

The Spirit of Glory and of God: Responding to Persecution

by Michael Haykin

Christians should stand firm in the face of persecution, living as servants of God and entrusting their souls to a faithful creator while doing good.

Duration: 54:13

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:12

Topics: "Persecution", "Suffering For Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the opposition and struggles that believers face in spreading the gospel. He emphasizes that the gospel is often not received in this world and that believers should expect persecution. The preacher references the story of five missionaries who were killed while trying to reach an unreached people group in Ecuador. He then reads from 1 Peter 4:12-19, which encourages believers to rejoice in their sufferings for Christ and to glorify God in their trials. The sermon concludes with a reminder that judgment begins with the household of God and that the righteous will be saved, while the ungodly will face a different outcome.

Transcript

Turn please to the book of 1 Peter, and follow along as I begin reading at chapter 1, verses 1 to 9, and then jumping down to chapter 2, verses 13 to 25. 1 Peter 1, beginning at verse 1, down to verse 9, and then chapter 2, verses 13 to 25. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ, and for sprinkling with his blood, may grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope for the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while necessary you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him.

Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice for joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your soul. Be subject, for the Lord's sake, to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the emperor. Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust.

But this is a gracious thing. When mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it, you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return.

When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. Amen. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God, and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner? Therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful creator while doing good. It was fifty years ago this year that five young men, missionaries, who had been planning for a long time to reach an unreached people in northern Ecuador, realized a life's dream. The people they were seeking to reach are known today as the Huarani.

In the 1950s, they were known as the Alca. A people who really lived in, for lack of a better word or description, stone age savagery. Where the average lifetime span, especially among the males, was around 30-35, where close to 70% of the males, in particular, died a violent death.

There had been attempts in the past to reach them. In 1944, in the height of the Second World War, five missionaries from the New Tribes Mission had gone in. All had disappeared without a trace, presumed slain.

And so it was in the early 1950s that these five men covenanted together to go down with their wives to reach this people group. Their names are very familiar today. Nate Saints, Ed McCulley, Roger Uderian, Pete Fleming, and Jim Elliott.

It was Jim Elliott who would say, and in fact this kind of becomes a theme of his life, he is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep. Everything that this world offers to gain the Lord Jesus Christ, what he cannot lose.

They had made some initial contact. They had actually flown over the area where they knew the Alcas fished, a beach, and in their light planes had dropped down food, things like that, to indicate that they were interested in making a contact, that they were not enemies but friends. In the early days of January 1956, they had actually also made initial contact where they had flown in and two Alca warriors and a woman had met them.

And they thought, things are going well and the Lord is opening a door here. The Lord was opening a door, but very differently from what they thought. In the middle of January 1956, after singing a hymn, which we will look at as we close this morning, we rest on thee, almighty God, they flew in.

Landed the plane, six Alcas that day came out to meet them. Kikita, Kimo, Minkaya, Tona, Dayui and Nimonga. They came out with weapons in hand.

The five missionaries had rifles with them, but they had spoken beforehand that if they were attacked, they would not fire to kill, because after all, they knew the Lord Jesus and they knew where they would be if eternity enveloped them that day. But these people did not. As they were attacked that day and one by one speared to death, one of the things that stayed in the mind of those six men who killed them, when they realized what the things they held in their hands were, namely guns, later, why did they not fire them at us? The last to be killed of those five men went into the river a little ways and there was a small hillock there sticking out of the water, stood on it and yelled out back at the killers in very poor Alca or Boroni, why are you hurting us? Why are you killing us? Kimo listened.

He was amazed that this man could speak his language, but then thrust a nine foot spear into the man's chest. When news of the deaths of these five men reached evangelicals in the rest of North America, there was shock, amazement, surprise. And yet, in one sense, we should not be surprised.

Because if you read through the Scriptures, this is common fare. Maybe not the violent death, but the opposition to the Gospel. Maybe not the violence of that martyrdom, but certainly the fact that the Gospel is not received in this world.

