

# STANDING STRONG AS A CHRISTIAN IN THE MIDST OF PERSECUTION AND TRIALS

- We are now living in a world in which there is growing opposition to Christian values



- In this teaching I will be sharing some keys and thoughts that will help to encourage you to remain strong in your commitment to Christ

**Jesus Himself made it clear that as Christians we would experience persecution and opposition for our faith in this world. We see this in the following two passages of Scripture**

**Jesus said,**

**“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” (John 15:18-19)**



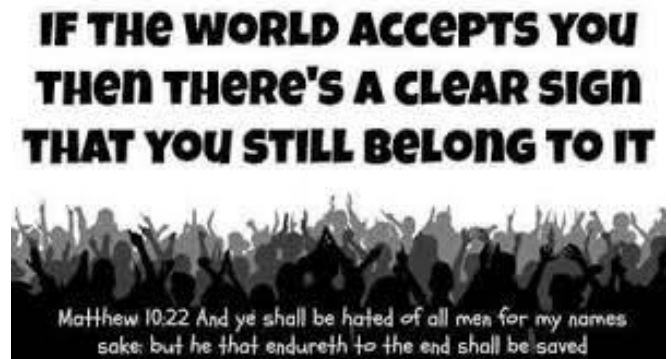
**Jesus also said in Matthew 10:16-22,**



<sup>16</sup> “Behold, I send you out as *sheep in the midst of wolves*. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless<sup>[a]</sup> as doves. <sup>17</sup> But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. <sup>18</sup> You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. <sup>19</sup> But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak;” **(Matthew 10:16-19)**

<sup>20</sup> for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

<sup>21</sup> “Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. <sup>22</sup> And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.” **(Matthew 10:20-22)**



- **Despite the increasing opposition that many Christians are now experiencing, *there is no greater life than living wholeheartedly for Jesus Christ.***

**The Apostle Paul made this clear when he wrote, “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:7-8)**



I will now share a number of thoughts and keys to help encourage you to remain strong and committed in your walk with the Lord

**1) God sometimes allows us to go through trials and challenges to enable us to grow in patience and Christlike character**

- What God permits in our life will always be ultimately for our own good
- *On some occasions* however, the trials that we go through in life are *self inflicted* through wrong choices. Trials that we bring upon ourselves

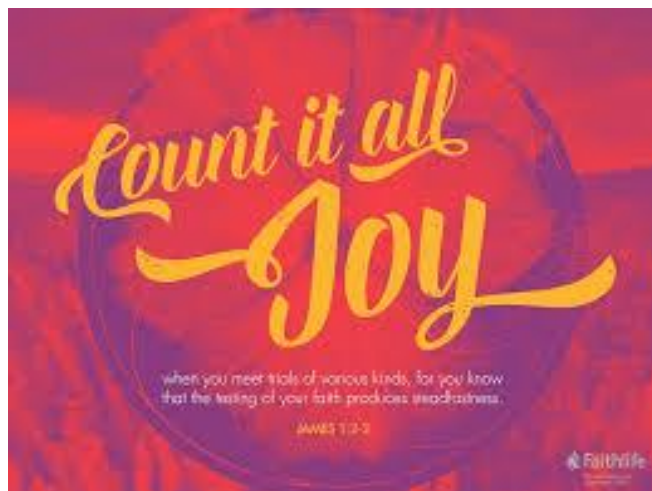


- It is how we respond to the trials and challenges in our life that invariably qualifies or disqualifies us for promotion in God's Kingdom. God is always more concerned about our character being right than what we do for Him
- The Apostle Paul wrote, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”  
**(Romans 8:28-29)**



**In the book of James we read,**

**“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, *that you may be perfect and complete lacking nothing.*” (James 1:2-4)**





## 2) We need to be continually both hearers and doers of God's Word

- Consistently meditating on the Word of God and *applying* it to our own lives is a great key to remaining strong during the midst of the trials and temptations that we all experience in life
- Building our lives on the Word of God is a great key to being prosperous and to having good success in our life

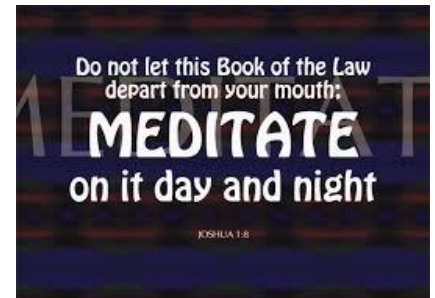


**Jesus Himself said,** “Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the **rock**; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” **(Matthew 7:24-27)**



**The LORD said to Joshua,**  
“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” **(Joshua 1:8)**



**It is so important that we build our lives based on what God says about our life in His word and not the opinions of others**

