

A Prescription for Persecution

Matthew 5:10-12

3 sources of persecution

4 reasons why - believe, say, how you live and who you love

A lot of ways - physical beatings, interrogation, dishonored, humiliated and even killed

1. Do not be surprised -

1 Peter 4:12: “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;”

John 15:20: “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”

2 Timothy 2:12: “If we endure, we shall also reign with *Him*. If we deny *Him*, He also will deny us.”

- The most common response of a Christian to being persecuted is shock. We do not think straight because we are being abused by someone for our faith in Jesus Christ. We are taught in these passages that believers should not be surprised when persecution comes. God is not surprised by the persecution. Jesus told us we would be persecuted. We should not be surprised either.

2. Do not be ashamed -

1 Peter 4:16: “Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”

- A Christian will be tempted to be ashamed because he is arrested, excluded, beaten, scorned, or persecuted. Peter tells us not to be ashamed when you are persecuted. Hold your head high for the cause of Jesus!

3. Do not worry about what you will say when the time comes

Luke 12:8-12: “Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. “And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. “Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

- Can you imagine waiting to go before a group of government leaders in order to answer them about your faith with your life on the line? Do you not think that you would worry about what to say? Jesus prepared us for such an event. He said that we should not worry about what we would say. Jesus told us that the Holy Spirit would provide the words for us to speak.

4. Rejoice

1 Peter 4:13: “but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”

Matthew 5:11-12:

Acts 5:41: “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”

- The Bible tells us not to be ashamed when we are persecuted. Does the Bible tell us how to respond to persecution? In this passage, we are told to rejoice. Jesus commands us to respond to persecution with joy because you are blessed. Persecution does not take anything from the believer but instead it adds blessings to the Christian. Jesus told us to rejoice because we have a great reward in heaven after we have suffered persecution. Jesus told us, therefore, that we are benefitted in this life and in the life to come with persecution. We should never fear persecution because through it we are blessed.

5. Glorify God

- 1 Peter 4:16 - A Christian may be tempted to deny the Lord through persecution. Peter instructs us to glorify God in the midst of persecution. We also should not take glory for ourselves through persecution but rather pass all the praise to Jesus.

6. Endure the grief

from suffering wrongfully - 1 Peter 4:19 - Peter teaches us that we should endure when we suffer from the hands of an evil person for something we did not do. Christians may be tempted to respond in anger and violence when they are treated wrong but Peter said to endure it.

7. Return the evil with good

1 Peter 3:9: “not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.”

Romans 12:14: “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

1 Peter 4:19: “Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to *Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.”

says “commit your souls to doing good” - How should we treat our persecutors? What should we do to one of the men who are pursuing us to injure and hurt us? The Bible teaches us to return their evil with good. We may think we have the authority to mistreat someone when we have been mistreated, but the Scripture teaches just the opposite.

8. Prepare to give a defense of your faith

1 Peter 3:15: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;”

- Although we are not supposed to worry about what we will say when we are brought before government official, Peter taught us to be ready to defend our faith in Jesus. A Christian must be ready to tell other why they have trusted Jesus and made a life surrender to Him.

9. Pray

for boldness to witness - Acts 4:29-31 - Persecuted believers must pray! Pray for boldness. In Acts 4, the persecuted believers did not ask for the persecution to end. Instead, they asked God to grant them boldness so that they could witness in light of the persecution.

Pray for those who persecute you - Matthew 5:44 - Many Christians win their persecutors to Jesus. Instead of hating your persecutors, pray for them. Ask God to touch their hearts. Remember what happened to Saul! Saul persecuted the church and became known to the church. No doubt those early Christians, prayed for Saul to be saved and God reached down and saved him.