Persecution and Suffering

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

1 Thess 3:1-4  (Paul tells us that affliction and tribulation can be expected and we should not be shaken by it.)
1 Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone,
2 and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith,
3 that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.
4 For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.

Matt 13:20-21  (Jesus tells in this parable, persecution or tribulation can cause us to stumble, don’t be like this one) (Read the entire parable)
20 But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;
21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.

Acts 13:49-50  (We see here that often when great work is being done for the kingdom, others will stir up persecution. We should expect it. Even teaching or attending this Bible Study could bring it.)
49 And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.
50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.

Acts 14:1-6  (They stayed with the message as long as they could when there were those against them.) (Read the whole chapter)
1 Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed.
2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.
3 Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.
4 But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles.
5 And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them,
6 they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region.
Acts 14:19-23  (Shortly thereafter Paul was subjected to great persecution and suffering at the hands of those who actually followed him. Sometimes the persecution will be very persistent.)
19 Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.
20 However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.
21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, (They kept coming back, they were not afraid of the persecution)
22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." (Paul reiterates our tribulations)
23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. (Paul appointed elders in the very city where they stoned him and left him for dead. This is a picture of the dedication we must have to our faith.)

Acts 8:1-3  (Some of this persecution actually started at Paul’s hands before his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul leads the persecution against Stephen, even to death.)
1 Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.
2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.
3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

(Read on in this story to see how Jesus turns Paul around to the point where he begins to serve God with all his heart and soul.)

Phil 4:11-13  (Paul says himself that he has learned a great deal in all his suffering, he sees that he can do all things....'through Christ.')
11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:
12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.
13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Phil 1:29-30  (Paul tells the brethren it has been ‘granted on behalf of Christ’ to suffer. Is that too much to do for the One who suffered so much for us?)
29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,
30 having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

Rev 2:10  (Jesus’ words to the church at Smyrna, ‘don’t fear’, there will be a reward.)
10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.
**1 Peter 4:12-19**  (Peter tells us not to think of our suffering as strange, but rejoice in it)

12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;
13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.
14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.
15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.
16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.
17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?
18 Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"
19 Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

**Romans 8:31-39**  (What then? What is the good news in all this?)

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?
32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?
33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.
34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.
35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."
37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.
38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,
39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(That is the good news for those who choose Christ, but what about the evil doers?)

**2 Thess 1:3-10**  (God will give the righteous rest, as He deals harshly and justly, with evildoers)

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,
4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all
your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,
5 which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy
of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;
6 since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,
7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven
with His mighty angels,
8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not
obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from
the glory of His power,
10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those
who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

Romans 8:16-18  (The bottom line is that our suffering is not worthy to be compared with the
age to come)
16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,
17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with
Him, that we may also be glorified together.
18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the
glory which shall be revealed in us.

So, shall we not expect, and rejoice in, persecutions and suffering that may come our way in our
walk for Jesus?