

Godly People Will Be Persecuted

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes that true godly living inevitably leads to persecution, challenging Christians to stand firm in their faith despite societal pressures.

Duration: 58:02

Scripture: Isaiah 41:10, Jeremiah 29:11, Matthew 10:34, John 15:18, Acts 11:26, 2 Timothy 3:12, Hebrews 4:15, James 1:12, 1 Peter 4:12-13, Revelation 2:10

Topics: "Persecution", "Faithfulness"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the inevitability of persecution for those who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus, drawing parallels to biblical figures like Daniel, the apostles, and early Christians who faced persecution. It highlights the importance of standing firm for God, even in the face of opposition, and the strengthening and unity that persecution can bring to believers. The speaker encourages honesty before God, acknowledging weaknesses, and seeking His strength to remain faithful in all circumstances.

Transcript

I want to turn to a verse that is not very popular with many Christians, 2nd Timothy chapter 3 and verse 12. And when you read it, you'll understand why most Christians don't like to memorize this verse. 2nd Timothy chapter 3 verse 12.

Indeed all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted or as the message Bible says, anyone who wants to live all out for Christ is in for a lot of trouble. There's no getting around it. In contrast to that is verse 13.

Evil men, unscrupulous con men among Christians and preachers will continue to exploit the faith and they are as deceived as the people whom they lead astray. And as long as such people are out there, things can only get worse. But don't let all that faze you.

Stick with what you have learned. Verse 14 and believe sure knowing from whom you learned those things. So this is an amazing verse that every single person, verse 12, who desires to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted and the scripture must be fulfilled.

It doesn't say some of those will be persecuted, it doesn't say most of those, then we could escape. But we can't escape because it says all. Now either that is the inspired word of the Holy Spirit or it was Paul's own idea which is not necessarily right or Paul was exaggerating when he said all.

I believe in the inspiration of the Bible. I've studied it for 50 years and I've never found anything in it that hinders me from believing that it's inspired by God. I've read many many books, even Christian books, and I'll tell you there is only one book that's totally inspired by God and that's the Bible.

It's the only book you can rely on a hundred percent and this book says that every single person who lives godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. It's like saying God, we considered that earlier, God disciplines every son whom he receives and if you are one who is not being disciplined it probably means you're not, not probably, it means that you're not one of God's children. That's what the Bible says.

So it's a pretty accurate way of finding out whether we are children of God by asking ourselves are we disciplined when we do something wrong. In the same way, here's a pretty good way of finding out whether we are living godly or desire to live godly. For myself, I took it seriously many years ago that if I really belong to that category of people mentioned in this verse, those who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus, I will be persecuted.

And if I'm not persecuted, the scripture is heaven and earth will pass away, this word will not pass away, then whatever I may think about myself, I'm not really living, seeking to live godly in Christ Jesus. I'm probably a compromiser, a diplomat, one, a chameleon, changes colors according to the society I'm with. Christian chameleons will not be persecuted.

That means those who act holy when they're in the midst of holy people, those who use religious language when they're in the midst of Christians and then in the midst of their unconverted relatives they gossip and backbite just like anybody else and then when they're in the midst of their worldly friends in college or in their office they talk the same rubbish they talk about. Such people will never be persecuted because such people are chameleons who change their color according to the group they are with. I'm not really talking to such people because I don't believe such people have the slightest desire to live godly in Christ Jesus.

A chameleon is not a child of God. A cat cannot change its nature when it's among the pigs and you know be dirty like them. A cat is a cat wherever it goes.

So in the same way if you're really born from above and God is putting your desire by his spirit to live godly, you will be persecuted. There is no doubt about it and when we talk about persecution I'm not necessarily talking about being thrown to the lions or being burnt at a stake or having your nails pulled out or whipped or beaten or imprisoned. Those are all extreme forms of persecution which may also come and there are many Christians facing that in the world today but it could be in smaller ways in the beginning.

