



**Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ
Jesus will suffer persecution.**

1 Timothy 3:12

People — 1 John 1:8
Eyes — 2 Peter 2:14
Rumors — Jeremiah 9:5
Silence — 1 Peter 2:15
Ears — 2 Timothy 4:3-4
Criminal — Psalms 43:1
Untruth — Psalms 101:7 (Acts 6:12-14)
Trivial - Proverbs 29:11
Imitate — Galatians 6:7
Opposition - Psalms 31:13
Negative — 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

The songwriter said in the song titled "Press along saints" that "persecution we must bear, trial, and crosses in our way." Persecution in one form or another is inevitable for those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus. Loyalty to Christ, His truth, and His righteous standards involve a constant determination not to compromise our faith or give in to the deluge of voices calling us to conform to the world and lay aside scriptural truth. Because of these godly standards, the faithful will be deprived of privilege and ridiculed; they will experience grief at seeing godliness rejected by the majority. *Persecution will encounter different kinds of people. A believer living right will meet human beings at various levels. There will be people we meet that have no regard for God and righteousness. Others we know*

are lukewarm Christians with one foot in the world and one foot in the church. The other set of people we may encounter are backsliders. The former Christians went from knowing about God to not wanting to know Him anymore but exploring other ways of living.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had to deal with persecution. The persecutors of God's Son are people many would not expect: the same group of men that claim to follow God. Chief priests were the temple ministers in charge of worship. The scribes were copyists of scripture in post-exilic times. They were trained to teach Old Testament law and were considered experts, called lawyers. The elders of the people (senior citizens), folks that most individuals would never see to be persecutors. These people Jesus met while teaching and doing other righteous deeds in their presence. However, in Matthew, chapter twenty-six, verse four, they consulted together, devising a plot to rid the Son of God. Why would people that claim to represent the church go against the Son of God?

Persecution begins with the eyes of others. People that have eyes full of sin. These deceivers look for every opportunity to engage in whatever type of evil they are trapped in but are never satisfied, never stopping. Such people are skilled in the art of enticement and persuasion.

Persecutors are particularly effective against those who are ungodly or godly, weak or "unsteady" in their life, and those most vulnerable to temptation.

In Matthew chapter twenty-one, Jesus Christ cleanses the temple by overhauling the moneychangers and the seats of sellers that sold doves. Then He healed the blind and the lame. The children were crying out to the Son of God, praising Him. However, the chief priests and scribes looked upon what they experienced, saw the wonderful things Jesus Christ had done, and were displeased. How could

these significant men be upset at something good that happened for the needy people?

Persecution develops partially from small talk. Whether an individual accomplishes something good or bad, feedback will swirl around from a group that may know the person enough to generate some news about them. Persecutors look to create verbal discrepancy to overthrow whatever success or recognition the individual may be receiving from the public. Most people who practice this behavior may realize they might never achieve such status, so if they feel unable to reach that plateau, the next option is to take them down.

Jesus Christ had to deal with such gossip when cleansing the temple in Matthew chapter twenty-one. Afterward, He healed the blind and the lame in the temple.

When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that Jesus did, the people cried out to Him and called His name, and the council sought to get rid of Jesus. Are they looking to take Him away because of the great things He did? Or is it because they were chanting His name?

Persecution may come through silence. Ever go within an area, and the people around look and give the silent treatment?

Silence can work both ways. A believer that goes to work or their common grounds may have to submit to human authority: employers, managers, and people of work. Why would God ask Christians to submit to human authorities, even if wrongfully accused or mistreated unfairly? The answer: this is God's will.

Why does God want us to pursue goodness in this way? He wants us to silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. The result of our submission to authority will not always be fair treatment or even freedom from harm. Instead, God plans to use our good choices to shut prejudiced people up. What does that mean?

Those who know believers well enough to see their faith lived out daily recognize

that we do good because we are Christians. They will stop believing that Christians are a destructive force in society, that Christians do evil, or that Christians are dangerous. They will stop being ignorant about what Christians are like and will know better by direct experience. Of course, that result depends on Christians leading good lives out in the open, including being submissive to human authorities.

Persecution will come about what they hear. Is it a coincidence that the difference between the word "hear" and "ear" is the letter 'h'?" Some encounters we experience with persecutors will be on what we say. Persecutors will not tolerate the truth, especially if the words are speaking directly about their situation. Many will turn away or tell them to stop or even get mad because listening through the ears is getting to the heart.

