

“Princes, Politicians and Persecution vs Praise”

Psalm 119:161-168

SHIN. Princes persecute me without a cause, But my heart stands in awe of Your word. ¹⁶² I rejoice at Your word As one who finds great treasure. ¹⁶³ I hate and abhor lying, *But* I love Your law. ¹⁶⁴ Seven times a day I praise You, Because of Your righteous judgments. ¹⁶⁵ Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble. ¹⁶⁶ LORD, I hope for Your salvation, And I do Your commandments. ¹⁶⁷ My soul keeps Your testimonies, And I love them exceedingly. ¹⁶⁸ I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies, For all my ways are before You. (Psalm 119:161-168 NKJ)

1. What princes, politicians, people-in-power typically do, they “persecute” God’s people –

SHIN. Princes persecute me without a cause, (Psalm 119:161 a NKJ)

1. Please note, three times Jesus refers to Satan as the ‘ruler of this world’ –
"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. (John 12:31 NKJ)

"I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. (John 14:30 NKJ)

"of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. (John 16:11 NKJ)

2. Note how Jesus applies these verses to Himself and His followers -
"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated you.*
¹⁹ **"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.** ²⁰ **"Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.** ²¹
"But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because

they do not know Him who sent Me.²² "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.²³ "He who hates Me hates My Father also.²⁴ "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.²⁵ "But *this happened* that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated Me without a cause.' (John 15:18-25 NKJ)

A. *In these verses Christ tells His people, His followers, His faithful, that they should expect persecution, Paul tells us –*

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12 NKJ)

B. *We know God is in control of this –*

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.²⁹ 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 NKJ)

C. *However, in John 15:25, Jesus applies Psalm 119:161 to Himself - 'They hated Me without a cause.'* (John 15:25 NKJ) ...

and in context to all His true followers! About this Augustine writes -

Verse 161.—“Without a cause.” We know what persecutions the body of Christ, that is, the holy Church, suffered from the kings of the earth. Let us therefore here also recognize the words of the Church: “Princes have persecuted me without a cause.” For how had the Christians injured the kingdoms of the earth? Although their King promised them the kingdom of heaven, how, I ask, had they injured the kingdoms of earth? Did their King forbid his soldiers to pay and to render due service to the kings of the earth? Saith he not to the Jews who were striving to calumniate him, “Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s”? Matt. 22:21. Did he not even in his own person pay tribute from the mouth of a fish? Did not his forerunner; when the soldiers of this kingdom were seeking what they ought to do for their everlasting salvation, instead of replying, “Loose your belts, throw away your arms, desert your king, that ye may wage war for the Lord,” answer, “Do violence to no man,

neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages”? Luke 3:14. Did not one of his soldiers, his most beloved companion, say to his fellow soldiers, the provincials, so to speak, of Christ, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers”? and a little lower he addeth, “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man anything, but to love one another.” Rom. 13:1, 7, 8. Does he not enjoin the Church to pray even for kings themselves? How, then, have the Christians offended against them? What due have they not rendered? In what have not Christians obeyed the monarchs of earth? The kings of the earth therefore have persecuted the Christians *without a cause*.—Augustine.

II. Despite the world’s opposition the psalmist sticks with God’s Word -

But my heart stands in awe of Your word. ¹⁶² I rejoice at Your Word As one who finds great treasure. (Psalm 119:161 B - & 162 NKJ)

1. *God’s word is awesome –*

But my heart stands in awe of Your word. (Psalm 119:161 B NKJ)

A. *Not only is God’s word AWESOME, but the psalmist’s heart recognized it as such! Hearts need to be changed, reformed before they have such good taste –*

"The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; Who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9 NKJ)

"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. (Matthew 15:19 NKJ)

B. *This recognition of the awesome nature has a big “but” in front of it -*
But my heart stands in awe of Your word. *Puts the awesome nature of God’s Word, against the persecution of the world, in the sense that psalmist is saying the Word provides comfort, stability, protection, relief and even revival in the middle of persecution!*

2. *God’s Word is great treasure –*

¹⁶² I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure. ¹⁶³ I hate and abhor lying, *But* I love Your law.

A. *God's Word is great treasure, in the sense:*

- *Sadly, few seem to find it such, it is like hidden treasure*
- *Its truth is a rarity, in a world filled with lies and deceit*

B. *What God's Word gives is the opposite of what we get from the world and Satan –*

"You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it. (John 8:44 NKJ)

Satan and the world gives us murder and lies, God's Word gives us life and truth –

"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 NKJ)

III. *Note the Godly response to God's awesome Word:*

1. Perfect praise –

Seven times a day I praise You, Because of Your righteous judgments. (Psalm 119:164 NKJ)

Seven is God's number! In the Book of Revelation there are seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls all the make know the coming and consummation of God's Kingdom!

There are also the Seven Spirits of God, symbolizing the Holy Spirit's perfection as He gives the ALL IT NEEDS!

Here praises are brought seven times a day!

This is symbolic of perfect praise, continued, constant praise!

2. *Perfect poise –*

Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble. (Psalm 119:165 NKJ)

Verse 165.—“Great peace have they which love thy law.” Amidst the storms and tempests of the world, there is a perfect calm in the breasts of those, who not only do the will of God, but “love” to do it. They are at peace with God, by the blood of reconciliation; at peace with themselves, by the answer of a good conscience, and the subjection of those desires which war against the soul; at peace with all men, by the spirit of charity; and the whole creation is so at peace with them that all things work together for their good. No external troubles can rob them of this “great peace,” no “offences” or stumbling blocks, which are thrown in their way by persecution, or temptation, by the malice of enemies, or by the apostasy of friends, by anything which they see, hear of, or feel, can detain, or divert them from their course. Heavenly love surmounts every obstacle, and runs with delight the way of God’s commandments.—*George Horne.*

3. *A glorious hope –*

LORD, I hope for Your salvation, And I do Your commandments. (Psalm 119:166 NKJ)

Now may the **God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may **abound in hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13 NKJ)

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to **a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (1 Peter 1:3 NKJ)

To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, **the hope of glory.** (Colossians 1:27 NKJ)

4. *An active, God-empowered love –*

My soul keeps Your testimonies, And I love them exceedingly.¹⁶⁸ I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies, for all my ways are before You. (Ps. 119:167-168 NKJ)

"If you love Me, keep My commandments. (John 14:15 NKJ)

Of course, we have the perfect picture of this in Christ Himself, Who despite hatred expressed in the cross, said "Father forgive them" and despite being buried, rose from the dead!

Verse 167.—"I love them exceedingly." It is only a reasonable return to God; for the Father loved me so exceedingly as not to spare his own Son, but to give him up for me; and the Son loved me so exceedingly that he gave himself to me, and gave me back to myself when I was lost in my sins, original and actual.—Gerhohus (1093–1169), in Neale and Littledale.

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