

## 1 The Persecuted Church

## 2 Come from behind Win

- This week on Thursday Night Football, the Denver Broncos were trailing the New York Jets 13–10 with time running out and on their own 5 yard line.
- Things looked like it was all over for the Broncos, their offense hadn't played all that well the whole game.
- However, not everyone was so pessimistic.
- The crowd knew there was hope as their quarterback, Tim Tebow, whom some said wasn't all that good as a NFL quarterback had led miraculous come from behind victories in 3 of the last 4 games.
- Would tonight be another miracle?

## 3 Instant replay

## 4 Who is Tim Tebow?

- Awards & Achievements
  - First round NFL draft pick in 2010.
  - Winner of two NCAA National Football Championships.
  - First–ever sophomore to win the Heisman Trophy.
  - Winner of the Davey O'Brien Award as the nation's best college quarterback.
  - Two–time winner of the Maxwell Award as the nation's top college football player.
  - Winner of the James E. Sullivan Award as the nation's most outstanding amateur athlete in any sport.

## 5 Who is Tim Tebow?

- Tim Tebow was born in the Philippines, the son of Christian missionaries.
- While pregnant, his mother suffered a life–threatening infection with a pathogenic amoeba. Due to the drugs used to treat her, she was advised to have an abortion.
- However, on account of her Christian values she refused and had the baby—who was born healthy.
- Growing up Tim—along with his 2 sisters and 2 brothers were home–schooled and received Christian education as part of their up–bring.
- So when Tim entered college he was confident in the faith and wasn't shy at all in showing it.

- He would frequently give God acknowledgement for his accomplishments and prayed after touchdowns.

## 6 Tebowing

- Due to all the publicity of Tim Tebow's faith on and off the field, people are bowing in prayer just like Tim does after a touchdown.
- In fact, there is a web site that you can take a picture of yourself praying like Tim and upload it to [tebowing.org](http://tebowing.org).

## 7 Interview

## 8 Negative Critics

## 9 Critics on the Field

## 10 Persecution

- For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. (2 Cor 2:15-16 NIV)
- In other words, a faithful Christian's life, will and can, set off persecution that is irrational—as those who are perishing respond to the conviction and condemnation that the faithful Christian's life produces.
- “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matt 5:10-12 NIV)

## 11 Persecution

- We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know. (1 Th 3:2-4 NIV)
- For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless. (1 Th 3:5 NIV)
- When we are being persecuted the devil comes along and tempts us to either deny our faith or to tone it down where our faith is not so obvious.

## 12 Persecution

- In many countries of the world, being a Christian will get you killed or put in jail.

- In other countries of the world, living out your faith will bring on mocking, ridicule, and disdain.
- Even among some people who call themselves Christians, they will criticize and persecute those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus.
- In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. (2 Tim 3:12-13 NIV)

### 13 Persecution Facts

- 163,000 Christians die every year for their faith.
- Some 35 million Christians have died for their faith in the last 100 years.
  - 15 million of this total were Catholic and Orthodox Christians who died under the Soviet regime between 1917 and 1980.
- Top Ten persecuting countries are: Burma/Myanmar, China, Egypt, Iran, Laos, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Vietnam.

### 14 Worst Eras for Persecution

- Roman persecution of early Christians.
- 12th – 14th Centuries when Genghis Khan and Tamerlane massacred millions of Christians.
- 1970s – 230,000 per year. (China, and Uganda)
- 1994 – As many as 500,000 of the 700,000 Rwandans killed were believers.
- 2025 – 210,000 (estimate)

### 15 Persecution Myths

- The Church grows when it is persecuted.
  - Due to persecution, the number of Christians in Turkey has dropped from 32% to 0.2% this century.
  - In Syria they dropped from 40% to 10%.
  - In Iran went from 15% to 2% and Iraq from 35% to 5%
- Martyrs are Church Leaders or Evangelists.
  - Most Christians who have died have not been direct witnesses to their faith.
  - They were swept away in a flood of ethnic cleansing or trapped in war-torn regions. Prison camps have been more common than crosses.

### 16 Persecution Myths

- Christians are primarily martyred because of their testimony of Jesus.
  - The social, economic and political factors listed below have much more to do with Christian deaths than preaching the gospel.
- Martyrs die glorious and victorious deaths, rejoicing to suffer for Jesus.

- Most are poor and frightened. They are mothers, children, workers and students, just trying to fight for their lives.

## 17 Christian Persecution

## 18 What We Can Do

- Get Involved
  - A web site sponsored by The Voice of the Martyrs located at [persecution.com](http://persecution.com).
  - It is an excellent source of information on what is going on in the world today.
  - It also provides ways on how to be a voice and stand up for our brothers and sisters who are being persecuted around the world.

## 19 What We Can Do

- Pray
  - Ask God to strengthen our fellow saints with courage and great faith.
  - Ask God to deliver them from imprisonment and oppression.
  - Ask God to give them grace to love their enemies.
  - Ask God to supply and protect their families.
  - Ask God to further spread of the Gospel—regardless of the persecution.

## 20 What We Can Do

- Remember
  - We shouldn't just remember the suffering of the persecuted church once per year.
  - In our Cell Groups, we could easily highlight a country or region of the world in which to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ.
  - Even in our Celebration Services we could also highlight, if we find a volunteer, what is going on in the world so that we can pray and intercede for the needs that present.

## 21 Living for God

is not for sissies!

- When we live for God with all our heart, we will be persecuted as the prince of this world has been condemned as well as all his followers.
- Nevertheless, as the Apostle Paul says, We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. (2 Cor 4:7-9 NIV)
- So then let us not fear what man can do to us and live for God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength—and support those who do!