



*Persecuted
Rejoice & Be Glad*

THE BEATITUDES (12)

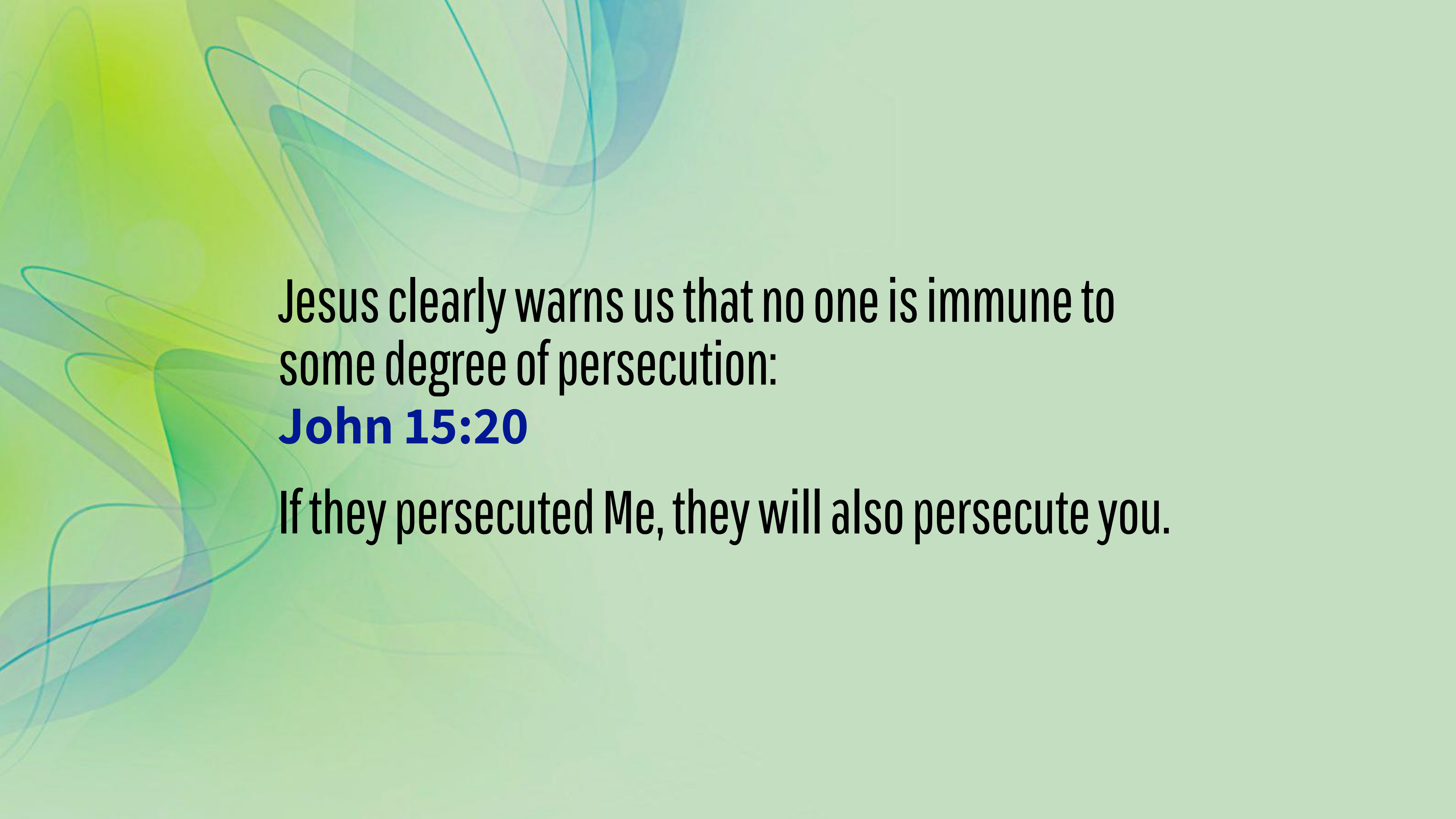
10. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
11. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.
12. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5:10-12

Verse 11

We are blessed when people revile you (which means: abuse, slander, insult), physically hurt you, and falsely speak terrible things about you, on the account of Jesus and on account of living Godly lives.

