

## INDESTRUCTIBILITY

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SCRIPTURE HAS FACED 2,000 to 3,500 years of violent opposition, persecution and martyrdom; in addition to the same fires, wars, floods and natural deterioration that have destroyed other ancient manuscripts. Over 70 million martyrs have died, and 100,000 die each year rather than renounce God, Christ and God's inspired Word, Scripture/the Bible. Yet, 2.5 billion professing Christians and six billion Bibles thrive today. [#6B]

Words like “unparalleled and unprecedented” seem inadequate to describe the survival of Scripture/the Bible (and Christians) across the ages. The antiquity and number of surviving manuscripts, in light of violent opposition and every other form of deterioration and destruction is nothing short of miraculous. There is no comparable human frame-of-reference for the amazing, timeless preservation of Scripture, short of God's miraculous work. This indestructibility is evident throughout Scripture and consistent with God's eternal nature and plan for the eternal life of His people.

- **Matthew 24:35** – [Jesus] “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away”
- **Isaiah 40:8** (NIV) - “ The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.”
- **Matthew 5:18** (NIV) – [Jesus] – “For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”

- **John 12:48** (NIV)– [Jesus] “There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.”
- **1 Peter 1:24-25** (NIV)- “All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, <sup>25</sup>but the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word that was preached to you.

### Survival of Scripture Manuscripts:

The first five books of the Old Testament Scripture (Pentateuch) are attributed to Moses about 1500 BC or 3,500 years ago. Until the Twentieth Century, detractors claimed writing and legal systems did not exist in Moses' time. Significant archaeological discoveries proved Scripture right and detractors wrong. .

The entire New Testament, including the last book, Revelation, penned by the Apostle John on Patmos in 90 AD, was written within 60 years of Christ's earthly life, death and resurrection. During the first two Centuries, early “church fathers” quoted the entire New Testament (except for eleven verses) in their letters and writings! [#119]

In addition to persistent, violent efforts to destroy Scripture/the Bible, age, water, rot, insects, fading ink, fire, theft, war, neglect, mishandling and other common historical causes, have destroyed most of the Scriptura-era papyrus, parchment and animal skins, upon which ancient manuscripts were written.

*“Because of the climate, papyrus documents from this period [the first millennium B.C.] are likely to be preserved only if they are in a dry desert and in a cave or shelter.”*

Anchor Bible Dictionary

The burning of the library at Alexandria, Egypt (circa 390 A.D.) destroyed an estimated 40,000 irreplaceable ancient manuscripts, including the works

by the greatest thinkers and writers of antiquity, including Homer, Plato and Socrates. This contributed greatly to the destruction of ancient papyrus manuscripts for even the most advanced nations of the known world.

Given the destruction of ancient manuscripts, the survival of 24,000 Scripture manuscript copies (5,600 in Greek, and 19,000 in Syriac, Latin, Coptic and Aramaic languages) is unparalleled. Further, the proximity of Scripture's literary record to the original autographs is unprecedented. In a distant second place is Homer's Iliad, with less than 650 manuscript copies written about 500 years after the original. The number of other non-Scripture manuscripts surviving from the Scripture-era, is comparatively insignificant [#115] The inspiration and power of Scripture does not rest in the papyrus and ink any more than it rested in the first (destroyed) tablets upon which God wrote the Ten Commandments. However, the connection between God's divine inspiration and preservation of His word and the amazing 'indestructibility' of Scripture is inescapable.)

Through the consistency of Scripture, God has ensured the inspired revelation of His moral and truth standard, ways, plan, purpose and promises remained the same for all people of all times. Generational language variations in Scripture translations have been uniquely necessitated by the unprecedented survival and spread of Scripture/the Bible. Even so, the Bible has verifiably and inexplicably remained unchanged across thousands of years and many language, culture, generational and nationality changes.

## SURVIVAL OF SCRIPTURE AGAINST VIOLENT OPPOSITION:

In addition to natural causes, Christians and Scripture have additionally faced almost incessant persecution and violent opposition for 2,000 years, and have still proven virtually indestructible. From early Roman Emperors (Diocletian, Nero) through Nazi dictators, Communism and modern atheists, the Bible has withstood and outlasted all of its detractors and attackers.

