

Christians on Campus
Acts Bible Study
Summer 2020

Persecution and Suffering

- I. As believers, we should expect a life not always at ease, but rather, we should arm ourselves with a mind to suffer persecution according to the will of God—1 Pet. 4:1-2.
- II. Christ as the first God-man with His suffering life is a model for us. We need to live a life which is a copy, a reproduction, of the life of Christ that comes from enjoying Him as grace in our sufferings—1 Pet. 2:18-25.
- III. In suffering persecution we must sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts, be constituted with the truth, and take care of our conscience—3:15-16.
- IV. If we suffer as a Christian, we should not be ashamed but should glorify God in this name—4:15-16.

Scripture Reading:

1 Peter 3:14-17; 4:1-2, 14-16

³¹⁴But even if you suffer because of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not be afraid with fear from them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, being always ready for a defense to everyone who asks of you an account concerning the hope which is in you, ¹⁶yet with meekness and fear, having a good conscience, so that in the matter in which you are spoken against, those who revile your good manner of life in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷For it is better, if the will of God should will it, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

⁴¹Since Christ therefore has suffered in the flesh, you also arm yourselves with the same mind (because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin), ²no longer to live the rest of the time in the flesh in the lusts of men, but in the will of God.

¹⁴If you are reproached in the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵For let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler into others' affairs; ¹⁶but if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name.

Recall your reading through the book of Acts. There have been many examples of believers going through suffering or being persecuted. We included a few cases in this handout. **After you read**, consider the following questions for fellowship:

1. What are some outstanding characteristics of the apostles that were manifested as they went through sufferings and persecution? How can we apply these examples to our experience?
2. How do persecution and suffering relate to our growth in life?

Paul and Silas's Example in Acts 16:19-34

¹⁹But when her [a certain slave girl's] masters saw that their hope of profit had gone out, they laid hold of Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. ²⁰And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, These men, being Jews, are throwing our city into confusion, ²¹And they are announcing customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to accept or do. ²²And the crowd rose up together against them, and the magistrates tore off their garments and ordered some to beat them with rods. ²³And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them securely,

²⁴Who, having received such a charge, threw them into the inner prison and secured their feet in the stocks. ²⁵And about midnight Paul and Silas, while praying, sang hymns of praise to God; and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken. And instantly all the doors were opened and everyone's bonds were unfastened. ²⁷And the jailer, waking up out of his sleep and seeing the doors of the prison opened, drew his sword and was about to do away with himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul called out with a loud voice, saying, Do no harm to yourself, for we are all here. ²⁹And the jailer asked for lights and rushed in; and trembling, he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰And leading them outside, he said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? ³¹And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household. ³²And they spoke the word of God to him together with all those in his house. ³³And he took them with him in that very hour of the night and washed their wounds. And he was baptized immediately, he and all his household. ³⁴And he brought them up into his house and set a table before them; and he exulted because he had believed in God with all his household.

Additional Discussion Questions:

Paul and Silas's experience in Acts 16 is a great example of points (III) and (IV) in the outline. Which verses show how they expressed these characteristics in their suffering? How did their testimony affect the people around them?

Paul's Example in Acts 18:5-17

⁵And when both Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. ⁶But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, Your blood be upon your head; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles. ⁷And he left there and went into the house of one named Titius Justus, one who worshipped God, whose house was next to the synagogue. ⁸And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with his whole household; and many of the Corinthians, when they heard, believed and were baptized. ⁹And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; ¹⁰Because I Myself am with you, and no one will assail you to harm you, because I have many people in this city. ¹¹And he remained there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. ¹²But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews rose up against Paul with one accord and brought him to the judgment seat, ¹³Saying, This man incites men to worship God contrary to the law. ¹⁴But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, If it were a matter of wrongdoing or some wicked crime, O Jews, I would for that reason tolerate you; ¹⁵But if there are questions concerning words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves. A judge of these things I do not intend to be. ¹⁶And he drove them away from the judgment seat. ¹⁷And they all laid hold of Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the judgment seat. And Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.

Additional Discussion Questions:

Why did the religious Jews persecute Paul? How was Paul supplied in his suffering?

Additional Passages for Further Study (bit.ly/ActsWk7more):

- **Barnabas and Paul's example in Acts 14:14-22**
- **Stephen's example in Acts 6:8-7:2, 54-60**

Barnabas and Paul's Example in Acts 14:14-22

¹⁴But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard this, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out ¹⁵and saying, Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men of like feeling as you, and announce the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and the sea and all things in them; ¹⁶who in the generations gone by allowed all the nations to go their ways. ¹⁷And yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good by giving you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness. ¹⁸And saying these things, they restrained the crowds only with difficulty from offering sacrifices to them. ¹⁹But Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, supposing that he was dead. ²⁰But as the disciples surrounded him, he rose up and entered into the city. And on the next day he went out with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹And when they had announced the gospel to that city and had made a considerable number of disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²²establishing the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.

Additional Discussion Question:

1. What are some outstanding characteristics of the apostles that were manifested as they went through sufferings and persecution? How can we apply these examples to our experience?
2. How do persecution and suffering relate to our growth in life?
3. *What did Paul do after he was stoned and dragged outside the city by the Jews? Were you amazed by this? Normally a person who is severely injured would take a considerable time to recover before they do anything. What kind of power did Paul have to rise up and minister again so quickly? Consider 2 Corinthians 4:7-18.*

Stephen's Example in Acts 6:8-7:2, 54-60

^{6:8}And Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹But some of those of the synagogue which is called the synagogue of the Libertines and of the Cyrenians and of the Alexandrians and of those from Cilicia and Asia rose up and disputed with Stephen; ¹⁰yet they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. ¹¹Then they instigated some men to say, We have heard him speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God. ¹²And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and led him to the Sanhedrin. ¹³And they set up false witnesses, saying, This man does not cease speaking words against this holy place and the law, ¹⁴for we have heard him saying that this Jesus the Nazarene will destroy this place and will change the customs which Moses delivered to us. ¹⁵And all those sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at him and saw his face as though it were the face of an angel. ^{7:1}And the high priest said, Are these things so? ²And he said, Men, brothers and fathers, listen. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, ... ⁵⁴Now as they heard these things, they were exasperated and gnashed their teeth at him. ⁵⁵But being full of the Holy Spirit, he looked intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; ⁵⁶and he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁷But they cried out with a loud voice and covered their ears and rushed upon him with one accord.

⁵⁸And they threw him outside of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man called Saul. ⁵⁹And they stoned Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! ⁶⁰And kneeling down, he cried out with a loud voice, Lord, do not hold this sin against them. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Additional Discussion Question:

Does Stephen's experience remind you of any scene we read in the Gospel of Matthew last semester? Which person does Stephen resemble? Discuss point (II) in the outline based on this account of Stephen's martyrdom.