

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENDURANCE UNDER PERSECUTION



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In Christianity, persecution is something that everyone who holds the true faith, the faith of Jesus Christ, would have to endure. According to the Noah Webster 1828 Dictionary ‘Persecution is the infliction of pain, punishment or death upon others unjustly, particularly for adhering to a religious creed or mode of worship, either by way of penalty or for compelling them to renounce their principles.’

All over the world the followers of Christ would face persecution for the word of faith they preach and for the testimony which they live.

Persecution may be *direct* or *indirect*. Direct persecution can be an experience where persons may be tortured, beheaded, burnt alive, experience starvation, bullet wounding and other forms of gruesome acts.

Indirect persecution is situational, as the underlying cause is the person’s belief or faith which they possess; such as being bullied at school, dismissal from the work place and being put out of the household.

In totality, Christians would be persecuted for righteousness’ sake (Matt 5:10-11). Those who are followers of Christ would bear the knowledge of the character of Christ. **1. Word of Truth, 2. Gospel of Truth, 3. Words of the Gospel, 4. Gospel of Salvation.** They would also have the righteousness of God dwelling in them. They would be righteous as Christ is righteous.

As the concept of persecution is established let’s see and understand what are the different aspects of trials or different forms of persecution a Christian may face.

- ◆ Hatred
- ◆ Suffering

- ◆ Ill-speaking of the righteous' reputation
- ◆ Death/Martyrdom

Hatred

Hatred is an emotion of intense dislike; so strong that it demands actions. In order for someone to express hatred to another person it would mean that the person is carnally minded, since to know or express love one must be spiritually minded.

(Romans 8:7-9) A carnally minded person hates God. There is an indwelling of the Spirit of God in the spiritually minded person. Hence the righteousness of God is within the person and they would have a true knowledge of God. The carnally minded person would be in enmity against the spiritually minded person.

In addition, Christ made known to his faithful disciples of the hatred that they would receive for being partakers of the true faith and being followers of His teachings.

(Matthew 10:17-19,21-22) The disciples were cautioned about the persecution they would face and how they would be hated by all men. This refers to all those who are carnally minded. They would hate or be in enmity with the spiritually minded, as the spiritually minded bear the knowledge of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Suffering

To suffer shame for righteousness' sake is quite hard to bear, however it is meritorious for the person undergoing such trial. By extension, the Christian would be subjected to dishonor, violation of rights and assault.

Acts 5:25-40- The apostles of Jesus Christ often taught in the temple and did mighty wonders in the name of their Lord Jesus Christ. However they became greatly despised as they unceasingly proclaimed the word of faith unto the hearers. The apostles were assaulted by the members of the council by being beaten for preaching the truth. The council members desired to stifle the freedom of expression of the apostles by commanding them that they should not speak in the name of Jesus.



Ill-speaking of the righteous' Reputation

From time to time, Christians would have their names and personality traits slandered. Words would be falsely spoken against the person that would add damage to their reputation. It would be done with malicious intent to either make the person be alienated or isolated because of the slandering done.

In other words, children of darkness would speak falsely of the children of light. Their strong words would have an influence on the weak or carnal mind, as false ideas are presented to them to make the appearance of light seem wrong.

More so, in **Luke 23:1-5,8-10** Christ was falsely accused of disobedience to the nation's law as the members of the council said that he was perverting the nation. In other words they were saying that Christ was misdirecting or misleading the people; that he was found changing the purpose or function of creation by the words He spoke.

We understand that Jesus Christ came to call sinners to repentance which indicates that He came to call sinners unto righteousness as He is righteous. It indicates that the life the people of the nation lived, along with the members of the council, were contrary to what Christ spoke.

The scribes and chief priests stood and vehemently accused Him. To vehemently accuse someone is to fiercely challenge an individual for honesty in a matter or for the principle or truthfulness of the said matter.

In other words, the individual would be harshly blamed for something or a claim of wrongdoing or misbehavior against the individual would be made.

Christ was accused for wrongdoings as He preached the words of truth unto the lost, where some accepted and some felt condemned by the words that sank in their hearts. The council members slandered the name of Jesus Christ for the testimony of righteousness He lived.

Death/ Martyrdom

We understood that Christians would suffer persecution in all forms; the ghastly end may be death/martyrdom. This is death that is imposed because of the person's adherence to the faith of Jesus Christ.

As Stephen who was stoned to death for preaching the word of truth, likewise some of us who remain faithful unto God would face death or martyrdom.

Here is a prophetic account showing that some of the saints of God would face death/ martyrdom.

Revelation 6:9-So the prophetic account shows that souls were slain for the word of God that they preached and the testimony which they held; a testimony of righteousness. Some of us will face martyrdom for righteousness' sake.

Why should a Christian endure persecution?