That this world for the believer is a time of struggle, of pilgrimage, of warfare. You have it all through the Scriptures. In fact, if you were to take out those sections that deal with this, you would lose a lot of the New Testament.

There is one book in particular, we're going to look at it now, 1 Peter, that deals in great detail with this whole issue of suffering for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is 1 Peter. In fact, that's the reason for the letter in 1 Peter 5, if you look over into the last chapter.

As Peter is summing up his book, he says these words in verse 12, By Silvanus, presumably the man who Peter dictated the letter to, by Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. The letter is a call to Christians to stand firm.

The letter rightly recognizing that this world is an enemy of God. That this creation, this world that is His world, we think of this world as our Father's world and is indeed, but this creation has rebelled against its

maker and against its creator. And this world is not a friend of grace.

Not a friend to Christians. And thus, Peter wanting to emphasize a number of things that Christians need to do in this letter. In light of that, as he comes to conclude it, emphasizes again the grace that you have received in Jesus Christ.

This is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. Be unshaken.

Now, as we look in the letter, we realize that the opposition of the gospel that Peter and the community to which he is writing have experienced has not yet reached a pitch of violence, of martyrdom. But nonetheless, it's painful. For instance, look at 1 Peter 3.14. 1 Peter 3.14 If you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you'll be blessed.

Have no fear. You'll be troubled, but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy. Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

Yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience. So when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. They're being slandered, the Christians of that day.

We know from documents outside of the New Testament, in the early 2nd century, that Christians were accused of a variety of things. Let's for a moment think of ourselves as Greeks or Romans living in the period of Peter. Have you heard about Christians in your town? You've never actually met any, but somebody's told you about them.

These people who are known as Christianoi or Christians. Well, what are they into? Oh, didn't you know? They're atheists. They don't believe in our God.

They don't believe in our God. Those are the gods who, when we worship them, they give us blessings. They give us family, and they give us crops, and they protect the empire.

They don't believe in our God. They must hate us. Why don't they believe in our God? One of the charges that comes up again and again against Christians in the early centuries is Christians ratio.

Oh, but it gets worse. Did you know that they're into incest? What do you mean? Well, they claim to love brothers and sisters. We all know what happens, don't we? One of the charges again that was raised against Christians, Christians are incestuous.

It gets worse. They're cannibals. We've heard that when they close the doors and they meet together, they actually eat the body of blood.

Christians were reviled. It's not only in those early centuries, though, that those sort of charges were made. You find the charges made down through the history of the Church.

I read just a few weeks ago a column in the National Post. It was actually a part of a book that's been written on Nell Gwynn, the mistress of Charles II, the so-called merry monarch. He actually studied his life.

It's hardly merry, but be that as it may. In the excerpt they gave, they talked about how Nell Gwynn was the antithesis of the Puritans. And then there was at least, it was a full page, there were at least two paragraphs of slander against the Puritans.

Pure slander. Now you think, well, what does it matter? The Puritans are long gone from this world. They have gone to there.

We trust their eternal reward in glory. But it typifies for me how the world reacts to Christians. What was said about the Puritans was basically untrue.

But it's typical of how the Church has been received down through the years, her good behavior slandered and reviled. 1 Peter 4, they've also been mocked. Notice 1 Peter 4 there, verse 14.

Insulted for the name of Christ. Shame cast on His name. The last few weeks we've seen the so-called Danish cartoon riots, where Muslims have risen up all around the world with violence and anger against the name, the way in which the name of Muhammad has been treated.

If you actually saw any of the cartoons, if you went online and got to see any of them, most of them are innocuous. I had to think of how the name of our Lord Jesus Christ is regularly shamed and insulted. After all, interestingly enough, Muslims regard Jesus as a prophet.

But I don't see them rising up at arms that His name is regularly used as a curse word and reviled. How different the major indication of how different Christianity is from Islam. For the Christian, our calling is to expect this, as we will see.

