

Dealing With Adversity



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Introduction

Will the person that has no enemies please stand up? Ok, instead, raise your hand if you are free of adversaries. I didn't see even one hand go up. No one stood up. Oh, I forgot, I meant to focus on just Christian folk.

If you are a Christian and are walking in accordance to God's will, you will never be free of enemies. They will attack you and plot to defeat you at every turn. How do I know, because the apostle Paul said so in his second letter to Timothy back in the 1st century? He said, ***"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."*** 2 Timothy 3:12

Word Origin and History of Persecution

"Oppression for the holding of a belief or opinion," from Old French persecucion "persecution, damage, affliction, suffering." Directly from Latin persecutionem (nominative persecutio), noun of action from past participle stem of persequi "follow, pursue, hunt down; proceed against, prosecute, start a legal action," from per- "through" (see per) + sequi "follow" (see sequel). Psychological persecution complex is recorded from 1961; earlier persecution mania (1892). (British Dictionary)

(Easton's Dictionary 1897)

The first great persecution for religious opinion of which we have any record was that which broke out against the worshippers of God among the Jews in the days of Ahab, when that king, at the instigation of his wife Jezebel, "a woman in whom, with the reckless and licentious habits of an Oriental queen, were united the fiercest and sternest qualities inherent in the old Semitic race", sought in the most relentless manner to extirpate the worship of Jehovah and substitute in its place the worship of Ashtoreth and Baal.

Manasseh followed Ahab's example. He "shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another". (**2 Kings 21:16**; comp. 24:4)



In all ages, in one form or another, the people of God have had to suffer persecution. In its earliest history the Christian church passed through many bloody persecutions. Of subsequent centuries in our own and in other lands the same sad record may be made. Christians are forbidden to seek the propagation of the gospel by force (**Matt. 7:1**; **Luke 9:54-56**; **Rom. 14:4**; **James 4:11, 12**).

Psalm. 7:13 says, "He ordains his arrows against the persecutors," ought rather to be, as in the Revised Version, "He maketh his arrows fiery [shafts]."

Persecution, according to www.dictionery.com... is, "a program or campaign to exterminate, drive away, or subjugate people based on their membership in a religious, ethnic, social, or racial group."

So, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12. I guess that means "All " Not just a few. If you are not under the critical eye of an adversary, you probably are not living godly in Christ Jesus. If you are living a godly lifestyle, you are sure to be at war with someone over your faith.

Who Is Your Adversary?

Your adversary is anyone that engages in persecuting you. It all has to do with making you feel worthless, defeated, helpless and afraid. Their goal is to hurt you physically and emotionally. The Bible tells us who the chief adversary is.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” I Peter 5:8-9

The devil is the one behind all forms of persecution. He is the architect of evil and oppression and he can use you or anyone else that he desires if you are not aware of his tricks. When you gossip, criticize, mock, degrade or speak in ridicule against another, you are being influenced by the devil. He'll put a thought or insert a question in your head and off you go saying what he wants you to say. The speech patterns are always destructive in nature...again, here the word of the Lord.

“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” John 10:10

The goal of your adversary is to Steal, Kill and Destroy. He is bent on our extermination. However, Jesus said He came that we might have life, abundant or overflowing life. As Peter said, resist the devil steadfastly in the Faith and he will flee. (Run away in fear of you)

Types of Persecution

Here's a short list of types of persecution;

Lies, Gossip, Backbiting, Criticism and Rejection. I am sure you will find more as you think about it.

All are meant to hurt you in some way and keep you in a low self-esteem. We certainly need to stay away from people that do these kinds of things.

Agents of Terror

We have already learned that the devil is the source of evil and terror focused at us. His demons are hard at work to kill, steal and destroy. What may not be apparent is whom these evil forces work through. Here's another short list, this time of the "Agents of Terror."

Consider these folks; Mom, Dad, Siblings, Teachers, Co-Workers, Other Christians, Religious Leaders and so on. Anyone that allows access to evil thoughts can become an agent of terror and oppression.