Throughout history, powerful rulers (and even church officials) have persistently attempted to destroy the Bible or deny it to the "common" people. Still, Thousands of years after God inspired Scripture, the Bible remains the most widely published and accept writing of all times. Billions of Christian believers in every modern generation is a testimony to God's inspired power in Scripture and Christians.

Some of the many documented attempts by kings and leaders to destroy Scripture/the Bible include:

## VIOLENT ATTEMPTS TO DESTROY SCRIPTURE/ THE BIBLE

**600 BC - King Jehoiakim** of Judah threw the scroll of Jeremiah's prophecy into the fire. God inspired Jeremiah to write the same words again with additional material (Jeremiah 36:21-32). [#105]

**64 AD - Roman Emperor Nero** actively attempted to destroy the Bible and Christians, whom he blamed for burning Rome (which he did himself). Some believe many of the 7-million graves in 900 miles of caves (catacombs) beneath the streets of Rome are evidence of Nero and Rome's attempts to rid the world of Christians. [#8-B4]

**200 AD - Antiochus Epiphanies** - Evil ruler commonly known as "the madman" waged a bloody persecution of the Hebrew people. He attempted to

destroy all Jewish scripture and anyone in possession of it was put to death by decree of the king (1 Maccabeus 1:56-57)<sup>[#105]</sup>

### **Early Roman Emperors**

**33-300 AD - Clement of Alexandria** (100 AD) wrote, “Many [Christian] martyrs are daily burned, crucified, and beheaded before our eyes.” Christianity was outlawed by the Roman government from the time of Emperor Trajan (reign 98-117 AD) until Emperor Constantine (reign 306-312 AD). All of the Roman emperors prior to Constantine, opposed Christianity. Many of their efforts were directed toward destroying the Bible. <sup>[#105]</sup>

**300 AD - Roman Emperor Valerius Diocletian** attempted to eliminate Christians and Scripture from the Roman empire, viciously persecuting and murdering Christians. Christianity was outlawed and any copy of Scripture was burned and the families who owned them were martyred. A “victory column” was erected over the burned ashes inscribed with the words ‘extinct nomine Christianorum ‘ “Extinct is the name of Christians!” In 320 AD - Emperor Constantine offered a reward for anyone who could deliver ‘the Holy Book’ to him. Within 24-hours, numerous copies were brought out of hiding and presented to him <sup>[#105]</sup>

**361 AD – Emperor Julian (“the Apostate”)** openly declared his hostility to the Bible and sought to destroy the influence of Scripture “through any means available.” He wrote a bitter renunciation of Scripture with a great number of false accusations

**405 AD - Jerome** completed his translation of the Bible from Greek and Hebrew to Latin, so it could be read by ordinary people. He was condemned by the bishop and accused of tampering with God’s word. Still, his Latin version became the Bible of Europe. Anglo-Saxon translations of parts of Scripture, particularly the Gospel accounts appeared in England in the 7th and 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries. <sup>[#105]</sup>

**1244 AD - Disputation of Paris:** Twenty-four carriage loads of Talmuds (approximately 12,000) and other Jewish religious manuscripts were set on fire in the streets of Paris. These burnings of Jewish books were initiated by Pope Gregory IX, who persuaded French King Louis IX to undertake it. Many such burnings followed over the centuries. <sup>[#113]</sup>

After the printing press was invented in 1450, it became impossible to destroy entire printed editions of the Talmud and other sacred books.

### **1229 AD Pope Gregory IX - Council of Toulouse – and Council of Taragona**

During the Council of Toulouse (1229 AD), religious leaders decided to outlaw God’s word. “We prohibit laymen possessing copies of the Old and New Testament...We forbid them most severely to have the above books in the popular vernacular.” “The lords of the districts shall carefully seek out the heretics in dwellings, hovels, and forests, and even their underground retreats shall be entirely wiped out.” Concil Tolosanum, Pope Gregory IX, in the year 1229.

