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## COMPLEX PERSECUTION

Did you hear about the guy who told his friend, "I wouldn't feel so paranoid if everyone wasn't out to get me." Maybe you feel that way some days !

For Christian believers in much of the world, someone is out to get them. This month many churches observed the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. You can get more information at [www.Persecution.com](http://www.Persecution.com)

Persecution afflicts Christians in some 55 countries of the world, 42 predominately Islamic. A Christian martyr dies every 5 minutes. More than 200 million believers are in danger of life, liberty, and property – simply for believing in Jesus or sharing the Bible message.

Most persecution occurs in "the 10-40 window" between approximately 10 degrees and 40 degrees latitude north of the equator. That's mostly Africa and Asia, where most Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists live, regions with high concentrations of people unreached by the good news about Jesus.

1 Peter 4:14 says *"if you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."* Peter says to make sure you don't suffer as an evildoer, and don't be ashamed to suffer as a Christian, but to glorify God.

Maybe you're thinking that's easier said than done. Yet, YOUR life and possessions are not in immediate danger of an anti-Christian rabble, are they?

In America, Christians are increasingly sidelined, ridiculed, and legislated against. Discrimination against Christians seems to be the only sort allowed by the growing politically-correct crowd.

But fellow believers in other parts of the world would rightly be surprised and disappointed if you allowed such relatively minimal pressure to silence your joyful sharing of the good news about Jesus.

Peter himself experienced imprisonment and beatings for preaching Jesus. His response to the authorities was *"we must obey God rather than men."*

Someone has well said "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Christianity thrives under persecution, and more people are coming to Christ today than at any other time in history, even in countries where persecution is highest.

Perhaps more persecution will be needed in America for the church to become healthy and growing and reaching out to a needy world.

Acts 14:22 tells us that in the midst of persecution, Christian leaders *"strengthened the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."*

Christians trust the Lord no matter what -- IN whatever happens to us and FOR every circumstance that God in His providence brings into our lives. Your purpose on earth is not your own convenience or comfort, but to communicate Christ, as His ambassadors of truth and grace.

Trusting Jesus is not some spiritual way of escaping the trials of the world. It IS your strength as you go through troubles and tribulations.

Could it be that if you're not experiencing some measure of persecution because you are living for Jesus, that perhaps you're not really speaking and acting in His name after all ?