



Acts 9:15 | SCRIPTURE  
Vlad Savchuk | SPEAKER  
The Pain of Persecution | SERMON

*But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. Acts 9:15*

*For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." Acts 9:16*

The word "witness" in Acts 1:8 is μάρτυς (martus), meaning to testify or witness. It also carries the implication of witnessing unto death, as seen in Acts 22:20, where Stephen is called a "martyr" (same Greek word).

Persecution is the price for walking in power.

*You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 2 Timothy 2:3*

*Who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. Mark 10:30*

While prayer can be the price to get the power, persecution is the price to walk in that power.

Not experiencing persecution is an exception, not a promise.

Persecution is the normal experience of true believers in this age.

*Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 2 Timothy 3:12*

Around 365 million Christians are subject to "high levels of persecution and discrimination." This compared to 340 million in 2021.

1 in 7 Christians are persecuted worldwide, including 1 in 5 in Africa and 1 in 7 in Asia. This compared to 1 in 8 worldwide in 2021.

4,998 Christians were killed for faith-related reasons. 90% of those killed were in Nigeria, where attacks on Christians have become more common since 2020 as part of a wider rise in political violence against civilians.

Open Doors estimates the number of Christians killed for faith-related reasons worldwide was 5,621 in 2023, 5,898 in 2022, and 4,761 in 2021.

14,766 Churches and Christian properties were attacked.

North Korea, Somalia, Libya, Eritrea, and Yemen had the highest rates of reported persecution against Christians.

Reasons for Persecution:



Nero blamed Christians to divert suspicion.  
Holy lifestyle.  
Slandered for sexual orgies.  
Accusations of atheism.  
Refusal to worship the emperor.

Christians, by their very existence, make unbelievers uncomfortable.

*If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.*  
John 15:18

*If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*  
John 15:19

*Remember the word that I said to you, A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.*  
John 15:20

*But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.*  
John 15:21

Persecution weeds out compromising Christians.

Sometimes, God takes us through the fire to set us on fire.

*But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Matthew 13:20-21*

Two persecuted churches (Church of Smyrna, Rev 2:8-11; Church of Philadelphia, Rev 3:7-13) were commended for their faithfulness, and they received no rebuke from Jesus in the letters to the seven churches.

Persecution has a purifying effect on your soul.

*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 1:6-7*

"The wind of persecution often fans the torch of truth." David Thomas

"The martyrs were bound, imprisoned, scourged, racked, burnt, rent, butchered—and they multiplied." Saint Augustine of Hippo

"If the devil were wise enough and would stand by in silence and let the gospel be preached, he would suffer less harm. For when there is no battle for the gospel, it rusts, and it finds no cause and



no occasion to show its vigor and power. Therefore, nothing better can befall the gospel than that the world should fight it with force and cunning." Martin Luther

Suffering for stupid decisions is not persecution.

We suffer for righteousness sake (1 Pet 3:14), godly living (2 Tim 3:12), the kingdom of God (2 Thess 1:5), as Christians (1 Pet 4:16) and for Christ (Phil 1:29).

We suffer persecution from religion (Mt 10:17), government (Mt 10:18), family (Mt 10:21-22, 34-36), society (Mt 10:22), and the devil (1 Pet 5:8-9; Rev 12:7).

How do we handle persecution?

Treat persecution like praise; don't take it personally.

*Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Matthew 5:11*

Jesus mentioned three forms of that oppression: persecution, reviling, and being spoken evil against.

Persecution speaks of physical attacks, reviling speaks of personal insults, and all sorts of evil spoken is falsehood being spread about us.

Rejoice, don't retaliate; your reward is coming.

*Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:12*

If possible, don't become a punching bag.

*And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" Acts 22:25*

Paul's appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:10-12).

Paul and Silas in Philippi refused to leave quietly (Acts 16:35-39).  
Overcome persecution by continuing God's work; don't let it stop you.

*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Revelation 12:11*

*So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. Acts 5:41-42*

*But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. Exodus 1:12*



Paul wrote 4 letters while in prison (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon). His letters reach more people today than he could reach by foot in his lifetime!

John Bunyan sat 12 years in prison and then again for a shorter term. In 1678, he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Don't take the bait of cowardice of becoming an undercover Christian to avoid persecution.

*He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*  
Revelation 21:7-8

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Jim Elliot (missionary killed in Ecuador)