The Toulouse edict was reiterated by the Council of Tarragona: “No one may possess the books of the Old and New Testaments in the Romance language, and if anyone possesses them he must turn them over to the local bishop within eight days after the promulgation of this decree, so that they may be burned.” *Histoire de la Bible en France*, D.D. Lortsch, 1910, p.14). <sup>[#105]</sup>

**1379 AD - Wycliffe Bible** - John Wycliffe led scholars to translate the Latin Bible into English and by 1383 thousands of copies were in the hands of the English people. The Archbishop described him as “*that Pestilent wretch, John Wycliffe, the son of the old Serpent, forerunner of the anti-Christ who has completed his inequity by inventing a new translation of the scriptures.*” People who owned Bibles were hunted down and persecuted or burned at the stake with the Scriptures hung around their neck. But the spread of the Wycliffe Bible could not be stopped. 40 years after Wycliffe’s death, his body was exhumed,

burned and his ashes thrown into the turbulent Swift River. This futile act of revenge served as an unwitting symbol, as the influence of Wycliffe's English Bible swept across Europe and the world <sup>[#105]</sup>.

#### **1401 Persecution of Lollard followers of John Wycliffe -**

The De heretico comburendo ("On the Burning of Heretics"), a law passed by the English Parliament under King Henry IV of England in 1401, was intended to stamp out "heresy" and in particular the Lollard movement, followers of John Wycliffe. The law stated that "...divers false and perverse people of a certain new sect ...make and write books, [and] do wickedly instruct and inform people". The law's purpose was to "utterly destroy" all "preachings, doctrines, and opinions of this wicked sect." Therefore, all persons in possession of "such books or writings of such wicked doctrine and opinions" were ordered to deliver all such books and writings to the diocesan authorities, within forty days of the law being enacted, so as to let them be burned and destroyed. Those failing to give up their heretical books would face the prospect of being arrested and having their bodies as well as their books burned.

**1524 AD - William Tyndall English Bible** - 75 years after the invention of the printing press, William Tyndale translated the Bible into English. Against English law, it was later distributed throughout the nation. Priests and bishops burned thousands of copies of his translation as "a *burnt offering most pleasing to the Almighty God*." Before printing began, Tyndale was forced to leave England for Europe. He was apprehended and imprisoned by the Roman church. In 1536, Tyndale was strangled and burned at the stake. His last words were, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes!"

Less than three years later, King Henry VIII authorized the publication of the Great Bible. This version was a combination of the Tyndale Bible and that of Miles Coverdale. A copy was chained to every pulpit in England so that everyone could read it. <sup>[#105]</sup>

#### PAPAL OPPOSITION

**1500 – 1700s AD** - Thinking it was doing the right thing, the Roman church attempted to keep the Bible out of the hands of "ordinary people," by forcefully opposed any translation of scripture from the Latin Vulgate. Between **1525 and 1528**, more than 18,000 Bibles were produced, but only two fragments remain - These efforts largely led to the Protestant Reformation of the 1700's. (Thiessen 1949, 84) <sup>[#105]</sup>

**1731 AD- Archbishop of Salzburg** - 1731 Count Leopold Anton von Firmian – Archbishop of Salzburg as well as its temporal ruler – embarked on a savage persecution of the Lutherans living in the rural regions of Salzburg. As well as expelling tens of thousands of Protestant Salzburgers, the Archbishop ordered the wholesale seizure and burning of all Protestant books and Bibles. <sup>[#113]</sup>

**1866 - Pope Pius IX** - Even after the Reformation started, the Catholic Church identified Bible Societies with Socialism and Communism. On December 8, 1866, Pope Pius IX stated, "Socialism, Communism, clandestine societies, Bible societies....pests of this sort must be destroyed by all means." Encyclical Quanta Cura. <sup>[#105]</sup>

**1229 AD – Pope Clement XI** - In 1229 the Council of Valencia put the Bible on the index of Forbidden books stating, "We prohibit also the permitting of the laity, to have the books of the Old and New Testament, unless any one should wish to have a psalter or breviary for divine service...But we strictly forbid the above mentioned books in the vulgar tongue." The Council of Trent reaffirmed this decree. Clement XI affirmed it in his Bull Unigenitus in 1713.