So briefly this verse says if you are persecuted, abused and slandered because you are a Christian, and on account of Jesus, then you are blessed!



Jesus clearly warns us that no one is immune to some degree of persecution:

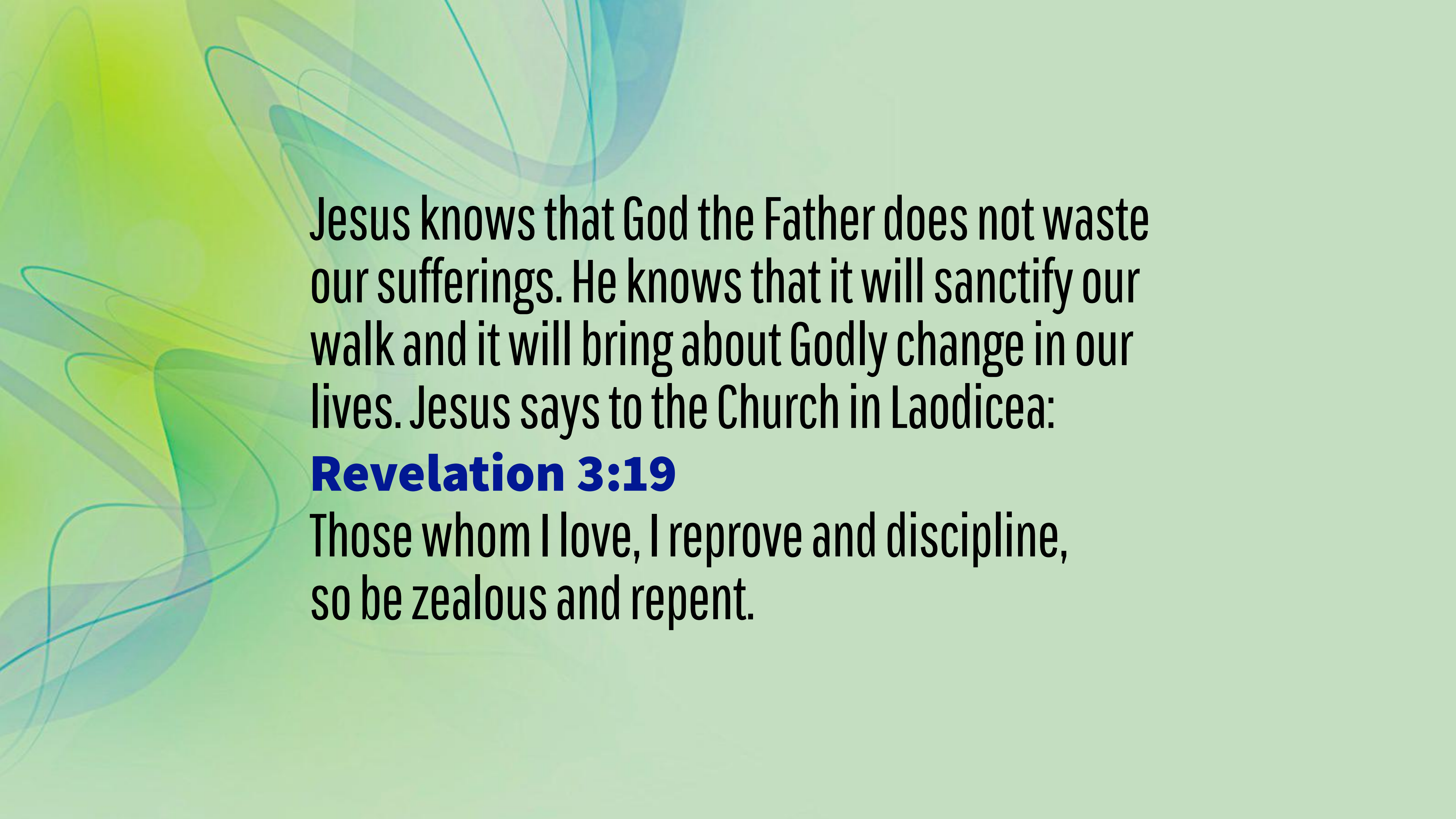
John 15:20

If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.

