



"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®  
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## **PERSECUTION**

The horrific executions by ISIS continue. Just a few days ago, ISIS released a video showing beheadings of 21 Coptic Christians from Egypt. The video was captioned, "A message signed with blood to the nation of the cross." A militant specifically referred to those about to be executed as "people of the cross." The radicals vow to "conquer Rome," indicating intent to destroy whatever Christian influence stands in the way of its plans to establish a worldwide Islamic caliphate. The early church's history of being persecuted to the point of martyrdoms seems destined to be the history of the twenty-first-century church as well.

## **PROTECTION**

More and more nations are joining the fight against ISIS. Yet Paul is more concerned with spiritual protection. Behind the gruesome realities of the ISIS executions lies spiritual wickedness. That's the source of the decisions by would-be militants to leave home—homes often located in Western democracies—to join ISIS. We dare not allow ourselves to fall under the sway of this evil influence.

1. Why do people act violently in the name of God and religion?
2. Should Christians join the military forces of their countries in order to inflict physical destruction on enemies such as ISIS? (Consider passages such as Matthew 5:9, 38-45; 10:34; 26:52; Mark 13:7, 8; and Romans 12:17-21; 13:1-7.)
3. How do we convince a secular culture to acknowledge the reality of evil?
4. What is the value of the spiritual armor of which Paul speaks when we are faced with physical violence or even martyrdom?
5. Which piece of spiritual armor that Paul mentions have you found most helpful in resisting and defeating evil? Why?
6. How can we help Christians who are in mortal danger because of their faith? Be specific.

—Charles R. Boatman

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