

## Persecution

When you think of persecution what comes to mind?

*Matthew 5:10 "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."*

How does this passage change your way of thinking about persecution? Is it contrary to your views on persecution?

## Table Time

*Matthew 10:16 "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. 17 Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, 18 and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. 19 When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. 20 For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."*

Who is sending us out (v.16) and why is that important?

We are the sheep but who are the wolves? Aren't sheep defenseless against the wolves? (Hint: John 10:11-14)

What does it mean to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves?"

For whose sake will Jesus' followers be dragged before governors and kings (v.18)? What is the purpose of this?

What is Jesus' promise to his followers as they come before these officials (vs. 19-20)? Have you experienced that in your life?

*Matthew 10:21 "Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, 22 and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 23 When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. 24 "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household."*

Do you see this happening around the world today? In our nation?

What is Jesus' promise to those who endure (v. 22)? How do we endure?

*Matthew 10:26 "So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 27 What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. 28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. 32 So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, 33 but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."*

Will the truth ultimately prevail (vs. 26-27)?

Whom shall we fear, man or God (v. 28) and why?

Does that mean we should be scared of God and try to hide from him (see Genesis 3:8-10)?

What is comforting about verses 29-31? Does this help us to calm our fears?

What is the blessing and warning issued in verses 32-33? How should that affect the way we live?

### **Wrap up**

What lessons did you take away from this passage of Scripture?

Does it change the way you think about persecution?

What is comforting about this passage?

*John 16:33 "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*

### **Further Study (suggestion by Pastor Dave)**

The phrase "the one the endures to the end will be saved" occurs one more time in Matthew 24:13 and is a common phrase in the book of Revelation. Jesus shows us how to endure in Matthew 24-25. Read Matthew 24-25 and identify how Jesus teaches us what endurance looks like. Matthew 24:45-51: we endure by serving well. Matthew 25:1-12: we endure by simply being prepared to wait. Matthew 25:14-30: we endure by serving for the glory of God, not our own glory.