### 3) We must never get offended with God when we are going through trials and persecution for our faith

- We are all in a spiritual contest. God is always good but the Devil is always bad



- We must never blame God for the misfortunes or rejection that we experience in our walk with the Lord



- As Christians we have a *very real adversary*, the Devil, who will continually try and oppose us

**Jesus Himself said,**

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” **(John 10:10)**



**The Apostle Peter wrote, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” (1 Peter 5:8-9)**

- **The Devil will continually make accusations about the goodness of God, especially when we are in the middle of our trials and disappointments in life**
- **We must never get offended with God when we are under spiritual attack, or when others betray us. GOD IS ALWAYS GOOD**



**Jesus Himself said,**

**“And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.” (Matthew 11:6)**



## 4) We need to live our life always with eternity in mind

- Because of Jesus Christ suffering for us on the cross at Calvary we will as believers have all eternity to rejoice with Him in the life to come
- **The best is yet to come for all believers**

**The Apostle Paul wrote,**

**“But as it is written:**

**“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,**

**Nor have entered into the heart of man**

**The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9)**





- We must refuse to allow persecution and temporary trials and challenges to cause us to get discouraged in our walk with the Lord

- As Christians we are just pilgrims. We are in this world but not of it



- When we keep our focus on things above we will have a right perspective in relation to the tribulation and persecution that we experience for the word's sake

**The Psalmist wrote,**

**“Blessed is the man whose strength is in You,  
whose heart is set on pilgrimage.” (Psalm 84:5)**



**The Apostle Paul wrote,**

**“For our *citizenship is in heaven*, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body...” (Philippians 3:20-21)**

**The Apostle Paul also wrote, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”**

**(2 Corinthians 4:16-18)**



## 5) We need to make our love for God our greatest priority in life



- Our love for Jesus will give us the grace to even love our enemies
- Maintaining our first love for Jesus will help us to withstand any storm or persecution that we experience in life
- Only the LORD can be depended on to never leave nor FORSAKE us. He will never turn His heart away from loving us



**King David, a man after God's own heart wrote,**  
“O GOD, You are my God; Early will I seek You;  
My soul thirsts for you; My flesh longs for You in  
a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.  
So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see  
Your power and Your glory. Because Your  
lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall  
praise You.” **(Psalm 63:1-3)**



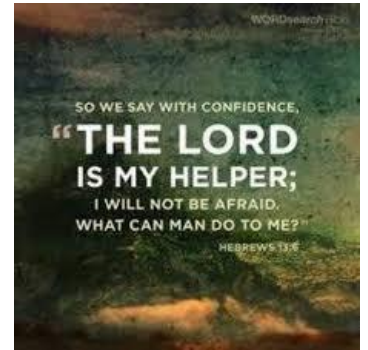
- **Jesus Himself emphasised the importance of our love for Him always being our highest priority in life when He said,**

“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” **(Luke 14:26-27)**



- **In this passage of Scripture Jesus was using Hebrew hyperbole to emphasise the importance of our greatest allegiance always being to Him**

- **Only the Lord can be depended upon to be always there for us. For this reason our relationship with Jesus must always be our highest priority in life. This is a great key to having emotional stability in our life**

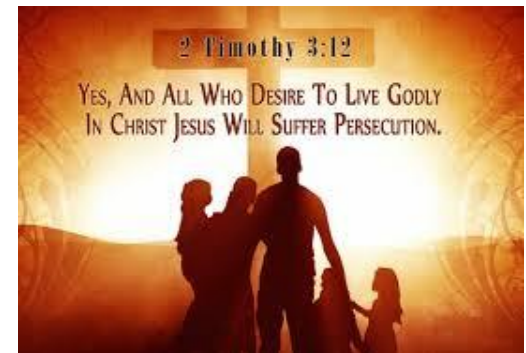


**In the book of Hebrews we read,**

**“...For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’” (Hebrew 13:5-6)**

**6) The more we desire to live for and to serve the Lord, the more persecution we will invariably experience in our walk with the Lord**

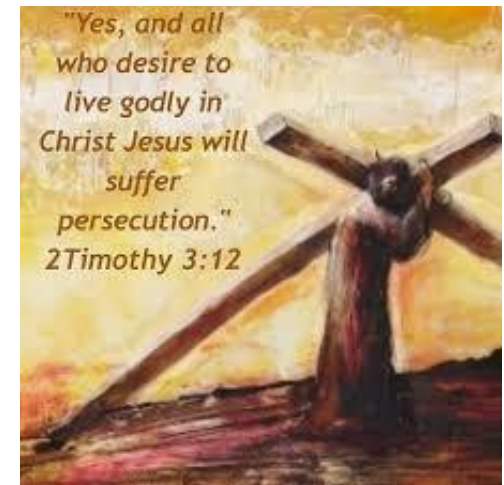
- We must not however allow persecution and opposition from others to move us away from our God given calling



- The eternal destinies of others is connected to us fulfilling God's plan for our life



**The Apostle Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*,”**  
**(2 Timothy 3:12-14)**



**In the book of Hebrews we read,**

“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.”