The apostle Paul wrote this to the 1st century church, ***"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."*** Ephesians 6:12

Yes, almost anyone can be use by evil forces to oppose us but our battle is not with them. They are only pawns in the hands of the devil. They might even think they are doing a good think. It will be obvious to us that they have no Spiritual insight.

So what do we do with the flesh and bones that come against us? How do we handle attacks that are initiated by the devil and driven through the mouths and actions of human beings? The 35th psalm of David gives us a really good plan of action.

The first thing we do is: Turn The Problem Over To God

Listen to what king David said more than 3,000 years ago when confronted his adversaries.

"Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." Psalm 35:1-3

Even the king knew that he alone was not strong enough to overcome his adversaries. He cried out to the Lord for help and did not try to muster up

enough strength to fight on his own. He called upon the Lord to fight for him. It is important to allow the Lord His rightful place as your Lord and to let Him do His work in your life. He will work everything together for good as indicated in **Romans 8:28**.

The 2nd Thing We do Is:

Be Specific In Your Request

“Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them. Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them. Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.
Psalm 35:4-6 & 8

It's like praying for a bike but not asking God for a girls or boys bike or specifying the color or size. If you do not be specific, you might get a tricycle instead of a 26" cycle. Be specific on how you want God's help. Don't be afraid to talk to God and share your true feelings. David did just that. He must have known that his adversaries were not thinking of his best interest and wanted God to end their reign of terror over him.

The 3rd Thing To Do is:

Keep A Clear Perspective

“For without cause have they hid from me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul.” 35:7 “False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.” 35:11-12 “But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, they gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not: With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.” 35:15-16 “For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land.” 35:20

Look deeply into the situation and determine if you are right or wrong. If you are not right, get right with God and clear up the matter. However, if

you are right, then be right and keep that perspective before you at all times. There will be those that will say to you, “Oh forget about it” “It’s not worth it” or “Forgive and forget” but that does not shut the mouths of the mockers or take away the oppression from their persistent efforts to hurt you. That is just another trap to snare you and keep you in fear or some other bondage. Do what Jesus did. He said, “Get thee behind me, Satan”

You must keep it clear in your own mind. Make a list and read it often if you have to. Be like the elephant that never forgets. Remember, you are not dealing with folks that ask for forgiveness but rather folks that are opposed to your lifestyle and faith in Christ. It’s ok to remember and keep a clear perspective on why all of this is happening to you.

The 4th Thing To Do Is: Be Joyful In The Lord

“And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation. All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which delivers the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoils him?” 35:9-10

In the midst of the turmoil, we are to rejoice and be happy in the Lord. It’s like that part of the 23rd psalm that says, **“Thou prepareth a table before me in the presence of my enemies”**. We are invited to a feast as our enemies look on. We can do this because God is with us, not against us and He is greater than all our adversaries combined.

I refer a lot to **Psalm 118:24**. It says, **“This is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”** When we are joyful, we rejoice. Knowing that the Lord has made the day just for us and it is full of His blessings makes us glad.



The 5th Thing To Do Is: **Be Patient & Wait Upon The Lord**

“Lord, how long wilt thou look on? Rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.” Psalm 35:17

How long? As long as it takes. It is in God’s timing, not ours. It is His will that will be accomplished on our behalf.

Let’s look at what it means to be patient. Dictionary.com can help with this. It says the following:

1. The quality of being patient, as the bearing of provocation, annoyance, misfortune, or pain, without complaint, loss of temper, irritation, or the like.
2. An ability or willingness to suppress restlessness or annoyance when confronted with delay: to have patience with a slow learner.
3. Quiet, steady perseverance; even-tempered care; diligence: to work with patience.

We need to keep our cool and strive to stay focused. Doing otherwise makes us look foolish and destroys our plan of action. The Bible tells us many times to “Wait Upon The Lord”.

“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31 See also, (Psalm 37:9; 123:2; Isaiah 8:17; 40:31)

GotQuestion.com offers some good insight into what it means to wait upon the Lord.

The command to wait on the Lord is found extensively throughout the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, it is more about waiting for the Lord’s providential care, but most New Testament references relate to Christ’s second coming. In all cases, it is about waiting expectantly and with hope. Fundamental to being able to wait is trusting God’s character and goodness.

