



## Scripture nugget – Fear God, not man

*When they had brought them in and made them stand before the Sanhedrin, the high priest questioned them, “We gave you strict orders [did we not?] to stop teaching in that Name. Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and want to bring this Man’s blood upon us.” But Peter and the apostles said in reply, “We must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:27-29).*

**Our faith is increasingly being tested in these times of adversity.** In green times, it is easy to obey God’s commandments especially when it does not bother anyone else. All authority comes from God and is necessary for order and safety in human society. Thus, a good Christian is also a law-abiding citizen. However, when it comes between obeying God’s commandments and orders from civil authorities, it becomes a real test of our faith. St Peter and the Apostles risked their lives when they chose to disobey the order from the Jewish leaders to stop preaching in the Name of Jesus, and were only spared by the timely intervention of Gamaliel, a respected Pharisee and teacher of the law, who managed to speak some wisdom and restraint to the angry Jewish leaders. There are many holy martyrs of God who have received their glory in heaven. But there are also many examples in Scripture when God demonstrated His mighty protection for those that risked their lives to obey Him. An example is when Daniel’s three young friends: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who refused to bow to the statue that Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar had set up, were thrown into a fiery furnace. In the fire, was seen walking with the three men a figure that looked like Jesus Christ. When they came out of the furnace, it was found that none of a strand of their hair was burnt and their clothes had no smell of fire!

**Those who risk their lives for God will never be put to shame (cf. Matthew 5:10).** On the contrary, they will earn a special place in heaven. Even when God wills martyrdom for a persecuted soul, death is a peaceful step into the place of eternal joy. St Stephen was the first martyr among the first believers. Despite being stoned cruelly to death, St Stephen died peacefully with a vision of heaven in his eyes and the strength to beg forgiveness for his persecutors. Jesus tells us clearly we should fear God and not man. Man can only do as much but God can cast a soul into hell. *And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna (Matthew 10:28).* God has a promise for those who persevere in obeying Him: *Because you have kept My message of endurance, I will keep you safe in the time of trial that is going to come to the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth (Revelation 3:10).* What a tremendous promise to keep in mind as more and more Christians are being persecuted for their faith as unprecedented times of tribulation come upon us!

**Conversation with Jesus:** Precious Lord, purify my heart, mind and soul from all unholy fears and anxiety. You have given me a spirit not of fear but of power, love and self-control (cf. 2 Timothy 1:7). St Paul shows us what kind of calibre a good Christian should have. He was constantly pursued by the Jews who wanted to kill him, he was beaten three times with rods, was stoned once nearly to death, with many other adversities. Yet, St Paul remained faithful and provided a strong witness to You till the end when he was martyred. Give me the courage and zeal of St Paul so that I can remain faithful to You even in adversity and persecution. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.