



Jesus said to his disciples: "Before all this happens, however, they will seize and persecute you, they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name. It will lead to your giving testimony. Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand, for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute. You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives."

Introductory Prayer: Jesus my Savior, thank you for another day and another chance to grow in holiness with your grace. I love you and wish to make you the true center of my thoughts, desires and actions.

Petition: Lord, help me face the difficulties of practicing my faith day--to-day.

1. Persecution: . Opposition from the world is the price we pay for following Christ. No pain, no gain. Why should that surprise us? If living the Gospel were easy, all the world would be saints. But the Gospel is demanding. It rubs against our fallen human nature. It demands of us — and even makes us unpopular. Why? Because people who do good are a thorny reminder to those who don't. It shouldn't surprise us that the neighbors look down on us for having so many kids. Or that the guys in the dorm snicker at us for living chastely. Or that the boss overlooks us for a promotion because we wouldn't donate to that pro-abortion group last Christmas during the company fund drive. Do I realize that to be a Christian is to be persecuted?

2. No Defense: . When Christ tells us not to prepare our defense, he's not telling us to sit back and do nothing. Rather, he wants us to use our talents for the Kingdom. Christ is inviting us to trust that ultimately the victory of good over evil belongs to him. God has his time and place for everything. In the meantime, we are called to build the Kingdom wherever we can— in our families, our offices, our schools, our communities. How am I building the Kingdom in the areas around me?

3. Wisdom from Above: . "I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking..." When we stay close to Christ in prayer and deed, he takes over our lives little by little. And that's good. Our selfishness fades. Our heart grows. We die to ourselves. "He must increase; I must decrease" (John 3:30). But we have to ask ourselves: Do we really believe in the Gospel? Do we believe in it enough to use Christ's words when we have to respond to the nonbelievers around us? How often do we identify ourselves as Catholic in public?

Conversation with Christ: Lord, you know it's not easy to be seen as your friend. People laugh at us — if they don't feel sorry for us. They don't understand where we are coming from. Help me understand some of the loneliness you must have felt when you went against the world's standards. Help me be faithful to you regardless of the cost.

Resolution: In conversation or in an e-mail I will use a line of Christ's wisdom from the Gospel.