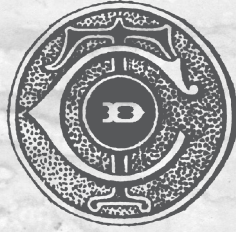


Jesus Freaks



StORies of REvolutionaries
WHO Ch an g e d their World:

FEARing GOD, Not M a n .

REVOLUTIONARIES

dc Talk
and the Voice of the Martyrs



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Jesus Freaks: Revolutionaries

Stories of Revolutionaries Who Changed Their World: Fearing God, Not Man

by dc Talk

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rev·o·lu·tion·ar·y

(rev-★-lū-sh★n-er-ē)n.

[from Latin *revolvere*: to revolve, or turn around]

1) A person who brings about (a) a sudden, radical, or complete change; (b) a fundamental change in political, social, or cultural organization; (c) a fundamental change in the way of thinking about or visualizing something: a change of paradigm <the Copernican *revolution*> 2) One engaged in a revolution. 3) An advocate or adherent of revolutionary doctrines, doctrines that are a complete turnaround from the cultural, economic, and political norms of the day. 4) A disciple of Christ; a Jesus Freak.

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These who have turned the world upside down have come here too ... and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus.

SPOKEN OF PAUL AND SILAS BY THOSE WHO OPPOSED
THEM IN THESSALONICA

(ACTS 17:6-7 NKJV)

What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!

PAUL, SPEAKING ABOUT THE PERSONAL REVOLUTION
OF BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

(2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 NLT)



"LORD, Show Me t h e Truth"

By 1967 it was as if a whole generation had detached itself from the conventional values of their society and converged on the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco looking for answers. Yet what was touted as a haven for free thinking and countercultural renewal had instead become a viper's pit of hard drugs, rape, abuse of innocence, organized crime, and the recruiting ground for every religious persuasion imaginable.

Into this walked a young man named Kent Philpott, who felt compelled of God to go there with the Gospel. In April of 1967, he met another young man, David Hoyt, who had devoted himself to Hinduism and preached the world of Krishna Consciousness. They began months of debating back and forth the nature of truth and spirituality that brought in many friends and supporters on both sides.

Kent's open-minded dialogue and David's sincere search for truth soon had David reeling in doubt about what he had previously held as true. Then one night in desperation, he called out to God: "Lord, show me the Truth. Jesus Christ, if you are the Son of God, come into my life! Forgive and heal me!"

In what was to David a blinding burst of light like what Paul experienced on the road to Damascus came the realization that Jesus was God's Son, sent to the world to free him. Jesus was alive and the true Savior of humanity! Jesus was the only one who could truly set people free! David became a Christian on the spot.

Soon after this, Kent and David teamed up to become among the first to establish a mission in the Haight-Ashbury district and reach out to those coming there for new answers. From their efforts and others that sprang up around the same time began the revival that became known as the Jesus Movement. They were among the first revolutionaries to be called "Jesus Freaks."



Why Search for Truth?

The personal revolution of becoming a Christian has always been the only basis of true freedom and real change. Though the truths of God's Word and His kingdom are eternal and unchanging, they are continually made new to every person who encounters them. Throughout history great change has only been made by those hungriest for Truth and those not content to simply follow the beliefs of others, but who instead demand the genuine revelation of coming to know God personally. Those who will accept no less than that are the ones who become world changers.

"And how about you? Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter said, "You're the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Jesus came back, "God bless you, Simon, son of Jonah! You didn't get that answer out of books or from teachers. My Father in heaven, God himself, let you in on this secret of who I really am. And now I'm going to tell you who you are, really are. You are Peter, a rock. This is the rock on which I will put together my church, a church so expansive with energy that not even the gates of hell will be able to keep it out."

Jesus and Peter

(Matthew 16:15-18 THE MESSAGE)

The rock Jesus spoke of here was the revelation of Jesus as the Christ that Peter expressed: Jesus as God's anointed Son, and Jesus as one's personal Lord and Savior. It is upon that rock that Jesus has always built His church. And it is without this revelation that people are led astray, even people of the established church, who seek power and position because they don't know the wealth that exists in the Truth of the Gospel.



What Is TRUth?

*Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. I was born and came into the world for this one purpose, to speak about the truth. Whoever belongs to the truth listens to me."
"And what is truth?" Pilate asked. Then Pilate went back outside to the people and said to them, "I cannot find any reason to condemn him."*

Jesus and Pilate
(John 18:37–38 TEV)

In this exchange is the summary of preaching the Gospel to the blind world.

"Here is the Truth, right in front of you!"

"What truth?"

Those who would be blind don't see it. Yet those who hunger for truth will. Many don't know they are hungry for it. Others have searched their whole lives for it and never find it until someone exposes them to it. But that is always the exchange: Those who know the truth must share it with others; those who don't know it have to decide whether or not they will receive it. If they will receive it, then God will reveal it to their hearts if they will hunger and thirst for it.

Why is Truth so elusive? Because Truth is not a list of beliefs or statements or mathematical formulas that can simply be memorized. It is not a philosophical system or the end of a journey where you can arrive and then be done. Truth is a Person—Jesus Christ—and knowing the Truth is a relationship. Just as getting to know a person takes time, getting to know Jesus can happen no faster. It happens day by day, meeting with Him, walking with Him, talking with Him, listening to Him, being with Him, and obeying Him.

Even if it takes all of eternity to get to know Him, there can



never be a better use of our time. Where is the time for bitterness, hatred, depression, power mongering, judging others, and drawing lines between people if we are consumed with getting to know Jesus? If we are all busy searching for Truth and loving others as Jesus told us to, there are worlds of problems we will never get into, and there are worlds of problems we will help solve.

For by whom has truth ever been discovered without God? By whom has God ever been found without Christ? By whom has Christ ever been explored without the Holy Spirit? By whom has the Holy Spirit ever been attained without the mysterious gift of faith?

Tertullian
Christian father and apologist
c. A.D. 150–229

I am the way, and the truth, and the life. The only way to the Father is through me.

Jesus
(John 14:6 NCV)



THOSE Who LOVE the TRUTH Are Always Revolutionary

The cross is God's truth to us, and therefore it is the only power which can make us truthful. When we know the cross, we are no longer afraid of truth. We need no more oaths to confirm the truth of our utterance, for we live the perfect truth of God.

There is no truth toward Jesus without truth toward man. Untruthfulness destroys fellowship, but truth cuts false fellowship to pieces and establishes genuine brotherhood. We cannot follow Christ unless we live in revealed truth before God and man.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Hung for resisting the Nazis

Berlin, Germany

1945

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Being truthful—always telling the truth—is revolutionary. Those who know the Truth can't help but stand up for Him and tell others about Him. They can't help but make a difference for Him.

If those who say they know the Truth—that they know Jesus—don't share Him, do they really know the Truth? Probably not. Those who know Him can't deny Him. Knowing Him is just too life-altering to go long without talking about Him.

Knowing Jesus changes things so that a person can't just sit back in a comfortable lifestyle and do nothing while others swallow lies or are persecuted. Knowing Him means being a constant witness of the Truth and a constant catalyst of change for a better world. Whether it is on a large scale or a small scale, those who belong to Jesus make a difference.



Do you know Jesus?

This book is filled with stories of those who do and were willing to give everything to make a difference for Him.

Learn from them.

Be like them.

Make your life make a difference for the Truth!



Here are
THEIR

Stories:

If any of you
wants to be MY follower,
you M U S T put aside your
selfish ambition,
SHOULDER YOUR Cross,
and follow ME.

If you try to keep your life
for yourself, YOU WILL LOSE it.

But if you GIVE UP your life
for MY sake

and for the sake OF THE
GOOD NEWS,
you will find
True Life.

Jesus

(Mark 8:34-35 NLT)



The Son of Consolation



Barnabas

Salamina, Cyprus

A.D. 64

"Don't be a fool, Joses. The man is a murderer and a spy! He only wants to come to us so that he can gather names to give to the council and bring us all to trial as he did Stephen. He will stop at nothing to see that every person who preaches in the name of Jesus is executed. No, we cannot let him come here, no matter what he claims. Brother Barnabas, we know you mean well as always, but you must see the reason in protecting ourselves. We cannot let Saul come to meet with us. Brother Peter, I turn to your leadership as always in this matter; please tell Barnabas that we would be exposing ourselves to unnecessary risk."

