

What Must We Do Today to Prepare for Suffering?

How can Christians in the west prepare for suffering? All believers everywhere must form a theology of suffering, including children of God sitting in comfort and enjoying many of the freedoms of religion (for now). How must Christians prepare *today* for the persecution *tomorrow*? What can be done? **This essay provides 4 vital keys.**

1. Know.

Everything starts with the knowledge of God. Christians must strive to know God. Not just theological terms and concepts and theories, but God Himself. Theories and methods wane and lose their luster over time. But the study of God never grows old and men of God never tire of studying deeply the beauties and glory of God. To know God rightly, believers must know Scripture. God is to be sought through His sufficient and complete revelation of Himself contained in the 66-books of the Bible. Thus, we must strive earnestly and labor hungrily to know God, to commune with Him, to experience His love, to bathe in His excellencies, and to rejoice in *Him* for who *He* is. Without this proper foundation of knowledge sourced in Scripture, all else will fail for it is foundationless. Thus, let us *know* God.

2. Grow.

After a proper knowledge of God that comes through studying deeply the Holy Scriptures, and as this discipline continues throughout the Christian's life, the believer can prepare to suffer by growing steadily and earnestly. Like a tree that is watered with water, over the course of time, it grows and strengthens and soars high into the sky so also it is for the child of God. With time and with diligent watering from the Spirit and the Word, children of God grow in strength, courage, depth and influence. Thus, every Christian is to work hard to be a growing Christian. Of course, God is the One who grows His people and conforms them into the image of Christ. But in so far as the believer places himself in the God-ordained means of grace, he will find himself being matured by God, growing in his love for Christ, glorying in the fellowship with the Spirit, and withstanding any and all opposition that may come his way.

3. Go.

Christians know God and must grow in grace and in holiness. This must -- and it will inevitably -- lead the child of God to go outside the comfort zone of his own Christian acquaintances and make disciples of all nations. He will find himself relentlessly driven to take others to heaven with him. He will have an open Bible and an open map and see the possibilities for ministry that remain innumerable. He will hear of the people groups around the world that still remain yet to be reached and engaged with the gospel and his heart will break within him as he earnestly beseeches God in prayer to raise up workers to send out. The Christian himself, however, will go. The more that the child of God knows God and grows with God, he will most certainly go with God to the lost and compel them to come to Christ by faith. He cannot *not* go. It's not an option. All Christians are to be missionaries and gospel-proclaimers. That's the call and duty of a Christ-follower. The mission is thus because it's the mission of God. And amazingly, the more that suffering and opposition comes, the more God's people go and cannot be stopped. Go and speak and tell!

4. Sow.

Christians go to the lost for the purpose of speaking of Christ and offering the only water that can satisfy and the only sacrifice that can appease God's wrath directed toward sinners because of their sin. Going to the lost is one thing. Sowing the seed of the gospel faithfully, tirelessly, relentlessly, and prayerfully is another component that is included. Like the sower who has God's seed and throws it out, the Christian remembers that some falls on good soil, some on hard soil, and some on superficial ground that appears to be genuine but then in reality it falls away. Sowing the gospel demands patience, it entails urgency, it imitates Christ, it includes tenderness, and it warns of procrastination. Preparing *now* for suffering *tomorrow* means that Christians know God, grow with God, go for God, and sow the seed of the gospel in any and all parts of the world so that Christ's Name would be supremely glorified.