

Spirit Driven

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.
2 Timothy 1:7

Power to suffer persecution

We were in the back of the church, teaching the Catechism when he knocked on the door. He wanted to ask us questions. We took him to the front of the church and started answering his questions. Soon he asked, "Where do you believe you will be after you die?"

We rejoiced, for here was the opening needed to share about Christ, "heaven."

"I will put you in heaven tonight," he smiled, "Just look in my backpack."

We looked; he could certainly carry out his threat, "why?" we wanted to know.

"Because you are taking away our religion, our way of life. You Christians think you have the only answers, well, we will see." With that he was gone.

We asked our students, "Do we take him seriously?"

"Yes, he just got out of jail, he killed someone."

That was when we suffered persecution.

¹⁷"Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. ¹⁸On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹But when they arrest you, ²⁰"Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. ²¹On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. ²²But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, ²³for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

²⁴"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. ²⁵All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. ²⁶When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

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Those are scary words, "when you are persecuted." Jesus doesn't tell us "If you are persecuted," He tells us "when you are persecuted."

Persecution can take many forms – isolation, sarcastic remarks, mocking, ridicule, loss of job, and more.

Have there been times that you felt persecution? If so, how?

Even if you haven't been personally persecuted, are there Christians in today's world who are being persecuted for their faith?

Christ gives us comfort when He tells us, “¹⁹But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, ²⁰for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

How many times have you heard yourself talking and then thought, “Wow, where did that come from?”

³Not only so, but we^{4a} also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. – Romans 5: 3-5

How can it be that suffering for Christ is a good thing?

²⁸Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. – Matthew 10: 28

How can knowing that nothing that happens to us here on earth can separate us from Christ be a comfort when we are victims of persecution?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father,

When we are suffering, for You – strengthen us. When we are persecuted for You – give us Your peace. When our brothers and sisters are suffering for You – let us stand with them.

Thank You for the hope You give us – let us share that hope.

In Your name we pray – Amen.