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## **Persecution**

### **2 Timothy 3:12**

**In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,**

This is a verse you rarely hear quoted by pastors, teachers, or anyone for that matter. Regardless of their denomination or views, no one likes to think they are going to be persecuted for their faith. In fact, it's quite often the opposite. Many believe that BECAUSE of their faith they won't be persecuted.

What makes anyone think they are so special that they won't be persecuted or even martyred for their faith? Are we greater than any of the prophets who were persecuted? Are we greater than the disciples who were persecuted? Are we greater than our savior who was persecuted? Consider these very words straight from His mouth.

### **John 15:18-21**

**“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.**

Persecution should come in our life because of the Word. The more your life resembles the Word, the more chance you have of persecution from the world. Here's the funny thing though, if we look at the persecution of the prophets, disciples and even Yeshua himself, we find that their persecution came from those of the religious sector who was rejecting the Word of YHWH. So whether your persecution comes from “religious” people or the world, we shouldn't be surprised. Both reject the whole Word of YHWH.

But is persecution a bad thing? Well, depends on your world view I guess. If you are only looking to this world for acceptance then I suppose it's NOT a good thing. However, if your goals are more eternal in nature, then it's actually a good thing.

### **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 is not to be something foreign to our life. It is to be expected.

If you are looking to this world for acceptance and to be esteemed by all, then please consider this warning by Yeshua.

### **Luke 6:26**

Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.

The key words here are “all men”. When you proclaim and live the whole Word, you are bound to have people speak evil of you.

Many associate persecution with that of the tribulation and the end times. But that is not the only times persecution will happen. They will, indeed, happen then, but the Scriptures are clear that persecution is something to be expected in our everyday walk. Consider Paul’s word to those in Thessalonica...

### **1 Thessalonians 3:4**

In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.

Paul went through much for the sake of the gospel. Trials and persecution was something that was just not foreign to his life. Consider...

### **2 Corinthians 1:8-11**

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

He elaborates on this even more in chapter 11

### **2 Corinthians 11:23-28**

“... I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have

known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.”

Kind of puts things in perspective doesn't it? It's easy to remove ourselves from a situation when it's not happening directly to us. But when it does happen to us, what do we do? What should we do? What should our attitude be in the face of persecution because of our faith? Should we grumble and complain? Should we proclaim our rights out to YHWH and say “Hey! What's going on here?”

Consider Paul's attitude...

### **1 Corinthians 4:12**

We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it;

Better than that, consider what Yeshua did.

### **Philippians 2:5-8**

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!

And also...

### **Isaiah 53:7**

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

Some might say “Well, yea, this was Yeshua and Paul. Of course THEY'RE going to be persecuted and handle it the right way.”

But as Peter said, Yeshua is our example. Even in our trials and persecutions.

### **1 Peter 2:21-23**

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

“To this you were called”. Wow. Think about that. “To this you were called”. It's a “calling” for all believers. How many times have we heard that preached or taught on?

But this calling is something we shouldn't be surprised at. There are many others in the Scriptures who suffered for following the way of righteousness. Consider Hebrews 10.

### **Hebrews 10:32-34**

Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You

sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

Consider what is said in Hebrews chapter 11. What is often referred to as the “Hall of Faith”.

### **Hebrews 11:35-40**

...Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death 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, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

“the world was not worthy of them.” Wow. What a statement. Please, focus on that for moment. “the world was not worthy of them.”. How awesome it would be to have that said of us.

Persecution for our faith should not be foreign to us. It should be a reminder that we are truly not of this world. We are supposed to be aliens and strangers just passing through.

### **1 Peter 1:17**

Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

So, though we live in the world, let us not forget that we are not part of the world. We should not be surprised when people talk bad about us, roll their eyes at us, exclude us from their events, and the list can go on and on. That list will grow more aggressive as the days we live in continue to darken.

Our only concern is that the treatment we receive is because we are living out the Word in front of them. If our persecution comes for any other reason, it is most likely because we deserve it.

### **1 Peter 2:20**

But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.

Our life should exemplify our Savior’s walk in every aspect. That should be our goal in life. And we should rejoice in whatever it brings our way.

Consider the words of James in talking about trials...

### **James 1:2-4**

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

Again, trials and persecutions are reminders that we are truly not of this world. We are just passing through. And we are being made into His image, not a product of this world.

As Yeshua said

**Matthew 12:30**

“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

As we move forward in time, the line of division will only become more defined as to what side someone is on. Sin will only continue to grow worse in the world, causing all to take a stand on one side or the other. All will have to make that choice sooner or later. And as that line becomes more dominant, and sides are chosen, the persecution will only intensify.

So what is the line that will become more defined?

**Matthew 10:32-33**

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

This is the line that drives division. This is what causes hatred to flow out of others towards believers. Standing with the whole Word of YHWH.

Compare Yeshua’s words as He continues...

**Matthew 10:34-36**

“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn “a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law — a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.”

When you stand with Yeshua in proclaiming the Word, the whole Word, your persecution will come from all angles. And as we get closer to the times of Yeshua’s return, the persecutions will only escalate.

**Matthew 24:9**

“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.

Some might say, “But wait a minute. I thought we would be protected in the end times.” And that is true, for some. For more understanding on this, we encourage you to watch our teaching titled “The Seven Churches”.

But whether we are near the end times or if we are decades from them, the enemy is out to destroy believers.

**1 Peter 5:8-9**

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Please know that “devour” here does not mean to persecute but rather to get someone to turn from the faith in the midst of persecution. Thus, the encouragement to stand firm in the faith and know that others are going through those SAME sufferings.

This is also the encouragement we see in the book of Hebrews regarding the coming of the Antichrist. After discussing their previous persecutions, the author encourages his readers to not give up or shrink back in the coming time of the Antichrist which would result in them being destroyed.

#### **Hebrews 10:35-39**

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

"We are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved."

Today it seems as if the words of Joshua are crying out from the mountain tops...

#### **Joshua 24:15**

But if serving (YHWH) the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve (YHWH) the LORD."

You can go with the flow of this world or you can stand and proclaim the Word of YHWH and join those in the Hall of Faith who stood strong in the midst of persecution.

We encourage you to enlist in the ranks of those of whom the world was not worthy of.

We hope you have enjoyed this message. Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom!

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at [www.testeverything.net](http://www.testeverything.net)

**Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.**

EMAIL: [Info@119ministries.com](mailto:Info@119ministries.com)

FACEBOOK: [www.facebook.com/119Ministries](http://www.facebook.com/119Ministries)

WEBSITE: [www.TestEverthing.net](http://www.TestEverthing.net) & [www.ExaminaloTodo.net](http://www.ExaminaloTodo.net)

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