Despite the different forms of persecution that a Christian may face, it is very important for the individual (s) to endure it.

Facing persecution will be challenging to an individual whereby the individual may feel frustrated and some, by instinct, retaliate under pressure.

Persecution may be wearisome to the individual, however God knows this and yet allows His servants to face it; not to bring distress upon the person but to try the faith of the individual.

The trying of the faith is to refine them to make them become perfect or polished, so to speak. It is to make the person become highly developed, in the state of perfection, having a flawless quality.

James 1:2-4- Diverse temptations can be understood as '*tests*' or '*challenges*' an individual may face. Whereby persecution may be categorized as a test or challenge.

This is permitted to try the faith of the individual; hence the trying of the faith establishes patience. Nonetheless the word '*patience*' in the Greek text means steadfastness or endurance. It refers to the characteristics of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and even the greatest trials and sufferings. So as the man's faith is tried he builds endurance until perfection.

The trying of our faith is to settle and stablish us and to make us perfect. **(1 Peter 5:10 + Colossians 1:23)** Once we endure persecution our faith is tried. More so it is tried for our benefit, whereas after we would suffer a while, which means bearing persecution, we would become settled permanently in the faith as long as we choose to continue in the faith of Jesus Christ and not give up.

Once permanently settled we would be made perfect and strengthened in the faith; thus we would not be moved away from the hope of the gospel which was preached unto us.

In addition to the building of endurance and the settling in the faith, another but most valuable factor of enduring persecution is the receiving of the crown of life.

James 1:12-As the servant of Christ may be afflicted from time to time for righteousness' sake, it is very important that the servant endure the affliction to obtain the crown of life. The bible calls those who endureth '*blessed*'. Once the individual remain faithful the crown of life will be presented to him.

How to overcome persecution?

In order to overcome persecution we must be born of God. Being born of God makes us become spiritual. This new birth renews us; it renews our mind making us become spiritually minded.

As we are born of God there would be an indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us. Therefore as God dwells in us we understand that God is very mighty and great.

1 John 4:4- Also as being born of God the knowledge of Him or the faith of Jesus Christ is in us, which gives us victory over all things.

1 John 5:4- So as the faith or the knowledge of God abideth in us we can overcome the world and all that it offers, such as persecution.

The reward of those who persecute the righteous.

Those who take pleasure in persecuting Christians for righteousness' sake will have their reward. A persecutor of Christians is evil and chooses to do evil continually as he is carnally minded.

As his thoughts are towards evil doing he shall be cut off from the earth.

Psalm 37:1-2, 8-9, 12-13, 20- The Psalmist identified on numerous accounts that the wicked would be cut off from the land because of their works of iniquity.

Also identified was that **YHWH** shall laugh at the evildoer who plotted against the just/ righteous, because he knoweth the end result of the wicked.

In addition, as the just/ righteous is born of God and God dwelleth in the individual the wicked are set as enemies to them. However they are also enemies of God, thus they shall be consumed and shall perish.

Jointly, we can also add another reference which identifies the reward of the wicked.

Isaiah 5:20-25- In these verses the word woe is identified three times, addressing the state of the wicked for the works they did. Their state would be a state of great suffering and distress due to adversity.

However, the end of the wicked would be the experience of the wrath of God. As God is love by nature, He still extends His hands to the wicked; giving them an opportunity to experience His love once they repent and believe the gospel. If they choose not to do so and continue in their wicked ways the wrath of God would be upon them.



At this juncture a recap would be given.

- ◆ Christians all over the world would experience persecution at some point in their journey as a follower of Christ.
- ◆ Persecution may be direct, such as torture, burning alive, etc. And indirect which is situational such as being bullied at school or getting put out from the household. Both forms will be because of righteousness' sake.
- ◆ True followers of Christ bear the knowledge of the character of Christ. *Words of truth, gospel of truth, words of the gospel,*

gospel of salvation. In addition they would have the righteousness of God within them and they would be righteous as Christ is righteous.

Different forms/aspects of persecution are *Hatred, Suffering, Ill-speaking of the righteous' reputation, and Death/ Martyrdom.*

A Christian should endure persecution because:

1. It is allowed by God to refine us whereas the need for refining is to make the person perfect/ polished.
 2. To make the person become highly developed in the state of perfection, to have a flawless quality.
 3. It helps us to build endurance or steadfastness until perfection.
 4. It settles or grounds us in the faith permanently once we remain faithful.
- ◆ Once we are settled in the faith we would receive the crown of life.
 - ◆ Only those who are born of God can have the knowledge of God within them, hence this same knowledge or faith helps us to overcome the world which includes persecution.
 - ◆ Those who persecute the righteous, if they do not repent and believe the gospel of Christ they would be destroyed.

The End.



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