**Title if Needed: Persecution Begins**

**How to prepare for suffering for Christ**

1. Examine Your Heart

Determine your salvation

Determine your allegiance

But Peter and the apostles replied, “We must obey God rather than any human authority.” Acts 5:29

But Peter and John replied, “Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him?” Acts 4:19

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.” Matt 16:24-25

1. Pray

And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus. Acts 4:29-30

* 1. Believers gathered to pray
	2. We gather to pray [Midweek prayer]
1. Share the gospel

But an angel of the Lord came at night, opened the gates of the jail, and brought them out. Then he told them, “Go to the Temple and give the people this message of life!” So at daybreak the apostles entered the Temple, as they were told, and immediately began teaching. Acts 5:19-21

**How to respond to suffering for Christ**

1. Love your enemies

The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead after you killed him by hanging him on a cross. Then God put him in the place of honor at his right hand as Prince and Savior. He did this so the people of Israel would repent of their sins and be forgiven. We are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit, who is given by God to those who obey him.

Acts 5:30-32

1. Trust God

They called in the apostles and had them flogged. Then they ordered them never again to speak in the name of Jesus, and they let them go…. And every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach this message: “Jesus is the Messiah.” Acts 5:40, 42

So if you are suffering in a manner that pleases God, keep on doing what is right, and trust your lives to the God who created you, for he will never fail you. 1 Peter 4:19

That is why I am suffering here in prison. But I am not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return.

2 Tim 1:12

1. Be Bold

And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word.  Acts 4:29

The wicked run away when no one is chasing them,
but the godly are as bold as lions. Proverbs 28:1

1. Rejoice

The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus. Acts 5:41

* + Because you are participating in the sufferings of Christ

Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world. If you are insulted because you bear the name of Christ, you will be blessed, for the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you. 1 Pet 4:13-14

* + Because you have an eternal perspective

I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.

John 16:33

* + 1. This time is short; so the time of our suffering is short

That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever. 2 Cor 4:16-18

* + 1. You will be rewarded in eternity

 “God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.” Matt 5:11-12

* + You are becoming more like your Savior

Dear brothers and sisters,when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. James 1:2-4

* + Because you have been counted worthy to suffer

**41**The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus. Acts 5:41

**29**For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. Phil 1:29

**4**He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever. Rev 21:4