I mean there's a kindergarten class in persecution and there's a PhD class in persecution but we'll be in the school in at least in the kindergarten and the kindergarten forms of persecution may be very may not be physical at all. It may be more mental, emotional and very often it will come from your own family members if they are not converted. Jesus said that in Matthew chapter 10 and it's important for us to see this for one reason.

Jesus said some amazing words. I believe that many Christians have got a one-sided view of Jesus. They don't see the full picture of Jesus.

They see Jesus putting his arm around the leper and washing the disciples feet but they don't see him taking a whip and chasing those who made money in the name of God out of the temple or they don't hear him saying how can you escape hell you generation of vipers. Many Christians have got a one-sided

opinion of Jesus. The world definitely has a one-sided opinion of Jesus.

You know gentle and kind and nice. I can understand the world having that opinion because they don't they don't read the Bible. The sad thing is most Christians have that opinion too because they don't read the Bible either.

So here is something that Jesus said. Jesus is the prince of peace. He said in the world you'll have tribulation but in me you will have peace and he's the one who says in verse 34 Matthew 10 34.

Don't think I came to bring peace on the earth. Isn't that what people sing at Christmas time? Peace on earth and goodwill toward men and we had peace on earth in 2000 years after the prince of peace came. Let's face it he gets worse and worse with every year.

Don't think that I came to bring peace on the earth. Not even in a family I did not come to bring peace. I came to bring a sword.

How many of course non-Christians don't even believe that. How many Christians believe it that Jesus came to bring a sword? I came we say why did Jesus come? There are many reasons why he came. He came to die for the sins of the world but among all the list of the reasons which you will say if somebody asks you why did Jesus come? He came to deliver us from sin.

Would you also add this as one of the reasons Jesus came? I came to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Now the world is full of daughters-in-law who are against their mother-in-law but for the wrong reasons. Jesus is not talking about that reason where they have a conflict because each has got their own stubborn self-will.

No he's talking about sons and daughters and daughters-in-law because they take a stand for the Lord and their loved ones or relatives don't accept that. It doesn't preach the new birth to another which preaches a new birth and holiness and godliness of life and the old parents or relatives or brothers and sisters belong to a system that accepts that anyone who's born into a Christian family is a Christian. One of the biggest lies propagated by the devil.

Acts 11 26 says very clearly what a Christian is. The disciples were called Christians. The devil's very cleverly changed that to whoever's born in a Christian family is a Christian, whoever gets sprinkled as a child is a Christian, all types of deceptions.

I mean the devil's been changing God's word right from the garden of Eden. So we could have parents like that, relatives like that, pastors like that, priests like that and then when we take a stand saying we believe what Jesus said unless a man is born from above born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God we're going to run into conflict with people who say hey no we were baptized somebody sprinkled some water on my head when I was three months old and I didn't even give him permission but there I became a child of God they say. So we run into conflict with people like that and then they become it says in verse 36 a man's enemies are the members of his own household.

Well-meaning family members can be your worst enemies. It's a message translation but if you prefer and love your father or mother more than me you don't deserve to be mine. You're not worthy of me.

If you prefer your son or daughter over me you don't deserve to be mine. I have the greatest respect for people who have come to Christ from non-christian homes who lost inheritance sometimes driven out of

their home sometimes parents don't talk to them for years on end separation what a price they have paid to receive Christ. Many of us who've had the blessing of being in born in a christian family have never experienced that.

It's those people who've come from non-christian homes very often who have a real conversion experience. First generation converts are usually the best believers. When it comes to second generation you know your parents are believers you may be really converted but it's not so sure.

You may not have had a radical change you just oozed into the church whereas those folks they had to take a decision and whenever I see such a particularly a girl like that boy it's a tough decision to come from a non-christian home as a girl and you know in Indian society the girl's pretty helpless to stand against parents and say I decided to follow Jesus Christ and it's such a shameful thing when such girls come into the church and see others who are born in christian families in that church who are worldly who dress immodestly who gossip backbite.

I remember hearing of a non-christian convert in one of India's villages a small village there was only one church there and this guy got converted through a tract or something and the person who brought him to Christ was visiting that village and this convert asked this person who led him to the Lord he says now that I'm a christian do I have to join this church here where everybody knows they fight with each other? What do you answer such a person?

