

Expect Opposition

Series: The Anchor of Word and Spirit

John 16:33 (1806)

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John 16:33 TM I've told you all this so that trusting me, you will be unshakable and assured, deeply at peace. In this godless world you will continue to experience difficulties. But take heart! I've conquered the world.

Hebrews 12:1-3 NIV ...let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Prayer)

I. The opposition of the early church

a. Exile and poverty

Acts 8:1 NIV On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

b. Martyrdom and imprisonment

Acts 12:1-2 NIV ...about this time King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them.² He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword.

Acts 12:3-4 NIV When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread.⁴ After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

c. Resistance and Resolve

Acts 12:5 NIV So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

Acts 12:23 NIV Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.²⁴ But the word of God continued to spread and flourish.

II. The opposition of the contemporary western church

a. A substitute “religion”

Alan Hirsch There's no such religious force in the West as powerful as consumerism.

Alan Hirsch Unless the church is equipping believers to embrace the values and vision of the kingdom of God and turn away from the materialism, consumerism, greed, and power of the present age, it not only abandons its biblical mandate, it is rendered missionally ineffective.

Aldous Huxley *Men have always been a prey to distractions ...but never before today has an attempt been made to organize and exploit distractions, to make of them, because of their economic importance, the core and vital center of human life... Ours is an age of systematized irrelevances, and the imbecile within us has become one of the Titans, upon whose shoulders rests the weight of the social and economic system*

b. Unbridled sexual perversion

Billy Graham "Nothing can alter the fact that God calls perversion sin."

Alan Hirsch *I found out the hard way that if we don't disciple people, the culture sure will.*

c. Divisive politics

d. Rugged individualism

Alan Hirsch *It's not so much that the church has a mission, it's that the mission of God has a church.*