Paul, one of the fiercest persecutors of the first believers in Christ, became one of the most persecuted for his faith in Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:12 (Amplified Bible)

Indeed all who delight in piety and are determined to live a devoted and godly life in Christ Jesus, will meet with persecution [will be made to suffer because of their religious stand].



Jesus knows that God the Father does not waste our sufferings. He knows that it will sanctify our walk and it will bring about Godly change in our lives. Jesus says to the Church in Laodicea:

Revelation 3:19

Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

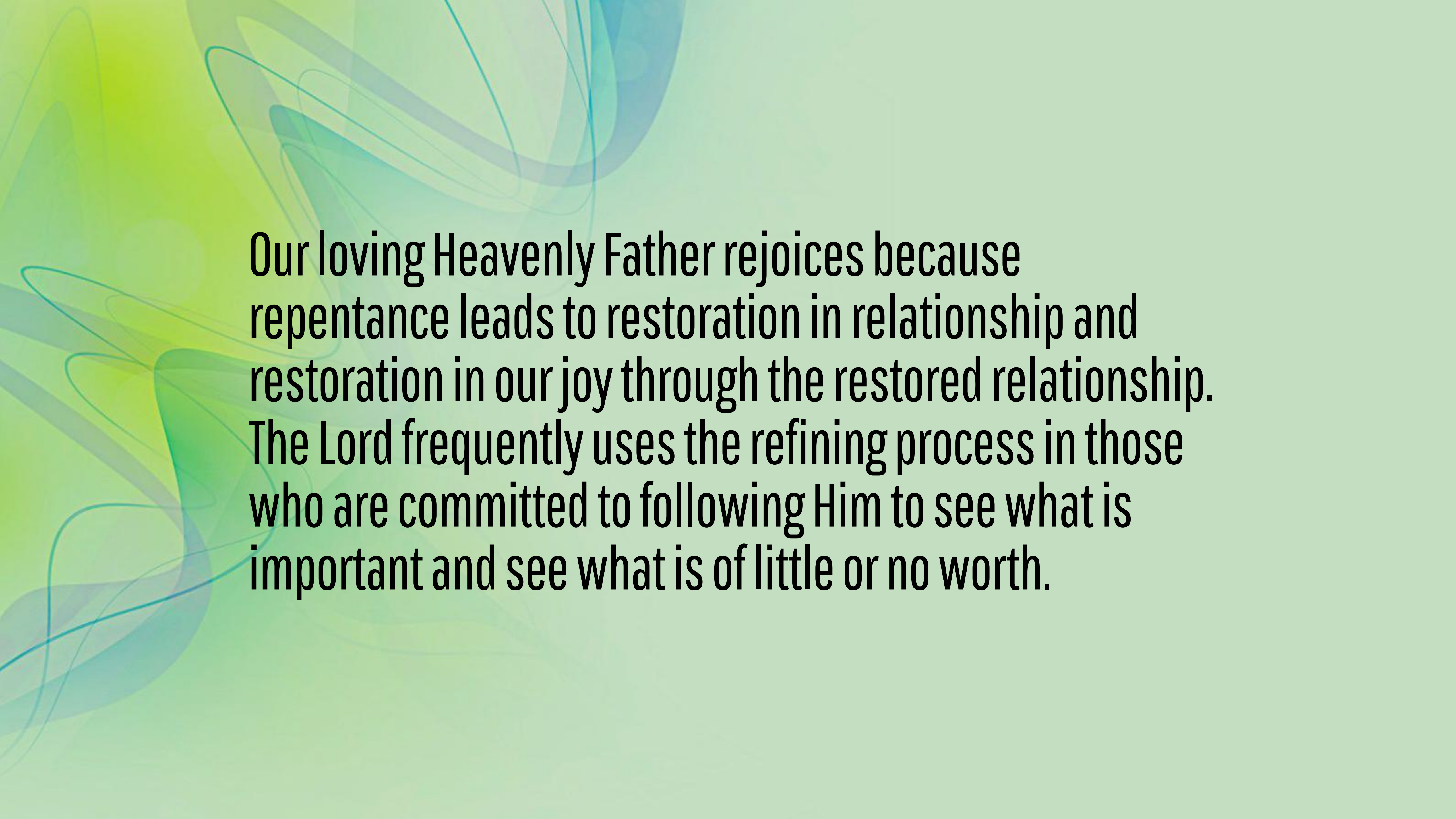
Although He [Jesus] was a son, He learned obedience through what He suffered.

