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Viewpoints

Observing events in our modern world from the viewpoint of our ascended Savior.

Persecution Persists ~ October 11, 2013

So why do I love a world that persecutes my faith?

[Online Version & Archive](#)

It could have been my cousin who was murdered. This is why I gave it my attention.

My first cousin, classmate and fellow WELS pastor is a visiting missionary to a far-flung, impoverished nation. So when I glanced at the headline that Christians were murdered for their faith in Nigeria, the image of my cousin jumped into my mind. This is why I paused to read what I was about to pass over. Even though my cousin doesn't serve in Nigeria, those were my bothers, and your brothers, who were shot dead in the road. Islamists stopped their minibus and asked if they were followers of Jesus Christ. Knowing what would happen, the five men remained loyal to Christ... for which they were killed on the spot.

Jesus predicted this would happen. It's the cross that Jesus forewarned that all Christians must carry: "All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Mark 13:13). Sometimes this cross causes a lot of pain. Sometimes this cross brings an early, sudden entrance into heaven.

Consider the Apostle Paul. His body was disfigured by the persecutions he endured. Then both Paul and Peter were killed under Nero's watch, according to Clement of Rome. The first of the Roman persecutions began under Nero and were "based on the vague charge that the Christians were haters of society." (*Remember this.*) Suspicions and cruel slanders of non-Christians fueled outbreaks of persecution.

The Roman historian, Tacitus, tells us of Christians crucified; sowed into the skins of animals and fed to wild dogs; covered with pitch and set aflame in order to illuminate the imperial garden. Next came Emperor Flavian who persecuted Christians for disturbing the peace. He was followed by Domitian, the one who called himself Lord and God. Emperor Tragan followed, who martyred Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, by throwing him to wild beasts in Rome's coliseum. Then came some emperors considered more favorable to the Christians: Hadrian (117-138), Pius (138-161) Marcus Aurelius (161-180) and Septimius Severus (193-21). While persecutions under these emperors may have softened on a national level, yet under the reign of each of them, localities of Christians saw some of their faithful killed. Some places, for instance, reported that so many Christians were executed at the same time, bodies were piled in the street until they were burned and their ashes carted off.

Fast-forward, now, to this century. Many Christians in various areas of this globe are being martyred for their faith. Note the biggest differences between the first century and our current century. First, today there are easier methods for implementing murder. The second difference is that more Christians today are being martyred than ever before.

The number of the martyred in this decade--in the last year!-- is deafening. But we tend to hear little because the mass media generally ignores it. Why? Because it's not only so common, it's politically incorrect in our politically correct world to say that persecuting Christians is wrong. It's not evil that this happens, so worldly "enlightened" thinking goes, because this is a natural characteristic of the culture (to persecute and martyr Christians). Therefore, Christians are at fault because they live counter to the culture. Wow! The same excuses to murder Christians during the Roman persecutions are being used today under the guise of political correctness!

Of course, this is wickedly unfair! But that's the norm of this sin-ruined world that has a long history of evil decay and rot. Which leads us to this important question...

...why do we continue to love this world so much? Why do we so badly want to hang onto what is soiled with the blood of my brothers and sisters in the faith? Why are we so enthralled with what may murder our children for being counter to the culture?

For allowing ourselves to be blinded by the false and empty promises of this world, Jesus already paid the price of our forgiveness at the cross. And now, restored in his merciful love, Jesus empowers us to live on earth as the aliens and strangers he made us to be: because **"our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body"** (Philippians 3:20-21). In case you don't recognize the tie-in, it was Paul, the apostle who was so greatly disfigured from the horrible scars of persecution, who wrote these words. And who then died for his faith under Emperor Nero's watch.

Source Material (Links may become inactive over time.)

[Nigerian Islamists Gun Down Christians](#) @ The Washington Times

[Persecution of Christians, Then and Now](#) @ National Review Online

[Coptic Christians Killed in Egypt](#) @ The Washington Times

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Blessings to you and your loved ones, Pastor Mike Nitz