So it's a sad thing when churches have such a testimony but if any of you are facing that type of thing from your family please praise the Lord that you've entered the right school school of following Jesus where persecution is one of the major subjects like mathematics and science in your regular school it's not an optional subject it's a compulsory subject and you've started learning that praise the Lord and that's very often the beginning it can move on to first once you start in school and college where you stand up for you know you can't talk about the latest movies because you don't watch those movies which everybody else is talking about you can't take part in those quiz competitions where most of the questions are about the film stars that's fine of course the sad thing is today

some a lot of today's believers can talk about the movies because they watch it watch them as much as anybody else that's because standards have slipped and some of those so-called believers are not really believers I can't imagine how a born-again believer can watch a movie with even a one-second scene of something sexually immodest or ugly just one second and not have a bad conscience I can't imagine how they can't peacefully at night having watched that without deep repentance and a few tears I can't imagine how such a believer can go by undisciplined by God after watching that and think of the believers are watching movie after movie after movie and they're never disciplined by God brother sister perhaps you're not a child of God at all God's put you on the shelf maybe you were a

child of God once upon a time but do you know you can lose your salvation you may be on the shelf today you can do all types of things now and God leave you alone but if you're determined to live godly doesn't say every Tom Dick and Harry who calls himself a Christian is going to be persecuted it's one who's determined to be godly he's going to find he's like a fish out of water in school he's going to find himself like a fish out of water in college where he will not cheat he will not do what's wrong not only he won't look at somebody else's paper but he won't show his own paper to somebody else see in our unconverted days we've all probably cheated in some small exam or something but I hope we have repented of it and that now that we're children of God one of the first things we need to

teach our children is you should not cheat and don't show other people your paper either and then you won't be very popular those are the kindergarten lessons in being persecuted for seeking to live upright and godly in Christ Jesus I mean I would consider it tremendous honor if my children became unpopular in school because they refused to cheat or show their paper to somebody else or refused to spend time speaking evil about the teacher when everybody else was speaking evil about the teacher I would be honored to have a child like that who just stayed away from such rebellious conversation I mean I'd be honored if I heard that some boy or girl in CFC was like that because they're my children too I'd be honored to have a child like that who stood up and was willing to face the

disapproval and the unpopularity that comes when you don't go with the crowd these are little upper kindergarten lessons you know you go from one class to another and you go on to your place of work and it's so difficult to be a true Christian we're talking about 2nd Timothy 3 12 of those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus I was talking to a Christian believer chartered accountant who came to one of our meetings not in one of our churches and I said hey tell me don't chartered accountants have to when you work for companies you know fudge the accounts and write wrong things and tell lies and things like that and you know cheat in order to may pay less tax for your company and tell lies to the income tax officers etc he said yeah I mean there may be a few really godly chartered

accountants in the world but many Christians are not they don't have a conscience about it they because they got to earn their living I remember one brother who stopped writing false accounts and lost his job and he came and asked me what I thought about it I said the best thing you ever did and even if your family starts it's better to stop doing what's right man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God and you know the sad thing was so many other believers he was not here it was another town not in our church either there are a lot of other believers around him who said that's okay we got to adjust a little bit when we live in this world well if you're going to adjust that's a very popular word adjust you'll never be persecuted because those who want to live godly in

Christ Jesus who are going to be persecuted who say I'm sorry I can't do that and you know you can get pretty you can get double promotions if you stand up for the Lord in God's kingdom you may lose something earthly but it's not possible to really stand up with for the Lord and be popular in this world Jesus wasn't Jesus said in John 15 he said these words here's another test of our discipleship in our Christianity Jesus said in John 15 verse 18 onwards John 15 verse 18 if the world hates you you know it hated me before it hated you now listen to this this is very important if you belong to this world the world would love its own or as the message bible says if you live on the world's terms the world will love you as one of its own but since I picked you to live on God's terms and no

