

The Ultimate Price for Loving God
Rev. 12:11

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

This past month we have been collecting an offering that will be used to help persecuted Christians around the world. We have tried to give you a glimpse of some the things that Christians face in other parts of the world.

Many of these people face much more than ridicule or discrimination. They face physical dangers and even death. As I look at the state of Christianity in America I wonder if American Christians would be up to the test. We get upset when someone doesn't treat us fairly. What would we do if they began locking us up in jail and beating us? Could we stand in such a situation?

Believers in the first century were also faced with similar trials. John the Baptist was beheaded for speaking out for God's moral standard, even in the face of the king. Jesus our Lord and Savior suffered tremendously at the hands of those who wanted to inflict on Him more suffering that was humanly possible to endure. And then they nailed Him to the cross and mocked Him as He hung there. Later the Jews in the hardness of their hearts stormed on Stephen and took him and stone him to death rather than listen to God's truth about themselves. Then Herod put James to death and would have done the same with Peter if God had not intervened.

Then we see the many sufferings of the Apostle Paul who himself had once been a persecutor of Christians. As matter of fact God had said that Paul would suffer many things for God's cause. Paul himself gives us a short list in 2 Cor 11:23-28

23 Are they ministers of Christ? — I speak as a fool — I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty

stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness — 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. NKJV

I wonder if we have it backwards. We think that we are rich and those in third world countries are poor. But they often purchase what we could not pay for. They might give three or four months wages to buy a New Testament. Would we do that here. Would we do that who do not even open our New Testaments for months at a time? When called to lay down their lives they do it without hesitation while we here can hardly give God an hour a week. Do they know something we do not? Maybe it is that they have much more than we do. Maybe we are the ones to be pitied, for Jesus said that those who would save their lives would lose them but those who lose their lives will have them. Mat 10:39

Luke 14:26

26 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. NKJV

Acts 20:24

24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. NKJV

Acts 21:13

13 Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." NKJV

Hebrews 11:35-38

35 Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented — 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. NKJV

Revelation 2:10

10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. NKJV

Revelation 2:13

13 "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. NKJV

Revelation 20:4

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ

for a thousand years. NKJV