

CLASS: SS1
SUBJECT: CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES
TOPIC: CHRISTIANS FACING PERSECUTION
WEEK: 9
TERM: SECOND

CHRISTIANS' PERSECUTION

Right from the time Christianity began with the birth of Jesus Christ, Christianity has always been synonymous with suffering and persecution. Jesus himself, our role model tested several doses of it during his ministry. Jesus once told his disciples that anyone who needed to follow him must first count the cost of Christianity. It is never a bed of roses but requires self-denial and full commitment. If need be, one may make the supreme sacrifice.

ST. PETER'S TEACHING ON CHRISTIANS AND PERSECUTION

(1 PETER 1:3-17; 4:12-19)

Peter recognized that Christians could face persecution on earth. This he believed was necessary in order to test the **genuineness of their faith**. Persecution is like fire to refine Christians just as gold is refined, to the praise, honour and glory of God toward the last days.

Peter advised that in the midst of such persecution, Christians are to rejoice because, although they love and believe in Jesus Christ without seeing him, their joy would be consummated when they obtain salvation for their souls.

According to St. Peter, the prophets of old who predicted the suffering of Jesus Christ also spoke of his glory that was to come after a period of suffering. This is the good news of the resurrected Christ now being preached and this has been something which the angels themselves had yearned to see. Therefore, it is important that Christians facing persecution to live soberly and set their hope on the grace that would be theirs at Christ's second coming.

As obedient children of God, they should not be conformed to the carnal passion of their ignorant past, but live holy lives, as God Himself is holy.

Peter said that Christians under persecution are sharing in the suffering of Christ. Therefore, they should regard any reproach in the name of Christ as blessing and

cause for joy, because the spirit of God rests upon them. However, Christians should not suffer as murderers, thieves or wrongdoers.

Nevertheless, if a Christian under persecution suffers, he should not be ashamed. Instead, he should glorify God while suffering for Christ's sake. He added that in no time, judgment would begin with believers, and if the righteous man would narrowly escape judgment, where would the impious or sinner be?

Therefore, let those who suffer persecution according to God's will or innocently, continue to do what is right and entrust their souls to a faithful creator.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PETER'S TEACHING ON CHRISTIANS AND PERSECUTION.

1. Peter's teaching recognizes the fact that persecution is part of the Christian heritage.
2. As Christians, we must not run away from persecution, but to face it with equanimity.
3. We are not to renounce our faith in time of persecution.
4. We are to speak courageously against examination malpractices, secret societies (cultism), partiality, tribalism and all forms of injustice.
5. It is better to be victim of persecution than to be an instruments of wrong doing

Assignment

Write three ways Christians face persecution in recent times.