longer on the world's terms the world's going to hate you on whose terms do you live your life at home place of work on the world's terms of God's terms that's going to determine maybe your promotion maybe the recommendation you get at the end of the year or the report that your boss writes about you I remember when I was in the navy nobody physically beat me or slapped me or for being a Christian but they make a lot of fun of me because I carried my bible prominently whenever I went out of the ship for a meeting and I wasn't ashamed of being known as a Christian not just a regular Christian but a disciple of Jesus what others would call a fanatic and it also meant that it affected my ambitions in the navy because I remember when I joined the military academy I had one goal I wasn't

converted my goal was go to right and right up to the top and that's the way I was going till Christ came into my life and I yielded my life to him and I decided to live for him I suddenly found that if I wanted to go

to the top I would have to keep quiet about my Christianity I mean I could fill the form saying religion Christian that's okay nobody would object to that but it mustn't be manifested in my daily work and walk and I must avoid all that I would behave like everybody else live on the world's terms and I had to make a choice perhaps like you have to make a choice and I mention it only to encourage you to make the right choice I'm so glad that when I was 21 years old and I got baptized I decided from that day I'm going to make that choice forget my earthly ambitions I'll go as

far as possible but I want to go higher in God's kingdom that promotion in that school is more important for me than on earth if you make that decision that'll be one of the wisest decisions you ever made in your life and the result was that many many times I found myself facing up to situations where my senior officers would tell me to do something and you know it's a thing it's not like saying no in your secular office if you say no to a senior officer in the military you can be jailed just for saying no you cannot say no in the military and I used to say I'm sorry sir I can't do that I'm a Christian I would give the reason also it's against my conscience and one of them even told me you got to stop being a Christian if you want to continue in the Navy I said no I'm a Christian but you

know what happened the result of all this was I mean they never threw me in jail God kept me out of that but I was ready to go but they would you know inconvenience me in other ways maybe not write a good recommendation about me so that I wouldn't get a promotion or once transfer me a half an hour I got transferred these are little things mosquito bites compared to the lions that ate up the early Christians but there were little things that made my backbone strong I got a backbone a lot of Christians don't have a backbone they can't stand straight they crawl you know the like the difference between a lizard and a man lizard can't walk up straight a lot of Christians are like that they're Christians they crawl and crawl around they're not standing up erect for Christ they're sort of

sneaking around in their place of work hoping that nobody will know that they're wholehearted disciples of Jesus well then you're not going to be persecuted no you'll get your promotion and you'll get a good recommendation and you'll get your increments on time and so many things like that look at all the the Dalit folk in our country who lose their benefits of as soon as they become Christians in the secular government and even the supreme courts denied them that well I say great we have to suffer something when I become Christian it's all part part of the following the Lord if the world if you belong to the world the world would love you you need to ask yourself whether what you do when you face situations like that you don't have to wait till you're thrown to the lions or locked up in

a jail these little little things God tests us to see one thing what we read in the that first verse do you desire to live godly in Christ Jesus or not that's all I know for me that was a test small things they're not usually big things small things but it's going against your conscience one signature to a statement which is false I'm sorry sir I cannot put my signature there because that statement is false if I lose my job I lose my job I had a few instances like this and you know what was the result not only I got a backbone spiritually I got to know the scriptures the Lord began to teach me you know you get promoted to a higher class you learn new things I began to learn things in the scriptures pretty fast and within three and a half years of my being baptized the Lord one day said

quit your job and serve me that was the biggest promotion of all which I didn't even expect just three and a half years I was after I was baptized and I'm absolutely sure that if in those three and a half years I had compromised here and there here and there I had wasted my life as an admiral or something in the navy and never accomplished the will of God for my life I wonder whether some of you have already missed the

will of God for your life that's the tragedy like I often say what do you want the Lord to say to you when you reach the gates of heaven you want him to hear him say well done good and faithful servant or do you want him to hear him say ah you finally made it I never thought you would but you got here is that what you want him to say or do you want him to say you know it's

