

Would You Die For Christ?



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

Would You Die For Christ?

Learn about the true commitment you should make to Jesus Christ

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Study Number: DGW21

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About the author: My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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Would You Die For Christ?

Would you die for Christ? If your faith was ever threatened in this way, would you be faithful to Christ – or would you renounce Him?

There are varying degrees of persecution that exist at different times and places throughout the world. However, the way that a Christian answers this question should always be the same! That is, the level of commitment that some have to Jesus Christ should not be any different than the level of commitment that others have (or have had) to Jesus Christ – simply because some are being persecuted and some are not!

Would you be “faithful until death” (as Revelation 2:10 commands) – no matter what that death was? In this lesson, we want to consider the level of commitment that Jesus Christ requires of His followers, consider the dedication that many Christians had in the past, and then consider some questions for us to use to answer the question, “Would You Die For Christ?”

You Must Commit Your Life To Christ

As we begin, let’s consider the type of commitment that is expected of those who are disciples of Jesus Christ – by appealing to a number of Bible passages. Particularly, we will be looking for whether or not Jesus Christ requires His followers to be so committed to Him that they would be willing to die for Him.

Revelation 2:10

Revelation 2:10 records part of the instructions Jesus gave to the Christians in Smyrna, warning them of coming persecution and encouraging them to be faithful to the Lord. “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.”

In its larger context, the book of Revelation was being written as a way to encourage Christians living at the end of the first century (A.D) and who would live in the second and third centuries. These Christians would experience intense persecution from the Roman Empire. The book, with all of its prophecies and imagery, encourages these Christians that God always wins – and that Satan and his allies will be defeated. The book often promises eternal life to those who would be faithful to the Lord through the point of their physical deaths – and pictures the great home of Heaven and the ultimate defeat of Satan and his allies in Hell at the end of the book! What an encouragement this book would have served to those who were enduring this severe persecution!

Revelation 2:10, therefore, finds itself in that context. Jesus was telling these Christians that they were going to experience such persecution – but, that if they were faithful to Him through the point of death, they would be rewarded with the “crown of life” in Heaven. So, as Jesus tells them, “Be faithful until death...,” let’s appreciate the fact that (for these Christians) this death could have been coming *sooner* rather than later – and in very painful ways. Clearly, Jesus expected this degree of faithfulness from His followers in the first century – just as He expects this degree of faithfulness from His followers today!

Matthew 10:27-28

Matthew 10 describes Jesus’ “limited commission” to His twelve apostles – when Jesus sent His apostles to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:6) and not to the Gentiles or Samaritans. Then, as He commissioned them to go

about this preaching work, He gave them specific instructions throughout this chapter.

In Matthew 10:16-17, Jesus warned, “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues.” Then, in verses 21-23, He said, “Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”

Finally, consider Jesus' instructions to His apostles in Matthew 10:27-28: “Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

Clearly, Jesus expected His apostles to be willing to suffer for Him – and not be afraid to tell His word boldly among all the people, regardless of consequences. In fact, Jesus said that they needed to fear God more than they would fear what men could do to them! Men could only destroy their physical lives by putting them to death; God could destroy their souls by condemning them to an eternal Hell! In fact, He goes on to tell them (in verses 32-33) that they must confess Him before men (promising that He will confess them to His Father if they do); and warns them about denying Him before men (promising that He would deny them before His Father if they do)! This is the kind of dedication Jesus expected out of them – and is the kind of dedication that He expects out of each one of His followers! Each individual must fear God rather than fearing men – and never be guilty of denying Jesus Christ before men.

Matthew 16:24-27

Later in the book of Matthew, in chapter 16:21-23, “Jesus began to show His disciples that He

must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.” Peter, in response to this, rebuked Christ, saying, “this shall not happen to You!” However, Jesus knew that these things must happen in order to fulfill God's plan of redemption.

After this exchange, in which Jesus demonstrated His willingness to give His life for the sins of the world, Jesus issued the following instructions to His disciples: “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works’” (Matthew 16:24-27).

