

# Suffering for the Sake of the Gospel

The resurgence of MARTYRDOM  
as central to Christian Witness

# Biblical teaching on Persecution

- The underlying biblical reasons given for persecution consist of an antipathy of evil toward the good (Romans 8:6-8);
- Wicked men opposing God and rejecting his divine precepts (Rom 3:10-18).
- Jesus indicated that since the world hated him, it will hate his disciples (John 15:18-19), and declared that if they persecuted him, they will also persecute his disciples (v. 20).
- The Bible's climactic teaching about the believer and persecution: *"Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"* (2 Tim 3:12).

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

But I tell you:

**Love** your **enemies** and  
**pray** for those who **persecute** you"

(Matthew 5:43-44)



# Early Christians' response to suffering and persecution

## Rejoicing

“So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, **rejoicing** that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.” (Acts 5:41)

## Suffering for Christ

“... for I will show him how much **he must suffer for My name's sake.**” (Acts 9:16)

“For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to **suffer for His sake**”

(Philippians 1:29)

## Dying for Jesus's sake

“For we who live **are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake**, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” (2 Corinthians 4:11)

## Strength in weakness

“Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; **for when I am weak, then I am strong.**” (2 Corinthians 12:10)


- **Peter and John** were brought before the Council (Acts 4)
- **The Apostles** were arrested (Acts 5)
- **Stephen** was arrested (Acts 6) and then stoned to death (Acts 7).
- **Saul** (who later became Paul) ravages the Church (Acts 8)
- **Saul** turns to Christ and then has to flee Damascus for his life (Acts 9)
- **James** is killed and Peter imprisoned (Acts 12).

## Paul Boasts About His Sufferings

Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. (2 Cor. 11:23-26)



- **Paul**, after all he mentions above he spent his last few years under Roman guard and was beheaded during the reign of Nero while in Rome.
- **James**, early church writings tell us, was crucified upside down because he didn't deem himself worthy to die in the same manner as the Lord Jesus.
- **All of the Apostles were martyred** except for the Apostle John was banished to the Island of Patmos. There were many martyrs throughout history. Second century Church father Tertullian has been credited with saying, **"the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."** In many ways he is right. We shouldn't expect to be exempt from this.



Present day  
Christian's response to  
suffering and  
persecution

# In developing world

- Accept as their lot
- Trust God to be with them in suffering
- Believe it must be “God’s will”
- Endure pain and suffering as an expected consequence of their Faith

# In developed world

- Fear suffering
- Avoid suffering at all costs
- Expect that, as believers, God will protect them from suffering
- If suffering comes they doubt God's love
- Demand their human rights



The rediscovery of  
martyrdom as part of  
the Christian life

*Sunday February 15, 2015*

A historic day for Egyptian  
Christians





# طابورين على البحر

جاءت النسخة المجددة  
The Bible Society of Egypt

طابورين ماشيين جنب بحر  
في يوم بكى كل العباد  
وطابور سفاحين  
وطابور أعز الولاد  
وطابور في ايديهم سكاكين  
وطابور لا يدين مربوطين لكن شداد  
وطابور ببصوا من فتحة للعينين  
وطابور عينين للسا متبنتين في عناد  
وطابور واقفين وشايلين موت  
وطابور راكعين ولحياة تانية على أتم استعداد  
وطابور جس عالي وزعيق وتهديد ووعيد  
وطابور هدوء وسلام ع القلب ساد

**سؤال..**  
**هو مين خايف من مين؟**

طابور الهامات العالية  
المكشوفة الممدودة للسا !  
ولآ طابور الروس الملفوفة  
في السواد!!





# Martyrdom in Egypt Today





**Boutrosia Church  
Dec 11, 2017**





# Alexandria & Tanta Churches Palm Sunday 2017





**Minia bus attack  
May 29, 2017**



مباشر



الإسكندرية - الآن



منزل الشهيد "نسيم فهيم - مسئول أمن الكنيسة"



ستوديو "كل يوم"

منزل الشهيد "نسيم فهيم - مسئول أمن الكاتدرائية المرقسية بالإسكندرية"



I'm not angry at the one who did this,

## Recalling Paul's sufferings

I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. (2 Cor. 11:23-26)



# CONCLUSIONS

- While we should do all we can to fight for freedom of religion for **all people** worldwide, we need, at the same time, to make sure that we are teaching **Christians** what the Scripture says about suffering and persecution.
- This is best summarized by Jesus as:  
**"Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"** (2 Tim 3:12).
- They need to accept it knowing that "...our **light and momentary troubles** are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." (2 Corinthians 4:17)