In the 1890's, Pope Leo XII allowed the laity to read the Bible but only the Latin Vulgate and only with permission, stating, "the Pope forbid you try to interpret the Bible by yourself, the laity are not able." <sup>[#105]</sup>

**1545 – 1563 AD - Council of Trent** - The **Council of Trent** (Latin: Concilium Tridentinum) was held in Trento (**Trent**) and Bologna, northern Italy. Prompted by the Protestant Reformation, it was a counter-Reformation council. “The Council of Trent condemns the proposition that “the Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary for salvation.” The counter-Reformation set in progress by this council added the Apocryphal books to the canon. <sup>[#113]</sup>

#### **1624 AD - German Catholic burning of Luther’s Translation**

Martin Luther’s German translation of the Bible was burned in Catholic-dominated parts of Germany in 1624, by order of the Pope – part of the exacerbation of Catholic-Protestant relations due to the Thirty Years’ War, then in its early stages <sup>[#113]</sup>

**19<sup>th</sup> Century - The government of Korea** outlawed and tried to keep the Bible out of the nation. This condition still strongly exists in North Korea, but there is a strong Christian church and Bible presence in South Korea today.

**19<sup>th</sup> Century - The Soviet Union (Russia)** attempted to outlaw the Bible; but, is now open to the Bible and Christianity is flourishing. <sup>[#105]</sup>

**20<sup>th</sup> Century - Adolph Hitler and Joseph Stalin (book burnings)** - Throughout WWII, hundreds of Nazi book burnings and purges were conducted, with special emphasis on non-German works, such as the Jewish Talmud. <sup>[#113]</sup> – In one instance, German Nazis looted a collection of 300 ancient scrolls in Vilnius, Lithuania. The collection included 31 full Torah scrolls, 70 partial scrolls, various megillot, and books of the Prophets. Of the 31 full Torah scrolls, 18 are considered “kosher” – without defect. Upon learning of these scrolls, Josef Stalin’s office directly ordered their destruction. But a brave Lithuanian archivist by the name of Antanas Ulpis defied the orders and secretly hid them in St. Georges church. In 1990, the collection was moved to the Mazvydas Nation Library in Vilnius and in late January (2002), after a great deal of negotiation, the material was returned back to Israel.

While many of the scrolls had been cut and used by the Nazis as wallpaper, the overall intact survival of these first five books of the Jewish and Christian Bibles was remarkable. <sup>[#106]</sup> –(Gross, Netty C. “Unrolling the Past,” The Jerusalem Report. 25 Feb 2002:10; excerpted from Christ for the Nations periodical: June 2002, p13.)

**In May 1940**, during Nazi Germany’s offensive in Europe in World War II, the university library of Leuven, Belgium was destroyed by the German army and 900,000 books burned. This was after 300,000 others had burned when the library was attacked in World War I. <sup>[#113]</sup>

**21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY OPPOSITION TO SCRIPTURE AND CHRISTIANITY**  
**In 2015**, Countries where violence against Christians is the most extreme include: **North Korea, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Maldives, Eitria**. Islamic extremism and Communism are the primary drivers of persecution. Christianity and Bibles are generally illegal in these countries and Christians are often imprisoned, openly persecuted and even killed. <sup>[#112]</sup>

Christian persecution today is most severe in countries where radical Islamic groups and communism are the dominant government (and religion). In those countries Christianity and the Bible are either illegal or met with extreme prejudice. Christian persecution is openly active <sup>[#112]</sup> in Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kenya, Ethiopia and similar countries, and it is rumored that the Christian church may again be shut-down in modern Russia.

**In** many parts of the world today, Christianity is illegal, Bibles are strictly prohibited and Christians are subject to imprisonment, torture and murder. Ironically, such violent Christian persecution only acknowledges the truth, power and life-changing influence of the Scriptures they seek to destroy. Instead of ending Christianity and destroying all Bibles, persecution often fosters powerful underground Christian networks.

**In America**, prayer, Bibles and public references to God have been systematically restricted, and even outlawed, in America's public forum ...All other forms of religious expression (and anti-Christian exclusion) are overlooked and often encouraged by the liberal media and bureaucrats.

With churches on almost every corner and multiple Bibles in most homes the persecution is more subtle and conducted under the guise of "liberal tolerance" and "open mindedness." By the same token, American Christendom seems almost lulled into passivity toward persecution in areas where Christians are violently murdered and Scripture is outlawed.