Hebrews 5:8

Even Jesus was shaped and changed by the sufferings He experienced as a man.

As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting.

2 Corinthians 7:9



Our loving Heavenly Father rejoices because repentance leads to restoration in relationship and restoration in our joy through the restored relationship. The Lord frequently uses the refining process in those who are committed to following Him to see what is important and see what is of little or no worth.

Yes, furthermore, I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege (the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth, and supreme advantage) of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him.

Philippians 3:8 (Amplified Bible)

Sudden loss in our lives brings about a new focus. And it is this new focus, that brings about change. Change is repentance - because repentance is a change in thinking, that leads to a change in heart, that leads to a change in our actions. The fact that we may be experiencing trials and persecutions on account of Jesus, can be something to rejoice in because it shows us that we are in fact counted as one of His own and He wants us to change. It can affirm we are in Him and therefore are being refined by Him, changing how we know Him and experience Him, in the same way Paul did.

[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognising and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly], and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed in spirit into His likeness even to His death.

Philippians 3:10 (Amplified Bible)

If anyone would come after Me,
let him deny himself and take up
his cross daily and follow Me.

Luke 9:23

Behold, I am the servant of the Lord;
let it be to me according to Your Word.

Luke 1:38

Despite the obvious persecution and slander she knew she'd face for carrying a child out of wedlock, she rejoices and sings prophetically:

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my
spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.

Luke 1:46

Now those who were scattered abroad went about [through the land from place to place] preaching the glad tidings, the Word [the doctrine concerning the attainment through Christ of salvation in the kingdom of God].

Acts 8:4 (Amplified Bible)

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

Romans 8:28

We must trust in Him, and trust that in His omniscience He knows the bigger picture.

We walk by faith and not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7



Jesus says 'Come follow Me, I am the living water.'

And we have a choice: We can choose either to walk a parallel walk, next to, but not actually in the river, in the hope of avoiding some of the obvious discomfort. But if we choose this parallel path we may too find we get entangled by the weeds and thorns of life.

Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.

Luke 17:33

Jesus invites us into the living waters now. He knows we will get wet and it may at times be uncomfortable, or seem undignified, but in the long run it is what is best and He knows of the great reward waiting at the end. It is by entering into the very water that we get washed and sanctified.

A man's steps are directed by the Lord.
How then can anyone understand his own way?

