

Persecution Is Inevitable

by Zac Poonen

Persecution is inevitable for those who desire to glorify God and walk in His will, but through humility and self-judgment, we can be refined and purified to conform to the likeness of Christ.

Scripture: Proverbs 6:16-19, Daniel 11:33-35, John 16:33, Acts 12:2, Romans 12:19, Ephesians 3:17, Ephesians 6:12, Hebrews 12:15, Revelation 13:7

Topics: "Persecution", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes that persecution is an inevitable part of the Christian journey, as evidenced by the lives of biblical figures like James, Stephen, and Jesus, who faced severe trials and death for their faith. He highlights that true servants of God will encounter opposition, especially in the last days, and that the church will endure tribulation before Christ's return. Poonen encourages believers to focus on glorifying God and fighting spiritual battles rather than engaging in conflicts with others, reminding them that vengeance belongs to God. He warns against hypocrisy during persecution and stresses the importance of self-examination and repentance to remain rooted in love and faith. Ultimately, he reassures that those who endure and remain faithful will be refined and made pure, fulfilling God's purpose in their lives.

Transcript

We read in Daniel 11:33, that in the last days, godly people will be attacked, imprisoned and killed. True servants of God are always persecuted.

James was killed by King Herod (Acts 12:2). No angel came to set him free. Abel was killed. Every true prophet in the Old Testament was persecuted. (Acts 7:52). John the Baptist was beheaded. Jesus was crucified. Stephen was stoned to death. Paul was beheaded. History tells us that Peter himself was finally crucified - and no angel came to rescue him then. As far as we know, all the apostles, except John, were killed. Many Godfearing missionaries have been killed in heathen lands.

The Bible clearly teaches that the church will go through the great tribulation before Jesus comes, and that many of God's finest saints will be killed during that time (Rev.13:7). Some of God's finest saints have been killed in Communist lands even in our lifetime.

God's purposes are different for each person. But one thing is certain: If you desire only to glorify God in your earthly life and to walk in the will of God, you will be immortal until your life's work is done.

"Those who have spiritual understanding will have a wide teaching ministry in the last days..... Wise leaders of God's people will share their wisdom with many others." (Dan. 11:33 - Living, and Good News Bible).

On the other hand, there will also be many in the last days "whom the Lord hates, who go around sowing discord among the brothers" (Prov.6:16-19). We do not fight against such people, because we refuse to fight with flesh and blood (Eph.6:12). We fight only with Satan, and we leave it to the angel of the Lord to deal with all our human opponents.

Many years ago I decided that I would never fight with any human being concerning any matter - and I have never regretted that decision. When anyone comes to quarrel with me, I either keep quiet, or get up and go away. When people accuse me by letter, I do not reply. It is sheer waste of time to reply to such people. I only forgive them, bless them, love them, AND LEAVE THEM ALONE. I want to concentrate all my energies on fighting Satan. I have realised that God can deal with these agents of the Accuser better than I can.

Vengeance belongs to God alone (Rom.12:19).

We read further in Daniel 11:34 that "many will join with these evil men in their hypocrisy". Many will become hypocrites in a time of persecution. They will act like wholehearted brothers when in the midst of the church, and talk about judging themselves and taking up the cross etc., But when they are in the midst of their worldly friends and their unconverted relatives, they will seek man's honour and behave and speak in such a way as to be accepted by them.

There are many believers who having a root of bitterness within them have defiled others in the church (Heb.12:15). But God has been longsuffering with all of them, and so they are all still in the church. But in due course, they will all be exposed (if they don't repent), and then they too will fall away, like others before them.

If we know God, we will remain "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph.3:17) - and rooted in the church too. If others hate us and betray us and kick us out of their houses, we will forgive them, love them and wait for another opportunity to serve them. And when that opportunity arises, we will be quick to grasp it, to bless them to the best of our ability. No-one will be able to make us evil. If another person's evil behaviour makes us evil, then we too become servants of Satan like him.

We are told that in the last days, "even those with insight will fall" (Dan.11:35). But if they humble themselves and judge themselves, there will be hope even for them. They can then be "refined, purged and made pure" (v.35). Those who don't judge themselves however will fall into Satan's hands, even though they had insight and understanding of God's ways at one time. Today is the day of grace, and those who repent and judge themselves can still ascend to great heights spiritually. But you have to be honest and you have to walk in the light.

This refining and purging will carry on until "the end of time" (Dan.11:35), so that God can fulfil His goal of conforming us to the likeness of Christ. So we must not expect an easy time on earth, until Jesus comes. In the world we shall have tribulation - CONTINUOUSLY.

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