- "We are sheep surrounded by green pastures, but we will not eat. We seem to have no appetite for the Word of God"

**James M. Rasbeary** - Author, *'Thou Art With Me: The 23rd Psalm'*

Ironically, it seems like Christian persecution stimulates the passionate growth of Christianity. Perhaps the persecution of His followers prophesied by Jesus Christ cleanses Christianity of passive, passionless followers. The persecution of Christians and attempts to destroy Scripture will only accelerate as the End Times approach.

**1 Timothy 4:1-2** - But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, <sup>2</sup>by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,...

**2 Timothy 4:3** - For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

**2 Thessalonians 2: 9-12** The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, <sup>10</sup>and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish

because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. <sup>11</sup>For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie <sup>12</sup>and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

Scripture/the Bible might be less violently opposed if it only presented "good advice or opinions." But Scripture uncompromisingly confronts sin with God's authoritative truth standard and the demand to acknowledge and repent of one's sin and turn to Christ for forgiveness and salvation. There is no middle-ground. Although many rebelliously reject the truth of Scripture and their own sin, calling it intrusive and judgmental.

From the beginning, Satan has undermined God's truth and credibility: "Surely, you won't die" – Genesis 3:4 (aka: "surely God loves you too much to allow anything bad to happen to you!"). This tactic still works because people are still unwilling to believe God and trust Christ. The enemy deceives these people into believing God's truth standard (and even God Himself), no longer exists. Like the ancients, they also are on the 'wide path of destruction.' They also are among those of whom Scripture declares, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..." (Hosea 4:6).

"In the last days, many false Christ's will appear, deceiving many" (Matthew 24:24). A common perception is these false Christ's will come as people claiming to be Jesus (i.e. David Koresh, Reverend Moon and others). That expectation may not be entirely accurate. Instead, many are deceived today by equally "false, non-Biblical, Christ's" portrayed by false teachers and a lukewarm church. For example, a growing number embrace a false Christ who only loves, yet, has no truth standard, judgment or holiness – and is blind to sin. Another false Christ will ultimately save everyone. Some even profess a false Holy Spirit, who "rightly divides Scripture," by revealing which parts should be ignored and discarded! These false Christ's are spreading quickly when people live comfortable, complacent lives and apathy toward Scripture prevails.

**Scripture is also Inexhaustible.**<sup>[#110]</sup>

In addition to being indestructible, Scripture is also inexhaustible. The mind of man can never fully explore or exhaust the ways and truths of God. Unlike the books of men, Scripture never becomes commonplace or loses its power or divine inspiration. Even the most familiar passages repeatedly yield unseen truths with each new visit. Scripture/the Bible is the endless “bread of life” and the “bottomless well that will never run dry.” Great scholars have studied and written entire libraries about Scripture, preached millions of sermons from Scripture and taught billions of Bible lessons --- yet, its contents are never exhausted.

The Bible/Scripture is inexhaustible because it depends on the inexhaustible resources of God, not the limited abilities, approval, agreement or even comprehension and belief of mankind.

- “The greatest proof that the Bible is inspired is that it has stood so much bad preaching”

**A.T. Robertson** – Theologian, Bible Teacher

If people had written the Bible, they would have sought human favor by complementing the wisdom, character and achievements of others. Instead, Scripture declares all to be unrighteous, lost sinners, deserving of the “just wages of sin” and “the wisdom of this world to be foolishness with God” (1 Corinthians 3:19). The Bible presents its heroes, followers and even “God’s chosen” people with all of their flaws, inconsistencies and sin. But that doesn’t necessarily mean one has failed, or the story is over when one dies! For believers in God’s grace and mercy, this life is a “win-win” proposition: *Jesus taught, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.”* (John 11:25-26 NIV).

Jesus did not promise easy, comfortable lives, but told His followers they would be persecuted and hated, as He was. He taught His followers to deny

themselves and the world’s ways. Instead of survival at any cost, Jesus taught and demonstrated that even death was better than denying Christ. In fact, almost everything Jesus taught directly contradicts the world’s teachings and ways.

Scripture reveals the love, compassion and endless grace of Almighty God toward each individual. God declares, “Love your enemies and do good unto them,” while the world declares, “do it to them before they do it to you.” Billions embrace Scripture because people know it conveys God’s truths which work; instead of human values and opinions that only ‘sound good’, but, never work.

