

Persecuted but Persistent!



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Persecution can come from any source and for any reason today—for not having health insurance; for not wearing a face-covering; or not keeping six-feet away. The spiritual condition of the world worsens every day. We are to *first of all* offer—¹ Timothy 2:1 “*Supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; ²For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*”

If we are persecuted for our faith in God, we have this promise from Jesus—Matthew 5:10 “*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” Any type of persecution we encounter, is getting us ready for Christ’s return—we must *persist* in faith!

Believers in Christ are persecuted because of their faith since *real* faith is in conflict with *verbal* faith. Trials and tests that are met according to God’s Word, will refine our faith in the Atonement work of Christ and prepare us for eternity. Self does not want to hear criticism, but only approval and praise, so persecution strikes at the *pride* in our heart.

The family of Jesus questioned His motives Mark 3:21, but Jesus was not concerned with what others said, so we are not to be concerned about criticism or persecution from others either. Jesus

Philippians 2:7-8 “*Made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.*”

If we want praise from God, we will not be concerned about what others think of us. We will not worry about whether our life of *faith in God*, refutes the world’s *faith in everything* but God. Those who criticize true believers will someday call for the mountains to: “*Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!*” Revelation 6:16—while the redeemed enjoy the fellowship of God at the *marriage supper of the Lamb* Revelation 19:9.

Persecution proves whether we are true believers in Christ or not. If we are following the faith of first-century believers, we will not worry about criticism, mistreatment, harassment, intimidation, or persecution from people, as all of these just make our faith in Christ grow deeper into the soil of trust. *Trials* and *tests* refine our *faith* and *trust* in our faithful God.

¹ Peter 4:12 “*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you.*” It is not at all strange that true believers are mocked and persecuted—while many professing faith but living like the world, are not mocked or persecuted.

The religious leaders in Bible times were not persecuted, because they lived *like* the average Roman citizen—no *belief* in Christ, and no trust on *God* for real issues of life. Satan had convinced them that they were going to the *Kingdom* of God—even though they were rejecting the *Son* of God. Luke 10:16 “*He who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me*” —which proves how wrong they were.

When Jesus came into the synagogue and spoke God’s Truth from the Bible, religious hypocrites opposed Him and plotted His murder. Jesus told them John 5:37-38 “*None of you have ever either heard His voice or seen what He is like.*”

Nor have you His word dwelling within you, for you refuse to believe Him whom He has sent.”

John 12:48 “*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*” The teaching of Jesus was to always *love* everyone John 13:34; to *not take revenge* Romans 12:19; to *trust God and trust also in Jesus* John 14:1; and other such commands—but the world *rejects* this teaching and Truth. The religious leaders were *determined* to crucify the One God had sent to *save* them from the flames.

Difficult trials and unjust persecution will *perfect* our faith—if these things are met according to God’s plan in the Scriptures. The apostle said ¹ Peter 4:12 the “*Scorching flame of persecution [fiery trial] is raging among you to put you to the test.*” Our faith is *tested* to reveal whether we have authentic first-century faith and Bible Christianity or not.

² Thessalonians 1:3 “*We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; ⁴So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.*”

It is all about being prepared for eternal life with God—² Thessalonians 1:5 “*Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.*” *Persecution* perfects *faith* as we *persist* in our *trust* on the cleansing Blood of the Lord Jesus.

The apostle adds ² Thessalonians 1:6 “*Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; ⁷And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁸In flaming fire taking vengeance on them*

that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: ⁹ Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”

Persecution is making the believer ready to enter the presence of God by perfecting their faith in God. The disciples encouraged others Acts 14:22 “And exhorting [urging] them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” Those who go through the *strait gate* into Heaven are those who were ridiculed and persecuted because of their faith—but they *persisted* in trusting God.

Jesus told us Matthew 5:11 “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ¹² Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” Being worthy of eternal life means persisting in faith through trials and troubles by the Spirit’s power.

The apostle Paul met with *severe* persecution and he went through *serious* trials, but he still was able to say Philippians 3:8 “I even reckon all things as pure loss because of the priceless privilege of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. And for His sake I have suffered the loss of everything, and reckon it all as mere refuse, in order that I may win Christ and be found in union with Him.” No matter what difficulty he went through, he would persist in his trust *on God*, so he could see Jesus *in Heaven*.

Whenever we face persecution or discrimination—and we meet it according to the Scriptures—God receives the glory. ¹ Peter 4:14 “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.” Everything we say or do is ¹ Corinthians 10:31 “To the glory of God.”

When we face persecution, it should *not* be ¹ Peter 4:15 “As a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. ¹⁶ Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. ¹⁷ For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”

¹ Peter 4:18-19 “And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”

When facing any kind of *persecution*, we must keep our *faith*, *trust*, and *focus* on what Jesus did for us on the cross—sacrificed Himself, so we could be forgiven and converted. We are to *persist* in faith and to keep Hebrews 12:2 “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.”

Our trials would *pale* in comparison to what the apostles *suffered* or Jesus *endured*. Hebrews 12:3 “For consider him that endured such contradiction [hostility] of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds [souls].”

If the Son of God, the *Creator* of everything and *Owner* of everyone in heaven and on earth, was willing to give up all *reputation*; face the severest *persecution*; be arrested and crucified for us, how much *more* should we be willing to sacrifice our life to Him!

Luke 6:26 “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.” The apostle met with *serious* opposition—yet was able to say Acts 20:22-24 “And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.” Our life is to be a *living testimony* of God’s Truth by our words; our conduct; and our treatment of everyone.

Jesus speaks of persecution and how to meet it—Revelation 2:10 “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

When we meet with persecution and trials, we are being tested in faith to reveal what type of Christianity we have—whether it is the invalid *verbal-faith only* of many Christians today, or the genuine *acting-faith of Christ* of true believers then. Our Hope of heaven depends on whether our *faith* and our *trust* is actually on the Atonement sacrifice of the Lord Jesus!

From the right hand of God *in Heaven*, Jesus speaks to His followers *on earth*—Revelation 2:19 “I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience” [persistence in faith]—“and the last to be more than the first.”

If we *persist* in our faith in Christ and our *trust* on God—even at the cost of our life—we are promised His eternal Kingdom. Heaven depends on *persisting* in our faith in Jesus, no matter *what* anyone may say or do, or how they *persecute*!



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