

Walking On In Persecution - Acts, 2 Timothy 3

Brief Perspectives and Background on Persecution

One of the ways that is helpful to understand truths from the God's Word is to read with an overarching theme in mind. In studying the passages from Acts, the suggested theme is 'The spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Church who is being empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit'.

Christian persecution must be understood in the context of suffering for the gospel as alluded to in the sermon. Jesus taught His disciples that they are blessed if they are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:10). A careful reading of the Beatitudes (Matt 5:2-12) tells us that Jesus used the word 'persecuted' 3 times, all in the context of living for Jesus.

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Warming Up

1. Who was the first and greatest Christian martyr?
2. Other than being killed, what are the other forms of persecution?

Into the Passage

Acts 6 – The persecution of Stephen

3. Why was Stephen persecuted?
4. What was Stephen's posture/attitude in persecution?
5. How is this type of posture/attitude possible in persecution?
Read Acts 6:5, 8, 10, Acts 7:55.

Acts 13:38-52; 14:1-7; 16:16-40; 21:27-36 – The persecution of Apostle Paul

6. What are some of the reasons why Paul was persecuted?
7. What was Paul's posture/attitude through these times of persecution?

Moving Forward

Read 2 Timothy 3

8. What kinds of people oppose the message of the gospel?
9. How can we train ourselves to prepare for persecution?

Life Together

'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' Acts 1:8

'And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.' Acts 6:7

The rest of Acts detailed how the early disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit, brought the gospel of Jesus Christ to the rest of region, in spite of the persecution. Peter ministered to the people in Jerusalem whereas Paul was called to be an apostle to the Gentiles.

Similarly, God's people in BCEC have a distinct calling. Catherine is on the Logos Hope, and Naggi answered the call to minister in the Middle East. And for most of us, we are witnesses for Jesus is to our FRANS.

F – friends

R – relatives

A – associates

N – neighbours

S – strangers

In our small group, confess our inadequacies before the Lord and ask for the empowering of the Holy Spirit to witness among our FRANS.

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These notes are primarily for the Into the Passage portion, and are to be used just as guidelines or commentary notes. Most of them are my own thoughts, so take that with a grain of salt. Let the Word of God lead you to truth, not these notes.

Into the Passage

Acts 6 – The persecution of Stephen

10. Why was Stephen was persecuted?

He was performing great wonders and signs among the people. Some people did not like what he was doing?

11. What was Stephen's posture/attitude in persecution?

He continued to speak the truth. He was not afraid. He was filled with boldness and conviction.

12. How is this type of posture/attitude possible in persecution?

Read Acts 6:5, 8, 10, Acts 7:55.

He was full of faith and the Holy Spirit, full of God's grace and power, and the wisdom of the Spirit. He never wavered in his conviction that Jesus was the Son of God and the truth.

Acts 13:38-52; 14:1-7; 16:16-40; 21:27-36 – The persecution of Apostle Paul

13. What are some of the reasons why Paul was persecuted?

They were saying things that the Jews disagreed with. Other people were jealous of them. People rejected what they were saying and tried to stir up dissension. They spoke boldly and performed signs and wonders. They spoke with authority, truth and conviction. They never stopped giving glory and praise to God.

14. What was Paul's posture/attitude through these times of persecution?

They never wavered. They continued to praise and worship God. They continued to trust in Him. Their lives were completely surrendered to God.