This language of denying self, taking up crosses, and following Jesus Christ must not be marginalized! Clearly, Jesus intends this as complete devotion to Him – following Him even to the point of death (as He demonstrates in verse 25)! He demonstrates that we must even be willing to deny ourselves of our own physical lives – in order to follow after Him, stating that nothing is more valuable than our souls! He says that we could possess everything this world has to offer; but, that it would mean *absolutely nothing* if we lost our own souls!

Now, this level of commitment was *not* just expected of His disciples at that time – but, for all disciples of all time! Jesus was willing to deny Himself in order to be beaten, scourged, ridiculed, spat on, and put to death by crucifixion – so that we could be saved from our sins. Now, He requires that we deny ourselves of our own physical pleasures in order to follow Him, bearing whatever hardships come along with following Him (even if it means being put to death)!

2 Timothy 2:3-4

The Christian is at war! He/she is a soldier for Jesus Christ, fighting in this spiritual war against the

enemies of God. The ultimate prizes in this war are the souls of mankind (your soul and the souls of those around you). Satan and his allies are attempting to prevent as many souls from being eternally saved as possible. So, eternities in Heaven or Hell weigh in the balance of this fierce war that is being waged on a daily basis.

In 2 Timothy 2:3-4, Paul uses the language of warfare when he states: “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.” So, Paul uses this language – as do other New Testament authors (i.e. Peter and John). In fact, in the book of Revelation, there are graphic scenes depicting the battle between good and evil.

Specifically, Paul tells Timothy of the devotion that he must have as a soldier of Jesus Christ! Just as soldiers in earthly armies must be fully invested in fighting the battles of their nations, soldiers of Jesus Christ must be fully invested in fighting the battles of Jesus Christ! And, as earthly soldiers experience hardships, soldiers of Jesus Christ will also experience hardships! Paul tells Timothy to be prepared for these things – and make sure that his life is conducted in such a way that he will please the one who “enlisted him as a soldier” (Jesus Christ)!

This language, while part of Paul’s instructions to Timothy, is applicable to every Christian – as every Christian is a soldier of Jesus Christ! Every soldier is called to be fully engaged in living for the Lord and making sacrifices of himself in order to please the Lord! And, just as some soldiers in earthly armies are called to make the ultimate sacrifice of their lives for their countries, some Christians are also called to make the ultimate sacrifice of their lives for Jesus Christ! Now, while all Christians and all soldiers will not be called to make this ultimate sacrifice, all are expected to be *willing* to make that sacrifice! Therefore, you and I must be (as Christian soldiers) *willing* to make the ultimate sacrifice of our lives for Jesus Christ!

Romans 8:16-17

Romans chapter 8 is a chapter that is full of encouragement for every Christian! Paul begins the chapter by teaching that there is “no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (8:1). Then, he demonstrates that those who are Christians are children of God. Then, he pictures the great hope that all Christians have – and that nothing and no one is capable of taking the Christian away from God!

Specifically, I want us to focus on Romans 8:16-17 to see a point: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” Notice that Christians are the children of God – and, consequently, are heirs of God! But, more than that, he says that we are “joint heirs with Christ” and will be “glorified together” with Christ! What a wonderful promise the Christian has – the promise of being the heir of the Almighty God!

But, Paul says there is a stipulation for receiving this great reward. Did you notice it? Again, the passage (vs. 17) says, “and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, *if indeed we suffer with Him*, that we may also be glorified together” (emphasis added). Paul says that this reward is conditional upon our willingness to suffer with Jesus Christ – the one who suffered and died for us! So, the life of a Christian will involve suffering – because the world will hate the Christian, just as it hated Christ (according to John 15:18-21)! Persecution has not ended, though it takes different forms at different times and in different locations. The Christian, regardless of circumstances, must be willing to suffer for Jesus Christ! Then, Paul says, that this suffering will be worth it! He says (in vs. 18), “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”!

