

**PERSECUTION'S POWER TO PRODUCE
POSITIVE PROGRESS ON THE PATH TO PERFECTION**
(Progressing Past Previously Paralyzing Problems and Perspectives)
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Note: Click on the Navigation Plane icon in the Adobe Acrobat Reader tool bar, then click on a bookmark to proceed to the corresponding section of this study.

1. Preparation

Prepare for the inevitability of trials.

a. *Phil. 1:25-30*

“And convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

“Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; in no way alarmed by your opponents-- which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God.

“For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, **not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake**, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.”

- b. Note that some of the “enemies” in the context were people who were involved in ministry, but with wrong motives (vv. 15-18).

2. Perfection

Desire to grow beyond the spiritual status quo.

- a. We must be aggressively pursuing a higher level of biblical Christianity.
- b. If we are content with our current level of spiritual maturity, we will have no desire to pay the price of discipleship.

3. *Principles*

- a. Aim at standing on principle rather than preference, convenience, relationships, or any other criteria.
- b. This is the single most critical difference between those who love the Lord and those who love the Lord and are committed to His Word.
- c. Knowing the truth and speaking it in love - Eph. 4:14-16
- d. The house build on the rock/sand - Matt. 7:24-27
- e. Don't anticipate what someone will do and let that determine what you will do - Col. 3:23
- f. Don't evaluate the success of what you do on how others respond - 1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 6:10
- g. Don't rely on others for the solution to the problem.
 - "If the solution to a problem is resting on what someone else should be doing, then the control of your life has gone out of God's hands into the hands of a frail, fragile, fallen, depraved human being.
 - Look for a solution that does not require a human being's cooperation.
- h. Let it be reward enough to know that you have pleased God.

4. *Perspective*

- a. Everything that happens to us as Christians relates to our relationship with Christ.
- b. He loves us and is interested and involved in every aspect of our lives.
- c. He uses trials to produce spiritual maturity, holiness, and joy in us.

1) ***Matthew 5:10-16***

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house.

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

2) ***Romans 5:1-5***

“Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

3) ***James 1:2-4***

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

5. *Pattern*

a. *John 15:18-21*

“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

“Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave 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. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.”

b. *1 Pet. 2:18-24*

“Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor [grace], if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

“For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”

6. *Praise*

- a. Thank God for the trial, realizing the benefits He has designed for you.
- b. When we rejoice and thank God for the suffering, we acknowledge He is at work in our lives using this trial to refine and mature us - Rom. 5:3-5; James 1:2-3
- c. This is trusting God, which is our shield of faith that takes away the trial's ability to disable us - Eph. 6:16
- d. It completely changes the way we view a trial from seeing it as a horror to seeing it as God's way of maturing us.

7. *Prayer*

a. *Pray for you.*

James 1:5-8 - "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

a. *Pray for those who persecute you.*

Matt. 5:43-48 - "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect [i.e. impartial], as your heavenly Father is perfect."

8. *Pursue Peace*

Take the initiative to push to resolution if possible.

- a. **Matt. 5:23-24** - “If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”
- b. **Rom. 12:14-21** - “Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

“Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

9. *Promise*

Rom. 8:35-37 - “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, ‘For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.”

10. *Pleasure*

- a. **James 1:2** - “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials”
- b. **James 1:12** - “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”
- c. **1 Pet. 1:6** - “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.”