**70 million martyrs died rather than renounce Christ and Scripture**

The persecution and murder of Jesus Christ in 33 AD was followed by the violent persecution and martyrdom of all of the original Apostles and thousands of Christian disciples. An estimated 70 million Christians have been violently persecuted and murdered for their faith and unwillingness to renounce Jesus Christ. Since 1950, an estimated 100,000 to 200,000 Christians have been martyred annually.<sup>[#112, 118]</sup>

According to the Open Doors Organization, Christian persecution today is perpetrated largely by Islamic radicals and Communist Atheists.<sup>[#108, 118]</sup>

The survival instinct is a driving force in human life. A trapped animal will gnaw off its own leg to escape a trap; people leap from tall buildings to escape a fire; a drowning person will drag down their rescuer in their clamor to survive. Yet, Christians often do the opposite, placing themselves in the path of danger and even death for the sake of others. That is why the sacrificial death of Christ and Christian martyrs for what they view as “only religion” is so difficult to comprehend for those whose lives are lived only for this world.

- “When your own life is threatened, your sense of empathy is blunted by a terrible, selfish hunger for survival.”

**Martel Yann** – Author, Life of Pi

When Jesus told His disciples about His impending death, He also warned them about their own impending persecution. But, in the presence of the Lord, they were blinded to what He was actually saying. Even with the Gospel truth fully revealed today, many still blind themselves to God's truths and ways.

*“Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.”* (John 15:20 NIV)

Martyred Christians have been imprisoned, slaughtered in arenas, used as human torches and violently persecuted, tortured and murdered for thousands of years. Yet, even in the face of persecution and death; faithful disciples of Christ stand firm, rather than renounce their Lord and Savior. The sacrificial boldness and martyrdom of Christ's Apostles was remarkable. Even more remarkable is the willingness of Christians today to follow Christ in the face of persecution and death.

*“Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’* (John 20:29 NIV)

Christian martyrdom is invariably perpetrated by those willing to do anything to stop the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is far different than those who declare “martyrdom” when committing suicide or murdering others in their attempts to impose their religion on others whose beliefs differ from theirs. Whether perpetrated by crusaders a thousand years ago or the Islamic extremists of today, this has never been God's way.

The sense of freedom and empowerment that comes to “born again” Christians, cannot be controlled by intimidation and fear tactics. Not even the violent persecution and martyrdom by the world's most powerful oppressors over 2,000 years, has been able to destroy or stop the spread of Scripture.

Perhaps this, in itself, is another reason the violent persecution of Christians has been so persistent for so many years.

Christian martyrdom does not happen because Christians place so little value on their own lives, but because they so highly value the life and relationship offered by God through Jesus Christ – in this world and the next!

- “A man is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose”

**Jim Elliott**, (Missionary martyred in the Amazon)

Those martyred for the sake of Christ sacrifice themselves for the sake of Christ's Gospel message. Christian disciples eagerly live out their faith and are even willing to die to share the Gospel of Christ with a lost and dying world. This martyrdom of disciples emulates the selfless love and sacrifice of Jesus Christ on behalf of those who often spend years in opposition to Christ and God's inspired Word.

*“Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

(Romans 5:7-8 NIV)

### **Why do Christians suffer and die rather than renounce Jesus Christ?**

It's not uncommon for those facing persecution and martyrdom for other religious or philosophical beliefs to renounce their beliefs or keep them secret. But Christ commanded His disciples to openly and actively “make disciples of others” (Matt. 28:18-20) ... in spite of the persecution He promised would follow (Matthew 5:11, 10:22, 24:9).

This is the power of God's indwelling Holy Spirit who imparts Spiritual life, transforms lives and changes fear and defeat into victory. Christianity is far more than a “religion.” It is a victorious life filled with hope and purpose that only begins in this world ... and continues forever. With faithful

Christians, “either one’s discipleship reveals itself, or the secret will kill one’s discipleship.” (Source – Barclay).

*“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. <sup>33</sup> But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven. ---- <sup>34</sup> “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. -*  
Matthew 10:32-34 (NIV)

Instead of teaching His disciples to avoid persecution, Christ taught His followers to live victoriously in the face of persecution, torture and even death. The fearless power is inexplicable to those who believe nothing exists beyond this life. But to Christians, the certain resurrection to eternal life in God’s eternal Kingdom makes clinging to this life at all costs inexplicable.