Waiting on the Lord is something the godly do. It's about holding on tight, hoping with expectation and trust, knowing that our Lord is not making us wait just to see how long we can "take it." There are times when God will delay His answer, and we will at times wonder why He seems so reluctant to intervene in our affairs: "I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God" (**Psalm 69:3**). But, knowing the Lord, we trust that He will come at the perfect moment, not a second too soon or too late.

Waiting on the Lord necessitates two key elements:

1. A complete dependence on God ... and
2. A willingness to allow Him to decide the terms, including the timing of His plan.

Trusting God with the timing of events is one of the hardest things to do. The half-joking prayer, "Lord, I need patience, and I need it RIGHT NOW," is not far removed from the truth of how we often approach matters of spiritual growth and the Lord's will. To wait on the Lord produces character in the life of the Christian in that it involves patience (see **James 1:4**). Waiting involves the passage of time, which is itself a gift of God.

The word *wait* in the Bible carries the idea of confident expectation and hope. "For God alone my soul waits in silence . . . my hope is from him" (**Psalm 62:1, 5, ESV**). To wait upon the Lord is to expect something from Him in godly hope, "and hope does not disappoint" (**Romans 5:5**).

We wait on the Lord in a way similar to how we wait on the arrival of out-of-town relatives, with loving anticipation of seeing them again. All creation eagerly awaits God's restoration: "The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed" (**Romans 8:19**). Those who wait for God to keep His promises will not be disappointed.

Waiting on the Lord involves being at rest in the Lord. **Psalm 23** provides a lesson concerning being still. Sheep will not be at peace near rushing water, but they will lie contentedly by "still" water, and that's where the Good Shepherd leads us (**Psalm 23:2**). The words "He makes me lie down" can be translated "He causes me to rest." When we, like sheep, are still, we are resting in the Lord and trusting our Shepherd.

Being still means we have ceased from following our own agenda or ingenuity; we have stopped trusting in our own strength and will power. We are waiting upon the Lord to exchange our weakness for His strength (see **2 Corinthians 12:9**).

The apostle Paul had a “thorn in the flesh,” and, as he gains spiritual insight, he understands that the affliction is a *protective* suffering meant by God to keep him from sin. As a result, the apostle is content to rest in God’s grace. God does not remove the thorn; He gives Paul a place to be still in the bearing of it. Paul learned to be still and wait on the Lord.

To wait on the Lord is to rest in the confident assurance that, regardless of the details or difficulties we face in this life, God never leaves us without a sure defense. As Moses told the panicky Israelites trapped at the Red Sea by Pharaoh’s army, “The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still” (**Exodus 14:14**).

The heavenly perspective comes as we focus not on the trouble but on the Lord and His Word. When it seems God has painted us into a corner, we have an opportunity to set aside our human viewpoint and wait upon the Lord to show us His power, His purpose, and His salvation.

When we don’t choose to wait on the Lord, we solicit trouble for ourselves. Remember how Abraham and Sarah did not wait on the Lord for their child of promise; rather, Sarah offered her maid, Hagar, to Abraham in order to have a child through her.

The account in **Genesis 16 and 18** shows that their impatience led to no end of trouble. Any time we fail to wait on the Lord and take matters into our own hands—even when we’re trying to bring about something God wants—it leads to problems. When we “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (**Matthew 6:33, ESV**), we can allow God to work out the rest of the details.

This doesn’t mean we sit idly by as we wait on the Lord to act on our behalf. We should not spend our time doing nothing; rather, we should continue to do the work He has given us to do. **Psalms 123:2** says, “As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a female slave look to the

hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till he shows us his mercy.”

That is, we should look to God with the constant anticipation and willingness to serve that a servant shows to his master. The idea of waiting on the Lord is not like waiting for the dentist in the waiting room (thank goodness!). Rather, the sense of waiting on the Lord is somewhat akin to what a waiter or waitress does in a restaurant.

Our attitude and actions should be as those of a waiter anticipating and meeting the requests of the one he’s waiting on. Our waiting on the Lord is not biding our time until we finally get the service we’ve been waiting for; it’s filling our time with service to the Master, always on our feet, ready to minister.

