

Blessed in Persecution: Matthew 5:10-12

“God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right - For the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.”

Matthew 5:10-12 NLT *God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.*

PEOPLE CAN PREPARE FOR PERSECUTION BY REVIEWING THREE SCENES FROM HISTORY:**Scene 1 - Persecution of the Old Testament Prophets**

While Judges and Kings ruled, the Prophets spoke God's word to the Nation of Israel and her leaders. Often these prophecies were rebukes of their doublemindedness and their hard hearts. The Prophet's role was to confront the nation with God's message so they would repent and return to Him. Too often their messages were met with resistance, ridicule, and even persecution.

Amos - The main emphasis of his ministry was between 760 to 750 BC.

Amos 7:12-15 NLT - *Then Amaziah sent orders to Amos: “Get out of here, you prophet! Go on back to the land of Judah, and earn your living by prophesying there! Don't bother us with your prophecies here in Bethel. This is the king's sanctuary and the national place of worship!” But Amos replied, “I'm not a professional prophet, and I was never trained to be one. I'm just a shepherd, and I take care of sycamore-fig trees. But the LORD called me away from my flock and told me, ‘Go and prophesy to my people in Israel.’*

Jeremiah - His prophetic ministry preceded and endured the captivity of the Jews by Babylon (626-586 BC).

Jeremiah 20:7-9 NLT - *O LORD, you misled me, and I allowed myself to be misled. You are stronger than I am, and you overpowered me. Now I am mocked every day; everyone laughs at me. When I speak, the words burst out. “Violence and destruction!” I shout. So these messages from the LORD have made me a household joke. But if I say I'll never mention the LORD or speak in His name, His word burns in my heart like a fire. It's like a fire in my bones! I am worn out trying to hold it in! I can't do it!*

**Scene 2 - The Beatitudes, Jesus' Warning of Persecution**

- **Insult You** - Revile, Denounce, Unbraid

If you are insulted because you bear the name of Christ, you will be blessed, for the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you. **1 Peter 4:14 NLT**

- **Persecute You** - Aggressively Chase, Hunt Down, Pursue

He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?” **Acts 9:4 NLT**

- **Slander You** - Intentionally telling lies about you to damage your reputation and beliefs.

**Scene 3 - The Apostle Peter's Ministry To Early Christians Persecuted Under Emperor Nero¹**

And who will harm you if you are deeply committed to what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear or be disturbed, but honor the Messiah as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. However, do this with gentleness and respect, keeping your conscience clear, so that when you are accused, those who denounce your Christian life will be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

1 Peter 3:13-17 HCSB

In fact, all those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

1 Timothy 3:12 HCSB

John R.W. Stott:

“Since all the beatitudes describe what every Christian disciple is intended to be, we must conclude that the

¹ For Full Video - <https://youtu.be/GizkGSTxhmk?si=IMHeBfc8Kk09A7C->

condition of being despised and rejected, slandered and persecuted, is as much a normal mark of Christian discipleship as being pure in heart or merciful. Every Christian is to be a peacemaker, and every Christian is to expect opposition.”

Be Encouraged:

but our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of His glorious body, by the power that enables Him to subject everything to Himself.

Philippians 3:20-21 HCSB

Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him endured a cross and despised the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God’s throne. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, so that you won’t grow weary and lose heart.

Hebrews 12:1-3 HCSB

For Small Group Discussion:

Opening Question: Have you ever been bullied? Or been a bully? What did that look like?

Main Point: All believers can expect persecution in one form or another and Scripture tells us how to be prepared. By God’s grace and compassion, He promises to bless us when we do.

Main Scripture: **Matthew 5:10-12; 1 Peter 3:13-17**

- How would you define persecution today? What is it? What is it not?
- What does Peter instruct us not to do in the face of persecution?
- How are we instructed to be ready?
- In knowing that persecution will happen and by taking steps to be prepared, how does that change your heart toward this type of suffering?
- How do you tend to respond when your values come under attack?
- Who can you pray for this week, and possibly encourage, that is experiencing persecution?

Additional Scripture: **John 14:27; 2 Timothy 3:10-12; Romans 5:1-5; James 1:2-18**