The Commitment Of Past Christians

Now that we have seen the fact that Christ requires us to make a complete commitment to Him – that we would even die for Him, I want us to consider the commitment of Christians in the past, especially Christians who lived in New Testament times (and shortly afterward).

Many were willing to die for Christ

Throughout the New Testament you read about the level of commitment that many Christians had for the Lord, demonstrating that they were willing to die for Jesus Christ. Let's consider just a few of the many passages we could consider.

(1) Acts 4:18-22. In Acts chapters 3 and 4, Peter and John were involved in performing a great miracle that resulted in a lame man being able to walk. After this miracle was performed, a crowd began to gather – and Peter took this opportunity to preach the gospel to them. As they were teaching the people, Jewish leaders came upon them and took them into custody until the next day. On the next day, Peter and John were brought before the highest Jewish court (the Jewish Sanhedrin). Thus, they were brought before many of the same individuals who had been involved in putting Jesus Christ to death a short time prior.

Before this council, Peter and John continued to speak about Jesus Christ with great boldness. Then, in Acts 4:16, the council reasoned among themselves as to what they could do to Peter and John – since it was clear that a miracle had been performed. Yet, so that this preaching of Jesus would spread no further, they determined to “severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name” (Acts 4:17). Then, consider the account recorded in Acts 4:18-22: “So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 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. For we cannot but speak the things which we

have seen and heard.’ 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. For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.”

Just a short time prior to this, Peter (particularly) had denied his association with the Lord. However, he is now standing boldly for the Lord – even before this council that has the power to put him to death (and was involved in putting Jesus to death). Peter and John, in this passage, both demonstrated their willingness to die for Christ!

(2) Acts 5:29, 41-42. In Acts chapter 5, the apostles (including Peter and John) refused to be silenced by anyone. They continued to preach boldly in the name of Jesus Christ. Then, the high priest and all who were with him rose up and took hold of the apostles and imprisoned them. When they were miraculously released from prison by an angel of the Lord, they continued preaching. When the captains and officers brought the apostles before the Jewish Sanhedrin, the Sanhedrin questioned, “Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!” (Acts 5:28).

To this charge, the apostles simply responded, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). As they proceeded to give testimony about Jesus before the council, the council became furious and plotted to kill the apostles (Acts 5:33). However, one member of the council (named Gamaliel) offered his advice that they do nothing to these men, reasoning that their movement would come to nothing if it was not from God – and warning of resisting God if it indeed was from Him. Although the council agreed with him, they proceeded to call for the apostles and beat them, commanding that they should not speak in the name of Jesus (Acts 5:33-40). Yet, verses 41-42 record the response of the apostles: “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”

Therefore, this chapter continues to demonstrate the willingness of all of Jesus' apostles to stand for the Lord – even to the point of suffering and being killed for Christ, refusing to stop preaching the gospel of the Lord!

(3) Acts 8:1-4. After the persecution of Stephen in chapter 7 (that resulted in Stephen's death), Acts chapter 8 records the expanding efforts of the Jews in persecuting the early Christians.

Specifically notice Acts 8:1-4: “Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.”

Each one of these early Christians demonstrated their willingness to die for Christ in this passage! They had just witnessed/heard about the persecution that had resulted in Stephen's death. Now, they were even willing to be persecuted themselves. Some were put into prison. Some were put to death. Some were separated from their families. Some were forced to flee from their homes. Verse 4 tells us that those who were scattered during this time of persecution “went everywhere preaching the word”! These Christians were fully committed to following the Lord and serving Him – even when it meant suffering for Him!

(4) Acts 21:10-14. As Paul concludes his third missionary journey, he is attempting to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost. Acts 20:22-24 says that he went “bound in the spirit to Jerusalem” – even though he knew that “chains and tribulations” were waiting for him there. Yet, he said, “none of the 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.”

