

Persecution

Note: Suffering persecution is being maltreated by others because you are a true disciple of Christ. It includes being falsely accused, unjustly condemned or imprisoned, being ridiculed, scorned, rejected, or injured. Persecution is not suffering for doing wrong toward others or for disobeying rightful authority.

1. Why do people persecute Christians, even when they are doing good? John 15:18–21. “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his mas-ter.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.”

2 Tim. 3:10–14. But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them. **1 John 3:1.** Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

2. Cain persecuted his brother Abel because his own works were evil, while Abel's were righteous. Gen.

4:2–7. 1 John 3:12–14. Not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

3. Do good to and pray for those who persecute you.

Love your enemies. Matt. 5:38–42. “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.”

Matt. 5:43–48. Matt. 5:43–45. “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on

the just and on the unjust.” **Rom. 12:14.** Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

4. Imitate Stephen, who prayed for his persecutors as they were stoning him. Acts 7:60. Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

5. In dealing with your persecutors be wise and innocent. Matt. 10:16. “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harm-less as doves.”

6. If and when you are falsely accused, trust God to lead you. Matt. 10:17–20. “But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.”

7. One need not get depressed due to severe persecution. Paul testifies to that. 2 Cor. 4:8–9. We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. **2 Cor. 11:23–**

29. *(Paul tells of the many things he suffered at the hands of his persecutors.)*

8. Those who suffer for the sake of Christ will be blessed and should count it an honor to do so. 1 Peter 4:12–16. Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

9. Never be ashamed to be identified with those who are being persecuted. Rather, suffer with them, if need be. 2 Tim. 1:8–9. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

10. Do not be ashamed of the gospel. Testify boldly and be ready to suffer persecution. 2 Tim. 2:3. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. **2 Tim. 2:8–10.** Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

11. Do not be unsettled or let the devil lead you away from the faith through persecution. 1 Thess. 3:2–4. And sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.

12. Jesus says that some do fall away when they are persecuted. Matt. 13:1–9. (the parable of the sower) Matt. 13:18–23. (Jesus interprets the parable.) Matt. 13:20–21. “But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.”

13. Some compromise the gospel to avoid persecution. Don't be like that. Gal. 6:12. As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

14. Believers can keep God's Word when they are persecuted. David did. Ps. 119:51. The proud have me in great derision, Yet I do not turn aside from Your law. **Ps. 119:61.** The cords of the wicked have bound me, But I have not forgotten Your law. **Ps. 119:69.** The proud have forged a lie against me, But I will keep Your precepts with my whole heart.

15. If persecutors threaten you, obey God rather than man, as did Peter and John. Acts 4:18–20. And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” **Acts 5:17–32.** *(The apostles went on preaching the gospel.)* **Acts 5:29.** But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” **Acts 5:41–42.** So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

16. Paul and Silas sang hymns while they were imprisoned. Acts 16:25. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

17. Paul was willing to die for the sake of Christ. Acts 21:12–13.