

INTRODUCTION

1. Tonight we are looking once again at the subject of “True Discipleship.”
2. In our last study together we said that there are three things a true disciple forsakes:
3. He forsakes his life, his possessions, and his family.
4. As he forsakes those things that are dear to him to gain Christ, there will be consequences.
5. And that is the feature that I want to talk about tonight.
6. “Festo Kivengere, a leading evangelical minister in Uganda, wrote a book called ‘I Love Idi Amin.’ He described the history of the church in Uganda, and in the following excerpt he told of the first Christian martyrs in the nation’s history:

‘Earlier that same year, 1885, three Christian boys had shed their blood for Christ in Uganda. The king had ordered arrest of these page boys in an effort to stamp out Christianity. The eldest was fifteen and the youngest was eleven-year-old Yusufu. They held fast their faith and staked their lives on it. Though people

were weeping and their parents were pleading with them.

At the place of execution they sent a message to the king: Tell his majesty that he has put our bodies in the fire. Soon we shall be with Jesus, which is much better. But ask him to repent and change his mind, or he will land in a place of eternal fire and desolation. They sang a song which is now well-loved in Uganda as the 'martyr's song.' One verse says, 'O that I had wings like the angels.' I would fly away and be with Jesus!' Forty adults came to Jesus the day the boys died. This was a new kind of life, which fire and torture could not control.

We have a memorial near Kampala as the first Christian martyrs of Uganda. By 1887, the end of the first decade of the church, hundreds had died. There were martyrs out of every village that had believers. They were only beginners, they knew little theology, and some could barely read, but they had fallen in love with Jesus Christ. Life had taken on a completely new meaning. The value of living and of living eternally had been discovered. They were not hugging their lives, but ready to give them for Jesus. During these dangerous days, there was an

immediate and steady increase in the number of those embracing Christ” (Quoted by John MacArthur, *The Hallmarks of Discipleship*, 25).

7. That story illustrates what it means to follow Jesus Christ.
8. It is also a true test to determine if you really have forsaken everything to follow Jesus Christ.
9. As we study the Bible, we see that persecution is a consequence for following Jesus.
10. Jesus in John 16:33 we would be persecuted by the world: *“In the world you will have tribulation.”*
11. He also said in John 15:20-21, *“If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.”* [Guess what? They DID persecute Jesus. And they ARE persecuting believers.]
12. Paul referred to persecution as a gift like salvation is a gift. He said in Philippians in 1:29-30, “For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, 30 having the same *conflict* which you saw in me and

now hear is in me.”

13. When he wrote to the Thessalonians he reminded them that they “became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in *much affliction*, with joy of the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess.1:6).
14. From all of these passages, we can say that all of this occurs because of the gospel and because of godly living (cf. 2 Tim.3:12).
15. When you surrender your life to Jesus Christ, Satan is not going to like that. It’s equally true that when you live a godly life in the midst of an ungodly world, the world reacts and sometimes the reaction is negative.
16. Jesus said in Matthew 5:11 that persecution can come in the form of being “*revile[d] and persecute[d]...*, and *say[ing] all kinds of evil against you falsely* for My sake.”
17. He also said that you will be hated and excluded in Luke 6:22: “Blessed are you when *men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil*, For the Son of Man's sake.”

18. Paul adds to that list in 1 Corinthians 4:12-13 by saying he and his companions were *“reviled...persecuted...defamed...made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.”*
19. The word “defamed” (dusphemeo) means, “to speak injuriously.” Some manuscripts have the Greek word blasphemio which means to “rail at or revile.” It is used of humiliating or scornful speech or a slanderous speech.”
20. This word is also used in Matthew 27:29 when Jesus was on the cross. It says that those who passed by *“blasphemed Him, wagging their heads.”*
21. In Acts 4 when the apostles were put in custody because they “taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (v.2), they asked them, “By what power or by what name have you done this?” (v.7), referring to the healing of the lame man in the temple (3:6-7).

Peter responded by saying in verses 8-12, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be

known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

After the leaders took council as to what to do with these men, it says in verses 18-21, “And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.”

22. In this situation, the apostle were “threatened” (v.21) and told not to “speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.”

