

The No. 1 Sin Sweeping the Nation and Promoting a False Religion

On February 12, 2015, 21 Egyptian Christians were beheaded on the coast of the Mediterranean at the hands of ISIS fighters. Just before they beheaded each man, they offered him his life—if only he would deny Christ. But these brave men loved Jesus more than their own lives.

While this type of persecution is happening around the world, another form of attack on Christ and His church is happening here at home. A false religion is gaining ground—and it recognizes only one sin.

This modern-day religion is called tolerance. Its sacred doctrine states that we must be tolerant of any form of belief, regardless of its teaching. Therefore, the only sin is believing that there is absolute truth or only one true God. And if you commit this sin of exclusivity, there is a price to pay.

With persecution on the rise, whether from secular culture or Islamic jihadists, we must face the inevitable cost of following Christ in our lifetime. In the face of such forces, we must not fall victim to fear but rather trust in the power of God. We must learn and grow in our knowledge of the Word of God and obey it. Above all, we must understand that suffering for Christ is at times what it means to identify with Him. Instead of avoiding it, perhaps we must embrace it.

In 1 Peter 4:12-13, the apostle Peter says, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though some strange thing happened to you. But rejoice insofar as you share in Christ’s sufferings, so that you may rejoice and be glad also in the revelation of His

glory.”

The same Peter who wrote these words once rebuked Christ for declaring His intention to go to the cross (see Matthew 16:21-23). Peter once found suffering abhorrent, but now he tells us we should rejoice. Peter had grown in his understanding of the role of suffering in the Christian life. He had seen that the suffering of the cross was not the end—but only the way to the resurrection.

The persecution of the church is not new. In fact, history proves again and again that Christianity flourishes best under persecution. How then are we as Christians to respond to persecution?

In this age of tolerance, we must love those who persecute us—but never surrender the truth. We must invite all people to come to the one who loves them and died for their sin. We must “implore [them] in Christ’s stead: Be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20). Above all, we must resist the temptation of being ashamed of the Gospel.

In the midst of suffering, God makes us some incredible promises:

- “If you are reproached because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (1 Peter 4:14).
- “In the world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).
- “Our light affliction, which lasts but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

There is an indescribable blessing that can only be received through suffering for Christ. When you trust in Him, even amid persecution or difficult circumstances, you will experience His presence with you in a unique and powerful way. And as you walk with the Lord in obedience, He promises that He will

never leave you or forsake you—in the fiery furnace, the lion's den, or even in your workplace. {eoa}

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