Review:

In a crisis the first thing you do is to not let your heart be troubled. You control your emotions and recognize that you have a choice as how you are going to react.

The second thing is to see things in an eternal prospective. One way or the other you are going to come out a winner.

The third thing that helps in a crisis situation is to know God and His Word intimately and deeply. You will handle the situation based on a firm foundation.

Fourthly, Christ did not leave us alone, we have the constant Helper, the Holy Spirit within us.

This fifth lesson deals with Christian Persecution and rejection.

The History of Christian Persecution

- Christ first warned about it.

  John 15:18-21 NKJV “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me

- The initial persecution of the early church came at the hands of the Jews and Jewish zealots.

- The Jews persecuted the disciples in Jerusalem. Then, when news of Christian conversions came in many of the Jews in the synagogues throughout the Gentile world—Jewish zealots—began to follow the apostle Paul wherever he went stirring up persecutions of those who had converted to Christianity.

- Paul suffered in many ways:

  2 Corinthians 4:8-12, “8 we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 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. 12 So death works in us, but life in you.”

2 Corinthians 11:23-27, “23 Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.”

- Foxes “Christian Martyrs Of The World” states the following about the persecutions that occurred in the early church and among Jesus’ own disciples:

“Around 34 A.D., one year after the crucifixion of Jesus, Stephen was thrown out of Jerusalem and stoned to death. Approximately 2,000 Christians suffered martyrdom in Jerusalem during this period. About 10 years later, James, the son of Zebedee and the elder brother of John, was killed when Herod Agrippa arrived as governor of Judea. Agrippa detested the Christian sect of Jews, and many early disciples were martyred under his rule, including Timon and Parmenas. Around 54 A.D., Philip, a disciple from Bethsaida, in Galilee, suffered martyrdom at Heliopolis, in Phrygia. He was scourged, thrown into prison, and afterwards crucified. About six years later, Matthew, the tax-collector from Nazareth who wrote one of the Gospels, was preaching in Ethiopia when he suffered martyrdom by the sword. James, the brother of Jesus, administered the early church in Jerusalem and was the author of a biblical text by his name. At age 94, he was beat and stoned, and finally had his brains bashed out with a fuller's club.”

“Matthias was the apostle who filled the vacant place of Judas. He was stoned at Jerusalem and then beheaded. Andrew was the brother of Peter who preached throughout Asia. On his arrival at Edessa, he was arrested and crucified on a cross, the two ends of which were fixed transversely in the ground (this is where we get the term, St. Andrew's Cross). Mark was converted to Christianity by Peter, and then transcribed Peter's account of Jesus in his Gospel. Mark was dragged to pieces by the people of Alexandria in front of Serapis, their pagan idol. It appears Peter was condemned to death and crucified at Rome. Jerome holds that Peter was crucified upside down, at his own request, because he said he was unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord. Paul suffered in the first persecution under Nero. Paul’s faith was so dramatic in the face of martyrdom, that the authorities removed him to a private place for execution by the sword.”

“In about 72 A.D., Jude, the brother of James who was commonly called Thaddeus, was crucified at Edessa. Bartholomew preached in several countries and translated the Gospel of Matthew into the language of India. He was cruelly beaten and then crucified by idolaters there. Thomas, called Didymus, preached in Parthia and India, where he was thrust through with a spear by a group of pagan priests. Luke was the author of the Gospel under his name. He traveled with Paul through various countries and is supposed to have been hanged on an olive tree by idolatrous priests in Greece. Barnabas, of Cyprus, was killed without many known facts in about 73 A.D. Simon, surnamed Zelotes, preached in Mauritania, Africa, and even in Britain, where he was crucified in about 74 A.D. John, the "beloved disciple," was the brother of James. From Ephesus he was ordered
to Rome, where he was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil. He escaped by miracle, without injury. Domitian afterwards banished him to the Isle of Patmos, where John wrote the last book of the Bible, Revelation. He was the only apostle who escaped a violent death.”