Peter looked from the speaker to Joses, whom the members of the first church had nicknamed Barnabas, the "son of consolation," because of his constant encouragement to the brethren. Barnabas looked troubled by the words, but Peter could tell he wasn't finished pleading his case. "Brother Barnabas, you have something else to add?"

"Only that I know the change that came to my life from accepting Jesus as the Messiah. And I know the change that came to your life, Brother Peter. And yours, Brother Isaac, and the change that came to the rest of you here today. Didn't Jesus preach that all who call upon His name would be saved? Well, Saul has called on that name. He also met with the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus. I know the man who held the coats of those who stoned Stephen as we stood by helplessly, and I know the man who reasoned with the Jewish brethren and Greeks in Damascus that Jesus is the Messiah. He is the same man on the outside, but not the same man on the inside. Saul is no longer a persecutor, but a brother in Christ. In fact, he left Damascus in fear for his own life because of the boldness of his testimony. What good is Jesus' sacri-



fice and Stephen's forgiveness of those who killed him if we cannot look past the flesh of a man and accept what Jesus has done to change his heart?"

Those in the room grew quiet for a moment, then Peter spoke for all of them. "As always, Barnabas, your words have spoken straight to *my* heart. I cannot refuse fellowship to any who will call upon His name, as Jesus himself said He would not. Can any of the rest of you?"

As Peter looked around the room, no eyes met his gaze, but many nodded their heads in agreement with him. They knew the danger of rejecting Jesus' words was greater than any threat to their lives.

It was in such a way that Saul, who was destined to become Paul the apostle, was admitted as a brother to the church in Jerusalem by Barnabas, "the encourager."

Barnabas continued to travel with and encourage Saul for some time after that. They journeyed together to Antioch in Syria, where they taught and argued the cause of Christ so well that the members of the church in Antioch were the first to call themselves "Christians." He also supported Paul as he returned to Jerusalem to persuade the brethren there that Christianity was not to be a sect of Judaism—following all the laws of the Old Testament and just adding Jesus—but it was a transformation of their covenant with God into something new through Christ, surpassing the law to a life in the Spirit made possible by Jesus' death and resurrection.

Barnabas was such an eloquent speaker and preached with such passion and convincing doctrine that he was the chosen speaker over Paul on their first missionary journey. However, when God began to bring Paul to the forefront, Barnabas the encourager took the lesser place without complaint. He was not worried about position as much as seeing the call of God fulfilled in Paul's life.

John Mark, Barnabas's nephew, had deserted Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey when things looked like



they were getting rough, but he repented and asked to go along with them on their second journey to the north. Paul refused to let him come along because of his earlier desertion, but Barnabas stuck with John Mark much as he had stuck with Paul before the brethren in Jerusalem years earlier.

Thus Barnabas and Paul went separate ways. Paul took Silas and headed to Syria and Cilicia, and Barnabas and John Mark went to Cyprus. Barnabas eventually encouraged John Mark to travel with Peter.

Being originally from Cyprus, Barnabas stayed on there preaching Christ to all who came across his path. Such a following rose up that he fell into contention with a Jewish sorcerer who was losing business because the things Barnabas taught freed the people from their fear of him and what his “magic” could do to them. Because of this, the sorcerer stirred the non-Christians of the city against Barnabas. They soon falsely accused Barnabas of some crime and had him thrown into prison.

When a time was set for Barnabas to come before a judge in Salamina, fearing the judge would discover his innocence and release him, a mob led by the sorcerer raided the jail, put a rope around Barnabas’s neck, dragged him outside the city, and burned him.

• • •

Barnabas was not swayed by the views of the mainstream. When everyone else flowed idly with the currents of fear or popular opinion, he took his paddle in hand and fought hard to get their boat back into God’s flow of love and acceptance, even if he was the only one paddling. He judged people by the confessions of their hearts and how they lined up with the Word of God, not by their pasts or what they looked like. Where others saw a lost cause or an enemy, Barnabas saw great potential and a brother or sister in the Lord that needed the support of an encourager. He stood by those others rejected, and by doing so he helped them to realize greater things in their own lives than he did in his own.