23. This sounds like it was written today.
24. When you speak publicly today about Jesus sometimes you are told that you will go to jail, or lose your job or be sued if you continue to speak in this name.
25. Sometimes it goes further like in other countries.
26. To this day Iran has not released Pastor Saeed who has been in prison for over a year.
27. In Acts 5:40, after the apostles were brought back before the authorities and told to not to teach in Jesus' name, it says they were "beaten" and again "commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go."
28. The word for "beaten" is *dero*, which comes from the root word *der* which means "skin." The word primarily meant to "flay (or "strip off the skin" Webster), then to beat, thrash or smite." The usual meaning is that of thrashing (flogging) or cudgelling ("to beat with a short, thick stick or club" Webster) and when used of a blow it indicates one of great violence" (W.E. Vine, Vine's Expository Dictionary,

95-6).

29. Persecution of this nature was no different than other kinds during this time.
30. Under Nero's reign, "some Christians were sewn inside skins of wild animals and torn at by fierce dogs. Shirts stiff with wax were put on others, and they were then tied to poles in Nero's garden and set on fire to provide light for his parties" (Fox's Book of Martyrs, 12).
31. Under Domitian's reign he said "that no Christian, once brought before the tribunal, should be exempted from punishment without renouncing his religion" (12).
32. Under Emperor Trajan, Christians like Ignatius, who was the pastor of the Church in Antioch, was fed to the lions because he would not renounce his faith in Jesus Christ.
33. The stories do not end, nor will they until Jesus comes back for His church and sets up His earthly kingdom and rules with a rod of iron during His 1000 earthly reign.

34. Since persecution is inevitable for a true disciple of Jesus Christ, how are we to respond when it happens?
35. First we are to commit ourselves to God.
36. 1 Peter 4:19 says, “Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God *commit their souls to Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.”
37. Second we are to glorify God in the matter.
38. 1 Peter 4:16 says, “Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but *let him glorify God in this matter.*”
39. But in order to commit yourself to God and glorify Him, you must first *be Spirit-filled.*
40. Let me invite you to turn back to the account found in Acts chapter 4 where the apostles were persecuted for preaching in the name of Jesus and teaching about the resurrection.

I. Be Spirit-Filled

A. Before Peter Gave Answer to the Council It Says He was Filled with the Spirit (Acts 4:8-13)

The word “filled” (Plestheis from pimplemi). It means “to be filled” (passive).

“The passive voice...shows Peter’s yieldedness to the Spirit’s control. He did not become filled by lengthy prayer or an emotional experience. The filling of the Spirit occurs when the believer walks in obedience to the Word and Spirit (cf. [Eph. 5:18](#); [Col. 3:16](#)). Yielding to His control releases His power in the believer’s life” (John MacArthur, Acts).

1. When you are Spirit-filled you will testify to the truth
 - a) You will not deny the truth; you will affirm it (Jn.14:6)
 - b) Jesus told His disciples in Luke 12:11-12, “Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and

authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. 12 For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

2. When you are Spirit-filled you will be bold with the truth (v.13)

“THE court before which Peter and John were brought was the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Jews. Even in Roman times it had the right of arrest. The one thing it could not do was to pass the death sentence, except in the single case of a Gentile who trespassed on the inner courts of the Temple.

The Sanhedrin had seventy-one members. The high priest was *ex officio* president. In the Sanhedrin there were priests, practically all of whom were Sadducees...There were scribes...There were Pharisees...[and] There were elders” (William Barclay, The Daily Bible Study Series: Acts, 38).

- a) Peter and John spoke boldly to this group

Prov.28:1 says that “the righteous are bold as a lion.”

“This principle is foundational to all the rest; yieldedness to the Holy Spirit is the key to successfully handling persecution. Because Peter was Spirit-filled, persecution merely drove him closer to the Lord. Lack of being filled with the Spirit is the reason the church today has difficulty facing opposition” (John MacArthur, Acts).

- b) Acts 13:46 records the boldness of Paul and Barnabas

It says, “Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That

you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.”

- c) Paul told the Thessalonians how he, Silas and Timothy spoke the Gospel boldly to them

1 Thess.2:1-2 says, “For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. 2 But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.”

