Value of Faith - Persecution

" Choose this day whom you will serve but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.”

[Global Persecution and Your Faith](https://dbx.focusonthefamily.com/media/daily-broadcast/global-persecution-and-your-faith?utm_source=dailybroadcastapp&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=Broadcast_20191101&refcd=823401)

Does anyone here enjoy being persecuted for what you believe in? It doesn’t have to be about religion. If you believe in something strong enough you will usually have to fight for it.

The American Revolutionary War was a colonial revolt which occurred in the 1700. The American colonials rejected the authority of the British Parliament to tax them because they had no representatives in that governing body. The American Patriots in the Thirteen Colonies fought and defeated the British but throughout the course of the war, an estimated 6,800 Americans were killed in action, 6,100 wounded, and upwards of 20,000 were taken prisoner. With around 8,000–12,000 who died while prisoners of war. Do you think these people believed in what they were fighting for? They believed in it so much so that they were willing to die for it.

In the Sermon on the Mountain, Jesus told a large crowd of people: Matthew 5:10-12: Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

* Does the thought of being persecuted for Christ cause you to celebrate and rejoice? Should it? According to Jesus it should!!!
* What are you willing to do to defend what you believe?
* How much value do you put in your faith?

In 2015 there was a shooting at the Oregon college. The reporter said the shooter would asked each student “‘Are you a Christian? if you are then stand up.” He told them ‘because you are a Christian, you’re going to see God today’ and then he shot and killed them. He kept going down the line asking each student and one by one they stood up. 10 students stood up that day. Why would they stand up knowing they would die?

Jesus says in Luke 17:33 Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will save it.

**The Definition of the word martyr**: is a person who willingly suffers death rather than renounce his or her beliefs. a person who is put to death or endures great suffering on behalf of any belief, principle, or cause.

**Quiz: Who was the First martyr of the Christian faith?** Jesus: because He died for what he believed!

We also know most of the disciples suffered greatly for their faith:

* James & Paul had their heads cut off
* Peter was hung upside down,
* Andrew (Peter’s Brother): reported to have been crucified on an X shaped cross
* Bartholomew: Skinned alive and beheaded
* Simon: Sawed in Half
* Phillip: Hung upside down by hooks in his ankles

Do you think they would have died for a lie?

They apparently felt very strongly about what they believed in.

In the 1500s there was a young man named William Hunter. He believed everyone should have the right to read the bible, The Church at that time disagreed. They felt only those trained by the Church should be allowed to read and teach what was in the Bible. They threw him in prison for 9 months and then asked him if he would change his mind. The bishop even offered him a large sum of money and a job working in his home to which William replied” Thank you, but if you can’t change my mind through scripture, I can’t turn from God for the love of the world. I count all worldly things but loss and dung, compared to the love of Christ.” On March 26 1555 William Hunter, at the age of 19, was burned at the stake stating “I am not afraid to die; Lord receive my Spirit. William hunter gave up his life for the truth. (Fox book of Martyrs )

Many others placed a lot of value in what they believed so much so that they were willing to die for it.

Jesus told 2 parables about the value of finding the kingdom of God

Matthew 13:44 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Matthew 13:45-46 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Both these parables are about someone who finds a treasure so precious that they are willing to give up everything they have in order to obtain that treasure.

**🡪God calls us to Give up all that we have for all that he has**

To be willing to suffer or die for something you really need to believe strongly in it. It has to be more than a passing trend or the latest fade. It has to be something much deeper than that.

What would that look like for you?

**I know this is a tough message and it probably sounds like** **I’m asking you to die for Christ but what I’m really asking is for you to live for Christ.**

None of the people we talked about woke up that day saying I want to die but what they did say was **I want to live for Christ**! and no one's going to take that away from me not even if it means that I will have to die for it.

The great thing is we live in a country where we are free to follow any religion we want. But we don’t consider the price many people pay to do the same things that we take for granted: We put off Read our Bible when many people are not allowed to have one or imprisoned if they are found with one. We don’t speak about our faith to others when many die each year for speak about their faith. It is a shame that we have all these freedoms but many will never use them.

