

Persecution and the Sovereignty of God

Acts 12:1-19

Introduction

The Holy Spirit is symbolized in Scripture in two ways:

- 1) "A mighty wind";
- 2) "consuming fire"

His arrival incited a progressive persecution.

"a great persecution against the Church" (8:1).

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

"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," 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

I. God Sees the Persecution of the Righteous – vv1-4

"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous," 1 Peter 3:12a

Herod the Great (born in 73, ruled 40-4 B.C.).

2nd wife **Mariamne I**

Herod Agrippa I king of Judea (41-44 A.D.)

James, son of Zebedee, brother of John, "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17)

Matthew 20:20-23

Herod was able to kill James but not Peter.

God exercises sovereign control over all things, including persecution: Acts 2:22-24; 4:24, 27-28

But, what comfort can the people of God receive from what the Bible says about persecution?

1. God sees *everything* at all times in every place because He is present at all times in every place.

Psalm 139:7-10

Isaiah 49:5

Genesis 39:21

Daniel 3:23-25

Jeremiah 23:24

“The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.” Proverbs 15:3

For the *evil*, His seeing is the constant, dreadful, watching eye of a wrath-filled *Judge*.

Amos 9:8

Jeremiah 16:17

“You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.” Psalm 90:8

Hebrews 4:13

For the *good*, He watches with the adoring eyes of a *Father*, full of love, concern, and compassion.

2 Chronicles 16:9

John 1:47-48

Psalm 11:4-5

“his eyelids test”

His is a careful, scrutinizing gaze that searches the heart and adjudicates the motive and intent of every thought and action.

2. God uses persecution as His ‘winnowing fork’ in the lives of those who profess to be Christian.

3. God’s all-seeing eyes are searching for any and all imperfections that might hinder us or harm us.

“His eyes were like a flame of fire” Revelation 1:14.

His loving eyes are like a blazing fire, searching for combustibles to burn up.

“You are a God of seeing,’ for she said, ‘Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.’” Genesis 16:13

Genesis 31:42

Be comforted in knowing that for the true believer God’s all-seeing gaze is loving, caring, compassionate, and kind.

Trust Him. He knows what He’s doing.