Then, when Paul stopped in Caesarea, in Acts 21, consider what is said in verses 10-14: “And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named

Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, ‘Thus says the Holy Spirit, “So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”’ Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. 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.’ So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, ‘The will of the Lord be done.’”

Paul clearly stated that he was not *just* willing to be arrested in Jerusalem; but, that he was even willing to die for the Lord there! The reason he was willing to do this (according to 20:24) was because he did not count his life “dear” to himself; but, he was focused on serving and glorifying God in his life!

(5) 2 Timothy 3:10-12. As Paul wrote to this young evangelist, he said, “But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 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. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

As we saw from 2 Timothy 2:3-4, Paul is showing Timothy that hardships and persecutions are involved in following the Lord and proclaiming the gospel. Specifically, Paul makes reference to the persecutions and afflictions that happened to him when he was at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. Then, he said that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

Now, to fully appreciate the statement Paul has just made (that is still applicable today), we need to understand what Paul experienced in these three places. To do so, we turn to Acts 13 and 14. First, Acts 13:42-52 describes the persecution he experienced in Antioch – how that the Jews “raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region” (vs. 50). Yet, “they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and

came to Iconium” (vs. 51). Second, Acts 14:1-7 describes the persecution he experienced in Iconium – how that when “a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe...and to the surrounding region” and preached the gospel there. Third, Acts 14:8-20 describes the persecution he experienced in Lystra – how that the Jews who had troubled him in Antioch and Iconium came there and persuaded the multitudes against him and stoned him to the point they thought he was dead. Yet, Paul rose up and went into the city, departing for Derbe to preach the gospel there the next day. Then, after all that Paul encountered in these cities, Acts 14:21-22 says that Paul determined to go back through those three cities to strengthen the souls of the disciples and encourage them to continue in the faith, saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

(6) 2 Corinthians 11:22-33. As a final example of the willingness of early Christians to die for the Lord – and as another example of Paul’s dedication to the Lord, consider the things he willingly endured in his service to the Lord, as recorded in 2 Corinthians 11:22-33.

“Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. 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. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 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; 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; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness — besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.”

Many did die for Christ

The passages we have just considered demonstrate the fact that many of the early Christians possessed a level of commitment to Christ that indicated they were *willing* to die for Christ. However, I now want you to appreciate the fact that many of these early Christians *did* die for Christ. Consider the following examples from both Biblical and historical records (Note that the historical references come from the book, *Foxe’s Book Of Martyrs*. {Foxe, J. (2000) *Foxe’s Book Of Martyrs*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.}). Please realize that the secular information (from Foxe) I am about to identify is largely based on handed-down tradition – and must not be confused with Scriptural record!

(1) Stephen. Acts chapter 7 records the preaching of Stephen – and how that the crowd refused to hear or accept his conclusion. Then, the text records how that they “cast him out of the city and stoned him” to death (Acts 7:51-60).

(2) James, an apostle (the son of Zebedee). Acts 12 records the actions of King Herod and his attempt to “harass some from the church” (vs. 1). Then, verse 2 records that he “killed James the brother of John with the sword.” This was approximately in the year 44 A.D.

(3) Philip, an apostle. According to Foxe, his preaching in Heliopolis against severe idolatry led the magistrates to put him into prison, severely scourge him, and then crucify him – in 52 A.D.

(4) Matthew, an apostle. According to Foxe, he was slain in the city of Nadabar, around 60 A.D.

(5) James, an apostle (the son of Alphaeus, known as “the less” – also called Levi in Mark 2:14). According to Foxe, James was taken (at 94 years of age), was thrown down, beaten, bruised, and stoned – and then had his brains dashed out with a club.

(6) Simon, an apostle (the “Cananite”). According to Foxe, Simon was crucified around 74 A.D. in Britain.

(7) Matthias, an apostle. According to Foxe, he suffered martyrdom in Jerusalem by first being stoned – and then beheaded.