like a teacher telling the class as some student boy you passed eh I really thought you'd fail you want the Lord to tell you that when you get to heaven or do you want to say boy you not only got distinction you got 99 top of the class it's all a question of what you want to hear I know what I want to hear I'll tell you something when you get to eternity you'll discover the only life worth living on this earth was a life where you sought to live upright and godly for Christ Jesus no matter what you lost no matter how much popularity you lost and I discovered my life that after I became a Christian also I found that if I stood for everything in God's word everything I believe God doesn't give suggestions he gives commands I mean I learned that in the military when the parade commander said

right turn he didn't mean all you feel all of you who feel like it turned right not at all there was no question of feel like it you just turned right and I'll tell you something if you were five seconds late in turning right he teach you such a lesson you'll remember it till the day you die it's really true it's immediate God doesn't give suggestions in the bible he never gave 10 suggestions to the Israelites he gave 10 commandments he's given commandments and if you care more for the approval of men rather than the approval of God in the different situations of life well it's almost certain you I mean you may make it to heaven I hope so but you're certainly not going to have what Peter says an abundant entrance into God's kingdom with the trumpets blaring and the angels shouting and say

hey see who was coming here one who was true to the Lord like Stephen got you know it's an amazing picture it's only a picture but it's a very beautiful picture that the bible says that Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father and he sat down at the right hand of the Father in Acts chapter 1 but then you read in Acts chapter 7 that Stephen sees Jesus standing up boy it's only a picture but I'll be greatly honored if I see Jesus standing up to receive me into heaven imagine he was seated stands up and says I'll stand up for you you deserve it you want to be like that or you go for the empty honor of your schoolmates your college mates your neighbors your relatives your pastor priest bishop whatever it is what regret will plague your mind for all eternity for millions and millions of

years you won't forget that you sought the approval of some unconverted boss or bishop or uncle or aunt more than the honor of one who gave his life for you on the cross one of my favorite hymns in those days when I was a young Christian was I'm not ashamed to own my Lord or to defend his cause there were times when I was ashamed and I would fall before God's face and say Lord I'm a coward I'm sorry I didn't always do it right like children learn to walk after falling many times I sometimes I was ashamed and then I would repent and come before the Lord and say Lord I'm sorry I was ashamed there help me we learned to walk gradually don't be discouraged if you were ashamed a few times but confess it that's the meaning of getting out you fall down get out then you're okay Lord I'm sorry I

was a coward in that situation I was concerned what people would think about me I was not bold enough to be a witness for you there and from there we can move on to we really stand for the Lord I mean a person may lose his job because he's asked to do something unrighteous or he's honest about something or there are many ways in which people can lose their jobs women who work who want to be exploited by their bosses and say no I'm a Christian may lose their jobs it's fine money is not the most important thing in the world those are the situations where you have to make a choice between Christ and money and

God sees the eyes of the Lord look at those whose hearts are totally his to see how he can support them all across the world I remember this brother who lost his job I told him it's

better to starve and die than compromise your conscience but I said you won't starve and die because there's another promise of God which says those who honor me I will honor so I said I can tell you I can prophesy that over you God will honor you I don't know how I don't know when but he'll honor you now I've experienced a lot of that in my own life and I know that that's what happened to that brother he got a much better job much more satisfied so there's something you miss there's a glory that you miss when you try to cover up the fact that you're a disciple of Jesus and compromise in some situation because you want the approval of men you see the approval of men or the approval of God is the big test that's going to determine how far you progress in your Christian life it's as much a

temptation as internet pornography I mean you can steer clear of internet pornography you avoided that pit and then you fell into this pit of seeking the honor of men what does it matter the devil's not bothered whether you fell into pit a or pit b so long as you fall into some pit you never get to the place where God wants you and not just that to get to the place where God wants you where God can use you to accomplish you see God's got so few true servants of his honor do you know that the way to life is narrow and very few there be that find it think of a savior who gave up everything to die for you on the cross and he's got so few followers who will stand up for him and multitudes of compromises once you say to the lord lord count me in you can count me as one of those who will stand