In a world where self-promotion seems to be a key to success, there are not too many like Barnabas. How many of us would be willing to help those around us go on to accomplish greater things than we do ourselves or befriend the unpopular because they claim they belong to Christ?

Now you can have sincere love for each other as brothers and sisters because you were cleansed from your sins when you accepted the truth of the Good News. So see to it that you really do love each other intensely with all your hearts.

Peter
(1 Peter 1:22 NLT)



"Put Down My Name"



Adrian and Natalia	Nicomedia	c. A.D. 303
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During the tenth and last major Roman persecution under Emperors Diocletian and Maximian, a young military officer who loved honor and courage distinguished himself to his superiors by faithfully and efficiently carrying out the letter of their orders in trying to suppress the Christians. His skill and daring in both this and in battle had led to one promotion after another.

But Adrian's task of torturing Christians bothered him. In the face of pain and death, Christians were repeatedly peaceful and unrelenting in their commitment to their Lord. He saw in these men and women a courage greater than any he had ever seen in battle.

Adrian was so intrigued by this that one day as he was bringing a group of Christians before a judge for sentencing, he asked one of them, "What gives you such strength and joy in the midst of your sufferings?"

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we believe," the man replied.

Suddenly Adrian saw it as he never had before. The Roman gods he was defending could never give a person such courage! They were nothing compared to the God of these Christians.

He made his way to the front of the line of prisoners and stepped before the judge. "Put down my name with those to be tortured. I also have become a Christian." The emperor's son Galerius, who served as Diocletian's caesar (or junior emperor) and had been present at the trials with his father, tried to persuade Adrian to strike his name from the list of Christians and to beg for forgiveness. Adrian assured him that he had not lost his mind but had acted thus according to his own conviction.

What Adrian did not know at the time was that his wife, Natalia, had secretly become a Christian some time before and had been praying for him. When she heard that he was in prison, she



went to him and encouraged him by telling him of her conversion and more about the God who loved him.

The group of Christians Adrian had put his name down with were soon sentenced to die. Before this, because of his former status in the empire, Adrian was allowed to go home that he might make his peace with his wife before he was killed. When Natalia saw him coming down the road, she at first thought he had renounced Christ in order to be freed and wouldn't let him into the house!

Though this might have been an opportunity for Adrian to escape, he did not. He soon returned to the prison. When he did, he watched as others were subjected to terrible tortures: Their arms and legs were broken with heavy hammers until they died from the agony and internal bleeding. When Adrian's turn came, his wife feared most of all that her husband would become fainthearted and renounce Christ, but he finally knew the courage that could only belong to Christians and never backed away from his commitment. She strengthened Adrian and held on to his arms and legs while the executioner broke them with the hammer. Adrian died together with the rest.

When they began to burn the bodies of the Christians, a thunderstorm arose, the furnace was extinguished, and lightning killed several of the executioners. The attempt was abandoned and the rest of the bodies were released to their families. Sometime later, after Adrian's body had been moved to the city of Byzantium, Natalia's body was found lying on top of her husband's grave. She had died while attending it.

His sacrifice has stood as a shining example for the last eighteen centuries. During that time Adrian has been known as one of the patron saints of soldiers.

• • •

Love... rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Paul

(1 Corinthians 13:4, 6-7 NAS)



No Greater Honor



Twenty-six Christians

Japan

1596-1597

On August 15, 1549, Francis Xavier and two other priests from the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) brought the Gospel to Japan. He called Japan “the delight of my heart ... the country in the Orient most suited to Christianity.”

Though Christians and missionaries (mostly Jesuits from Portugal and Franciscans from Spain) had been allowed freedom in the nearly fifty years following this, the rulers of Japan had a growing concern that Christianity was a threat to local religion and culture, and therefore to the security of their rule. On July 24, 1587, an edict was issued stating that all Jesuit missionaries must leave Japan in twenty days. Though some churches were destroyed, no missionaries left Japan permanently.