We worship one who was insulted and reviled, who did not revile in return. How different we are than Muslims. Those are the two indications that we have here of persecution.

Slander about Christian behaviour, insulting about their names. The latter is important because in the world in which Peter is writing, shame and glory are two major issues. They are not for us.

For us, the major issues as Westerners primarily are death and life. I think you see this in our politics in North America. How we have had numerous politicians, who if they lived in the Roman period, when shame was brought into their lives because of their activities, they would have committed suicide rather than be ashamed.

But for us, that's not a central issue. But it was for this world to be the object of ridicule and shame was a faith worse than death. No wonder it says in Hebrews 12, verse 2, that our Lord Jesus, despising the shame of the cross, endured.

There is a very interesting piece of graffiti that has been found written around the year 120. Graffiti is no new thing in the world. And this graffiti is found in the quarters of the imperial pageboys in Rome.

When excavations were being done on some of the ancient buildings, they found the area where the pageboys in the palace lived. And there is this graffiti scratched into the wall there for all posterity to see. It is of a figure in worship.

We know it's in worship because his hand is raised, a typical aspect of worship in the ancient world. And then there is another figure, stick figures, you know, that you draw when you don't have much talent, like me. And it's of a figure on a cross with a donkey's head.

And under it is, You can see that there was a pageboy in that palace, Alexamenos, who was a Christian. And he's being mocked and reviled. The shame that was associated with being a Christian.

Also interesting, below that, in another hand, archaeologists are able to tell it's another hand, is Alexamenos is faithful. Did he write it? Did another write it? We don't know. It's not yet reached a pitch of violence, but given circumstances, it would.

And if you know anything of the early church's history, you will know that the attitudes of casting slanderous accusations against Christians, reviling Christians, did reach a pitch of violence. Why were Christians attacked in this way? In the letter to 1 Peter, Peter doesn't tell us exactly in the passage we read, but if you look back earlier, in 1 Peter 3, we do get, I think, an insight into why Christians were attacked. Let me go back to verse 1. Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking.

For who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. So as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh, no longer for human passions, but for the will of God. The time that has passed suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do.

Living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this, they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, but they malign you. Amazing, you know, how many things have not changed.

The Roman world, in many ways, is a very foreign world. In fact, even a hundred years ago here in Ontario, there is much that is strange to us about that world. But there are so many things that are identical.

Verse 3 is a picture of Roman life in the first century. Sexual sin, immorality, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, idolatry. It is a picture of our world.

Increasingly a picture of where the leaders in our world want to take our society and culture. No wonder when the Christians, men and women, actually converted out of that, suddenly knew a new lifestyle and they stood against it. No wonder their old friends in drunkenness and drinking parties ask you, hey, we're going down to drink at so-and-so's tonight.

Are you coming? No, I'm not coming. What's the matter with you? You're not feeling well? No? No? And then the person will begin to share what they've experienced in Christ. That they've actually been freed.

They've been freed from the bondage and dominion of sin and brought into a living relationship with a living God. It's no wonder the world reacts to that with slander, with reviling. As we began, the world is not a friend to the church.

There's a warfare here. We sense it in our own souls, we who are in Christ. There is that old nature that still wars against all that is good and right and light.

And writ large in the world in which we live is that warfare as well. It has not yet broken out into violence in Peter's days, but it would break out into violence. Good tradition has it that Peter died a martyr only a few years after writing these words.

Jesus predicted that in John 21. It's coming a day, Peter, when you've dressed yourself and gone where you want, but another will dress you and take you where you do not want to go. A prediction, John says, of the death he would die.

And violence would break out against the church. Violence that would shatter all of the Roman norms. One of the most horrifying texts from the early church is a text about the martyrs of Lyons in southern France, year 177.

The elder of the church, a pastor, was in his nineties, a man named Pothinus. In Greek and Roman culture, this is very different from us, by the way, our culture at large, if you were to ask the average person in our culture, which is more valued, youth or age? Oh, youth! But in the Greco-Roman world, it was age. Those who had grey hair and were seniors were revered and honoured because of their age and the idea being that as you got older, you got wiser.