“For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”

**(Hebrews 10:35-38)**



**In the book of Proverbs we read,**

**“Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, “Surely we did not know this,” does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?”**

**(Proverbs 24:11-12)**



- It is so important that we remain strong in our faith during our times of trials and tribulations, so that we can help many others to come to Christ and to fulfil their God given destiny in life

## The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” **(1 Corinthians 15:58)**



## 7) We need to always remember that God is sovereign in the affairs of the world

- We can therefore be assured that when Jesus Christ is truly Lord of our life, nothing can ever happen to us apart from the will of God for our life

**Jesus Himself said,**

**“Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will.” (Matthew 10:29)**

**“Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”**

**(Matthew 10:31)**



- **In the book of Daniel we see that when Shadrach, Meshach and Abed Nego were thrown into the burning fiery furnace for their faith, the LORD was with them.** “Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counsellors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?” They answered and said to the King, “True, O king.” “Look!” he answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” **(Daniel 3:24-25)**



## 8) The importance of being planted in a loving bible based church fellowship

- We must refuse to allow the Devil to offend us and to drive us away from fellowshiping with other believers



**Jesus Himself said in relation to the times that we are now living in, “And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. (Matthew 24:10-11)**



- **We cannot do the Christian walk alone**
- Even Jesus Himself spent much time with His 12 disciples during His time here on earth



**In the book of Hebrews we read,**

**“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who**

**promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and**



**good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but**

**exhorting one another, and so much the more as**

**you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:23-25)**



## 9) We need to build and cultivate good godly friendships in our life

- We need to make time to invest in our friendships
- Having good friendships is a great key to remaining emotionally healthy and to having a support network when going through trials and persecution in life
- The enemy loves to isolate people so that they feel unwanted and alone in life



**In the book of Ecclesiastes we read,**  
“Two *are* better than one,  
Because they have a good reward for their labor.  
For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.  
But woe to him *who is* alone when he falls,  
For *he has* no one to help him up.”  
**(Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)**



- **We must always appreciate our friendships and invest time and energy into them**

**10) We can depend upon the Lord to strengthen us during the trials and challenges that we experience in life as believers**

- As Christians we can still experience peace during the trials and storms of life and when we are rejected for our faith



**Jesus Himself said,**

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” **(John 16:33)**

## The Apostle Paul wrote,

“But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve *me* for His heavenly kingdom. To Him *be* glory forever and ever. Amen!”

**(2 Timothy 4:17-18)**

**AND**



# 11) Life is all about choices. God has given us all a free will



- Without God's wisdom we can make many poor choices in life and bring upon ourselves and others much unnecessary suffering and pain



- We must never allow our past to define our future. The past we cannot change. God is always able to resurrect broken dreams

**King David wrote,**

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, And **forget not all His benefits**; Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, **who redeems your life from destruction**, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” **(Psalm 103:2-5)**

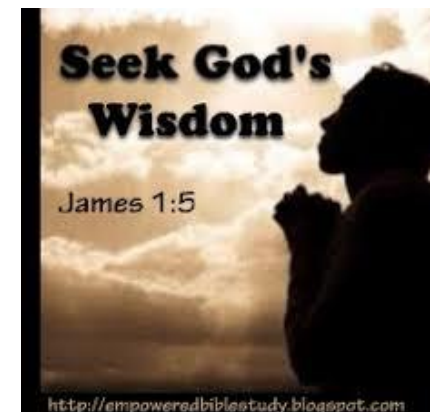


- Whilst we cannot change the past, we can FULLY entrust our future to the LORD and involve Him in all of our plans so that we can finish our Christian walk well



- Being intimate in our walk with the LORD helps us to clearly hear the voice of the Holy Spirit so that we can make right choices in life

- Continually seeking God for wisdom in our life helps us to consistently make right choices in life



**In the book of Proverbs we read,**

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.” **(Proverbs 3:5-6)**

**Jesus Himself said,**

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” **(John 16:13)**





## So in conclusion

- May I encourage you to remain strong in your walk with the Lord, especially when you are going through trials and challenges in your life or when you have been rejected for your faith
- In doing this you will make a great eternal difference in the lives of many people and finish your Christian walk strongly



## I will finish with the words of the Apostle Paul to the young pastor Timothy,

“But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry.”

**(2 Timothy 4:5)** “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give to me on that Day, *and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*” **(2 Timothy 4:7-8)**

**Our faith is the most precious thing that we have. We must not allow anything, or anyone to stop us from living wholeheartedly for the Lord**

