OF THE SHEPHERD: *Sheep Becoming Like the Servant Shepherd*

INTERESTS AND INQUIRIES: *Curious Cultural Concerns for The Future*

JAMES (4Vol): *Faith That Makes A Difference*

JUDE: (2Vol) *STANDING FIRM, When the Rest of the World is Falling Away.*

KINGDOM VISION: *Seeing the World and God's Kingdom as God does*

LIFE MATTERS: *What It Means for Others To See Jesus In You*

MAKING LIFE WORK (2Vol): *Discovering Your God Focused Purpose in Living*

PRAYERS OF DESPERATION: *Prayer God Answers But No One Wants To Pray*

Ruth: *Our Unmerited Blessedness in the LORD.*

SURVIVING THE STORMS OF THE SOUL: *The Presence of God for the Troubled Soul*

THE HOLY SPIRIT: *The Friend You Need To Get To Know*

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN: *Seeing and Living the Kingdom of Heaven*

THE WONDER OF IT ALL: *The End Times of Trials, from Mark 13*

TRAGEDIES OF LIFE: *Things God Allows & Blessings from Heaven's Perspective*

WATER BAPTISM: *The First Step of Believer's Obedience or Disobedience.*

WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER: *A Handbook for Pre-Marriage Considerations*

YOUR LIFE IS LIKE...: *The Challenge to Disciple A Community*

--- All downloadable free resources at: www.christefca.org ---

...while the rest of the world is falling away.

...while the rest of the world is falling away.

...while the rest of the world is falling away.

...while the rest of the world is falling away.



May each lesson bring a growing submission, a deeper obedience and an increase of the righteous reign of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His Spirit, in His Church and throughout our mission field.

--- Downloadable free resources at: www.christefca.org --