

The Godly People Will Be Persecuted

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a godly life in Christ Jesus, which will inevitably lead to persecution, but ultimately results in spiritual maturity and a deeper relationship with God.

Duration: 58:02

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:12-14, Hebrews 4:15

Topics: "Persecution"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of living a godly life and standing firm in God's word. He shares his personal experience of facing opposition for his faith and considers it an honor to be persecuted for standing up for God. The speaker also highlights the significance of being obedient to God's commands, comparing it to following orders in the military. He encourages listeners to prioritize their spiritual growth and not to compromise their beliefs for worldly gain.

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 conmen 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 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 has put in you a 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 the 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 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 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 Matthew 10 34. Don't think I came to bring peace on the earth. Isn't that what people sing at Christmastime? Peace on earth and goodwill toward men.

Have we had peace on earth in 2,000 years after the Prince of Peace came? Let's face it. It 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 non-Christians don't even believe that? How many Christians believe it that Jesus came to bring a sword? 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 we would say if somebody asked 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 could even be moving from one Christian denomination to another which doesn't preach the new birth to another which preaches the 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 gonna 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've 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 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 were 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, a 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 have entered the right school, the 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 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 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 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 have a bad conscience. I can't imagine how any believer can sleep 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 who 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 will leave you alone. But if you're determined to live godly, it doesn't say every Tom, Dick and Harry who calls himself a Christian is going to be persecuted. It's the one who's determined to be godly is 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 are children of God, one of the first things we need to teach our children is, we 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 a 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, just stayed away from such rebellious conversation. 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 2 Timothy 3, 12, of those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus.

I was talking to a Christian believer, a 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 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. Because they've 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, it's the best thing you ever did. And even if your family starves, it's better to starve, 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 were 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.

It's 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 for the Lord and be popular in this world.

No, Jesus wasn't. Jesus said in John 15, he said these words. Here's another test of our discipleship and 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 gonna hate you. On whose terms do you live your life? At home, place of work, on the world's terms or God's terms? That's gonna 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 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 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 serious 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've 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. 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 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 Dalit folk in our country who lose their benefits 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 to become Christian.

It's all part of following the Lord. If you belong to the world, the world would love you. You need to ask yourself 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 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, put your job and serve me.

That was the biggest promotion of all, which I didn't even expect. Just three and a half years 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'd have 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. I often say, what do you want the Lord to say to you when you reach the gates of heaven? Do 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 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 in 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 of you who feel like it, turn 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 angel 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 one. But then you read in Acts chapter seven, 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.

Do you want to be like that? Or are you going for the empty honor of your schoolmates, your college mates, your neighbors, your relatives, your pastor, priest, bishop, whatever it is, what regret will play 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. 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 learn to walk gradually. Don't be discouraged if you were ashamed a few times, but confess it.

That's the meaning of getting out. If 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, if you 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. 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 is not bothered whether you fell into pit A or pit B, so long as you fall into some pit and 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 on earth. 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 compromisers. Once you say to the Lord, Lord, count me in, you can count me as one of those who will stand up for you. 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. You'll never get victory over anger till you get victory over 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 as a result of which if we lose money or lose a job or lose a recommendation 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 are 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 into 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 gonna 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 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 well 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? Do 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 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 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 gonna 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'm afraid of the king. So I know that God hears my prayers even if the windows are shut but I'm gonna 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 do 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've been tempted and when I'm 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 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 were 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. We are 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 where you think where you could 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 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 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. Boy that must be the real faith.

It can't be this real faith as worship idols I'm worshiping now. That must be the real faith. Look at the guy's willing to give up his life be eaten 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 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. You know the people who came to capture him he gave them a meal to eat and all before and he said eat let's go before you go.

They took him and when the Roman magistrate or somebody felt sorry for this 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 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 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 times 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 were 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 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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