

BEARING UP UNDER PERSECUTION

Note to the speaker:

Help all to see that we should not fear persecution but that we must expect it and be prepared to deal with it. All should fortify themselves to endure. Instill confidence that Jehovah will help us to overcome persecution. Now is the time to be drawing close to God by taking full advantage of his provisions

“ALL . . . IN ASSOCIATION WITH CHRIST JESUS WILL ALSO BE PERSECUTED” (5 min.)

Why now discuss the seemingly unpleasant subject of persecution?

Not done out of morbid interest in suffering or because of trying to frighten anyone into a certain course

Having a balanced view will help us to overcome fear of it

The Scriptures indicate that all Christians will be persecuted (Read 2 Timothy 3:12)

Yet, have you personally experienced such persecution?

We are now in final part of foretold “last days” (2Ti 3:1-5)

Do you think “last days” will end without your experiencing the fulfillment of verse 12?

As with Paul, servants of God today should expect persecution (vs. 11)

Can ask: ‘What sort of persecution might *I* face, and why?’

Ought to consider our own position with regard to persecution

Just as we experience blessings as Christians, we must also expect persecution (Mr 10:29, 30)

All should want to have insight into what may occur and how we can strengthen ourselves to bear up under persecution

PERSECUTION MAY TAKE VARIOUS FORMS (10 min.)

Persecution comes in various forms, may or may not be physical (*it-2* 609; *w82* 4/15 22-3)

Verbal abuse, ridicule, and insults

Possibly even from one’s own family (Mt 10:34-36)

Often very hard to bear, since it comes from loved ones

Gain victory not only by determination to remain faithful and loyal to God but also by not repaying unjust treatment in kind (1Pe 2:21, 23)

Rather than become angry, patiently wait on Jehovah, and keep trying to ‘conquer the evil with the good’ (Ro 12:17-21)

Apostle Paul was happy to endure insults if this brought praise to God’s name (2Co 12:10; *w85* 11/15 12)

Economic pressures (Re 13:16, 17; *re* 197)

Government bans can lead to loss of employment, homes, and possessions

We do not want to be like some in Corinth congregation who put emphasis on wealth and position (1Co 4:8)

In sharp contrast, Paul showed his willingness to endure much dishonor and suffer physical want, according to whatever circumstances developed in his service to God (1Co 4:9-13)

If persecution forced us out of good job into lowlier work, faith can enable us to bear up and respond in a positive way (Heb 10:32-34)

Physical suffering—including bodily injury, imprisonment, even death (Mt 24:9; Lu 21:12; 2Co 11:24, 25)

We should not torment ourselves with visions of excruciating pain (*w74* 219)

Rather, the fact that suffering may come should stimulate us to get proper view of and make preparation for persecution, no matter what form it takes

Persecution may perplex us momentarily, but Jehovah will always show his faithful servants “the way out”

Not so much to escape the trial but “to be able to endure it” (1Co 10:13; 2Co 4:8-10; *w90* 7/15 19; *w83* 5/1 20; *w76* 473-4)

Though we are weak in ourselves, faith will strengthen us to overcome any persecution or difficulty

Our faith will always be victorious (1Jo 5:4)

ANCIENT AND MODERN EXAMPLES OF BEARING UP UNDER PERSECUTION (15 min.)

Important to remember that we can succeed in face of any persecution

Have basis for courage and confidence—not in ourselves but in God’s love (Ro 8:35-39)

The example of pre-Christian witnesses proves that it is possible to bear up under persecution (Heb 11:35-38)

First-century Christians faithfully endured much persecution (Ac 8:1-3; 9:1, 2)

Victorious ones in past were not supermen but were frail, average humans just like us

If they could endure, we can too

In modern times many have borne up under persecution (Give some examples, preferably local ones. If possible, use: [1] loss of employment or position because of being a Witness; [2] prolonged persecution by being ridiculed, reviled, as is often the case in divided households; [3] physical abuse. Avoid glorifying the person. Stimulate

confidence that we too can likewise endure. Include observations about attitudes that helped persecuted ones bear up, and cite any practical things they did that would help others to endure similar circumstances. If needed, following may be used: *w89 3/1 18; w89 6/15 27; w88 2/15 17; w86 6/1 28-9; w82 4/15 16, 27*)

PREPARE NOW TO BEAR UP UNDER PERSECUTION (15 min.)

Fix clearly in mind why you are being persecuted

Mistreatment should not be because of questionable conduct on our part (1Pe 2:19, 20; 4:15, 16; *it-2 610*)

Satan the Devil is the real instigator of persecution (*w82 4/15 23*)

He has raised issues of universal importance in which we are involved (*w83 5/1 13*)

Is Jehovah truly the Sovereign? Nations refuse to recognize that and persecute those upholding his sovereignty (Ac 4:18-30)

Keeping this in mind will help us bear up

Persecution also comes because of Jesus' "name," his role as King of established Kingdom (Mt 24:9; *it-2 61; w83 1/15 31; w83 10/1 22*)

Also, there is the question of whether we personally will maintain integrity under test

If we have shown integrity for years, how pointless it would be to give in because of momentarily severe persecution

Keeping in mind that trial is but "momentary" will help us bear up (2Co 4:17, 18; *it-1 724-5; bw 121*)

During persecution realize that God can be relied on for extraordinary help (1Co 10:13; 2Co 4:7)

Unsurpassed tranquillity can be ours when we are persecuted (*w83 5/1 19*)

Remember to pray (Ac 4:23-31; Jas 1:5, 6)

Keep in mind that God permits such suffering for our ultimate benefit (*bw 115-39*)

Can serve as form of training (*it-1 629; w87 6/15 30-1*)

Prepare now to bear up under any form of persecution (*w85 11/15 11-15; w83 5/1 18*)

We need to take advantage of provisions to strengthen ourselves spiritually

Think of such provisions specifically in terms of preparation to bear up under persecution

Reading the Bible acquaints us with examples of how our brothers in past endured

Meditating on such accounts will help us withstand pressures now and endure further trials later

Become experienced in all facets of the ministry

This will help us continue preaching when under ban (*w85 11/15 12-13*)

Cultivate regular communication with God through daily prayer (1Jo 5:14, 15)

Do not shrink back (Heb 10:39)

Sharpen your vision of hope ahead (Heb 12:2, 3; *it-2 610*)

Concerted effort is needed to strengthen us now and prepare us for whatever may come

We need not live in fear (Mt 6:34)

We have God on our side if we keep close to him

He can and will help us bear up (2Ti 4:17; 1Pe 5:10)

(Adhere closely to the outlined material, and observe the indicated timing of each section. Not all cited texts need be read. Source material in parentheses need not be mentioned)