CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
AUGUST 15 2026

Scripture Story: Romans 1:8-17.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 13, 14.

commitment under fire



Photo by A Truman

flashlight

"The rage of the persecutors was equaled by the faith of the martyrs. Not only men but delicate women and young maidens displayed unflinching courage. 'Wives would take their stand by their husband's stake, and while he was enduring the fire they would whisper words of solace, or sing psalms to cheer him'" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 240).

key text

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, NIV)

what do you think?

Take the following true-false (T/F) quiz to test your knowledge about the persecution of Christians.

T / F Those who live godly lives in Christ Jesus can expect to be persecuted.

T / F King David asked God for permission to avenge those who persecuted him.

T / F The prophet Jeremiah understood that others rebuked him for God's glory.

T / F Jesus taught that whoever is persecuted for righteousness' sake is blessed.

T / F As a result of persecution, the gospel was spread.

T / F Through a parable Christ explained that some believers would endure for a time, but when trouble comes, they fall away.

did you know?

Even today, there are still places all over the world where people are killed or imprisoned for declaring themselves as Christ's followers. To many of us who are privileged to live in countries that do not persecute Christians, we don't necessarily think about our freedom as much as we probably should. We're just used to it. Often when we think of persecution, we conjure up images of burning stakes, lions, and the Amphitheatre. But no matter how foreign it all sounds, it's as real now in some countries as it was centuries ago. Whether it's a Chinese man who chooses to become a Christian, a North Korean who smuggles Bibles, or an African woman who takes care of her two nephews because their father and mother were martyred for their belief in Jesus Christ, Christians all over the world are jailed, murdered, and executed for their faith.

INTO THE STORY

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

"I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

"I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

(Romans 1:8-17, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Who is Paul writing to? List the emotions that he feels toward them and why.

Do a bit of investigative work: Where was Paul when he wrote this passage? What was he doing? Does the setting add new insight or change any perspectives to his words?

Paul repeats the word "gospel" several times in this passage. *Circle* the word "gospel" each time it appears in the passage. What is the context each time it is mentioned?

How do spiritual gifts make us strong?

What is the power of the gospel that Paul speaks of? How is it at work in your life?

punch lines

"While he lived on earth, anticipating death, Jesus cried out in pain and wept in sorrow as he offered up priestly prayers to God. Because he honored God, God answered him. Though he was God's Son, he learned trusting-obedience by what he suffered, just as we do. Then, having arrived at the full stature of his maturity and having been announced by God as high priest in the order of Melchizedek, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who believingly obey him" **(Hebrews 5:7-10, *The Message*).**

"By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going" **(Hebrews 11:8, NIV).**

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" **(James 1:2-4, NIV).**

"We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring" **(2 Thessalonians 1:3, 4, NIV).**

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" **(Romans 8:28, NIV).**

further insight

"God was with His people, and persecution could not prevail to silence their testimony."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 252.

Sabbath

Read James 1:2-4.

Sometimes your most profound and intimate experiences of God will be discovered during your darkest hours. All through the Bible, we find characters who, in times of trouble, reach out to the Lord in special ways. This is seen, for example, in many of the psalms, where the author would cry out to the Lord, seeking a deeper experience with Him during times of distress, pain, and suffering. Problems force us to look at God and depend on Him, instead of ourselves.

How has God used circumstances and trials in your life to bring growth and Christlikeness?

Sunday

Read Psalm 50:15.

Problems do not automatically make you a better person. Sadly, many people get bitter instead of better. The difference lies in the way they choose to respond to their problems, and our choices depend upon our walk with the Lord. If we make it a habit to be in communion with God daily, and if we make it a habit to think on Him, dwell on Him, and praise Him for His goodness, we will be much more inclined in times of distress to run to the Lord and learn from Him.

Think of a problem you are facing right now and ask yourself: "What does God want me to learn?"

Monday

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

Notice how the Bible tells us to give thanks "in" all circumstances, not "for" all circumstances. This small difference in prepositions can make a big difference. No matter what problems you are facing, you can still be assured in His love, wisdom, care, power, and faithfulness. Think back on your past experiences; how did the problems get resolved? Can you see a way in which God was present through it all?

Tuesday

Read Matthew 5:14.

How is God using the Bible, the power of the Holy Spirit, and circumstances in your life to help you reach out to your friends and family for Christ? In what ways are you feeling convicted to tell others about Jesus and what He has done for you and what He has promised to all who accept Him? How can you be more willing to reach out to those who don't yet know the Lord?

Wednesday

As you read the passages listed in the *Punch Lines* section of this week's lesson, which verse strikes you as particularly significant today? Why do you think this verse is especially relevant to you? What circumstances are you facing that should cause you to lean more on the Lord and less on self or, in fact, anyone else?

Thursday

Read Matthew 25:35, 36.

How can your personal circumstances and life experiences be opportunities for you to serve God and others? That is, wherever you are, whatever situations arise, how can you be open to the leading of the Spirit to be a witness to others? Sometimes, even in the smallest and kindest acts, we can be a powerful witness for God. Think about even the "small" things you can do that could make a big impression on someone who might be searching for truth.

Friday

Read Romans 8:28.

God often allows certain struggles and hardships in our lives so that we can sympathize and minister to the same kind of needs in other people's lives. In what ways has God comforted you that would enable you to comfort others? What have you been through, and what have you learned in your trials that could help someone else going through something similar?

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 13, 14.

**Love Under Fire* is a special adaptation of *The Great Controversy*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.