

UNDER ATTACK

“Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted....” —2 TIMOTHY 3:12

If someone wishes to attack God, what do they do? They cannot literally and physically attack God, because He is invisible. What they will do is attack His people.

If God has given us a position with a measure of influence, and we seek to honour Him and walk humbly with Him, then we should not be surprised if we come under attack. This is not because a godly life is taking on a “holier than thou” stance, but the reverse is true. As Christians, we recognize our sin and our inability to live the way God intended, and we have repented. So Christ has entered us, made His home in us, and our godliness, as revealed through us, is the tangible expression of God in us. If someone wants to hurt God, they must attack that which expresses God.

Unless we are foolishly provoking antagonism, we cannot take persecution too personally. The persecution of the church through its history has been the persecution of Christ. To Saul of Tarsus, the most adamant opponent of the Christian church, Jesus asked, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4) Saul, who was spending his time “breathing out murderous threats” against the Lord’s disciples and rounding them up, was stunned and flabbergasted. “Who are you, Lord?” he asked. How could he attack Christ and not even know who He is? Very simply – by attacking

His church, which is His body comprised of every Christian. Hence, an attack on the body is not because there is a conflict with the church, but a conflict with Christ Himself.

In the Old Testament, God had to reassure Samuel when the people rebelled and demanded a king. Samuel was depressed and hurt over this, but God said to him, “It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king” (1 Samuel 8:7). When we take the brunt of people’s rebellion against God, it is simply because we are physical targets, something tangible they can rebel against.

We should be mindful, however, not to negate legitimate criticism, and to take our critics seriously. They may be right, and if they are, we should listen to them, be thankful for them and take appropriate steps to correction. But Paul warns of persecution being inevitable for those who want to live a godly life in Christ. This is fundamentally rebellion against God, and we must treat it as such. We do not need to vindicate ourselves or God. He will do both in His own time.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I pray for those who have not yet discovered that You are the light of men. May your Spirit draw them and their hearts be receptive. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: How would I counteract criticism for wanting to live my life in Christ?