The incident of the cargo ship *San Felipe* brought this to a head. When this ship ran aground on Japanese soil on August 26, 1596, the cargo was seized by the local shogun, or military leader. The captain, upset over the loss of his cargo, threatened Japan with a Spanish invasion (something he had no power to bring about) if his cargo was not returned. He said that Spain would easily overrun Japan with the information they had from the Franciscan monks. The Franciscans were immediately labeled as spies for this, and the tide of opinion that was already unfavorable for the Christians turned in favor of annihilating them.

So on November 23, 1596, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the absolute ruler of Japan, better known by history as Taikosama, ordered the Christians of Kyoto arrested. This began a period of persecution called the Kirishtan Holocaust, which would see as many as one million believers executed for their faith. In fact, the Christian church of a nation has never been so thoroughly decimated as it



was during the persecution that began on this date and did not truly end until over 260 years later.

The twenty-six prisoners taken on that day were made up of Franciscan monks, Jesuit priests, and their converts, ranging in age from twelve to sixty-four, and were from various nations: twenty Japanese, four Spaniards, one Portuguese (born in India of a Portuguese father and an Indian mother), and a Mexican. Though they had committed no crime, it was soon decided that they would be crucified like the God they proclaimed near Nagasaki, roughly a thirty-day march away by foot. Just before the prisoners were sent on their journey under the guard of soldiers, each prisoner's left ear was cut off, though the original sentence had been that their noses and both ears would be amputated.

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Nagasaki, Japan

1597

On the morning of February 5, the day appointed for the execution, Terazawa Hazaburo walked hesitantly through a wheat field outside the city gates as the men under his command prepared the crosses. It was around ten in the morning. A crowd was gathering in the morning mist, and there was a distant rumble of thunder coming from the direction of Mount Kompira, which towered over the village of Nagasaki.

Terazawa had been chosen for this task since he was the brother of the regional governor, but he did not look forward to it. One of the men he was to execute, Paul Miki, was a close friend, and Terazawa had often listened to his sermons. However, he so feared Taikosama that he dared not disobey his commands. In his sympathy for the prisoners, though, he allowed two Jesuit priests to remain close-by so they could minister to those men when they arrived.

About ten-thirty the long procession they had been awaiting finally reached the fields. The soldiers pushed their way through



the crowd, and for the first time since he had seen them appear in the distance, Terazawa got a good look at the prisoners. Their hands were tightly bound and their feet were raw from the forced march. Each footstep colored the snow with blood. Most were pale and emaciated. They had divided into three groups, each led by a Franciscan who was praying as they made their way forward. Though physically they showed the toil of the journey and the rough treatment they had received along the way, their faces glowed with an anticipation Terazawa could make no sense of.

When Gonzolo Garcia arrived, he stepped forward to greet Francis Rodriguez Pinto, one of the two Jesuits there to minister to the prisoners. "My good friend, God be with you. I am going to heaven today. Please give a hearty hug to Friar Gonzalez on my behalf next time you see him." Then Brother Garcia turned to the cross nearest him. "Is this one mine?" he asked a soldier. It was not. So the soldier led him to another a short distance away. When he arrived there, he knelt and embraced it.

Partway back, Brother Philip of Jesus, a twenty-four-year-old Mexican who had struggled as a Christian most of his life, made a joke to comfort one of his friends. "The galleon *San Felipe* was lost so that Brother Philip could be saved." He also embraced his cross with great emotion and relief. His struggles were over. In the end, he would not fall away.

No nails were used to fix the Christians to the crosses, but their hands, feet, and necks were held in position with iron rings, and a rope was tied around their waists to hold them in place. Peter Baustista stretched out his hands on the cross and requested of his executioner, "Nail them down, brother."

Paul Miki, Terazawa's friend, was the son of a brave Japanese soldier but had given up a promising military career to preach the Gospel. Many considered him the most effective evangelist in Japan at the time. He was thirty years old. Since he was too short for his feet to reach the bottom rings, a soldier tied a piece of linen



around his chest to support him. When he stepped on Paul to tighten the knot, a priest from the crowd stepped forward to object, but Paul calmly said, "Let him do his job, Father. It doesn't hurt."

When they were all fixed to their crosses, they were lifted together, and all twenty-six crosses fell into place with an ominous thud that echoed through the hills. The jolt sent a shock of pain through each victim's body.

