

CALLED TO SUFFER

Peter wrote from God that it is commendable for a Christian to bear the pain of unjust suffering because they are God conscious, and it is also commendable to suffer for doing good.

'To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.' 1 Peter 2:19-21

Persecution has three common sources:

- **Religious leaders** - Matthew 10:17
- **Government leaders** - Matthew 10:18 (Holy Spirit will give words to respond)
- **Family members** - Matthew 10:21 (This often happens with false religions and cults who cut off family who become Christians) Jesus had family who doubted him
- Cain murders Abel over his 'righteous' offering - Genesis 4:3-8, 1 John 3:11-14
- Wicked shoot at the righteous - Psalm 11:2, 37:32, 44:22, 69:4-12, 74:7-8, 119:22-23, 50-51, 119:61, 69, 161
- The bloodthirsty hate those who have integrity - Proverbs 29:10, 27
- Many religious leaders do not want to hear from God - Jeremiah 26:7-11
- Three Jewish lads cast into fiery furnace for refusing idolatry - Daniel 3
- Daniel suffered for being righteous and standing for God - Daniel 6:1-16
- Jesus is attacked in the desert right after his public baptism - Matthew 3:15, 4:1-
- In his first teaching, Jesus alerts his disciples about future persecution - Matthew 5:10-12
- Mature sons of God love and pray for their enemies - Matthew 5:44
- Persecution because of the Word of God - Matthew 13:21
- Dangerous to persecute God's servants and messengers - Matthew 23:33-39
- Persecution before the coming of Christ in judgment - Matthew 24:9-11
- Promise for those who forsake all for Christ. Satan fears most those who are most effective in spreading the gospel of the kingdom of God. - Mark 10:30
- Woe when all people speak well of you - Luke 6:26
- Ashamed of Jesus' words about losing your life (soul, psuche) - Luke 9:23-26
- God remembers the persecutors and the persecuted (from A to Z) Luke 11:47-51
- Jesus understands our situation - John 15:18-25
- Persecutors often think they are doing God a favor - John 16:1-3

Persecution in the Early Church

Book of Acts - There is plenty of **action** in the early church story. Jesus went up. Holy Spirit came down. Believers went out. Sinners came in. Religious and government leaders came against. Believers went out again and again with joy midst persecution. Unlike many Christians in our day, they did not pray to escape trouble but instead prayed for boldness. Persecution created many opportunities to get the gospel out to key people in various places.

- Peter and John cause 'holy havoc' for healing a lame man. - Acts 4:1-23
- Religious leaders jealous of popularity of Christianity with the 'common' people - Acts 5:12-17
- Rejoice over being able to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus - Acts 5:40-41
- Stephen attacked for his boldness of the Spirit of truth, wisdom - Acts 6:10-12
- Stephen stoned but forgives his persecutors. New Testament believers never described as dying but 'falling asleep'. The body appears as 'asleep' but the spirit goes immediately to be with Jesus - 1 Corinthians 15:42-54, Philippians 1:21-23, 1 Thessalonians 4:10
- Persecution motivates the Jerusalem church to spread the gospel to the world - Acts 8:1-4
- Christianity's worst enemy Saul, becomes its best friend - Acts 9:1-6
- Paul (formerly Saul) now receives persecution from his former colleagues - Acts 9:23-25
- Herod seeks to kill Peter, but the church prays. Peter lives and Herod dies - Acts 12:1-5, 23
- The church grows through persecution - Acts 12:24
- Crowds throng to hear apostles. Jealous Jews stir up persecution - Acts 13:44-52
- Paul bounces back after being stoned - Acts 14:1-7, 19

- Preachers imprisoned. Praising prisoners released supernaturally - Acts 16:19-26
- Paul has quite a reputation and God knows him too. - Acts 17:5-10,13
- Paul gets another beating - Acts 18:6, 12-17
- Riot over lost riches due to Paul's preaching - Acts 19:23-20:1
- Paul makes the most of every opportunity - Acts 21:27-40
- Paul gets a cool response to his blunt message - Acts 22:22-29
- Paul gets a visit from the Lord, who instructs and encourages him. - Acts 23:1-2
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Saul, the former persecutor becomes Paul the persecuted

