

Persecution

Series on Prayer & Holiness

- Practical Holiness – Matthew 5-9
- Beatitudes – blessed are.....
 - * radical in teaching vs religion of the day
 - * transformational in living vs rules that are imposed
 - * powerful in impact vs petty opinions & arguments
 - * revolutionary in concept vs behave & be seen to ...
- transformation of the heart – from spiritually destitute to belonging to kingdom, mourning - comforted, seeking – finding, merciful, pure, meek – for those willing to be changed.....

Persecution

“Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

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.”

Persecution

1. Relevant or Irrelevant?

- audience understood persecution
- in our context:
 - Globally – huge issue
 - persecuted church information – many suffering
 - more dying today than in past
 - persecuted church statistics & stories available
- being actively in danger for your faith and speaking of Jesus is still globally relevant for today

Persecution

- locally – what about you?

- why is this relevant for your life, key information?

- a) sin nature vs. new life in Christ

 - two completely opposed positions - conflict

 - 2 Tim. 3:12 –” *You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. **In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.**”*

Persecution

- Acts 14:22 –” *Then they 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.*”

- John 15:19-20 - *"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' **If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also**"*

- huge sweeping statement – all will be persecuted?

Persecution

- conviction of Paul is that the tension between the way of life and message of Christ ones, and the mindset and way of life for our world will result in conflict!

- because it is rooted in the nature of the fallen man and new creation in Christ – does not go out of date!

- When you live out your Life in Christ:

- putting God first in time & finance

- loving enemies, seeking peace, meek

- giving comfort, standing against injustice

* you will find persecution and opposition *

Persecution

2. Persecution & Two Causes

- want to be clear – we can cause many problems we do not need to have!
 - some choices and actions are about us, pride and folly can make us a target.
 - look at teaching surrounding this – when we understand righteous, peacemaking, meekness etc, we are in a position to make decisions about taking a stand!
- Jesus gives two reasons that will bring persecution

Persecution

a) righteousness sake

- sermon on Hunger & Thirst we explored this
- involves authentic heart pursuit, and actions that evidence that change
- Righteousness speaks of deep convictions that are actions. Continuity of what I believe and is in my heart being seen in what I do and say. Authentic and unmistakable!
- why would this be offensive – persecuted by others?

Persecution

- Luke 16:13-15 - *"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight."*

- Look at how the root has two shafts

1. Love of Something Evil - has taken the place God alone demands in their lives.
2. Justification of My Actions – rationalize and justify behavior and attitudes to suit what you want (love)

Persecution

b) because of Me

- *'insult, persecute, falsely say all kinds of evil'*
- made fun of, insulted, bullied, excluded, isolated, mocked, left out, gossiped about, treated unfairly, etc.
- When your commitment to Christ means:
 - chastity over giving oneself away
 - integrity over taking what is not yours
 - self control over excess and indulgence
 - humility over pride and self defense
 - spiritual mindedness exposing folly & sin

Persecution

- remember there are often two responses to this:

- John 3:20-21 *“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”*

- righteous living, showing Jesus in your choices, attitudes and actions will provoke a response from others. They will react in one of those two ways.

Persecution

3. Reward & Perspective

- blessed are you when.... Great is your reward.....
- rejoice and be glad.....
- Crazy talk? Is this Possible? How on Earth.....?
 - either phony – praise God anyhow
 - or honest and real – can see through the immediate

a) Key Information

- this is temporary – heaven is permanent – focus...
- reward makes this pale in comparison 2 Cor. 4:17ff
- suffering & persecution have huge compensation

Persecution

b) Examples for You to Examine & Draw From

- Consider the Prophets of Old
- Hebrew 11 – Hall of Faith
 - suffered mocking, scourging, killed
 - considered not worthy by their world
 - celebrated as hero's by scripture
- those who have suffered persecution
 - books, stories, accounts, etc

Persecution

So What

1. Relevant For Today

- Sin nature vs. New Life – not a dated battle
- You will need – deep relationship & good perspective

2. Correct Causes for Persecution

- righteousness, because of Jesus

3. Big Picture

- enabled by God, reward is significant, perspective is offered