- Next, the persecution of the early church came at the hands of the Romans as ten different Roman emperors, starting with Nero, began campaigns to wipe out every Christian and evidence of Christianity from the face of the earth.

- For 250 years Christians suffered from sporadic and localized persecutions for their refusal to worship the Roman emperor, considered treasonous and punishable by execution. The most widespread of these was the Great Persecution (303–11) of the Emperor Diocletian. He ordered Christian buildings (and the homes of Christians) torn down, their sacred books collected and burned, and Christians themselves were denied the protection offered to other citizens by Roman law. Christians were arrested, tortured, mutilated, burned, starved, and forced to gladiatorial contests to amuse spectators.[4] The Great Persecution officially ended in April of 311, when Galerius, then senior emperor of the Tetrarchy, issued an edict of toleration, which granted Christians the right to practice their religion, though it did not restore any property to them.

- The Roman Emperor Constantine the Great converted to Christianity following his victory at the Battle of Milvian Bridge in 312. Under his rule, Christianity rose to become the dominant religion in the Roman Empire. In 313, Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, legalizing Christian worship.

- All throughout history there have existed pockets where many Christians have been persecuted and martyred for their faith, whether it was the 300,000 – 400,000 martyred during the Spanish Inquisition, the millions under Hitler in fascist Germany, the 40,000 shot per month in Russia at the height of Stalin’s persecution.

**Today there still exists a lot of persecution of Christians that is occurring all around the world, and even within our own country.**

- **Iraqi Christians Murdered, Hundreds More Flee**

  - Posted on: 2010-12-09 04:24:27 BAGHDAD, Iraq (Worthy News)-- Hundreds of Iraqi Christian families are fleeing Iraq’s capital Baghdad and the town of Mosul as murderers target families in their own homes and workplaces, a well-informed advocacy group said Wednesday, December 8.

  Barnabas Fund said the latest group of refugees comes amid news that an elderly Christian couple and their daughter became the latest victims of what it called "the relentless campaign" against the country’s Christian minority.

  Four gunmen reportedly raided the property in Baghdad and repeatedly shot them with silenced pistols. “The victims, Hikmat and Samira Sammak like many Iraqi Christians had left the capital and gone to live in the north. Tragically, they had just returned briefly to Baghdad to finalize the sale of their home and furniture," Barnabas Fund added.

  Two weeks ago, Christian brothers Saad and Raad Hannah were shot dead in their car workshop in Mosul, rights activists said. The incident followed the assassination of two other Christians by gunmen who burst into their Mosul home.
HOSTAGE SIEGE

"These raids come after the hostage siege at a Baghdad church on October 31 that left more than 50 people dead. The Islamic State of Iraq an Al-Qaeda front group claimed responsibility for that attack and threatened further violence," added Barnabas Fund, which has close contacts with Christians in mainly Muslim nations such as Iraq.

The militants said in statements that the "killing sword will not be lifted" and that Christians everywhere were now "legitimate targets".

"As the situation becomes increasingly perilous, Christian families are leaving Baghdad and Mosul either fleeing the country altogether or heading in waves to the northern cities of Erbil and Sulaimaniyah, in the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan," Barnabas Fund told Worthy News in a statement.

FAMILIES MOVE

About 500 families were reportedly to be on the move to the Kurdish region.

"The refugees leave behind their homes, possessions and work. And although the authorities have promised to give $400 to every family who moves, some Christians have commented that this is not enough to cover even one month's rent for a flat in the north," Barnabas Fund explained.

Dr. Patrick Sookhdeo, International Director of Barnabas Fund said that Christians in Iraq are facing the agonizing dilemma of either living in "constant fear" if they stay in their homes "or losing everything" if they leave.

"We must continue to uphold our Iraqi brothers and sisters in prayer and be ready to provide for their practical needs during this crisis," he added.