It doesn't always work that way. One of the most horrifying scenes is of the pastor of this church, a man named Pothinus. He's in his nineties.

He is arrested for being a Christian, and as he's taken through the streets, his bystanders are struggling to be able to get at him, to spit in his face, to kick him, to punch him. It must have been a horrid scene because it violated one of the most basic instincts of Romans and Greeks. You honour the elderly.

Did many of them know him? Probably not. All they knew was, he's a Christian. We know what they do.

And this violence spewed out on him. In fact, to be a Christian is to experience opposition. Paul says it this way in 2 Timothy 3. If anyone wants to live godly in Christ Jesus, he or she will be persecuted.

It doesn't always come to the violence we're talking about. But there is opposition to the Gospel. It may experience it in ostracism, in names, in reviling, in slander.

But there is opposition. How then should we respond to it? Peter lists here in this passage before us seven ways of response, and I'm going to add an eighth that comes from chapter 3. First of all, Peter says in chapter 4, verse 12, don't be surprised. Christians often are surprised.

After all, most of us tend to think of ourselves as pretty nice people. Why would people oppose us? We're nice people. We're just trying to do people good.

Don't be surprised. Don't be amazed. There are laws in our country to prevent violence against the Church, but there is still opposition to the Church in the news media.

Why is it that Christians are regularly portrayed in most major outlets of the media? I'm thinking here particularly of movies, usually as buffoons or fanatics. Don't be surprised, Peter tells us. Jesus says the same if you go back into John 15.

This is a persistent theme, as I've said, in much of the New Testament. John 15, verse 18. John 15, verse 18.

If the world hates you, know it has hated Me before it hated you. If you are of the world, the world will love you as its own, but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. For Jesus, this is a given.

The world hated Him. And in fact, it's not us that the world hates. It's the One that we represent.

The One who is in us that the world hates. The world can no longer do harm to our beloved Christ. But in the person of its followers, it can slay and torture and slander and revile the Lord Jesus.

Oh, look at 1 John. 1 John 3. Same theme. 1 John 3, verses 12 to 13.

We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.

The struggle between those who are of God and of the world dates back to Cain and Abel. Cain, the type of the world. Abel, the type of those who are in love with God.

And Cain slaying Abel. Don't be surprised, is the first admonition that Peter makes to us. We shouldn't be surprised if people oppose the Gospel.

For many of us, we once did that too. Don't be surprised. Secondly, the amazing thing Christianity tells us.

Rejoice. When you are attacked for Christ's sake, rejoice. Notice in verse 13 of 1 Peter 4. Rejoice insofar as you share Christ's suffering.

Now notice, the sufferings themselves are not the source of joy. The sufferings themselves are not the source of joy. If you rejoice in the actual suffering, well, you're a masochist.

Peter is not calling us to rejoice in the actual physical suffering, but rejoice in the fact that the suffering is a sign of something richer and deeper. The suffering is a sign that we are in union with Jesus. Rejoice in the fact that when His glory is revealed, we will share in that glory.

Jesus says the same. Peter here is only echoing our Lord in Matthew 5 on the Sermon on the Mount as He's finished what we call the Beatitudes. Jesus thinks about the past.

And He thinks about the prophets. Matthew 5 verse 11 Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely. Notice on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. But so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. What a privilege to be this long line of noble forebears.

One of the things that happens, it happens to a few young people I suspect, but as you get older you start to think about roots. I find it interesting that a lot of people you meet, when I tell them what I do, they say, oh, I always hated history when I was younger. But an interest in history often gets kindled as people get older and they start to think about their roots.

Where did I come from? Who are my grandparents, great grandparents, and so on and so on. For the Christian, we have rich roots. There are spiritual roots, there are spiritual forebears.

What a line to be yoked with. These men and women who suffered for Christ. The prophets, most importantly, as I said, to suffer for His namesake, is to share in the glory that will be revealed when He comes.