B. All Christian Ministry and Witness Depends on the Filling of the Holy Spirit

1. The command is in Ephesians 5:18
2. The parallel is in Colossians 3:16
3. The results follow both passages
 - a) Praise (Eph.5:18; Col.3:16)
 - b) Thanksgiving (Eph.5:19; Col.3:17)
 - c) Submission (Eph.5:21-22; Col.3:18, 22)
 - d) Love (Eph.5:25; Gal.5:22)

II. Bless

A. We Are to Love Our Enemies

1. Jesus said in Matthew 5:44 to “love your enemies.”
2. Romans 12:20, which is a quotation of Proverbs 25:21-22, says, “Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’”

B. We Are to Speak Well of Our Enemies

1. Jesus continued in Matthew 5:44 by also saying, “*bless* those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”

The word “bless” is eulogeo where we get the English word eulogy. It means, “to speak well of.” It has this meaning in 1 Cor.4:12 and 1 Peter 3:9.

2. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:12, “Being

reviled, we *ble*ss.”

3. Peter said in 1 Peter 3:8-9, “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary *ble*ssing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a *ble*ssing.”
4. Though the word is not use the thought is applied in 1 Thessalonians 5:15 where Paul says, “See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.”

III. Pray

A. Pray for Your Enemies

1. Jesus said in Mat.5:44 to “pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”
2. The Old Testament taught that we are to love our enemies

- a) Ex.23:4-5 says, “If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. 5 If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it.”
- b) Lev.19:18 says, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.”

3. David expresses the proper attitude in Psalm 35

B. Pray for Yourself

After the apostles were first brought before the Sanhedrin and threatened we hear them praying (Acts 4:23-31).

1. They prayed that God would “look on their threats” (v.29).

2. They prayed that God would “grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word” (v.29).
3. They prayed that God would “heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus” (v.30).
4. In Eph.6:18 Paul says as part of the weaponry for the battle you need to pray “always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”

“All prayer” refers to all kinds of prayer, both personal and intercessional.

5. Pray for deliverance
 - a) Ps.7:1 says, “O Lord my God, in You I put my trust; *Save me* from all those who persecute me; And *deliver me.*”
 - b) Ps.119:86 says, “All Your commandments are faithful; They

persecute me wrongfully; *Help me!*”

IV. Persevere

A. Christ Submitted to Persecution Patiently

1. Isa.50:6 says, “I gave My back to those who struck Me, And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.”
2. Isa.53:7 says, “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.”
3. John 19:1-11
4. 1 Pet.2:21-23 says, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but

committed Himself to Him who judges
righteously.”

B. Believers Must Do the Same Knowing that Jesus
is With Them

1. Paul said in 2 Cor.4:9 that they were
“persecuted, but *not forsaken.*”
2. In 2 Cor.1:8-10 he said, “For we do not want
you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble
which came to us in Asia: that we were
burdened beyond measure, above strength,
so that we despaired even of life. 9 Yes, we
had the sentence of death in ourselves, that
we should not trust in ourselves but in *God*
who raises the dead, 10 *who delivered us*
from so great a death, and does deliver us;
in whom we trust that He will still deliver
us.”
3. He told to Timothy in 2 Tim.3:11 that he had
“carefully followed my doctrine, manner of
life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love,
perseverance, 11 persecutions, afflictions,
which happened to me at Antioch, at

Iconium, at Lystra--what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.”

4. What about what he said to the Romans in 8:33-39, “Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. 35 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

V. Rejoice

A. Because Jesus Already Overcame the World

John 16:33 says, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

B. Because They Persecuted the Prophets Who Were Before You

Mat.5:10-12 says, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

C. Because it Proves You Belong to Jesus

Mat.5:10 again says, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, *for there is the kingdom of heaven.*”

D. Because Your Reward is Great in Heaven

1. Mat.5:12 says, “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, *for great is your reward in heaven*, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”
2. Luke 6:23 says, “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.”

CONCLUSION

1. To come to Christ you must be willing to forsake your life, your possessions and your family.
2. As you do there will be consequences; you will be persecuted.
3. How are you to respond to the persecution? By being Spirit-filled, by blessing or speaking well of your enemies, by praying for them and yourself, persevering, knowing Jesus is with you, and by rejoicing!

True Discipleship (Pt.2)

Acts 4:8-13

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4. You might be here today and being persecuted for your faith, remember Jesus is with you and nothing will separate you from Him.
5. Be Spirit-filled, bless, pray, persevere, and rejoice!
6. We want to help you do that this morning as our elders come to the front to pray with you.
7. Let's pray.