

## Persecution

Esther 3:6-15

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Esther+3%3A6-15&version=NIV>

***“Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai’s people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.” (vs. 6)***

Because of Mordecai’s character and because of his faithfulness to the commands of God, Haman despised him. In fact, Haman’s hate was so great that rather than simply pursue vengeance against Mordecai, Haman sought to take out his anger on all of Mordecai’s people. In fact these were not just Mordecai’s people, but God’s people, the Jews. Haman gained permission from the King to persecute the Jews. Persecution is ill-treatment or hostility especially because of religious belief or race.

As I read of Haman’s smooth words to the king and his intent to harm an entire people, I am reminded of what persecution really is and what it is not. Sometimes, in a first world culture, we are quick to cry persecution when we face a challenge or hardship and in the security of freely worshipping and practicing our faith, we forget what persecution really is like. We forget those in other parts of the world who indeed face persecution at the hands of men like Haman. While we are outraged over our inability to have a manger in a city square, there are places where it is illegal to own a Bible. While we are upset that teachers are not able to lead prayer in public schools, there are places in the world where there are public prayers, but they are to another god and prayers to the one true God are prohibited. While we mourn the commercialism of Christmas (that we freely buy into in many ways), there are brothers and sisters in Christ who die for proclaiming the gospel in countries where it is illegal to do so.

In the week ahead, (since we are free to do so) may our prayers be spiritual battle cries for Christians around the world. Praying for brothers and sisters who are free to read scripture but do not and for those who hide their Bibles, read them in fear, and worship in underground churches. Let us be in prayer for missionaries who risk their lives to share the goodness of Christ and for American Christians who fail to speak the truth of the gospel for fear of an angry word, slammed door, or broken relationship. Let’s be in prayer for Christ’s Church universal around the world that it would be encouraged, that it would thrive, that it would glorify our resurrected King.