It has been said that if there is no cross, there will be no crown. In this world, we go as He went. He went.

Insulted, reviled, attacked, persecuted. We go the same way. In fact, persecution and opposition is a sign of who we are.

We are in Christ. And so rejoice. It's a paradox to rejoice in suffering.

Not joy in the suffering itself, but joy in what that suffering reveals, that we are in Christ. Then thirdly, Peter says, verse 15, let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or a meddler. Make sure if you're going to get attacked for being a Christian, it's not because of stupid things you do.

There are some brothers and sisters who sometimes their zeal outruns their sense, their common sense. And sometimes they say things and do things that get them into trouble and it's the silly things they say and do and then when they get themselves into trouble, well, I'm being persecuted for Jesus' sake. No, it doesn't matter to me.

We're stupid to say those certain things. So make sure that if you're going to be persecuted and opposed, it's for the real thing. Fourthly, don't be ashamed.

Verse 16, if anyone suffers a Christian, let him not be ashamed. God forgive me, me, for the times I have been ashamed to speak His name. Thinking, what would that person think of me? God forgive me for drawing back in shame because of Him who was not ashamed to suffer the cross for me.

Don't be ashamed. He didn't draw back from the cross despite its shame. The cross was reserved for criminals and for low life and for the lower classes and for slaves and non-citizens.

It was a horrible, lingering death. Our Lord's death was short compared to what it normally took. It normally took about three days.

The Romans liked it because it dragged it out. The shame of the cross. Oh God, may I not be ashamed of Him.

And then verse 16, again, don't be ashamed, but glorify God in that name. That is the name Christian. No wonder in the early church when people were asked on trial for their faith, what is your name? And they would say, I am a Christian.

No, no. What's your name? I am a Christian. You know, because of the history of the church, we've tended to modify that name with adjectives.

You know, I'm an evangelical Christian. That means I'm not a Roman Catholic and I'm not a liberal Protestant and I'm not Greek Orthodox. And then, oh, I'm a Reformed evangelical because in the widespread of evangelicals, I'm one of those who embraces Reformed theology.

But bottom line, what am I? I am a Christian. We live in a world that is so interested in finding its identity. Here is an identity that gives you entitlement to glory.

I am a Christian. I have put my faith in Jesus the Christ. I am a follower of His.

Again, as we saw, as He went, so do we go. So, on 1520, the passage where Jesus is talking about if the world hated you, well, if the world hated Him, it will hate you. Then notice what He says in verse 20.

John 15, 20. Remember the word I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecute Me, they will also persecute you.

We're His servants. The greatest thing in life that I can be is to be a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. To live for Him and His purposes and His pleasures and His glory.

That gives me meaning and stature. I'm a Christian. May God enable all of us who name that name not to be ashamed, but to glorify God in that name.

And then, sixthly, verse 19. I've dumped over one if you've been following. I'll come back to that in a minute.

Therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. Notice, suffering is according to God's will. Suffering is not a sign of God's displeasure.

It is actually, we're talking about suffering for Christ's sake, it is actually a sign of God's will. How should we react when people slander us for being Christians? When they say names about us? When they insult our Lord Jesus? Do we react as the Muslims do? At least a significant sector of Muslims. Well, death to anybody who insults Jesus.

Take their heads off. May the government ban the use of the name Jesus as a swear word. You may have seen, if you went on the internet, some of the signs of a huge rally of quite tens of thousands of Muslims in London after the Danish cartoons broke.

And the signs were horrifying. Death to anyone who insults Muhammad. Execute them.

Europe, your 9-11 is coming. Is that the way we react? No. We react with love and kindness because we serve One who when He was spit upon and mocked and slandered and lies said about Him, He did not revile and return.

This is the Christ we serve. If we are His servants, we go as He went. And we love and do kind deeds.

Those five men that we began with. They had rifles. They knew that in those rifles were power.

