

# SUFFERING PERSECUTION

## (PART 2)

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Nearly every book of the Bible, especially the New Testament, teaches on the subject of God's people suffering tribulation and persecution as a result of serving and obeying Him. Indeed, we are *promised* that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim 3:12).

### **The crown of life**

From the teachings of the scriptures, we know that we reap immediate rewards for enduring trials on our faith. This is how we grow spiritually to be more like Christ (Jas 1:2-4). But there is also the ultimate heavenly reward, eternal life, that is in store for those who endure suffering for righteousness' sake. This is yet another reason we are taught to rejoice when we are being persecuted. While preaching "The Sermon on the Mount," in Matthew 5:10-12 Jesus Christ said, "*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*" Paul also preached "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Revelation 2:10 says, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: *be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*" This is actually teaching that the crown of life is a reward for those who are faithful in enduring tribulation to the point of being killed for it. James 1:12 says, "*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*"

### **Endure to the end**

But these "exceeding great and precious promises" of growing spiritually to be complete like Christ and then of receiving eternal life are only for those who *endure* the sufferings for righteousness' sake. Romans 12:12 commands us to be "*patient in tribulation,*" which literally means "to stay under," or endure it. Part of enduring is obeying God's commandment to love our enemies and do good to those who are evil to us (Matt 5:38-48; Luke 6:27-36; Rom 12:19-21). In the parable of the sower, Christ taught that some of the seed "fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

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and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away” (Matt 13:5-6). What does this mean? The Lord explains in verses 20-21: “*But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.*” These ones who are “offended” are described in the parallel account in Luke 8:13 in this way: “They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which *for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.*” Falling away (i.e. quitting), or returning evil for evil, is the opposite of *enduring*. Matthew 10:22 says, “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: *but he that endureth to the end shall be saved*” (see also Matt 24:13; Mark 13:13). That is why Luke 21:19 says, “*In your patience possess ye your souls.*” Once again, this is not a new process. James 5:10-11 says, “*Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*” Timothy taught the Thessalonian brethren “*that no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know*” (1Thes 3:3-4). We have these very comforting words from our Master in John 16:33: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. *In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*” Romans 8:18 says, “*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*” “*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*” (2 Cor 4:17). This is why 1 Peter 5:8-10 reminds us: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”