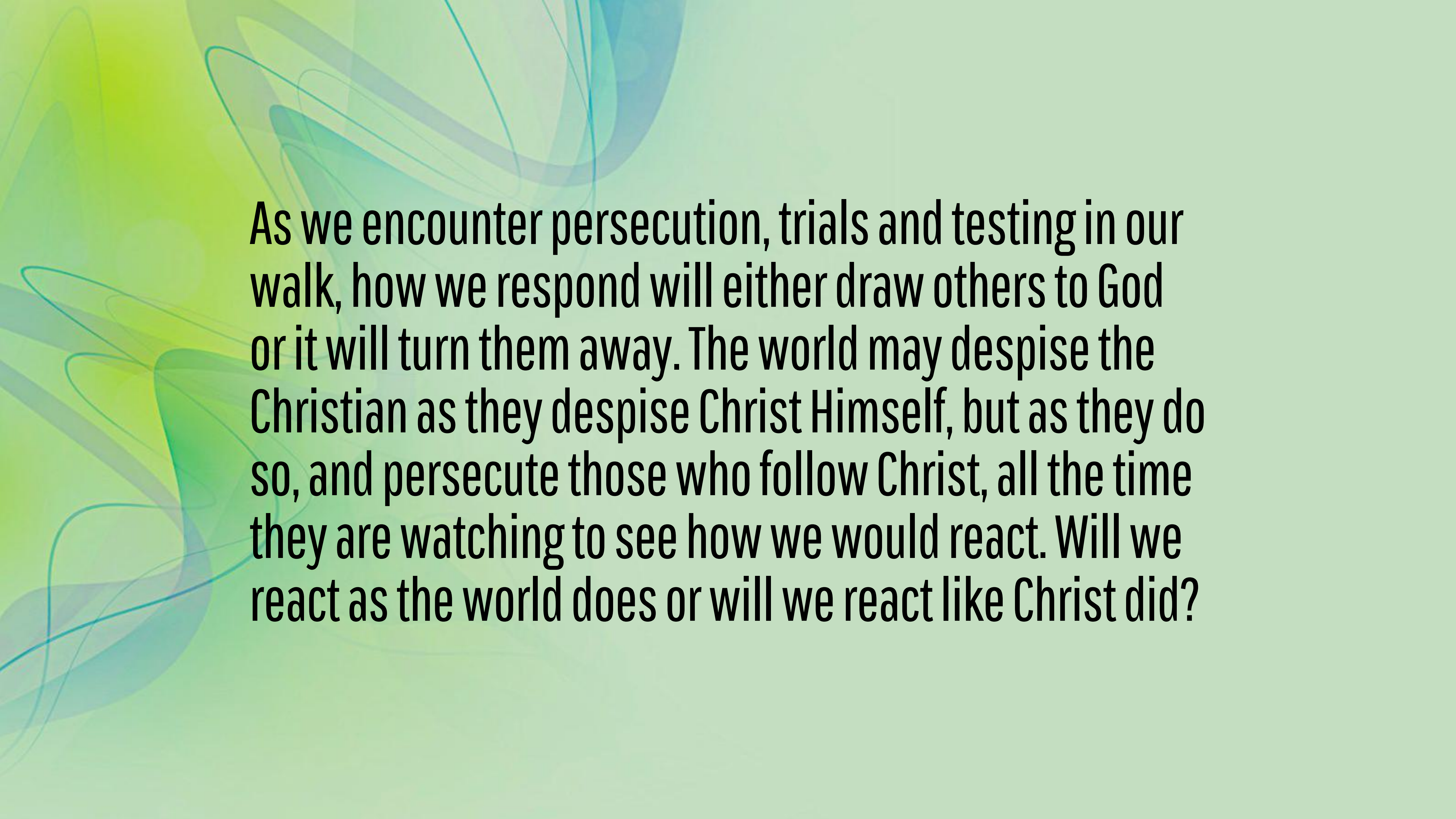
Proverbs 20:24

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 fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.
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Romans 8:16 -17

We can choose to walk a similar path to Jesus but stepping from stone to stone in the hope of staying dry and comfortable, and we'll never get washed by the water but risk hurting ourselves trying to preserve our dignity.

Or we walk by faith and by the Spirit deep in the water where there is life and where we know Jesus has walked. We walk in the knowledge that by the water we will be sanctified and the process will shape our character.



As we encounter persecution, trials and testing in our walk, how we respond will either draw others to God or it will turn them away. The world may despise the Christian as they despise Christ Himself, but as they do so, and persecute those who follow Christ, all the time they are watching to see how we would react. Will we react as the world does or will we react like Christ did?

19. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.
20. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.
21. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps.
22. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth.
23. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly.

1 Peter 2:19- 23

The thing about enduring while suffering unjustly,
is we don't need to endure in our own strength.

I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me [I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me; I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency].

Philippians 4:13 (Amplified Bible)

Christ is our sufficiency in all things.
We can be self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency.

God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

1 Corinthians 10:13

Persecution is not something that should be avoided as though something strange is happening to us, rather, if our conscience is clear, then we can expect God to work it out for our good and further change us into the people He wants us to be. People who live in a close relationship with a loving Heavenly Father, who are being transformed into the image of Christ, and who are utterly dependent upon the Holy Spirit in all we do. And we can expect Him to work out our suffering for the good of others as well as for ourselves. He will use our witness in trials and persecution to lead others to Himself like He did with Paul and Silas in prison to bring the guard and his entire family to faith.

3. We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.
4. Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.
5. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering.

2 Thessalonians 1:3-5