

Our Social Response

Not only should our emotional response be distinctive but so should our social response. That is, the way we react to those that have done the persecuting.

📖 Acts 7:60. **Q.** In this account of the stoning of Stephen, how does he respond to his persecutors?

Q. What other Biblical account does this remind you of? How do you think the two are related?

Fill in the blanks below, where we see how Jesus instructed us to respond to persecution.

📖 Matthew 5:44 But I say unto you, _____ your _____, _____ them that _____ you, _____ to them _____, and _____ them which despitefully use you, and _____ you;

In 📖 1 Corinthians 4:12-13, Paul describes some of the troubles he had encountered. List below, the ways which he responded to those troubles.

1. ...being reviled, we _____.
2. ...being persecuted, we _____.
3. ...being defamed, we _____.

During the greatest persecution ever waged on man, Jesus himself responded in a way which no one could have ever expected or predicted. While he hung on the cross and men stood mocking, Jesus uttered these words:

📖 Luke 23:34Father, _____; for they know not what they do...

This, the greatest example of a proper response to persecution not only serves as our guide, but also as our strength and ability. It is the spirit of Christ that dwells within us, and it is by his power that we can respond to persecution in a godly manner. The spirit-fullness that *leads to* persecution, will also allow us to *deal with* the persecution.

Conclusion: It is inevitable that the godly Christian will face persecution. We should rejoice that we are able to suffer for his name, and should respond to our persecutors with the love of Christ. Then the Bible says “great is your reward in Heaven”! Mat 5:12.

Learning to Rejoice in Persecutions

The first time human blood was shed upon this earth, it was the result of religious persecution. Cain, enraged by his brother Abel’s devotion to and acceptance by God, was moved with envy to slay his brother in cold blood. Although it was not Abel’s intention, his godly life laid bare the ungodliness of his brother. Cain, feeling condemned by his brother’s life of holiness, reacted like all the world has reacted toward those who choose to live in godliness. Instead of turning to God and emulating Abel’s good example, he chose rather to eliminate Abel and to continue in his religion of self-worship.

This ancient example of religious persecution typifies what has driven the persecution of Christians for the past two-thousand years. A righteous life, lived selflessly and for the glory of God will, without a doubt, condemn this world and result in persecution.

The Reality of Persecution

📖 2 Timothy 3:12 Yea, and _____ that will live _____ in Christ Jesus _____ suffer _____.

Cain could not bear the testimony of his godly brother, so he attempted to silence him. But, like all who have suffered martyrdom for the sake of Christ, Abel’s voice spoke from beyond the grave.

📖 Genesis 4:10 And he [God] said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

Ever since Jesus began his public ministry over two thousand years ago, the name of Christ and those associated with it have, like Abel, experienced persecution. Although the freedom that we enjoy today in this country has spared us from extreme cases of persecution and death, each of us who has decided to live for Jesus, have endured persecution in one form or another


G.K. Chesterton said: *Jesus promised his disciples three things- that they would be completely fearless, absurdly happy and in constant trouble.*


As Christians, if we are willing to live unapologetically for Jesus Christ, than we must also be willing to endure the inevitable consequence of that devotion – persecution. We must learn to have a biblical perspective of this persecution, and realize that it is not happening contrary to God’s plan but that it actually confirms his plan.

📖 Matthew 5:11 Blessed are ye, _____ revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

The Reason for Persecution

We do not face martyrdom or severe persecution in our society, but we do experience hatred and ridicule from this world. Many of us even have family members or friends who have waged some sort of persecution against us. So, why are Christians persecuted?


 John 15:19. **Q.** According to this verse, why do you think this world might persecute a Christian?


 1 Peter 4:4. **Q.** According to this verse, what might the world *think of you*?

Why do they think this? _____.


What is their response? _____.

The world persecutes the Christian who takes stands against certain behaviours or attitudes that are not consistent with a holy lifestyle. Remember 2 Timothy 3:12 says it is those Christian who *will live godly in Christ Jesus* that will suffer persecution. The moment we decide to draw a distinction between ourselves and the world, the world will become offended, and as a result, hostile.

 Share a time that you feel you suffered persecution for your devotion to Jesus Christ.


According to  John 16:8, Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit would come, he would _____ the world of _____, and _____, and _____.

As Christians we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Our bodies are the vessels which the Spirit uses to accomplish his tasks on earth. The reproof mentioned in the above verse takes place when we walk in the Spirit and obey the word of God. The simple testimony of a Christian who is living a godly life, is a reproof to this world. The world responds to the godly Christian by trying to discredit his message, defame his character, silence his voice or even take his life.

 Galatians 5:11. **Q.** Paul was suffering persecution, how did he describe the message of the cross?

 Romans 9:33. **Q.** How is Christ described in this verse?

Christians will always be persecuted in some form or another when they attempt to live a godly life. This persecution comes as the character of God as displayed in the life of a Christian, comes into conflict with the depraved nature of this world. The simple fact is, the unsaved man cannot understand the Christian, will stumble at his message and will become offended.


 1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man _____ the things of the Spirit of God: for they are _____ unto him: _____, because they are spiritually discerned.


Our Response to Persecution


The same godliness that leads to persecution, should also govern the way in which we respond to persecution. An otherwise good testimony can be destroyed if a sincere Christian responds poorly to persecution.

Our Emotional Response

First consider how we are to respond emotionally to persecution.

 1 Peter 4:14. **Q.** What emotion should we express when we suffer reproach for Christ?

 Acts 5:41. **Q.** After the disciples were beaten for preaching the name of Christ, how did they react, why?

 Luke 6:22-23. **Q.** Look at v23, how are we to respond to persecution?

We are told to *be happy*, to *rejoice*, even to *leap for joy* when we are persecuted. The distinctiveness that leads to our persecution should also characterize our response to the persecution! But this happiness is not a false disguise for our real feelings, if we take a closer look at the above verses, we see good reason to *rejoice and be exceedingly glad* when we are persecuted:

1. 1 Pet 4:14: The Spirit of God rests upon us and God is glorified
2. Acts 5:41, Matt 5:12: We are unmistakably identified with Christ and the prophets
3. 2 Tim 3:12: It is evidence we are living a godly life.
4. 1 Pet 4:13: We will have joy at his coming.

The godly Christian will be persecuted and will recognize the persecution as a confirmation of his godly lifestyle! Every persecution is an opportunity to display the character of Christ.