*“For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead”*

1 Corinthians 15:16-20 NIV

Suffering and even martyrdom for the cause of Christ is not a tenet or goal of Christianity. The “goal” is to actively love, trust and follow Jesus Christ in this world and live in a personal, intimate relationship with the living God. Strong Christian discipleship illuminates the world’s darkness with Christ’s light and truth. This leads those lost in darkness to either come into God’s light or respond with hatred and persecution.

Paradoxically, the persecution and martyrdom of Christians only strengthens believers to depend more fully on Christ. This vividly displays the truth and power of God’s amazing work in His disciples. Christian martyrs do not simply sacrifice themselves. They exchange temporary,

fleshly lives barely worth living, for faith-led lives worth dying for. This is a compelling witness of truth and power for a world desperately lost in confusion and hopelessness.

Foxes Book of Martyrs recounts harrowing stories of passionate Christians who suffered and died martyrs deaths during the Reformation. These were not “religious fanatics” who foolishly sacrificed their lives to send “infidels” to their deaths. They were (and still are) believers who count their own earthly lives as nothing for the sake of sharing the Gospel of Salvation and eternal life with others.

#### **God writes and preserves His word In human hearts:**

Scripture has survived intact for thousands of years because it is written in human hearts, which are far less perishable than papyrus, parchment or animal skins. Scripture also remains inspired ... or because it was hidden away in dry vaults and caves. Scripture also remains inspired and unchanged because God’s promises, prayer answers, and power “live” in Scripture, waiting only to be claimed by those willing to believe God and trust Jesus Christ.

*“Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.”* 2 Corinthians 3:3 - NIV

- “If this Book had not been the Book of God, men would have destroyed it long ago. Emperors and popes, princes and rulers have all tried their hand at it; they die and he Book still lives.”

#### **H. L. Hastings 19th Century clergyman**

The 17<sup>th</sup> Century French Philosopher, Voltaire declared that within fifty years of his death there would not be one Bible in the world. Fifty-years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society was using his house and printing press to produce stacks of Bibles. His house is now a distribution center for Bibles in many languages.

Scripture conveys far more than encouragement for the downtrodden, advice for the confused, and hope for the weary. “Faith also comes by hearing the Word of God.” There is an unexplainable heart and life-transforming power in Scripture that produces faith and translates God’s truths and ways into human discipleship. The Holy Spirit also “calls Scriptural truths to a believers remembrance” (John 14:26). But believers must first study and mediate on God’s Word, so they have something to remember.

God has divinely inspired and timelessly preserved Scripture, but He also gives all people the free-will to accept or reject His ways and truths. God’s ways and truths do not depend on human approval or agreement, but likewise, God’s inspired Scripture is not subject to change or “un-inspiration” by mankind. God even preserves the free will of those who choose to misuse or misinterpret Scripture or allow unused Bibles to gather dust.

Anyone willing to read and verify the truths of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, in Scripture/the Bible, can freely do so. But false doctrine and teachings spread rapidly among those unwilling to seek out or read God’s truth for themselves. Unwillingness to see and hear God’s inspired Word, effectively destroys more Bibles than were ever burned in the streets by the Nazis or Roman emperors!

- *“Every engine of destruction which human philosophy, science, force and hatred could bring against a book has been brought against the Bible. Why should this be? Clearly because the Scriptures convict men of their guilt and condemn them for their sins.”* <sup>[B#7-3]</sup>

**Arthur W. Pink** – 1886-1952 – Theologian, Author

## WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT BIBLE OPPOSITION AND INDESTRUCTIBILITY

### In spite of violent opposition, Scripture has proven indestructible

- *“The Bible- banned, burned, beloved. More widely read, more frequently attacked than any other book in history. Generations of intellectuals have attempted to discredit it; dictators of every age have outlawed it and executed those who read it. Yet soldiers carry it into battle believing it is more powerful than their weapons. Fragments of it smuggled into solitary prison cells have transformed ruthless killers into gentle saints. Pieced together scraps of Scripture have converted whole villages of pagan Indians.”*

