

Isaiah 40:8, “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.”



Psalms 119:89, “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.”

1 Peter 1:24-25, “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

The Word of God is the sword of truth which defeats the attacks of the devil. If the Word of God can be destroyed, then it becomes easier to sow deceit. History has shown that the devil has attempted and is continuing to attempt to destroy God’s Word.

The first recorded destruction was by Antiochus Epiphanes, ruler of the Greek empire after the death of Alexander the Great. Antiochus, known popularly as “the madman”, launched a bloody persecution against the Hebrew people. One aspect of his vendetta was an attempt to destroy copies of the Jewish Scriptures. The historian Josephus comments upon this event:

And if there were any sacred book of the law found, it was destroyed, and those [Jews] with whom they were found miserably perished also (Antiquities of the Jews 12.5.4).

After the resurrection of Jesus, Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire and was considered a threat to the security of the Roman world. And so history repeated itself. A determined effort to eradicate the Bible from society was initiated by the Roman ruler, Valerius Diocletian.

The following was written by Cecil Willis from Truth Magazine:

Diocletian (284-316), the ruler immediately preceding Constantine, Eusebius, the historian said, "royal edicts were published everywhere, commanding that the churches be leveled to the ground and the Scriptures destroyed by fire" (Church History, Book VIII, Ch. 1). Diocletian went on to say that if one had a copy of the Scriptures and did not surrender it to be burned, if it were discovered, he would be killed. Furthermore, if any other should know of one who had a copy of the Scriptures, and did not report it, he also would be killed. During this time many, many copies of the Bible were burned, copies laboriously

written in longhand. Of this period the historian Newman said, "Multitudes . . . hastened to deny the faith and to surrender their copies of the Scriptures; many more bore the most horrible tortures and refused with their latest breath to surrender the Scriptures or in any way to compromise themselves" (Newman, Church History, p. 169). After this edict had been in force for two years, Diocletian boasted, "I have completely exterminated the Christian writings from the face of the earth!" (Rimmer, Seven Wonders of the Wonderful Word, p. 15).

History tells us that the next ruler, Constantine, became a Christian. He requested that copies of the Scriptures be made for all the churches. But alas! Diocletian had completely obliterated the Word of God. After Constantine offered a substantial reward for a copy of the Scriptures, within 25 hours 50 copies of the Bible were brought to him!

The Bible has had many enemies. Even those that professed on some occasions to be its friends under other circumstances turned enemy to it. During the middle ages, for example, the Roman Catholic Church burned thousands of copies of the Bible. "Of the estimated 18,000 copies printed between 1525-1528, only two fragments are known to remain" (Thiessen 1949, 84).

But in spite of it, the Bible lives on. Voltaire, the noted French infidel, who died in 1778, made his attempt to destroy the Bible. He boldly made the prediction that within one hundred years the Bible and Christianity would have been swept from existence into oblivion.

In France where the influence of Voltaire was great a copy of the rejected Scriptures was tied to the tail of a donkey, and dragged through the streets to the city dump, where it was ceremoniously burned. In 1968 Coffman notes, "since that time, the government of France has fallen thirty-five times" (1968, 343-344).

But Voltaire's efforts and his bold prophecy failed as miserably as did those of his unbelieving predecessors. In fact, within 100 years, the very printing press upon which Voltaire had printed his infidel literature was being used to print copies of the Bible. And afterward, the very house in which the boasting Voltaire had lived was literally stacked with Bibles prepared by the Geneva Bible Society. Voltaire and all his cohorts had miserably failed.

Rimmer stated, "Men have died on the gallows for reading it, and have been burned at the stake for owning it. Tortures too fiendish to describe have been visited upon delicate women and tender children for looking on its pages. Yet in spite of the strongest forces that Hell could unleash and in the face of the animosity of tyrants and despots, there are more Bibles in the earth today than there are copies of any other book ever written by the hand of man!"

Today in many countries the Bible is considered an illegal book and if found is destroyed. Christians with a Bible in their possession experience persecution and death. The following is information obtained by Voice of the Martyrs (Jan. 2019):

In Azerbaijan the government published a list of banned religious books in 2015 that included the Old Testament. In Brunei Bibles in the Malay language are illegal and are confiscated if discovered. In many

third world countries, Bibles are legal but are unaffordable for most people. In Cuba most Christian literature remains illegal. Churches are often demolished by hired gangs so the government can deny responsibility.

In Djibouti Bibles are available, but owning one in some communities comes with the risk of government harassment or violence at the hands of Muslim family members and the Muslim community.

In Eritrea around 300 believers are known to remain in prison, including several top leaders. Imprisoned Christians are not given a trial or allowed to see their families, many of whom do not know where their loved ones are imprisoned or even if they are still alive. Christians simply disappear and are assumed to be in government prisons. These prisoners of faith are sent to the strictest and most remote prisons. The conditions inside these prisons are some of the harshest in the world. The Christian prisoners are provided meager rations, treated very poorly and, in some prisons, sometimes held in shipping containers in extreme desert conditions for years. Christian literature is also highly regulated, and evangelical believers who want Bibles must smuggle them in.

Bibles in Iran are highly restricted. It is illegal to import them and illegal to have Bibles printed in the country. Since they are so difficult to obtain, Bibles are treasured by Iranian believers. Christians have developed creative ways to obtain Bibles and distribute them, including through websites, mobile phone cards and smartphone apps.

In Iraq there are fewer than 300,000 Christians who remain. ISIS and other Islamist groups destroyed every copy of God's Word that they found or captured, but because of the work of Bible societies and missions organizations, including Voice of the Martyrs, more Bibles have been distributed since the rise of ISIS than destroyed.

In Malaysia it is illegal for Malay people to have a Bible. Christian converts who are caught are confined to "re-education camps" that use brainwashing techniques, torture and propaganda to force them to return to Islam.

There are no church buildings in Morocco. Bible distributions and missionaries are not allowed in the country. Fearful of government informants, believers are cautious to trust one another and connect with other believers. It is difficult to find fellowship, but networks of underground churches have developed in recent years. Most believers have not had access to God's Word or discipleship. A number of Christians have been imprisoned on charges of apostasy or proselytizing. About 35 million people live in Morocco, but only a few printed Bibles exist in the country.

In North Korea it is very dangerous to own a Bible. Owning even a few pages of a Bible can result in detention in a concentration camp, where they are starved, overworked and tortured. North Koreans have a saying: Whenever two or three people are gathered together, one of them is a spy. This is true even in family settings, as children are taught to spy on their parents from a young age. Therefore, North Korean Christians must be extremely careful in what they say, what they do and how they pray: all must be done in secret. When a Christian is discovered, the government punishes the entire family. It is estimated that about 30,000 Christians are suffering in prison and labor camps.