



"And now I am no more in the world,  
but these are in the world..." (John 17:11).

Use this recent news story to help your students see the relevance  
of this week's lesson from the Standard Lesson Commentary®  
or Standard Lesson Quarterly®.

### **A VIOLENT PURGE**

The recent violence in Gaza has drawn attention away from the continuing extreme actions by ISIS, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Having conquered much of northern Iraq, ISIS is busy persecuting Chaldean Christians in the area. The city of Mosul, for example, has been purged of Christians, perhaps numbering 100,000. As one commentator observed, "Our worst nightmare is confirmed. Christianity in Mosul is dead, and a Christian holocaust is in our midst." The goal of the radicals is to create an Islamic state with no room for dissenters. Christians are being forced to convert to Islam, face death, or leave.

### **A COMFORTING RESPONSE**

We sometimes hear of (and complain about) Christians being persecuted in various ways in America as the country drifts further and further from its Judeo-Christian moorings. But what is happening in America in that regard pales in comparison with persecution of Christians in the Middle East and elsewhere. Paul's words to the Corinthians remind us that when we share in Christ's sufferings, we also can share in his comfort.

1. What can we do to aid persecuted Christians in Iraq and elsewhere?
2. What are some situations that we might be tempted to call *persecution* when in reality the suffering is self-inflicted?
3. Under what circumstances, if any, are Christians justified in using deadly force to defend themselves against persecution? Explain.
4. What troubles have you endured that seemed to have come about because of your Christian faith? How did God comfort you in those circumstances?
5. How have you been able to use that comfort in blessing others?
6. What can Paul's use of his status as a Roman citizen to avoid persecution teach us today, if anything (Acts 16:37-39; 22:25-29)?

—Charles R. Boatman

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