

Are You Willing to Die for Your Faith Like This Arab Believer?

For far too long, we in the American church have taken our freedom to worship God for granted.

As believers, we can walk into a church and sing praises to Jesus without apprehension of verbal or physical confrontation. With few recent and rare exceptions, we can share our faith on the streets without fear of arrest or assault.

This type of mentality has made us complacent. And frankly, it has made us—the American church—soft and weak.

It makes me wonder how many so-called Christians in America are willing to die for their faith. If we were faced with a life-and-death situation, one where we were mandated to renounce our faith or be killed, how many of us would lay down our lives for the cause of Christ?

Daniel showed courage in doing so. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego willingly endured a fiery furnace.

And what about the college students in Oregon who didn't lie about their faith with a gun pointed at them?

Willingness to die for his faith has never been an issue for my friend Steven Khoury. The son of an Arab Christian evangelist, Steven has dealt with intense persecution his entire life—mostly from his own people—but his faith has never wavered.

As if growing up in the volatile and chaotic West Bank in Israel wasn't enough, Steven faced a double dose of oppression due to his faith in Christ as a Palestinian. His Arab brothers

often assaulted his father's church with Molotov cocktails. They also assaulted him physically and labeled him as an infidel.

In the Arab world and according to the Quran, that means death.

"I'm stuck between two rocks and a hard place," says Steven, a pastor and co-founder of Holy Land Missions in Jerusalem. "I'm an Israeli and I'm a Palestinian. Some people say I'm doubly blessed; some people say I'm doubly cursed. Being an Arab and an Israeli, I'm sometimes looked at as a traitor by both sides.

"But I always ask people, 'If you don't find anything worth dying for, what's worth the living?' As a Christian, we are all called to live a life of sacrifice. We must pay a price. Part of carrying the honor of being a Christian is that it has to come with a price."

Believers in the Middle East incur the cost daily. ISIS has slaughtered many Christians in that area of the country. I have befriended pastors in India, Syria and Pakistan whose congregations are in constant danger of reprisal for their faith in Christ.

Yet, many in the American church go on about their business as if none of that matters. In a word, we are spoiled.

"American mentality is its own worst enemy," Steven says. "People around the world envy America as a whole for what you have. Since the majority of the world cannot possess what you have, the natural inclination for some nations is to destroy you. You have what you have because this country is based on (a) biblical foundation.

"Since other countries reject the Bible, they cannot get to where America is today. Some in the Islamic faith are willing to lay down their lives, but it's for all the wrong reasons.

What would happen if all believers, especially the American church, did that for all the right reasons?"

Indeed. Jesus suffered and laid down His life for us. Can we not do this for Him?

And as I always say, "There is that."