up for you whatever my as a result of that whatever my earthly loss is going to be I will not sin I will not sin whatever I lose I will not sin I'm willing to lose my job if necessary lose money but I will not sin see if you take those stands stand like that in your younger days it becomes much easier later on you know you can later on in life you can get upset with people who cheat you but you won't get upset with them if in your younger life you have taken a stand for the lord and because of that you lost money somebody cheated you later on in life that's fine it's okay God permitted it it's quite all right because money lost its attraction for you early in life I remember once a brother who was telling me he was having a problem with anger I said is your anger because perhaps you love

money and material things so you lose some money in some situation and you get angry with the people who caused you the loss of money your problem is not anger I said your problem is love of money and you'll never get victory over anger till you get victory of the love of money so there are little situations like this where in our younger days we got to take a stand for the lord and if as a result of which if we lose money or lose a job or lose a recommendation or or you know lose an admission somewhere because we are upright because everybody else gives wrong marks when admission in college and you give the marks you got I remember when my children were applying for college and there were a lot of others who were just fudging the marks etc I said I want to tell you something we got to

teach our children principles when they're young I said supposing you do give the wrong marks and get admission in some college and you're out of the will of God right there you can have a road accident and die because you were in the wrong place God never wanted you there but you got there by telling a lie giving a wrong age or a wrong certificate or a wrong marks and you thought you got something you didn't get anything you got out of the will of God and who knows what will happen there you can face some serious problems there which you'd never have faced if you didn't get into that top rate college but got a second rate one because you were honest and you think God won't honor you there he'll honor you and probably give you a better job when you get your degree than the other guy who

got a degree from the first rate college God's got ways of surprising people you honor God he'll never let you down never never I remember when my wife and I got married and she had some of her unconverted uncles at the wedding and I was rock bottom poor those days and everybody knew it because I quit my job and I was working among students and poor villagers etc and her uncles told her and humanly speaking what they said was probably right out of concern said that this guy can't take care of you in one year you'll be on the streets you think God's going to let down someone who serves him like that we've never been on the streets you honor him he'll honor you but God will test you will you stand up for me and I want to say to all of you young people God's got a wonderful plan for your

life but you can miss it if you don't stand up for him think of Daniel in that situation where it was a small thing the king didn't tell Daniel to murder somebody or go and commit adultery or it was a small commandment in the book of Leviticus chapter 11 there were certain types of meat which the Bible their Bible had forbidden the Jews from eating in Proverbs it said the wine which is fermented you should not drink and when Daniel saw that on the table and all the other Jews drinking and eating that and saying oh that's a small commandment we're in Babylon now we can't think of those laws which are given in the wilderness hundreds of years ago Daniel said no I respect God's word I'm going to stand for him and he was all alone he didn't have any three friends those days he was all alone

he took a stand that's why you hear the name Daniel today that's why so many people are proud to name their son Daniel what about those friends who ate around that table you know any other names I don't even know one of their names and even if you knew their name nobody would want to name their children after those guys but did Daniel suffer persecution of course he did later on he was he did he took that stand when he was 17 70 years later when he's 87 years old an old man with gray hair they threw him into a lion's den the same uncompromising stand for a simple thing like praying he had the habit of opening his windows towards Jerusalem I mean just to remember I think of that city which is burnt up and I've got to go back and Lord you said after 70 years you'll send your people back

Jeremiah prophesied that I remember hearing it in my younger days and he opens his windows and prays and then the king passes an order anybody who prays to any other God will be thrown into a lion's den and that's one day Satan could have told him listen God's going to listen to your prayer even if you keep your windows shut doesn't he hear your prayer if your windows are shut why do you have to open your windows wasn't that a good argument but Daniel would have said but that would indicate that I am afraid of the king so I know that God hears my prayers even if the windows are shut but I'm going to do what I always do keep my windows open and kneel down just by my window so that everybody can see that I pray to the God in heaven and not to this God it was a stand he took and sure enough

people reported on him you can be sure people are watching on you to report on you and he was thrown into the lion's den boy no wonder when the Lord spoke about three righteous men to Ezekiel in Daniel's own lifetime he spoke about Noah Daniel Job and Daniel imagine the Lord coupling you with those godly men in the Old Testament so these men God chose them and gave them a ministry because they took a stand for him you think Joseph was not tested in different situations he could have easily compromised there's always a test and I'm sure in those 30 years in Nazareth where people call it the silent years but I know that Jesus was tempted like me the Bible says that in Hebrews 4 15 people ask me you know what happened in those 30 years I say yeah I know what happened in those 30 years