Chinese House Churches Raided, Two Pastors Missing


BEIJING, CHINA (Worthy News)-- Worthy News has just learned of two incidents of religious persecution in China, thanks to ChinaAid.

In the first, which took place in Qu County, Da Prefecture, Sichuan province, the Youqing Church on Sept. 26 was raided by police. Objects of value to the church were broken, books were confiscated, and members of the congregation were arrested and taken to the local police station. Family members of those arrested were requested to pay bail money to get the detainees out of jail.

In Sept. 29, 2010, four of the church members attempted to negotiate with Sichuan police in hopes of having the belongings that were confiscated returned to them. This was done in accordance to Chinese laws regarding places of worship. Instead of having the items returned to them, the members themselves were arrested.

In Henan province, in the Wancheng District of Nanyang City, another house church was raided. All occupants of the church were arrested except for one elderly woman.

Two foreign pastors, one from the United States and the other from Russia, both present at the time of the raid, were arrested along with their translator.

Ma Hanzhong, a member of the house church and arrested with the others was beaten. The location of the two foreign pastors are unknown at this time.
Henan province officials have threatened to sentence the detained believers to "re-education" (attempt to get them to renounce their faith in Jesus Christ) through labor.

- Other locations of continual persecution of Christians are Pakistan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Cuba, Turkey, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Iran.

**Persecution is not from God.**

- Rejection and persecution is a compliment.
  
  *Jesus said, *If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.*
  
  - Acts 5:41 The apostles had been beaten for teaching in the temple. *So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.*
  
  - Philippians 3:10 The Apostle Paul wrote that he wanted to share in the sufferings of Christ. *…that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings…*
  
  - 2 Cor. 1:3-4 When you are rejected or persecuted, God is always there, through the Holy Spirit, to comfort you.
    
    *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation…*

**Persecution is from People**

- Most problems we have involve other people.
  
  - Many times Satan will try to get to you through other people.
  
  - 2 Timothy 3:12 *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*
  
  - If you have never run into the Devil, you must both be going in the same direction he is going. If nobody disagrees with you, if no one gets rubbed wrong by you, you must be going down stream with them and not upstream in the opposite direction.

**Persecution and Rejection is not Personal**

- If a person is rejecting your trying to teach them, they are rejecting God. It’s not personal toward you, it’s personal toward God. They are rejecting Jesus and God.

- Their defense mechanism is that if they can discredit and reject the messenger, that justifies them to reject the message.
  
  - Just know that if you are being persecuted or rejected, that it’s not you that they are hating. They just hate to feel guilty or convicted.
  
  - The homosexual crowd is wanting to have “wrong” be accepted as “right” so they won’t feel guilty of sinning.

The Christian’s Survival Kit
Persecution and Rejection in the U.S.

- More Christians died for their faith in the twentieth century than at any other time in history, says Christian Solidarity International. Global reports indicate that over 150,000 Christians were martyred last year, chiefly outside of the United States. However, statistics are changing: persecution of Christians is on the increase in the United States.

- Persecution for our beliefs or witnessing for Christ here in the U.S.A. is seen in:
  - The entertainment industry and syndicated media increasingly vilify Christians.
  - It involves losing friends, being refused jobs, getting fired from jobs, a few church buildings being burned. This is in contrast to imprisonment, loss of life and limbs, as in other countries.
  - But, we should not assume wholesale persecution cannot happen. We have the blessings of freedom because our nation was established on Christian principles. If we don’t protect our Christian freedom rights we could lose them and could experience real persecution.

- Jesus said, “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.” Matthew 10:34-36

- He also said, But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, Mt. 5:44

- King David sings, “When my father and my mother forsake me, Then the LORD will take care of me.” (Psalm 27:10)

- You will be in a position to receive much more than then you have left behind. Jesus himself promises, “there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.” Mark 10:29-30

- Matthew 5:44-45 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (or hurt you), so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. For He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.