Don’t back down or shy away from what you believe in! Not for anyone. Not to be cool. Not to be popular. Not to get an awesome job. Not for anything.

**“Here die 40 men for Christ”.**

Even though few today in American sacrifice much at all for their faith in Christ, there are stories in history that tell us amazing accounts of those who have suffered because of their faith. One such story took place in 328 A.D. in a city high in the icy mountains of Armenia.

It was a bitterly cold winter and in the middle of that winter an order came from the Roman emperor that every man, woman, and child under the rule of his empire must bow down to him as a god. Now there was a powerful force of Roman soldiers in that Armenian city known as the “Thundering Legion”, and their reputation as a powerful military force was known through all the Roman Empire. But the emperor was not satisfied with their military service - he wanted each soldier to bow down to him.

When the time came for each soldier to bow down, 40 could not. They were faithful soldiers, but more importantly, they were Christians - they could not obey the emperor's order to make him their god. They said, “We can only worship the one true God.”

Well, when the word of these 40 Christian soldiers refusing to bow down and worship him was received by the emperor, his command back was simple, “Bow down to me, reject your Christian God, or die”. But the 40 Christian Roman soldiers did not bow down - so the decision was made that they would die. But how should they die? Should they be fed to the hungry lions? Should they be burned at the stake? These were both terrible ways to die, but an even more cruel death was prescribed - they were to be frozen to death in the bitter cold winter.

So they took the 40 soldiers to a frozen lake in the middle of a terrible storm. They stripped them of all their clothing and left them to freeze to death on the ice.

But the general didn't want to lose these 40 good soldiers. He said, “Simply bow down to the emperor and save your life?” But they did not. The soldiers taunted and laughed at them – “soon you'll be back; you will bow down”. But the laughing stopped when these 40 Christians bravely walked barefoot across the freezing lake.

Well, through the night the soldiers lit a fire and cooked food to tempt the Christians to give up. But the Christians prayed to God to make them brave, and they began to shout, “Here die 40 men for Christ”.

The freezing bitter cold night went on until finally, the cold was too much for one of the men. He staggered back to the fire and agreed to denounce his God and to bow down to the emperor. But the remaining 39 Christians would not give in, even though they were literally freezing to death.

Then, amazingly, something happened that they could not believe - one of the Roman soldiers sitting by the fire, having watched the bravery and courage and faith on these dying Christians, he stood before the general and uttered these words, “I will take that man's place - I will be a Christian.” As the general watched in amazement, this Roman soldier removed his clothing and walked onto the icy lake to join the 39.

Well the Roman soldiers sat by that fire all night long and the last thing they said they could remember hearing through the howl of that terrible freezing winter storm was the now 40 Christian men shouting, “Here die 40 men for Christ”. In the morning, sadly, there were 40 frozen bodies; men who have sacrificed for their faith and belief in Christ.

A full 350 years later, in the chapel in the forum of Rome, was dedicated to these 40 soldiers a plaque, a simple plaque which still hangs there today, with these powerful words engraved on it,

**What would you have done?**

**How far are you willing to go for what you believe?**

**How much value do you put in what you believe?**

**Don’t let anyone ever look down on you for what you believe.**

1 Timothy 4:12 Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

**Be willing stand with your head held high and say:**

Joshua 24:15 …You may choose this day whom you will serve but as for me and my house I will serve the Lord

Final Note: Charles Spurgeon was a preacher back in the early 1800. He was known as the “Prince of Preachers” do to his passionate intensity while using simple language to communicate his message. He became the pastor of the largest church in London at the age of just 19.

Some quotes by Charles Spurgeon:

* “The greatest enemy to human souls is the self-righteous spirit which makes men look to themselves for salvation.”
* “It is not how much we have, but how much we enjoy, that makes happiness.”

When the holy spirit is in you there is no limit to what He can do with you to glorify Christ!