(8) Bartholomew, an apostle. According to Foxe, Bartholomew traveled to many countries in preaching the gospel; but, was killed in India by being severely beaten and crucified. After his crucifixion, Bartholomew was still barely alive – and was then beheaded.

(9) Andrew, an apostle. According to Foxe, Andrew preached in many of the Asiatic nations. Particularly, when he arrived in Edessa, the governor threatened him for preaching against the idols they worshiped. As he persisted in his preaching, Andrew was ordered to be crucified – and was fastened to the cross by cords rather than nails so that his death might be slower. He, according to Foxe, told his accusers that he would not have preached the glory of the cross if he had been afraid to die on it – and that he coveted the cross, longing to embrace it. Additionally, according to Foxe, Andrew is said to have preached to the people for the greatest part of the two days he was hanging on the cross.

(10) Peter, an apostle. According to Foxe, Peter is said to have been apprehended by emperor Nero (during which time he is reported to have converted 49 people to Christ). Then, after nine months in prison, was severely scourged and crucified with his head downwards (per his own request, considering that he was unworthy to die in the same way the Lord died).

(11) Paul, an apostle. According to Foxe, Paul was released from his Roman imprisonment (which is recorded in Acts 28). Later, he was imprisoned by emperor Nero again in Rome – and then beheaded.

(12) Thomas, an apostle. According to Foxe, Thomas was thrust through with a spear after displeasing some pagan priests.

(13) Jude, an apostle (also known as Thaddeus). According to Foxe, Jude was crucified in Edessa after performing many miracles and

making many conflicts caused resentment from people in power.

(14) Luke. According to Foxe, Luke was killed by priests in Greece, being hanged on an olive tree.

(15) Mark. According to Foxe, Mark returned to Alexandria, where some Egyptians determined to put him to death. They are said to have dragged him through the streets, left him bruised in a dungeon all night, and then burned his body the next day.

(16) Timothy. According to Foxe, in A.D. 97, Timothy opposed an idolatrous feast and angered the people so much that they fell on him with their clubs and beat him in such a severe manner that he died two days later of the bruises.

(17) Persecution under Nero. According to Foxe, the Roman emperor Nero (who persecuted the church in A.D. 64-68) “refined upon cruelty, and contrived all manner of punishments for the Christians that the most infernal imagination could design. In particular, he had some sewed up in the skins of wild beasts, and then worried by dogs until they expired; and others dressed in shirts made stiff with wax, fixed to axletrees, and set on fire in his gardens, in order to illuminate them” (12-13).

Test Yourself!

We have now seen that Jesus Christ requires you (if you want to be His disciple) to be so entirely committed that you would die for Him. We have also seen faith-strengthening examples (both Biblical and historical) of individuals were willing to die for Christ – and did die for Christ. Now, it is time for us to examine ourselves and evaluate whether or not we are so committed to the Lord Jesus that we would even die for Him! 2 Corinthians 13:5 simply states, “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified.”

As we do this, it is easy to say, “Yes, I would die for Christ.” But, what does your life really

demonstrate? Initially, Peter said He would die for Christ (Matthew 26:31-35); but, then denied Him (Matthew 26:69-75). Does your life demonstrate a pattern of full sacrifice and commitment to the Lord? If you are not willing to sacrifice your life to Christ now (when your life is not being threatened), it is simply unreasonable to believe that you would sacrifice your life to the Lord when you are facing martyrdom! So, honestly evaluate the following areas. While these are not the only areas to consider, I believe they will help you gauge your level of commitment to the Lord and whether you would *actually* be willing to die for Christ!

Are you faithfully attending the assemblies of the local church now?

If you are not being faithful to God's instruction to assemble together with your brethren now (Hebrews 10:24-25), allowing many things to prevent you from assembling (i.e. sports, hobbies, unnecessary work, television programs, family activities, etc.); why would you believe that you would faithfully assemble with your brethren during a time of persecution (i.e. if you would be arrested, beaten, or killed for assembling)?