The command to wait on the Lord means that we are to be near Him and attentive so that we may catch the slightest intimation of what He wants for us. We naturally think of ourselves as self-sufficient. We turn here and there and expect help from our own ability, from friends, or from circumstances. But in the spiritual life we are taught to distrust self and depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit.

Waiting on the Lord involves the confident expectation of a positive result in which we place a great hope—a hope that can only be realized by the actions of God. This expectation must be based on knowledge and trust, or we simply won’t wait. Those who do not know the Lord will not wait on Him; neither will those who fail to trust Him.

We must be confident of who God is and what He is capable of doing. Those who wait on the Lord do not lose heart in their prayers: “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (**1 John 5:14**).

Waiting on the Lord renews our strength (**Isaiah 40:31**). Prayer and Bible study and meditating upon God’s Word are essential. To wait on the Lord we need a heart responsive to the Word of God, a focus on the things of heaven, and patience rooted in faith.

We should not despair when God tarries long in His response, but continue to patiently wait on Him to work on our behalf. The reason God sometimes

waits a long time to deliver is to extend the goodness of the final outcome. “Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him” (Isaiah 30:18, ESV).

The 6th Thing To Do Is: Give Thanks & Focus

“I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.” 35:18

When your eyes are upon the Lord, it is easy to give thanks. If you have difficulty, just look at all the many benefits and blessings that came your way over the years. These things are the reason why we give thanks. You also begin to see Jesus and if you stay in tune with Him, you will no doubt fall in



love with Him. He is not only the Son of God but is also our redeemer. That, in itself, is reason to praise, worship and thank Him.

“Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favor my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant and my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long” 35:27-28

We also need to focus. Most of the time we get scared because of the nature of the adversary’s attack. Then we fall into confusion or fear. Staying focused is vital to overcoming. The way to do that is to give thanks to God for whom He is and all the times He has been there for you. This will keep you in times of trouble.

It Is Good To Give Thanks.

The 7th Thing To Do Is Keep Praying Until You Win

Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it. **This thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me.** Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord. Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me.
35:21-24

It is important to keep praying about your situation. King David did not through up a prayer and rest easy. He went back to God more than once to keep his request in front of the throne of God.

Is God Hard of Hearing?

Now this can be a stumbling block if you do not understand what is going on. ***God is not hard of hearing.*** He knows our thoughts and hears the cry of our hearts before we even utter a sound.

I believe the issue is really, “How much do you really want what you ask God for? God will sometimes delay His actions until you get your act together. When we continually seek the Lord through prayer, we strengthen our relationship and solidify His Lordship over our lives. We end up in an utter abandonment of our wills and a serious trust in the Lord. One flippant prayer will not accomplish this.

Conclusion

There are many ways of dealing with adversity. You can put your head in the sand and not acknowledge it. You can reclassify it so it is not a threat. (Good luck with that) You can descend into denial and say that it doesn't exist. You can agree with your adversary and fall under his oppression and torment. Finally, you can fight the good fight of faith and resist your adversary at every turn. Listen again to what the apostle Peter said.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the

faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” I Peter 5:8

King David’s 35th psalm gives us a plan of action that will keep us and defeat our adversaries. It’s only seven little or big steps, depending on how you perceive it.

1. **Turn The Problem Over To God.**
2. **Be Specific In Your Request.**
3. **Keep A Clear Perspective.**
4. **Be Joyful In The Lord.**
5. **Be Patient & Wait Upon The Lord.**
6. **Give Thanks & Stay Focused.**
7. **Keep Praying Until You win.**

God wants to partner with you. Yes, He can do it all and doesn’t need you. However, His original plan was to create man and give him authority to rule on the earth in His image and likeness.

God loves to work with and through man. We are His crowning achievement and His beloved creation. When we see this truth, it makes reality a lot better and brings life into perspective. We begin to see ourselves as God sees us. Our faults no longer matter. We are blessed of God. We join the Lord in doing His will. It’s a great time to be alive.



More Than Conquers

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:37-39