

**LOVE**  
**Without Hypocrisy**  
 (in the book of Romans)

**29 – Persecution**

**WARNING!**

**Following Jesus may result in**  
**PERSECUTION!**

"If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." – **Jesus**  
John 15:20b (WEB)

**IF YOU'RE A FAKE,**  
**There's still time**  
**to escape!**

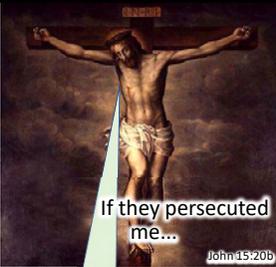
... they last for only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes along because of the word, they immediately fall away.  
Mark 4:17b (ISV)

**What did they do to Jesus?**

- They persecuted him to the point of death.

**What did Jesus do to them?**

- He prayed for them, asking for their forgiveness.

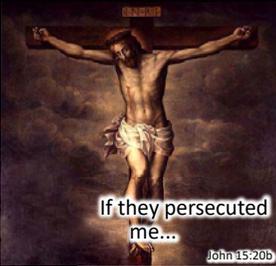


If they persecuted me...  
John 15:20b

Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing.  
Luke 23:34a (WEB)

Unlike us, Jesus could have rightfully sent the whole world to hell. But he chose to leave us an example, instead.

And he tells us to follow him.



If they persecuted me...  
John 15:20b

**Christ, who suffered for you, is your example.** Follow in his steps. ... He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When he suffered, he did not threaten to get even. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.  
1 Peter 2:21b, 23 (NLT)

**SOMETIME LATER...**

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.  
John 15:20b

- **STEPHEN** was a deacon and a teacher of the good news.
  - ... a man full of God's grace and power, [who] did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.  
Acts 6:8 (NIV)
- Some people turned to God. But others refused to repent.
  - Opposition arose ...  
Acts 6:9a (NIV)

**In the end, they killed him.**

- They treated him the same way they treated Jesus.
- He treated them the same way Jesus treated his killers.

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John 15:20b

**I SEE JESUS! (Acts 7:55-56)**

"Lord, do not hold this sin against them" Acts 7:60b (NASB)

**One of the witnesses who gave approval of Stephen's murder...**

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John 15:20b

And Saul agreed completely with killing him. Acts 8:1a (NET)

**SAUL\*** decided it would be good to persecute all of the Christians...

Now on that day a great persecution began ... Acts 8:1b (NET)

\*[Also called Paul.]

**But Jesus had other plans.**

- As Saul was going from town to town, Jesus stopped him.

WHO ARE YOU?

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John 15:20b

**I AM JESUS. WHEN YOU PERSECUTE CHRISTIANS, YOU ARE PERSECUTING ME!**

**Jesus answered Stephen's prayer by saving Saul!**

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John 15:20b

"And I will show him how much he must suffer for me." Acts 9:16 (NLT)

**FOLLOW ME!**

**The end result?**

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John 15:20b

- Paul (Saul) stopped persecuting Christians...
  - ... people were saying, "The one who used to persecute us now preaches the very faith he tried to destroy!" Galatians 1:23 (NLT)
- And others started persecuting him!

But the Jews stirred up devout women of high social standing and the officials in the city, started a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their territory. Acts 13:50 (ISV)

**They eventually killed him.**

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John 15:20b

**But not until God had used him to:**

- Give us part of the New Testament.
- Proclaim the good news over much of the Roman Empire.

**Before his death, guess what he told the Christians!**

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John 15:20b



Those who try to live a godly life because they believe in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 2 Tim. 3:12 (GW)

**HE ALSO WARNED ABOUT THE OTHER GROUP.**

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John 15:20b

Those who try to live a godly life because they believe in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

But **evil people and phony preachers** will go from bad to worse as they mislead people and are themselves misled. 2 Tim. 3:12-13 (GW)

**... evil people and phony preachers ...** 2 Tim. 3:13a (GW)

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John 15:20b

**These people often blamed the Christians (and Jesus himself) for the persecution!**

**OF JESUS:** He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. Luke 23:5a (NIV)

**OF PAUL:** We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews ... Acts 24:5a (NIV)

**... evil people and phony preachers ...** 2 Tim. 3:13a (GW)

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John 15:20b

**They still blame-shift today!**

You're a hateful hypocrite!

