

Acts 29

Catholic Christianity (AD 70-312)

Introduction

The word *passion* is derived from a Latin word meaning “to suffer”. What you’re willing to suffer for reveals your passions. The early church suffered greatly for Jesus. Tertullian rightly remarked that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

Discussion Questions

- The years AD 70-312 marked a time when Christians were the persecuted minority. This was a continuation of the persecutions which began with Jesus and the apostles (John 15:18-25; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:12-17). Have you ever experienced persecution for what you believe? Did you suffer well? How have Christians handled the transition from majority back to minority in our country?
- Christians were known from the beginning to be generous and loving (Acts 2:44-45; 1 Thess. 2:8). This trait was evident and extended to even the unbelievers and persecutors. What traits are Christians known for today? How would others describe us? What are ways we interact with culture? In what context are the observations about us made?
- It did not take long for error and false teachers to arise within the church (Acts 20:27-32; 1 Tim. 1:3). There are as many false views of God, Jesus, and the Spirit today as there ever were. What are some of the misunderstandings you encounter? What are some of the questions you still have? Why do you think people persist in departing from orthodoxy?
- Because of growing persecution and heresy, the biblical pattern of local church leadership began to shift (2 Tim. 4:3-5; Heb. 13:7-9,17). Instead of just church elders and deacons (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3; Tit. 2), city and regional bishops arose to act as an authority over the local congregational leadership (1 Pet. 2:25, 5:1-5; 1 Tim. 2:5; Acts 15:1-35). What place does church authority have in your life? When would you approach your pastor about a matter? When would you expect church leadership to approach you?

Think About It

Sometimes pragmatism and our own reasoning seem to conflict with biblical wisdom and direction. When this happens, it can be tempting to dismiss the Scriptures for modern ideas and innovations. Even though it may seem inconsequential at the time, compromises in doctrine always have disastrous effects in the end.

What Will You Do?

Persist in keeping a close watch on your life and doctrine. Believe that Jesus and the gospel can speak to your needs today (Rom. 1:16-17). Set “an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” and devote yourself to the reading of Scripture (1 Tim. 4:12-16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Renewing Your Mind

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:35)

Being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. (1 Thess. 2:8)

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 1:3)

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily. (Col. 2:8-9)

In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect. (1 Pet. 3:15)

Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters... There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. (2 Pet. 3:15-16)

We have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place... For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies. (2 Pet. 1:19-2:1)

Prayer Requests

