

4-23-2016, COTR Texarkana

Title: Unsung Heroes

Purpose: Provoke Christians to embrace a Biblical response to persecution and help those who are persecuted for Christ.

Spiritual Truth: If one member suffers, all suffer together...1 Cor. 12:26 (ESV)

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:26–27

Topic: Persecution, Suffering, Heroes, Persecuted Church

Series: Heroes

Series Purpose: Provoke people to follow the example of Biblical heroes.

Unsung Heroes

I. Introduction

A. Review: Series “Heroes”

A.1. Listen to messages @ChurchOnTheRock.org or on the COTR iPhone/ Android app

A.2. Def. Hero: someone we admire for their achievements or character; someone we want to be like.

B. Today we’ll talk about the millions of unsung heroes around the world, the men, women and children being persecuted because of their faith in Christ.

B.1. Center screen ISIS beheading Coptic Christians because of their faith.

B.2. Def. unsung: not celebrated or praised on earth but celebrated in Heaven.

B.3. Def. persecution: to unjustly inflict pain, punishment or death upon Christians because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

B.4. 1 Corinthians 12:26–27 (ESV) **If one member suffers, all suffer together...27**
Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

C. Title: Unsung Heroes

D. Purpose: Provoke Christians to embrace a Biblical response to persecution and help those who are persecuted for Christ.

E. Spiritual Truth: If one member suffers, all suffer together...1 Cor. 12:26 (ESV)

II. Modern day persecution

A. **ChristianityToday.com** A Christian is martyred every five minutes; that’s 105k per year. More Christians have been martyred in the 20th and 21st centuries than during the previous 19 combined. More than 200 million Christians are facing persecution in 105

countries; Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world. (Open Doors) The most dangerous place to be a Christian is N. Korea. Over 50k Christians are being held in detention camps. Believers caught with a Bible can be executed. christianpost.com

- B. **Religion News Services** says Muslims are the primary drivers of Christian persecution worldwide. In 41 of the 50 worst nations for persecution, Christians are persecuted by Islamic extremists. (Open Doors). ISIS gives Christians a ‘choice’: They can convert to Islam, pay an Islamic tax, or be killed, enslaved, tortured, or held hostage. This is sharia law. The Koran says Fight against those who believe not in Allah...(Sura 9:29)
- C. **Persecution in America:** Picture Dr. Eric Walsh, a public health expert and lay minister, has filed a lawsuit against the Georgia Dept of Public Health alleging he was terminated for sermons on issues ranging from homosexuality to evolution. His attorney said “He was fired for something he said in a sermon. If the government can fire someone over a sermon, they can come after any of us for our beliefs on anything.”
- D. **If you’re looking for an issue crying for social justice it is Christian persecution.**

III. **2nd Timothy, Paul talks to Timothy about persecution.** Paul is in prison awaiting death for his faith. His letter is a call for perseverance in spite of persecution.

- A. **Don’t be ashamed of Jesus even if it is costly.** 2 Timothy 1:8 (NIV) So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.

A.1. Def ashamed: to feel embarrassed and stop living for Jesus, e.g. laughed at when you pray for meal. Instead “join me” with a promise of “God’s power”. 2 Cor12:10 (ESV) ...I am content in...persecutions...For **when I am weak, then I am strong.**

- B. **A sober call to endure suffering.** 2 Timothy 2:10–13 (ESV)...I **endure** everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. 11 The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we **endure**, we will also reign with him; **if we deny him, he also will deny us**; 13 if we are faithless, **he remains faithful**— for he cannot deny himself.

B.1. Telling people about Jesus is what led to Paul’s arrest. He was persecuted for it.

B.2. Def. endure: to remain faithful to God during suffering. // Rev. 7 churches overcome

B.3. Vs 12b The first deny is the opposite of endure and refers to apostasy or disowning Christ in the midst of persecution. Apostasy is not tolerated for Jesus said if we deny we know Christ He will deny He knows us. Vs. 13 If we turn our backs on him He will still be faithful to us, e.g. Peter’s denial.

B.4. All Christians will suffer one day. 2 Tim 3:12 (NLT)...**everyone** who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (Endure it as a good soldier.)

C. **Keep your eyes on the prize.** 2 Tim 4:6–8 (NIV)...the time for my departure is near. 7 **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.** 8 Now there is in store for me the **crown** of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day...but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

C.1. // trophy for athletic victory. To finish our race is to be faithful in doing what the Lord has called us to do.

IV. **Conclusion: A call to help persecuted believers.**

A. **2 Timothy 1:15–17 (NCV)** You know that everyone in Asia has left me... 16... Onesiphorus, who has **often helped me** and was **not ashamed** that I was in prison. 17 When he came to Rome, **he looked eagerly for me until he found me.**

A.1. What can I do? Pray, give to ministries helping the Persecuted Church, reach out to people who are being mistreated for being a Christian in America.

V. **Response: Prayer by Pastor K/ Souls**

A. *** *Logos Bible Software and library, Noah Webster's first edition of An American dictionary of the English language, A handbook on Paul's letters to Timothy and to Titus, The Bible Knowledge Commentary were used to prepare this message.*