Are you faithful in teaching the gospel now?

If you are not being faithful to God's instruction to teach the gospel to those around you now (2 Timothy 2:24-26), allowing yourself to cower from opportunities; why would you believe that you would be faithful in teaching the gospel during a time of persecution (i.e. if you would be arrested, beaten, or killed for teaching)?

Are you faithful in self-denial now?

If you are not being faithful to God's instruction to deny yourself now (Matthew 16:24-27), allowing yourself to enjoy things that are contrary to the will of God; why would you believe that you would be faithful in denying yourself of your own earthly life during a time of persecution (i.e. if you would be arrested, beaten, or killed for serving the Lord)?

Are you presenting yourself to God as a living sacrifice now?

If you are not being faithful to God's instruction to present your body as a living sacrifice to be used entirely in God's service now (Romans 12:1-2), giving your life entirely to God to be used in whatever way will bring Him glory and honor; why would you believe that you would be faithful in giving yourself as the ultimate sacrifice to God in a time of persecution (i.e. if you would be arrested, beaten, or killed for glorifying God)?

Are you being faithful to the Lord now?

If you are not being faithful to the Lord now, why would you believe that you would be faithful to the Lord through the point of death? However, if you are being faithful to the Lord – and you are being faithful in attendance, and you are being faithful in teaching the gospel, and you are being faithful in denying yourself, and you are being faithful in presenting yourself as a living sacrifice to God now, it stands to reason that you *would* be faithful to God until death!

Remember, Revelation 2:10 says, “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.”

The point that I am trying to make in this lesson is simply this: God expects you to be completely faithful to him during your life in order for you to have the reward of Heaven when your life is over. Each Christian today must be just as faithful to God as the Christians who gave their lives for Him. It doesn't matter whether we experience persecution and die for the Lord or not, we must live our lives faithful until death!

Conclusion

Romans 8:18 succinctly describes *why* anyone should be this dedicated to Jesus Christ. It

says, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” The worst earthly punishments cannot compare to the punishment of Hell (which is prepared for the devil and those who do his will), nor can they compare with the glory of Heaven (which will be given to those who faithfully follow the Lord)!

In Galatians 2:20, Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Whether we will ever be called to die for Christ or not, let us all determine to live for Him – and consider ourselves to be crucified with Christ!

Study Questions

Would you die for Christ?

1. You Must Commit Your Life To Christ

Discuss whether Christ requires that you be willing to die for Him, from the following passages.

- A. Revelation 2:10 –
- B. Matthew 10:27-28 –
- C. Matthew 16:24-27 –
- D. 2 Timothy 2:3-4 –
- E. Romans 8:16-17 –

2. The Commitment Of Past Christians

Discuss the following passages that demonstrates the willingness of many early Christians to die for Christ.

- A. Acts 4:18-22 –

B. Acts 5:29, 41-42 –

C. Acts 8:1-4

D. Acts 21:10-14 –

E. 2 Timothy 3:10-12 –

F. 2 Corinthians 11:22-33 –

Discuss the following examples (from Biblical and historical record) of early Christians who did die for Christ.

A. Stephen –

B. James, an apostle –

C. Philip, an apostle –

D. Matthew, an apostle –

E. James, an apostle –

F. Simon, an apostle –

G. Matthias, an apostle –

H. Bartholomew, an apostle –

I. Andrew, an apostle –

J. Peter, an apostle –

K. Paul, an apostle –

L. Jude, an apostle –

M. Luke –

N. Mark –

O. Timothy –

P. Persecutions under Nero –

3. Test Yourself!

What does 2 Corinthians 13:5 teach?

Answer the following questions about your faithfulness to the Lord with a “Yes” or a “No”:

A. Are you faithfully attending the assemblies of the local church now?

B. Are you faithful in teaching the gospel now?

C. Are you faithful in self-denial now?

D. Are you presenting yourself to God as a living sacrifice now?

E. Are you being faithful to the Lord now?