

Persecution and the Sovereignty of God

Acts 12:1-11

PART TWO

Introduction

Persecution is the *wind* and *fire* of gospel proliferation.

2 Timothy 3:12

1 Peter 3:12

Three crucial points to remember when you are persecuted:

- I. God *Sees* the Persecution of the Righteous – vv1-4
- II. God *Hears* the Prayers of the Righteous – vv5-17
- III. God *Sets His Face* Against Evil – vv18-19

II. God Hears the Prayers of the Righteous – vv5-17

“...and his ears are open to their prayer.” 1 Peter 3:12b

Psalms 34:15-17

Exodus 3:7

“four squads of soldiers to guard him” (v4).

What did the handful of Christians have?

Prayer, “earnest prayer” – and Jesus Christ!

“earnest prayer” Gk *ektenos*; ‘intently, fervently, without ceasing’

Luke 22:44

Our prayers should be made *earnestly* and in *agony* when we are being persecuted. God hears our cries.

How could he sleep?

Because he knew that while he sleeps, the brethren *pray*. While he sleeps, Jesus Christ remains awake.

Psalms 4:8

Surely Peter’s faith grew by leaps and bounds having slept while lying at death’s door, *chained* and in prison

Peter learned that the Lord’s timing is always best.

Trust in God’s sovereign timing for deliverance from persecution.

Use the time well to develop confident patience, greater faith in the Lord's promise to deliver.

Every step of Jesus building His Church is marked by divine intervention:

- † an angel released the apostles once before (5:19);
- † an angel came to redirect Philip (8:26);
- † an angel came to instruct Cornelius (10:3).
- † Now an angel comes to set Peter free.

God sovereign power. Nothing is left to chance or the whims of man.

“The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.” Psalm 34:7

Like a great unseen army, angels encamp around those who belong to God. Their eyes never closing.

Watchful warriors waiting for Word from the Commander of the host to send them in to defend and deliver God's chosen ones.

And after the battle, to comfort and support them.

The fervent heart cries that arise from persecution reach the ears of the Commander of the Lord's army.

Philippians 4:6-7

Dependence on divine power should never become insecure or impatient; nor should it ever cause us to neglect our responsibilities.

Philippians 2:12

“follow me...he went out and followed him” (v9)

The angel's command required swift action.

When God brings the filling of the Spirit to show us *the way of escape* (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13), we must respond immediately without question or hesitation.

This requires us to consistently access the means of grace that keep us *filled*.

Psalm 91:12, 14-15

The Lord of hosts hears the cries of those who truly know Him and love Him. And He responds with power.