Hebrews 4 15 he was tempted like me in all things that's how I know how what all went on in those 30 years because I know the ways in which I have been tempted and when I am tempted in certain ways I

say ah now I know how Jesus was tempted in Nazareth and little by little by little I've discovered what went on in those 30 years from the things that happened in my life because it says he was tempted like me just from that one verse I got so much revelation and you can get it too and that's what used to help me in those times when oh here is a situation where I can compromise ah Jesus was tempted to compromise in Nazareth too Lord help me to take the decision you took when you were in Nazareth that's been my prayer many times when you're tempted as a young man and tempted in different

situations and you realize that if you live godly you're going to be persecuted take a stand and then one day when the persecution gets much worse and we get into the bsc class and the msc class of persecution we'll be ready to face it but do you think that the person who's failing in the kindergarten is going to pass in bsc have you ever heard of such a thing they're not even going to pass the fifth standard leave alone bsc class that's why the kindergarten lessons are important that's why God does not allow us to be tested beyond our ability he says at each grade he gives us an examination paper suited for that grade then when we pass that he sends us to the next one and the next one and the next one I remember one day when God considered me worthy to be taken to court by religious

people for standing up for him I I felt I was greatly honored that day 59 years I never had an advocate never been to a court in my life never even knew what it looked like and when I went you know externally naturally with a lot of fear and trepidation it's like when you're thrown into a river and you don't know how to swim you have a little fear and trepidation it's there but underneath that external turmoil was a calmness and I heard the Lord say to me don't worry I came here before you religious people took me to court as well and if you look carefully you'll see my footsteps so I looked for his footsteps they were there I mean symbolically speaking you know what I mean and I put my feet in those footsteps and you know what happens when you put your feet in Jesus footsteps you become

supremely happy I believe I was the happiest person in that court that day happier than my accusers happier than the judge or anyone that's what happens but the Lord didn't allow me to face that till I was 59 wasn't that good he doesn't give me a 10 standard question paper when I'm in the fifth standard so my point is this I don't think I'd ever have got there if there was certain other lower tests along the way that I'd fail you don't get a 10 standard paper if you're failing in the fifth standard all the time do you know you're missing something I'm not saying you've got to go to court it may be different ways God educates us some of you face severe persecution from relatives etc more than I faced I never faced anything from my relatives really from my own family members but the point

is this that God will lead us higher and higher and higher and every step higher makes us stronger why does God allow his children to be persecuted one reason it makes them stronger I mean why do you send your child to do the final examination even though it's got fever the child doesn't want to go say mommy today's examination day I don't want to go and you say okay my girl don't go to school today you got examination we'll send you the days when there's no examination that's the surest way to keep your child in the same class forever would you do that oh I got a little fever mommy no you forget about the fever you got to go here's some aspirin or something go you're so eager because we know that that's the way that child of ours is going to be promoted to the next class that's the test

that's the purpose of that testing and it's those promotions that you may have missed many opportunities you had well think where you could have which class you could have been today and where are you today because you went to school on the days when it was easy and when it came to a test you avoided school that means you didn't stand up for the Lord there but you came to all the meetings you accumulated

knowledge to the head is bulging with knowledge but in those situations with your relatives or somebody else or an officer somewhere else you compromised and the Lord saw that and he doesn't force anyone to stand for him so I believe it's strengthening that comes when we face opposition God allows persecution and that's why if you look in history think of the apostles Jesus had 12

