



“I shall always be ready to remind you of these things...”
2 Peter 1:21



CABOT WESTSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1017 S. 2nd St. (Old Hwy. 367)
 Cabot, AR 72023
cabotwestsidechurchofchrist.com
facebook.com/cabotwestside

When We Meet

Sunday

Bible Classes – 9:00 am
 Worship – 10:00 am, 5:00 pm

Wednesday

Bible Classes – 7:00 pm

Our Elders

R.D. Hopper
 Norman Kemper

Our Deacons

Troy Hunter
 Kelly Kendall
 Tony Ramick

Our Preacher

Alex Hale

The World In Which We Live

by Alex Hale

In this evening’s lesson, we will discuss the persecution experienced by the church at Smyrna in the first century. We must understand, however, that the Christians in Smyrna are not the only ones to experience persecution. Scott Bayles writes, “There are more martyrs today than there were in the days of the Roman Empire. An estimated 200,000 Christians are martyred each year around the world because of their faith in Jesus.”

Last year, Aid to the Church in Need, an international Catholic charity, released a report which identified 2017 as the most dangerous year for Christians in world history. Though that may be hard for us to imagine, they reported that Christians are the victims of 75% of all religiously motivated violence and oppression in the world. Furthermore, they reported that Christians face worse forms of persecution than any other religious group. The report labeled thirteen countries as “extreme” in their persecution of Christians, including:

- China, where the president has described Christianity as “a foreign infiltration” and has ordered the destruction of church buildings, crosses, and other Christian symbols.
- India, where approximately 39 million of the country’s 64 million Christians experience direct persecution.
- Iraq, where the persecution of Christians is so severe that it is estimated that Christianity will be completely wiped out there by 2020.
- Nigeria, where terrorist group Boko Haram continues to carry out genocide against Christians.
- North Korea, where Christians have experienced such punishments as forced labor, starvation, sexual violence, and forced abortions. In addition, there have been reports of disciples being hung on crosses over open flames and run over by steamrollers.

This report is entitled, “Persecuted and Forgotten,” because for all of the United States’ and United Nations’ supposed concern for human rights, there has been almost no attention given to this crisis.

While we are blessed to live in a land where we can worship without fear, we must understand that persecution can take on many forms, and persecution is not just something that happens “over there.” America is becoming increasingly hostile to Christians.

- A teacher in New Jersey is suspended for giving a student a Bible.
- A football coach in Washington is placed on leave for praying with players.
- A fire chief in Georgia is fired for self-publishing a book defending Christian morality.
- A marine is court-martialed for refusing to remove a Bible verse from her desk.
- Christian groups are kicked off of college campuses.
- Christian bakers, florists, and health care providers are accused of bigotry when they seek to do business in accordance with the principles of their faith.
- Recently, a law professor from Notre Dame, when questioned in a hearing as an appeals court nominee, faced this line of questioning from a United States senator: “Why is it that so many of us on this side have this very uncomfortable feeling that – you know, dogma and law are two different things. And I think whatever a religion is, it has its own dogma. The law is totally different. And I think in your case, professor, when you read your speeches, the conclusion one draws is that **the dogma lives loudly within you, and that’s of concern** when you come to big issues that large numbers of people have fought for years in this country.” [emphasis mine]

How did the violent persecution experienced by brethren around the world begin? It started with intolerance, which is what we often see in our society (John 15:18-20).