They could collect contemporary jargon. They could take down those Alka warriors. Like that.

But they followed the Christ who gave His life for sinners. Who took upon an insult and shame. Now how is all this possible? Embedded in this text is one statement which I think the whole thing hinges on.

In verse 14. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests on you. What we've been describing is not normal human reaction.

I know it. You know it. You know when somebody attacks your name.

How do you feel? The wheels start to turn in your head. And you start to think of all the things that you can say in response to tear that other down. Sometimes, and we know the violence that this world spews forth because we see it in our own breath.

We sense those urges in us for violence and violent reaction. How is anything that Peter describes here possible? It is because we are indwelt by the Spirit of the living God. It is not in our strength that we will withstand persecution.

It is in His strength and His enabling Spirit that we have sung about this morning. No wonder Paul, for instance, when he's talking to Timothy about persecution in 2 Timothy 1, 6-7, he turns him to the Spirit. 2 Timothy 1. For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

For God has given us a Spirit not of fear, but of power and of love and of self-control. No wonder Paul points to Timothy. Don't look to your own inner resources to stand for Christ in this day.

Look to the One who has come to indwell you. He is a Spirit, primarily, Paul says, of power, and that's where he wants to emphasize, but also of love and self-control. It is the Spirit who will enable you to do that which is humanly impossible.

There's a movie just coming out on the life of a woman named Sophie Scholl. She was 21 when she was executed in Nazi Germany because of her passive opposition to the Hitler regime. When her mother saw her for the last time, she had only a few words, only time to say a few words, and she said to Sophie these words, Sophie, Jesus.

It was in the strength of Christ that that young woman, along with her brother, and about four or five other young men and women were beheaded in 1943 because of their refusal to go along with the Nazi regime, because they knew a higher transcendent power, namely God and the Lord Jesus Christ. How did they do that? The man who was involved in actually executing Sophie said he had never seen a woman go so calmly to her death. It wasn't her.

It was the one who indwells her. No wonder then, Peter says, take heart, be encouraged. The one who indwells you, namely the Spirit, is much stronger than all the powers of this world.

There is one final text, and I don't have time to go into this in detail, that I would refer you to. Having the Spirit to help us doesn't mean we don't use our minds to respond lovingly, but with the truth to attacks on Christianity. 1 Peter 3.15 where Peter says, be prepared always to make a defense.

There is a place for Christians to say, no, no, you've got us wrong. You've got us completely wrong. This is why I'm a Christian.

Because of who Jesus is and what He has done and how He fulfills prophecy and why it makes sense in the world in which we live. There is a place for using our minds in defending the faith. But at the core of it is this leaning on the Spirit, having the Spirit help us, displaying His fruit in our lives.

We live in a world in which the church is under heavy attacks. This sort of thing we've got here, the freedom to gather like this, is quite unusual in many parts of the world. In northern Nigeria there would be the fear that Muslims from a neighboring village might come in and level the church and kill many of us.

In Sudan it's been going on, there's a lull in it now, but it's been going on for 25, nearly 30 years. Muslims from the north coming down and killing and pillaging and selling young men and women into slavery. In China, China is still the most virulent opponent of the Gospel.

In some of the countries of the former Soviet Empire, places like Belarus, there's been increasing crackdowns. A man that I sat at dinner with a few years ago, a man named Georg Vievovsky, is in prison currently because Belarus has ruled what he's doing, preaching the Gospel, illegal. We live in a world in which the church is heavily persecuted.

If we have no idea about it, shame on us. We're living in a fool's paradise. We should be aware of brothers and sisters.

That's what it says in Hebrews 13. In Hebrews, as he's closing the letter, remember those who are in prison. As though you were in prison with them.

And those who are mistreated, since you are also in the body. Remember those who are in prison. One of the things that is on the information table at the back is the latest issue of the Gospel Witness dealing with the persecuted church.

