

ZOOM STUDY: IMPORTANT BIBLICAL TERMS

PERSECUTION

1.) What is persecution?

John 15:20 “Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.”

Matthew 5:11-12 “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.”

Acts 14:21-22 [Paul and Barnabas] returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said.

Hebrews 10:32-34 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. ³³ Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. ³⁴ You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

2 Timothy 3:12 Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

2.) Why do believers invariably face persecution from those who are not Christians?

John 6:53,60-64,66 Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.” ⁶⁰ On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?” ⁶¹ Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶² What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! ⁶³ The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. ⁶⁴ Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” ⁶⁶ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

Amos 7:10-11 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: “Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. ¹¹ For this is what Amos is saying: “ ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.’ ”

1 John 3:12-13 Why did [Cain] murder [Abel]? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous. Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.

Acts 7:51-58 “You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! ⁵² Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— ⁵³ you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it.” ⁵⁴ When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

⁵⁶ “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” ⁵⁷ At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, ⁵⁸ dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.

3.) List some examples of persecution recorded in Scripture.

4.) Both Paul and Peter talk about persecution as participating in the sufferings of Christ. What does it mean to share in his sufferings? How does this help us reframe and endure persecution?

Colossians 1:24 Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.

1 Peter 4:12-13 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

Romans 8:17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Philippians 3:10-11 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

5.) Suppose you are in a threatening position where someone says, “Deny Christ or die.” What can give you the courage to confess Jesus?

Matthew 10:32-33 “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.”

Matthew 16:24-25 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.”

Revelation 2:10-11 “Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. ¹¹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.”

6.) Share some examples of when you were persecuted. How did you deal with that?

7.) How can persecution be a blessing and source of joy for a Christian? How can it be a blessing to the church?

Acts 5:41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

Philippians 1:27-28 I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.

Acts 4:23-24,31 On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. ²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. ³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

8.) What freedoms does our nation enjoy? How can these freedoms help us when we are persecuted?

Acts 25:10-11 Paul answered [Festus' suggestion that he stand trial again in Jerusalem]: "I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. ¹¹ If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

Acts 22:25,29 As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?" ...²⁹ Those who were about to question him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains.

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus, we are grateful that you faced persecution in order to win our salvation. Strengthen us by your grace and cause us to cling to the promises of your Word, so that when we face persecution, we may faithfully confess you and impress upon others the gospel's life-giving power. Amen.