Anthony of Nagasaki had come home to be martyred. His parents were in the front row of the crowd not far from him. When his mother began weeping, he called out to comfort her. Then he joined a chorus that the others had started, not wanting his particular part to be left out. He was thirteen years old.

Martin of Ascension broke out into praise, crying out, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people." The younger ones among them (five were under the age of twenty) broke into a psalm learned in catechism: " 'Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, Praise the name of the Lord ... From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised!' "

John of Goto, a nineteen-year-old, had just taken his vows as a Jesuit priest that morning. When one of the priests in the crowd came to comfort him, telling him that heaven was near, he responded gladly with a smile, "Don't worry, Father, I am quite aware of that."

Next to John was Louis Ibaki. At hearing the mention of heaven, he pressed against the ropes as if wanting to jump into his Savior's arms. He sang in his soprano voice, "Paradise! Paradise! Jesus! Mary!" He was only twelve years old. It was noted in the writings left behind by the others who died that day that young Louis was perhaps the greatest encourager of them all. He laughed and sang when his ear was cut off, and he sang along the entire route of the march from Kyoto. "*We have little Louis with us,*" Francis Blanco had written in his journal the night before. "*He is*



so full of courage and in such high spirits that it astonishes everybody."

Finally Terazawa Hazaburo, wishing for it all to be over, stepped forward to read the decree and sentence of Taikosama:

"'As these men came from the Philippines under the guise of ambassadors and chose to stay in Miyako preaching the Christian Law, which I have severely forbidden all these years, I come to decree that they be put to death, together with the Japanese who have accepted that law.'"

Yet the martyrs weren't through. Suddenly a cry came out from among them that silenced Terazawa. "All of you who are here, please listen to me!"

It was the voice of Paul Miki. No one moved as all fell silent to listen.

"I did not come from the Philippines. I am Japanese by birth and a brother of the Society of Jesus. I have committed no crime, and the only reason why I am put to death is that I have been teaching the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am happy to die for such a cause and see my death as the greatest blessing from the Lord. At this critical time, when you can rest assured that I will not try to deceive you, I want to stress and make it unmistakably clear that man can find no salvation other than the Christian way."

Some of the soldiers had stepped forward to listen more closely. Terazawa stood motionless as the executioners stood near him with the spears that would finally silence all of these men. Paul Miki smiled a moment, then looked deep into the eyes of his friend Terazawa. "The Christian law commands that we forgive our enemies and those who have wronged us. I must therefore say that I forgive Taikosama. I would rather have all the Japanese become Christians."

Then Paul fell silent. He had said what he wanted to say and was now ready for the end. He looked to the others who hung with him and spoke a few comforting words; then looking to heaven he proclaimed, "Lord, into your hands I commend my spirit. Come



meet me, you saints of God!"

At this the rest who could began singing again and shouting praises to God. Some prayed and shouted words of encouragement. Some of those standing by took up the choruses as well.

However, Philip of Jesus could not sing or shout. He was slipping and choking within the ring around his neck. Terazawa, though a veteran soldier, could take no more. He ordered the executioners to step forward and carry out the sentences. Usually the victims died instantly, but if not, then a quick flick of the sword blade severed their necks. One by one each of the twenty-six was dispatched.

In the end, Terazawa turned and walked away. Those who had died before him that day had greater honor in death than that of any samurai or soldier he had ever seen in battle. His steps were deliberate and heavy. Tears glistened in his eyes and made their way down his face.

• • •

Wherever Jesus is taken, He changes things. Those who love power always fear Him and seek to wipe His followers from their nations, but the seed that is planted by such a sacrifice remains. These, who would have turned Japan upside right with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, did not die in vain.

After persecuting Christians for over 260 years, Japan finally allowed a church to be built again in Nagasaki in the late 1800s to minister to the growing number of Westerners there. Soon after, priests were astonished to see Japanese citizens streaming down from the hills to attend services. Those people had been meeting in secret and passing along their faith for all of those years. They had survived all that time without the aid of a Bible or any other Christian direction, yet they all clung to the person of Jesus as Lord.

