

THE BOOK OF ACTS

PERSECUTION: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

JULY 27, 2025

SCRIPTURE

The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.
Acts 4:1-4

If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 1 Peter 4:14

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness.” Matthew 5:10

For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for Him. Philippians 1:29

REASONS FOR PERSECUTION

1/ A spirit of antichrist.

The spirit of the antichrist...is already in the world. 1 John 4:3

Christians aren't only persecuted for the Christian faith, but for Christian ideals.

Persecution is **an evidence** of devotion to Christ.

All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 2 Timothy 3:12

“You will be hated by everyone because of Me.” Matthew 10:22

2/ A spirit of jealousy

When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. Acts 13:45

3/ A spirit of capitulation

“We will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” Daniel 3:8

4/ A spirit of religions

“You always resist the Holy Spirit!” Acts 7:51

5/ A spirit of fear

When King Herod heard about (Jesus), he was worried. Matthew 2:3

REALMS OF PERSECUTION

Persecution has been around since the beginning and will be here until the very end.

Be like Ignatius! Don't be like Ignatius!

1/ There has been persecution in the past.

Early believers were slandered for their “Love Feasts”.

“I was honored today with having a few stones, dirt, rotten eggs, and pieces of dead cat thrown at me.” George Whitfield

2/ There is persecution in the present.

Illegitimate Persecution

We don't need “Christian martyrs” who are persecuted because they lack wisdom.

Legitimate Persecution

Christians are persecuted for their faith and their Biblical stances.

Modern persecution is multi-layered (bullying, manipulation, repossession of good, imprisonment, unjust prosecution, financial ruin, physical assault, death, etc.).

The loss of political power is not Christian persecution. But the loss of the First Amendment is a step towards Christian persecution.

3/ There will be persecution in the future.

Jesus, Paul, and John all wrote about end times persecution.

RESULTS OF PERSECUTION

1/ Persecution influences the crowds.

But many who heard the message believed. Acts 4:1-4

2/ Persecution influences the Church.

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Acts 8:4

3/ Persecution influences your crown.

“Do not fear what you are about to suffer... Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” Revelation 2:10

RESPONSE OF PERSECUTION

1/ There is a time to stand up.

Paul appeals to Caesar. He works the judicial system.

2/ There is a time to stand down.

Jesus accepts His persecution without a fight. This is meekness, not weakness.

REMEMBER DURING PERSECUTION

1/ In suffering, remember the privilege.

2/ In suffering, remember it is not the disapproval of God.

3/ In suffering, remember the Father is near.