Stop saying we need to repent!

Stop being so judgmental!

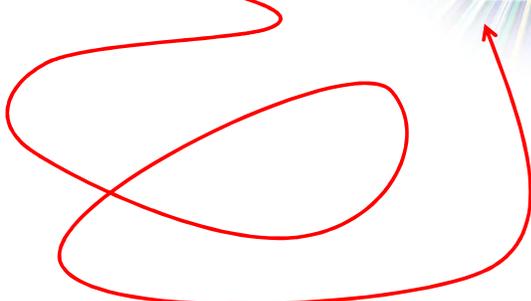
Quit being so negative!

You're not being inclusive!

Bigot!

**Yet in all of this, Jesus still says...**

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John 15:20b



**The issue is this:**

**"When you are persecuted for following Jesus, how do you respond?"**

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Romans 12:14 (NIV)

( If you are NOT following Jesus, this question does not apply to you. )

**If you *are* following Jesus, the world will *not* treat you as a friend.**

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John 15:20b

If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as one of its own. But because you do not belong to the world and I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. John 15:19 (ISV)

→ Don't be surprised ... if the world hates you. 1 John 3:13 (WEB)

**Not *everyone* will persecute you.**

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John 15:20b

I think you're crazy, but harmless!

I'm offended... I'm going to get even!

I'd rather just ignore you!

I hate your guts!

Rid the earth of such people!

**But *some* will.**

**"Following Jesus" is NOT an *invisible* activity!**

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John 15:20b

I **SEE** you putting Jesus first in your life!

I **HEAR** you including God and the Bible in your conversation!

★ If *nobody* ever persecutes you for following Jesus, you may need to ask who you are *really* following. ★

**Your Mission...**

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John 15:20b

★ FOLLOW JESUS ★

... when circumstances are pleasant.

... when the world is showing its hatred for Jesus (which it will).

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# Your Mission...

**"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse."**

**Romans 12:14**

*Same word, used two ways:* In v. 13, we are told to "pursue" (practice) hospitality for *good*. In v. 14, we are told how to respond when the wicked "pursue" (persecute) us for *evil*.

**JESUS DOES NOT "SUGARCOAT" WHAT IT MEANS TO "FOLLOW" HIM.  
HE TELLS US WHAT TO EXPECT, AND HOW TO RESPOND WHEN IT HAPPENS.**

**What can we expect, if we follow Jesus?**

(There are *many blessings*. But our focus here is on what most people want to avoid - which *also* comes with following Jesus.)

## **WHAT TO EXPECT.**

- We will receive *many blessings* ... along with persecution - Mark 10:29-30.
- Those who want to be godly will be treated the same way Jesus was treated - John 15:20; 2 Timothy 3:12.

## **N.T. EXAMPLES OF PERSECUTORS AND PERSECUTED PEOPLE.**

- *Persecutors:* the Jews - Acts 13:50; Saul (Paul) *before* Jesus changed him - Acts 9:1-5; 22:3-8; civil and religious leaders - Luke 21:12 (prophecy); local people - 1 Thessalonians 2:14-15.

- *Persecuted people:* Jewish Christians - Acts 8:1; Paul (Saul) *after* Jesus changed him - Acts 13:50; the Thessalonians (a good example we can learn from) - 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4.
- Persecution is not something new. It began when Cain killed Abel (Genesis 4:8)!

**God prepares us for this persecution.**

## **WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT.**

- God has not abandoned you - 2 Corinthians 4:9.
- Persecution will never separate you from Christ's love - Romans 8:35-39.
- You are (and will be) a recipient of God's favor - Matthew 5:10.
- The persecutors are treating you the same way they treated God's prophets; you will be rewarded - Matthew 5:11-12.

## **HOW TO RESPOND TO THE PERSECUTORS.**

- Love them; pray for them - Matthew 5:44.
- Bless them (i.e., desire good for them) - Romans 12:14.

## **HOW TO RESPOND TO THE PERSECUTION ITSELF.**

- Endure it (Paul's example) - 1 Corinthians 4:12.
- Delight in what it accomplishes - 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.
- Sometimes, it may be possible to escape it - Matthew 10:23.
- Note: Persecution is one of the things that separate the fakes from the genuine followers of Jesus - Mark 4:17.