

Answer: Let us return to the Scriptures...

Acts 5:16 -

“Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.”

In the Bible, the word “to be offended” or “to be vexed” (in Swahili, *kuudhiwa* or *kuudhi*) carries more than one meaning.

1. “To Be Offended” — A Feeling of Displeasure or Anger

The first meaning is the emotional sense of being displeased, angered, or provoked — a reaction of indignation toward wrongdoing or injustice.

A good example of this is found in the account of Saul’s persecution of the Church and his encounter with the risen Lord.

Acts 9:3-6 -

“As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.

He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?’

‘Who are you, Lord?’ Saul asked.

‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ He replied.

‘Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’”

Here we see that Saul’s violent acts against believers were a direct offense against the Lord Himself.

Christ identifies Himself with His Church — meaning, to harm His followers is to harm Him (cf. *Matthew 25:40*).

Similarly, the Jews were said to have “offended” or “persecuted” Jesus because He healed on the Sabbath — acts that exposed their hardness of heart.

John 5:14-17 -

“Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, ‘See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may

happen to you.'

The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.

So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute Him.

In His defense Jesus said to them, 'My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I too am working.'"

2. "To Be Tormented" — The Sense of Suffering or Affliction

However, not every occurrence of "to offend" or "to be vexed" in Scripture means emotional displeasure.

In some contexts, it means to be afflicted, tormented, or oppressed.

In Acts 5:16, the word "tormented" (translated from the Greek *ochleō*, meaning *to trouble, harass, or oppress*) refers to those suffering under the bondage of evil spirits.

"Crowds gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed."

Thus, in this passage, *to be vexed* means to be oppressed or tormented by demonic forces.

Christ's power, working through the apostles, liberated those oppressed by Satan, fulfilling what Jesus Himself had declared in Luke 4:18:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
because He has anointed Me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free."*

A similar expression is found in Revelation 12:13, where Satan, symbolized as the dragon, "persecutes" the woman (a symbol of God's people):

*"When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth,
he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male
child."*

Here again, *to persecute* or *to vex* signifies to inflict suffering and persecution.

3. The Blessedness of Being Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake

Finally, in Matthew 5:10–12, Jesus uses the same concept of *being persecuted or vexed* — but this time, as a mark of blessedness for His followers:

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you,
and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.
Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven,
for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were
before you.”*

Conclusion and Reflection

Ask yourself:

Are you being afflicted or persecuted for righteousness' sake, or for wrongdoing?

If your suffering is for Christ, then take heart — your reward is great in heaven (*1 Peter 4:13-14*).

But if your afflictions are the result of sin or disobedience, repent today, and receive Jesus Christ, who alone can deliver you from every torment and bring you into His peace.

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

— Matthew 11:28

May the Lord bless you richly.

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How Did Evil Spirits Torment People? (Acts 5:16)

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