

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org
Encouraging Christians to guard their heart January 2022

**When Christianity Stops
“Saving”: Preparing to
Persevere in Persecution**
by Becky De Nooy



For most of America’s history, being a Christian has conferred cultural cachet, claims Dr. John Piper. Christian faith was considered “normal, good, patriotic, culturally acceptable.” But those days of respect for Christians, he says, are over. A scornful society now deems your Christianity a liability, though—praise God!—eternity will not.

Our brothers and sisters in the worldwide church have seldom felt the ease we experienced for 350 years. For them, “counting the cost” meant choosing to risk profession, home, health, family—even life itself—to bear the name *Christian*. We Americans admired their high-priced devotion from afar, with rare warrant to wonder if such extreme sacrifice

might one day be demanded of us.

While believers everywhere have suffered for the cause of Christ, most “persecution” Americans faced was of a watered-down variety. But now institutionalized persecution is looming—or here, if you’ve already lost your livelihood or spent a weekend in jail for your biblical stand. Compared to the rest of the world, we still enjoy religious freedom, but that’s changing, and it’s time to take heed. Our unusually blessed past no longer portends our future; ignore this at your own peril, and at the greater peril to your testimony. Absent divine intervention or the Lord’s return, recent events suggest outright persecution is in America’s imminent future. Understanding this is crucial, since lack of preparedness will hinder faithful witness.

Writing about the crushing mental pressure imprisonment caused him, American missionary Andrew Brunson, detained

two years in Turkey for his faith, recalled, “Being thrown in prison had been such a drastic, unexpected change—it simply hadn’t happened to any missionaries in Turkey, so I had never prepared myself. I couldn’t cope with the horde of questions plaguing my mind.”

In God’s providence, Pastor Brunson emerged from his ordeal with his faith intact. But months of vacillation before his ultimate victory illustrate the prudence of preparation. If we expect to give a good account of the worth of our Lord and of the preciousness of our faith, we must prepare for persecution now. This is an urgency which cannot wait.

Yet how can flesh and blood prepare to pay a price—perhaps the ultimate price—for faith in Christ?

In a lifetime of learning from the persecuted, I’ve noted core beliefs and disciplines common in believers who persevered. But my conscience con-

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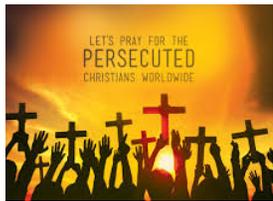
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victs me: untested and unproven, how gravely inadequate I am to instruct others. Help me, Lord, to see my weakness; then please kill my pride and keep me from falling! May God, who raises the feeble and creates overcomers, use their example to your strengthening—and mine—in the hour of trial.

1. Embrace your matchless treasure. You possess *nothing* which matches the worth of your faith and your salvation in Jesus Christ.

2. Expect persecution. Our Master's suffering was unique, but no servant is above his master. Jesus called us to count the cost, promising the world would hate us as it hated Him. Persecution is your Christian birthright; expect it.

3. Pray for power. Without the strengthening of the Holy Spirit, no one could ever stand.

4. Resolve to stand. When the thumbscrews come out, denial will be your impulse without a conscious commitment to faithfulness. Resolve now to stand by the power of the Holy Spirit.

5. Be inspired by the persecuted. The book of Hebrews describes the great cloud of witnesses surrounding us. God transformed these broken vessels into heroes of the faith who boldly owned their Savior. His empowering them in their trials proves His power to uphold *you* in your trials. Be inspired by the witnesses in the Voice of the Martyrs newsletter and in books such as *Tortured for Christ* or *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. Then aspire to be like them.

6. Pray for the persecuted. Praying that others will persevere in their Christian stand despite hardship and persecution is a healthy reminder of the cost—and the value—of our inheritance in Christ.

7. Emulate the persecuted. Put to death your fear of opposition and ridicule. How delusional to expect to withstand se-

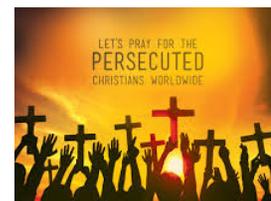
vere persecution later while purposely avoiding mild opposition now! Then develop the habit of immediate prayer for the persecutor.

8. Memorize the Bible. Persecutors can confiscate the Bible hidden in your belongings, but they can't confiscate the Bible hidden in your heart. Commit to the constant expansion of your "persecution Bible" while you still can.

9. Pray to finish well. The Christian life is a race, with the pathway uncertain. Pray that God will strengthen you by His Holy Spirit to keep the faith to the end, no matter the cost.

Do you see it? America no longer applauds your faith; still your eternal reward shines on! Lament for your nation, but never for yourself, because if you stand firm to the end—any end your King decrees—you will hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

Whether through peace or persecution, prepare to enter that joy.



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