Though Christianity has enjoyed some freedom in Japan in the last one hundred years or so, it has always been viewed with suspicion



by the Japanese as an invading Western religion. Only about one in a thousand claims to be a Christian there today. In 1995 when a religious cult attacked a subway station with a gas bomb, a number of laws were passed that were supposed to protect against such a thing happening again, many of which strongly opposed the further spread of Christianity in the country.

Pray for the spread of the Gospel in Japan that they will join with the faith of their brothers and sisters around the world and not be deceived by traditions.

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

John
(1 John 4:4 NAS)



The Thundering Legion— Part One



**A Legion of
Roman Soldiers**

**Northern Roman
Empire**

C. A.D. 174

Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus led his legions to subdue the Quadi and Marcomanni in Germany, who had mounted an open military defense against the progression of northern Roman provinces. Antoninus, who had made his fame as a military leader, decided to handle the situation personally.

However, he greatly underestimated the cunning of these northern kings and found himself and his army trapped by an ambush in the mountains without water. They pleaded to their gods for deliverance as the soldiers neared dying of thirst, but they received no response.

Overall, Antoninus had little tolerance for Christians. He was a stern and impatient general who would not stand for inefficiency or failure in his troops, and he ruled Rome the same way. He had grown up well trained in philosophy and civil government and felt that the worship of the Roman gods was part of the very fabric of the empire. Therefore, Christianity was equivalent to treason, and the fourth major Roman persecution (c. A.D. 163–180) took place under his rule.

Yet in the desperation of this situation, when a legion made up entirely of Christians stepped forward and offered to pray for their rescue, Antoninus gave them his permission.

Shortly after they prayed, a huge storm broke out, and they were caught in a downpour. Soldiers rushed to collect water any way they could, even building dikes to store it as a future supply. The tempest rumbled so powerfully in the faces of their enemies that many left their ranks and defected to join the Romans. The rest were easily routed and the army was saved.



This group of soldiers came to be known as “The Thundering Legion.”

After this incident, Antoninus stopped the persecution of Christians for a time, though he made no official edict legalizing their worship. However, he eventually forgot what God had done for his army and again outlawed Christianity, threatening those who would not sacrifice to the Roman gods with torture and death.

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Many may remember the story from the first Jesus Freaks (pg. 96) of the forty soldiers of “The Thundering Legion” some 150 years later who refused to come in off the ice of a lake in winter to maintain their testimonies, but few know this story of how they received their name. Like Elijah before the prophets of Baal, they were not afraid to put their God to the test. They believed that God would answer their prayers because He had done it before. They believed He would answer them because they knew His nature. Faith says, “If Jesus said it, I can count on it.”

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Faith uses as much wisdom as it has to accomplish the task at hand and then lets God step in as He wills. It is unafraid to obey God even when that obedience would seem foolhardy. It is something that comes from a real relationship with God where we listen to Him more than we ask Him for things. It is the adventure of doing whatever God tells us to do without fear.

Is there really any other way to live?

How much longer will it take you to make up your minds? If the Lord is God, worship him; but if Baal is God, worship him!

Elijah
(1 Kings 18:21 TEV)



from this day forward ...

- I will make a difference.
- Jesus, I thank you that you suffered and died for me on the cross to pay for my sins.
- Father, I thank you that you raised Jesus from the dead to be my living Lord and Savior.
- Holy Spirit, I thank you that you will lead me to do the right thing and change my world.
- Today, Lord, I want to make you a promise.
- I will not be ashamed of your name or your Gospel.
- I will do what I can for those who are persecuted and pray for them.
- I will look enemies in the eye and love them with your love.
- I will pray for them and love them—no matter what the consequences.
- I will follow your voice wherever you lead me, unafraid, for I know you will be with me.
- If I should stumble, if I should fall, if I should deny your name, if I should feel guilty that I did not pray or forgot to do something you asked me to do, I will not quit. I will not wallow in guilt. I will turn back to you, confess my sin, and do what you called me to do, because that is why you died for me.
- I will stand with you and my brothers and sisters around the world, because no matter what happens, no matter what I face or how it looks, in the end, we will be victorious—we will inherit eternity and heaven with you.
- I can do nothing else, because...

... I am a Jesus Freak.

Signature

Day