And the first article is very sobering by a man named Penner, in which he details, in personal terms, some of the persecution that's going on around the world. Even places like Cuba. One of the things that, when I drive into work, I drive up Jarvis Street, the Cuban government must have bought one of the signs, because it's always got this sign for Cuba.

Cuba C. And it's got all the, you know, lovely couple on the beach. The registrar of the school I teach at was down in Cuba teaching in the interior recently. And there was a spy in the congregation who was teaching who reported him to the authorities.

And he was shut down. His passport taken. And the likelihood that he'll ever get back into Cuba to teach again is unlikely.

It's not a place of freedom. That's the world in which we live increasingly. I haven't mentioned anything about Islam and all of its attacks on the church.

We need to be in prayer for these brothers and sisters. You need to know about it. Secondly, as we think about this whole area, we need to realize that in the providence of God, so often this is the way the church has grown.

All of those six men who killed the five missionaries I referred to at the beginning became believers within the next few years. Menkaie actually baptized the son of the man he slew, Nate Saint, Steve Saint. Dikita, one of the men who was there that day, I'm not sure if he's still living.

He was still living in 1996. He was interviewed and he said, I'm forgiven. I know I'm forgiven.

When I get to heaven, I'm going to find Nate Saint. I'm going to put my arms around him and we'll be friends forever. Only the gospel can do that.

Only the gospel can turn violent persecutors of the church into the lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ. You don't know the story of what God did in those people. You need to read Elizabeth Elliot's Shadow of the Almighty.

The widow of Jim Elliot, who after her husband's death, went in with her little daughter and ministered in and among those Alcas for about eight years and saw all of those killers come to Christ. That Alca or Walroni church is now sending out missionaries. It's a fabulous story.

It's the power of the Spirit of God. And then thirdly, we need to rely on the Spirit in our own personal lives and our own testimony. We need to be men and women who cleave to God, who walk in the Spirit.

Who, as Peter says, have done with the passions of this world and live for Him. This is Jim Elliot a few years before his death. He's talking about that passage in Hebrews 1. He makes his ministers a flame of fire.

He says these words in his diary, Am I ignitable? God, saturate me with the oil of the Spirit that I may be aflame. Oh God, preserve me from a life of barrenness. May God enable us who are believers in the Lord Jesus to be preserved from a life of barrenness.

To be aflame with the Spirit. This world is passing. There is a great world to come.

God has placed us here for His eternal purposes. May we be found faithful. You may be here this morning and you're not a Christian.

You're not in Christ. In fact, in your heart, really if we were to dig down deep enough, there is enmity to the Gospel. A passage like this is calling you to put your faith in Christ.

To realize that this world and all of its goals and ambitions is passing and will one day be burned up, reduced to ash and cinder. And you will find yourself in the loneliness and the awfulness of hell. And what we've looked at this morning, the call to you, to put your faith in Christ.

To become a Christian. To know Him who is, to know life eternal. To follow the Lord Jesus on His, yes, hard road, but a road that leads to glory.

He or she is no fool who gives up what he or she cannot keep to gain what she cannot lose. One day death, if the Lord tarries, will claim us all. And nothing we own in this world will go with us.

Nothing. Oh, I know the Egyptian pharaohs used to bury their pharaohs because of all the stuff that archaeologists are delighted to find, but those men and women were not using that stuff on the other side. But, oh, to have Him, Christ.

That is why those five men were willing not to fire their rifles at those outcasts. Because they knew that if they were slain, they would have Jesus. If you're not a Christian this day, may you ponder and reflect on these things.

And may God, by His mercy and Spirit, bring you to put your faith in the Lord Jesus. Let us pray. Father, we thank You for Your Word that is so relevant to our day.

Speak through it to all of Your people this day. Build up Your people. Strengthen them.

Make us to stand firm in Christ. And those who are not Christians this day, oh God, bring them to a saving faith in Your Son, our Lord Jesus. Amen.

We want to sing the hymn actually.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11730.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/michael-haykin/the-spirit-of-glory-and-of-god-responding-to-persecution/>

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