

## TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF PERSECUTION<sup>1</sup>

**In the OT** we see a) some pleas for God to judge those who are doing the persecuting, b) sometimes an overlooking of persecution, c) using it to turn thoughts back to God & His Word & d) motivation to ask God for deliverance:

Jer. 15:15 – *Take vengeance on my persecutors*

Jer. 20:11 – *My persecutors will stumble and not prevail*

Jer. 17:18 – *those who persecute me be put to shame*

Psalm 31:15 – *enemies and from those who persecute me*

Ps. 119:84 – *judgment on those who persecute me?*

Ps. 119:86 – *They have persecuted me with a lie*

Ps. 129:1 & 2 – *They have persecuted me from my youth up*

Ps. 142:6 – *Deliver me from my persecutors*

**In the NT:** Here we see a different type of response taught regarding those who persecute God's people:

- a) When you're persecuted "*for Christ's sake*" you are blest – Mt. 5:11 – *insult you and persecute you*
- b) We are to *pray* for our persecutors – Mt. 5:44
- c) We are to *bless* our persecutors – Rom. 12:14
- d) We are to move on when persecuted – Mt. 10:23

**A fundamental axiom:** Christians shouldn't be surprised by persecution since

- a) **The world has persecuted God's servants in both the OT & NT time period:**

OT: Acts 7:52 – *which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?*

NT: Acts 8:1; 11:19; 13:50 (various persecutions)

- b) **Christ promised it:** Mk. 10:30 – *children and farms, along with persecutions (!)*

- c) **Believers during the Tribulation will experience it:**

Mt. 23:34 – *and persecute from city to city*

Lk. 21:12 – *their hands on you and will persecute you*

Lk. 11:49 – *will kill and some they will persecute*

- d) **God's Word promises it:** II Tim. 3:12 – *all that live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution*

- e) **It sometimes includes other negatives as well** – II Cor. 12:10 – *insults with distresses with persecutions*

**Righteous causes for persecution:**

- a) **The Word of God** – Mt. 13:21 & Mk. 4:17

- b) **Preaching & standing up for Jesus Christ** – Jn. 15:20 – *If they persecuted me, they will persecute you*

**All persecution against believers who do righteousness, is ultimately against our Lord Jesus:**

Jn. 5:16 – *for this reason were they persecuting Jesus* (i.e. His claim of deity)

Acts 9:4 cf. 5 – Paul's testimony

Acts 22:7 cf. 8 – Paul's testimony

Acts 26:14 cf. 15 – Paul's testimony

**What should be our response? We should persevere through persecution:**

When persecuted we should endure – I Cor. 4:12

When persecuted we should remember that we are not forsaken – II Cor. 4:9

**What does such righteous behavior often accomplish?** It brings conviction to the enemies of Christ – Gal. 1:13

**The ultimate and underlying source & author of persecution is Satan** – Rev. 12:13

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