- Persecution produces perseverance, character and hope - Romans 5:3-5
- Nothing can separate believers from the love of God as over comers - Romans 8:35-39
- Overcome evil with good with aggressive love actions! - Romans 12:14,21
- Apostles seem to be on Satan's priority attack list - 1 Corinthians 4:9-13
- 'We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going.' - 2 Corinthians 4:8-12 Living Bible Translation
- Spiritually mature Paul did not complain but endured all of this for Christ - 1 Cor. 6:3-10
- The place of weakness is the place of perfected power! - 1 Corinthians 12:9-10
- Those born of the flesh persecute those born of the Spirit - Galatians 4:29
- The cross of Christ causes persecution - Galatians 6:12
- Paul's marks: 195 lashes, beaten with rods 3X, ship wrecked 3X - Gal.6:17, 1 Cor.11:22-33

- Paul's persecution advances the gospel to Caesar's household - Philip.1:12-14, 4:22
- Counted as a privilege to suffer for Christ - Philippians 1:27-29
- Knowing Christ's ways includes resurrection and suffering - Philippians 3:10
- Persecution was part of apostle Paul's destiny - 1 Thessalonians 3:1-4, Acts 9:16
- Persecution brings about perseverance and faith - 2 Thessalonians 1:4
- Suffering for the sake of the church - Colossians 1:24-25
- God's people who share the faith will suffer - 2 Timothy 1:7-12 but they have:

Power to face the enemy and all his forces - 1:7

Love towards all which includes their persecutors

Sound mind and discipline to overcome the flesh and battles in the mind

- **Endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ** - 2 Timothy 2:3,8-13; 3:10-12; 4:5-8
- Count it all joy to face trials as a way to maturity - James 1:2-4

- God's Hall of Faith included those who saw miraculous deliverance and those who did not. Some experienced much trouble, persecution, unanswered prayers or even death.

God honors those with **faith to escape** or **faith to endure**. Hebrews 11:29-39

- Don't be surprised! REJOICE! The Spirit of glory rests on you. - Isaiah 60:1-3, Acts 6:15
- Stephen shone with glory! Note: suffering should not occur due to being a meddler or a criminal. Commit yourself to God and continue to do good. God will restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. - 1 Peter 4:12-19; 5:10. **Suffering** and **glory** go together.

Peter wrote to the persecuted believers and knew about the false accusations which they faced - 1 Peter 2:19-23. He appeals to the glory and example of Jesus - 1 Peter 1:3-9; 2:19-23.

Their holy lives silently condemned the unholy people around them. - 1 Peter 4:4.

Two Weapons:

- **Clean life and conscience** - 1 Peter 2:12-18; 3:13-16 Some Roman soldiers and others came to Christ when they saw how bravely the persecuted Christians - lived and even died -Philippians 1:27-29; 4:21-22. Daniel was a man of integrity - Daniel 6:1-5 Boldness is disarming.
- **Proclamation of Christian faith** - Based on true historical facts - 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Peter 1:16,19

REVELATION

Who will you worship and follow? If it's Jesus, be ready for persecution

This book reveals the past, present and future, 1:19, but most of all it reveals Jesus Christ as he is now - 1:1,12-18. Jesus holds the keys (authority) over death and hell's plans. Persecution will increase until Jesus returns, but He is still on the throne! God wants us to overcome, endure, be faithful and persevere midst great tribulation (pressure). Apostle John experienced it - 1:9

- Many end-time martyrs - 6:9-11. God's plan for our victory. - Revelation 12:11-13
- **Blood** of the Lamb (**God's covenant**)
- **Believer's confession** / testimony
- **Believers** unshakable **commitment** Revelation 12:17
- It looks like the Beast is winning, but he is not. Jesus is Lord - Revelation 13:7-10
- Saints are still around for fiery trials but **remain faithful** to Jesus - Revelation 14:11-13
- **Jesus comes like a thief just before Armageddon.** - Revelation 16:15-16

(For more details on the second coming of Jesus, go to our [section](#) on **End Time Prophecy**)