



## Persecution and Suffering

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**Persecution:** hardship experienced by and initiated against a person because he or she chooses to follow Jesus and/or is sharing the gospel. For example: losing your job because you are baptized, going to prison because you are preaching, being beaten because you are a known Christ-follower, etc

**Suffering:** hard things that happen in our lives, such as disease, loss of a loved one (especially unexpectedly), disappointment, being beaten for no apparent reason, being robbed, etc.

Persecution and suffering are promised for followers of Jesus. In either case, the enemy will try to silence the witness for Jesus. However, when we respond to persecution and suffering in the way the Bible teaches we can reap many benefits and the gospel continues to be shared.

Persecution and suffering may or may not be caused by the enemy, but he will always try to use it to distract us and keep us from continuing in the mission of Jesus and our calling as His disciples. The important question is not "Why?", but "How do I respond?"

*What are other examples of persecution and suffering, especially in your context?*

*Which is more common in your context?*

**Instructions:**

For each passage below, identify what the persecution looks like, how the disciples responded, and what benefit they gained.

This is not a complete list of scriptures that teach us about how to respond to persecution and suffering. As you read the Bible, ask God to highlight other passages that teach about these.

**Job 2:4-10**

“Skin for skin!” Satan replied. “A man will give all he has for his own life. But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.”

The Lord said to Satan, “Very well, then, he is in your hands;but you must spare his life.”

So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

His wife said to him, “Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!”

He replied, “You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?”

In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

Persecution/Suffering	Response	Benefits

**Job 42:1-10**

Then Job replied to the Lord:

“I know that you can do all things;  
no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?’

Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,  
things too wonderful for me to know.

“You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak;

I will question you,  
and you shall answer me.’

My ears had heard of you  
but now my eyes have seen you.

Therefore I despise myself  
and repent in dust and ashes.”

After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has. So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has." So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the Lord told them; and the Lord accepted Job's prayer.

After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before.

Persecution/Suffering	Response	Benefits

### Psalm 56

For the director of music. To the tune of "A Dove on Distant Oaks." Of David. A *miktam*. When the Philistines had seized him in Gath.

- 1 Be merciful to me, my God,  
for my enemies are in hot pursuit;  
all day long they press their attack.
- 2 My adversaries pursue me all day long;  
in their pride many are attacking me.
- 3 When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.
- 4 In God, whose word I praise—  
in God I trust and am not afraid.  
What can mere mortals do to me?
- 5 All day long they twist my words;  
all their schemes are for my ruin.
- 6 They conspire, they lurk,  
they watch my steps,  
hoping to take my life.
- 7 Because of their wickedness do not let them escape;  
in your anger, God, bring the nations down.
- 8 Record my misery;  
list my tears on your scroll—  
are they not in your record?
- 9 Then my enemies will turn back  
when I call for help.

By this I will know that God is for me.

**10** In God, whose word I praise,  
in the Lord, whose word I praise—

**11** in God I trust and am not afraid.  
What can man do to me?

**12** I am under vows to you, my God;  
I will present my thank offerings to you.

**13** For you have delivered me from death  
and my feet from stumbling,  
that I may walk before God  
in the light of life.

Persecution/Suffering	Response	Benefits

**Matthew 5:10-12**

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Persecution/Suffering	Response	Benefits

**Matthew 10:16-23, 26-28, 32-39**

“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the

one who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

“So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. 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 hell.

“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

“Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

Persecution/Suffering	Response	Benefits

**Acts 4:1-4, 13, 18-20, 23-31**

The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

"Why do the nations rage  
 and the peoples plot in vain?  
 The kings of the earth rise up  
 and the rulers band together  
 against the Lord  
 and against his anointed one.'

Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Persecution/Suffering	Response	Benefits

**Acts 14:1-7**

At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, where they continued to preach the gospel.

Persecution/Suffering	Response	Benefits

### 2 Timothy 3:12

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Persecution/Suffering	Response	Benefits

### 1 Peter 4:12-17, 19

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Persecution/Suffering	Response	Benefits

### Hebrews 2:10

In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.

Persecution/Suffering	Response	Benefits

**Hebrews 11:35-40, 12:1-2**

Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Persecution/Suffering	Response	Benefits

**James 1:2-4**

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

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