

The Value of Persecution

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

Persecution is a reality of the Christian life. Paul ominously warned that “all who would live godly in Christ Jesus **shall** suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).

We expect persecution from the world. After all, Jesus said: “A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (Jn. 15:20).

The more lamentable reality is this: Occasionally, hateful conduct comes from our own kinsmen in the Lord.

Paul was not exempt from such malevolence; he wrote of being “in perils among **false brethren**” (2 Cor. 11:26). For further illustration of this reality, read the apostle’s description of certain envious brethren in Rome who attempted to compound the apostle’s affliction while he languished as a prisoner, awaiting the disposition of his case before Caesar (Phil. 1:12ff).

It is difficult to conceive of such ungodly malevolence. And, unfortunately, that noxious species is not extinct.

As faithful children of God, we must learn to recognize the value of persecution and even rejoice therein — not ostentatiously, but in a quiet and humble way. Consider the following.

Fellowship With Jesus

Persecution allows us to share in a special fellowship with our Lord. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul cataloged a number of things he had to forfeit for the cause of Jesus. Such losses, however, he viewed as but “dung” (Phil. 3:8; KJV) or “refuse” (ASV) that he might share the “fellowship of [Christ’s] sufferings” (Phil. 3:10).

The noble apostle even counted his “bonds” as a “grace” (favor) which God had bestowed upon him (see Phil. 1:7). What a marvelous attitude!

Is Persecution a Blessing?

Persecution is good for us. The inspired James argues that trials “prove” our faith, work “patience” (endurance) in our lives, and help develop maturity (Jas. 1:2-4). Steel is tempered in the flames of the forge. The University of Hard Knocks helps to grind off those rough edges that mar character.

Evidence of Virtue

Yielding graciously to persecution allows one to demonstrate that he is of a superior quality than his adversaries. It is easy to be hateful, but the ugly disposition throws a floodlight upon human weakness.

It is much more Christ-like to remain calm and to respond in kindness, in the face of evil opposition. This is a tremendous challenge, but we have the wonderful example of the Lord to encourage us. Peter says that Jesus, “when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not” (1 Pet. 2:23).

At times, when one is maligned by unspiritual brethren, he is required to admonish himself with the foregoing precedent so beautifully demonstrated by the Lord. Particularly is this the case, for example, if he is aware of devastating “skeletons” that lie buried within some of his adversaries’ “closets.”

The genuine Christian must employ a greater ethical code than that to which his detractors subscribe.

Proves Your Faithful Friends

Persecution enables us to value the sweet consolation of true friends. Conflict sometimes brings faithful children of God together in a thrilling way they might not have known otherwise.

Affliction can stimulate the Lord's people toward a greater resolve to love one another. There's nothing like an ugly example to help the more mature escalate toward a higher level of brotherly love.

And so, when we think about it seriously, we can thrust ourselves forward, even in the face of adversarial conflict, and press on. We can thank God for his grace, and for his patience with us all. We can express gratitude for those whom we love in the Lord, and who stand with us in times of distress.

And we can pray for those who would accuse, misuse, or abuse us (see 2 Cor. 11:24; Rom. 10:1).

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Scripture References

2 Timothy 3:12; John 15:20; 2 Corinthians 11:26; Philippians 1:12; Philippians 3:8; Philippians 3:10; Philippians 1:7; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 2:23; Romans 10:1

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