

Acts 4:1-31
Cross Brand
C3:16
3/25/26

Sources
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Throughout its history the church of Jesus Christ has faced persecution.

Here are the primary types of persecution facing Christians today:

- **Violent Physical Attacks:**
- **Systemic & Legal Discrimination:**
- **Forced Conversion & Sexual Violence:**
- **Religious Nationalism & Clan Pressure:** .
- **Economic and Social Marginalization:**
- **Digital and Technological Surveillance:**

Persecution of Christians in America today is generally subtle and indirect, focusing on ideological, social, and legal pressure rather than physical violence.

- **Legal and Zoning Restrictions:**
- **Workplace and Academic Marginalization:**
- **Cultural and Social Ostracism:**
- **Free Speech/Expression Conflicts:**
- **Vandalism and Property Damage:**

John 15:18-20

He said, "If the world hates you, understand that it hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word I spoke to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours."

I. THE PERSECUTION MANIFEST

Acts 4:1-4 While they were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple police, and the Sadducees confronted them, ² because they were annoyed that they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³ So they seized them and took them into custody until the next day since it was already evening. ⁴ But many of those who heard the message believed, and the number of the men^[a] came to about five thousand.

The **priests** were the ordinary priests conducting the evening sacrifice.

The captain of the temple guard was the chief of the temple police force, which was composed of Levites.

The **Sadducees** were one of the four sects that made up first century Judaism, along with their archrivals the Pharisees, the Essenes, and the Zealots.

The authorities were **greatly annoyed** with the apostles

Application:

We will inevitably “annoy” someone for our faith

II. THE PERSECUTION MET

A. BE SUBMISSIVE

The next day, their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem ⁶ with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and all the members of the high-priestly family. ⁷ After they had Peter and John stand before them, they began to question them: “By what power or in what name have you done this?”

Peter and John offered no resistance during their arrest

Application:

Persecution can create gospel opportunities that we should be thankful for.

B. BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

⁸ Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit

“Whenever they bring you before synagogues and rulers and authorities, don’t worry about how you should defend yourselves or what you should say. ¹² For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what must be said.” Luke 12:11-12

“And don’t get drunk with wine, which leads to reckless living, but be filled by the Spirit.” Ephesians 5:18;

Application

The Holy Spirit will guide us with insight and support through persecution

NOTE..... Make sure your tank is full for Him to pull truths from

C. BE AGGRESSIVE IN SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES

⁸ Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders: ⁹ If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a disabled man, by what means he was healed, ¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified and whom God

raised from the dead—by him this man is standing here before you healthy. ¹¹ This Jesus is

**the stone rejected by you builders,
which has become the cornerstone.**^[c]

¹² There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.”

The Boldness of the Disciples

¹³ When they observed the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and recognized that they had been with Jesus.

Christians preach an exclusive Christ in an inclusive age.

Application

Regardless of what others believe Jesus is not just “a way” to heaven, but rather the only way.

We must take comfort in the fact that we do not have to be formally trained to stand for Christ.

D. BE OBEDIENT TO GOD AT ALL COSTS

¹⁴ And since they saw the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in opposition. ¹⁵ After they ordered them to leave the Sanhedrin, they conferred among themselves, ¹⁶ saying, “What should we do with these men? For an obvious sign has been done through them, clear to everyone living in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷ But so that this does not spread any further among the people, let’s threaten them against speaking to anyone in this name again.” ¹⁸ So they called for them and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

¹⁹ Peter and John answered them, “Whether it’s right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than to God, you decide; ²⁰ for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

²¹ After threatening them further, they released them. They found no way to punish them because the people were all giving glory to God over what had been done. ²² For this sign of healing had been performed on a man over forty years old.

The unexpected boldness of Peter and John, and the presence of the healed man standing with them, put the Sanhedrin in an impossible position.

It is a clearly biblical principle that believers are to obey their government.

1 Peter 2:13-17, “Submit to every human authority because of the Lord, whether to the emperor as the supreme authority ¹⁴ or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good.

¹⁵ For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good. ¹⁶ Submit as free people, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but as God's slaves. ¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brothers and sisters. Fear God. Honor the emperor."

The reaction of Peter and John, however, marks the limits of that obedience.

Application:

If persecuted, we must stand with a conscience informed by scripture.
Obey the government until you cannot.

E. BE COMMITTED TO FELLOWSHIP

²³ After they were released, they went to their own people and reported everything the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

It is noteworthy that the first thing Peter and John did after being **released** was to go to **their own companions**.

Application

We must remember the need for Christian community is intensified during persecution

F. BE THANKFUL

²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together to God and said, "Master, you are the one who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You said through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David your servant:^[d]

**Why do the Gentiles rage
and the peoples plot futile things?**

²⁶ **The kings of the earth take their stand
and the rulers assemble together
against the Lord and against his Messiah.**^[e]

²⁷ "For, in fact, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, assembled together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your will had predestined to take place.

It is the word from which our English word "despot" derives and denotes an absolute master.

Faced with opposition, they took comfort in God's sovereignty.

Application

We must embrace God's sovereignty.

G. BE DESIROUS OF GREATER BOLDNESS

²⁹ And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that your servants may speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰ while you stretch out your hand for healing, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." ³¹ When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God boldly.

They asked not for protection or a place to hide but for even more courage to boldly proclaim God's truth-the very thing they had been ordered not to do.

Application

Regardless of persecution we must pray and look for more opportunities to share the gospel