In the New Testament, in Acts chapter seven, Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin is a defense of the faith preached by Christ and His apostles. The high priests ask Stephen a question regarding what he heard about him. Then Stephen's response was direct and gave examples of Moses and Joseph: and how they are living themselves today. When the people heard these things from the mouth of Stephen, they felt it in their hearts. They gnashed at him with their teeth, as stated in verse fifty-four of the same chapter.

Persecution is like people treating the victim as a criminal. To be treated by society for following the will of God can be hard at times. The devil has his agents watching every move a believer makes as they continue on the righteous path. Why does a believer get treated like a criminal? The experience is quite similar.

First, a believer gets treated as though they committed a felony. What action did the believer perform? A godly gesture that enables someone to recognize the Christ

in them, which brings attention to others within the environment. Secondly, God's people are constantly under watch in everything they do and say. Criminals have the same experience to such an extent.

In Matthew chapter twenty-six, verse eleven, Jesus stood in front of the governor after being accused by the chief priests and scribes. He questioned the Son of God regarding matters stated by the accusers. The governor had a custom that they release a prisoner at feast time, where they would bring two prisoners out, and they gathered the people together to render who would go free, and Jesus was one and Barrabas was the other. When the governor had the court in session, his wife was gesturing already to her husband that she suffered because of Jesus' righteous activity. The Son of God knew He was delivered and put in this position because of envy, as stated in verse eighteen of the same chapter.

Persecution can make a believer experience falsehood from others around them. People can make up stories about someone at any time, anywhere, with anyone. The victim has no control over the thoughts and minds of the wicked. They intend to pull down the righteous path the believer is walking in to make him disconnect from God and follow the evil ways of society. The devil will do whatever it takes to get everyone on that path by any means necessary.

In Acts chapter six, verses eight to eleven are a perfect example of how evil works against a servant of God. Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. There arose certain men that disputed with Stephen. Why? What did he do? God's will: help others come to know that God exists.

In retaliation, the devil devises a plan and gets some corrupt people to speak against Stephen. The men could not confront him

because they could not resist the wisdom by which he spoke. So these men did it behind his back, stirring up the corrupt men to bring falsehood against Stephen. The elders and scribes came upon him, caught him, and brought him to the council.

Persecution at times derives from petty things. Today, in our society, there are laws, rules, and regulations to follow in each country. However, apart from that, people have self-made laws, and most are trivial but significant to them. Some people stir up conflict over the silliest things only to follow their instincts to cause strife with people such as believers to get them angry and off course with God. Who is creating these episodes to tempt the people of God? The devil.

Jesus Christ stood before Pilate for questioning. He asked a series of questions to determine His fate. "Art thou the King of the Jews?" His response, "thou sayest." Then asked, "hearest thou not many witnesses against thee?" No answer.

Pilate did not believe there was enough evidence to condemn Jesus Christ. However, he did address the people, asking them what to do with the Son of God. Pilate asked the people what evil did He do to deserve such punishment? The crowd gave no other answer but away with him.

Persecution will involve people imitating believers who righteously walk straight and narrow. Living before God as a believer can be a mocking experience. If someone watches you and cannot challenge you, they will copy you. People will attempt to disrupt your path, used by the enemy to stop the flow of God resonating in your life. Their mission is to get the believer mad to the point where they cannot connect with God.

In Acts chapter nine, verse fourteen, the seven sons of Sceva attempted to mimic God's servant Paul. They try to lay hands

on some of the people possessed. However, instead of binding the spirit, the spirit within responded, And the evil spirit answered and said Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you? The man with the evil spirit came out and leaped on them.

Persecution can come in a variety, including physical torment and lies or slander, both of which David seems to have experienced. His enemies certainly tried to kill him. Saul attempted a few times to get David, but God made a way of escape for him. The evil "whispering" David mentions here might include smears on his reputation and plans for death. The prophet Jeremiah would experience the same struggles as David. Jeremiah was unpopular because he predicted disaster for Judah. David and Jeremiah were not the only ones to receive such vile treatment. Jesus, too, was the object of similar abuse.

Persecution will come in the form of disrespect or disregard. People who live in darkness and love the pleasures of this world will have little interest in the people of God. They will see you as a believer but not resonate with you because the straight and narrow way is the light and the broadway is darkness. The conversation will be brief at most times because of our differences. They will see the light and know something different about you but do not comprehend. Believers must allow God to work through us to reach them, and they can decide at that point.

Persecution all believers go through because the Son of God had to deal with it. However, God is the one that will help us through these times because He knows all things.