**Charles W. Colson** – Prison Fellowship International

### In spite of persecution, Bible is still loved, read and studied by millions

- “No other book has been so chopped, knifed, sifted, scrutinized, and vilified. What book on philosophy or religion or psychology or belles letters of classical or modern times has been subject to such a mass attack as the Bible? With such venom and skepticism? With such thoroughness and erudition? Upon every chapter, line and tenet?” “Yet, the Bible is still loved by millions, read by millions, and studied by millions.” **Arthur W. Pink** – 1886-1952 <sup>[#110]</sup> ‘

### Like its author, the Bible is indestructible

- “the very fact of the Bible’s continued existence is an indication that, like its Author, it is indestructible. No other book has provoked such fierce opposition as the Bible, and its preservation is perhaps the most startling miracle connected with it. Just as an earthly parent treasures and lays by the letters received from his child, so our Heavenly Father has protected and preserved the Epistles of love written to His children.”

**Arthur W. Pink** – 1886-1952 <sup>[#110]</sup> ‘

**The Bible never stays destroyed**

- “A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put.”

**Bernard Ramm** Theologian and author

**Bible truth is Imperishable**

- “To what greater inspiration and counsel can we turn than to the imperishable truth to be found in this treasure house, the Bible?”

**Queen Elizabeth II**--Queen of England

**Martyrs die horrible deaths, yet Scripture and Christianity survives.**

- “Men have died on the gallows for reading it, and have been burned at the stake for owning it. Tortures too fiendish to describe have been visited upon delicate women and tender children for looking on its pages. Yet in spite of the strongest forces that Hell could unleash and in the face of the animosity of tyrants and despots, there are more Bibles in the earth today than there are copies of any other book ever written by the hand of man!”

(**Unknown** – “Rimmer, op. Cit. P. 15”).

**Scripture, is God’s unchanging Truth and man’s compass for this life.**

- “Sink the Bible to the bottom of the ocean, and still man’s obligations to God would be unchanged. He would have the same path to tread, only his lamp and guide would be gone; the same voyage to make, but his chart and compass would be overboard”

**Henry Ward Beecher** —Author, 1813-1887; Social reformer;

**Read the Bible until it sinks-in**

- “Some people like to read so many [Bible] chapters every day. I would not dissuade them from the practice, but I would rather lay my soul soak in half a dozen verses all day than rinse my hand in several chapters. Oh, to be bathed in a text of Scripture, and to let it be sucked up in your very soul, till it saturates your heart”

**Charles Spurgeon**--Theologian, Author, Bible Scholar (1834-1892)

**America is removing God from the ‘public square’**

- “The Supreme Court has insulted you over and over again, Lord. They’ve taken your Bible away from the schools. They’ve forbidden little children to pray. They’ve taken the knowledge of God as best they can, and organizations have come into court to take the knowledge of God out of the public square of America.”

**Pat Robertson** --Theologian, Author, Teacher, Evangelist

**America’s destiny is to carry the Gospel to men everywhere -**

- “The destiny of America is to carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all men, everywhere”

**John Quincy Adams**—President #6

**America’s freedom depends on Scripture**

- “It is impossible to mentally or socially enslave a Bible-reading people. The principles of the Bible are the groundwork of human freedom”

**Horace Greely**--Statesman, Writer – (1811-1872) - Editor

### **The Bible is full of warnings about false prophets and false messiahs**

- “The Bible is full of warnings about false prophets and false messiahs. These satanically inspired people have appeared in almost every generation of history.”

**Billy Graham** --Evangelist, Theologian, Author, Teacher / Writer

### **The Bible survives because of God’s divine authority and power**

- “The Bible rose to the place it now **occupies** because it deserved to rise to that place, and not because God sent anybody with a box of tricks to prove its divine authority.”

**Bruce Barton** - Christian Author

### **Hold fast to the Bible and practice its precepts**

- “Hold fast to the Bible as the sheetrock of our liberties ...Write its precepts on your heart and practice them in your lives”

**Ulysses S. Grant** – 18<sup>th</sup> President

### **The survival of America is tied to the survival of Scripture in America**

- “The strength of our country is the strength of its religious convictions. The foundations of our society and our government rest so much on the teachings of the Bible that it would be difficult to support them if faith in these teachings would cease to be practically universal in our country”

**Calvin Coolidge** – 30<sup>th</sup> President