apostles if you include Paul as the 12th who replaced Judas Iscariot all of them except John were killed they stood for the Lord they were the best of God's servants James was killed when he was around 30 chopped off head chopped off Paul killed when he's 67 John I heard they tried to kill him once they couldn't and probably we don't know how he finally died he was over 90 but we don't know but anyway 11 out of 12 definitely they were killed couldn't God have protected them couldn't he have saved them like he saved Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego out of the fire and like he saved Daniel out from the lion's den no they were old covenant people they could not bear something God does not test us beyond our ability they didn't have the Holy Spirit within them but now in the second third

century when the Christians were thrown to the lions it was not like Daniel being thrown to the lions because these were new covenant Christians who had the Holy Spirit within them and they were eaten up by the lions and they glorified God tremendous glory came to God as a result of their I've heard stories how in the Roman Colosseum it's like a big stadium these people would sit and watch these Christians being thrown to the lions somebody in the sitting there would be convicted said boy that must be the real faith can't be this real faith is worship idols I'm worshiping now that must be the real faith look at the guy's willing to give up his life beaten by the lions for the faith and he would stand up and say I'm a Christian too they would catch him and throw him to the lions these are

the type of things exciting days and you know martyrs like the elder of Smyrna not the one mentioned here in Revelation 2 but after him later on one who was a disciple I mean a close disciple of John the Baptist sorry John the Apostle close fellowship John the Apostle his name was Polycarp converted when he was five years old or something and he managed to survive till the age of 86 and then they captured him and took him to the execution and you know the people who came to capture him he gave them a meal to eat and all before and said eat let's go before you go and then they would took him and when the you know the Roman magistrate or somebody felt sorry for his old 86 year old white haired man and said just say Caesar is Lord deny Christ and I'll let you go even now and he said

something like this 86 years or 81 years 86 years I've served him served my Lord and he's only done me good how can I deny him and they burnt him and if the story is right I heard that there was some type of perfume that came out of that fire when his flesh was burnt these are the ones who have gone ahead of us and even today there are some of our brothers and sisters in countries like China where they're locked up for years because they stand up for the faith when we face those things it not only strengthens us I think it detaches us more from earthly things we become better pilgrims most of us certainly those of us in Bangalore we live very comfortably and we I don't know how good pilgrims you or I are but persecution will certainly make us better pilgrims I'll tell you that some of the

things you have may be burnt taken away your job etc and maybe your house maybe whatever it is because you're a Christian and we become better pilgrims and I think also when persecution comes Christians become more united they stop quarreling and fighting about silly little things those who are born again become more one with one another so the many wonderful things that God sees is accomplished through persecution and that's why in his great wisdom what he never permitted Old Testament saints to face he permits I mean they're very rare there were the rare prophets in the Old Testament who were

persecuted Isaiah was sawn into two within with a saw and John the Baptist's head was beheaded there were they were persecuted too Jeremiah was thrown into a well and almost died there but they

were prophets were like new covenant people living in Old Testament time just like there are many old covenant people living in New Testament times but otherwise generally speaking in the Old Testament the Israelites had a comfortable life but in the New Testament the early Christians are all persecuted all who live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted and God in his great wisdom allows it and one last thing I want to say is that through it God demonstrates to the devil there I have a people on earth Satan who will not deny me even if they lose money job house life itself you and I are called to be a testimony for Christ like that and I'll tell you this if you don't need this word this week you'll certainly need it in the days to come so take it as a word to prepare you for the future

let's pray there's no harm in telling God Lord I'm a coward I've said that to God numerous times I said Lord I'm scared I'm like a little child I'm not the bold type and that's why I don't want to go away from you like a little child clinging to his daddy I want to cling to you always and lean upon you he doesn't expect us to be bold he expects us to be honest he doesn't expect us to do it on our own he expects us to come to him and say dad give me the strength for this I want to stand for you in my school in my college in the little things in the kindergarten I want to stand for you help me you think he won't help you he'll run to your aid heavenly father help us all to be your witnesses we don't have it within us but you can help us in Jesus name amen

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