

Overcoming During Persecution

Mathew 5:11-12 **11 “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in this same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

The more we _____ with Jesus, the more we are persecuted. As Christians live our lives surrounded by those with opposition toward us, but at the same time knowing that if we _____ strong, there are a few who will come to Christ through our true witness. And so, today, we’re going to talk about how to _____ our witness true during persecution.

Insult- This word means to reproach, revile, defame, chide or taunt.

Persecution- This may be _____ types of persecution, such as Paul and the other Apostles endured. Like them, we may be arrested or imprisoned. It is only _____ of God that stops people from giving full-reign to their persecutions, and as fear of God decreases, they will persecute more. As we are less and less a Christian nation, we will find that these laws against persecuting Christians will be either _____, or _____.

saying all kinds of evil against us falsely-They’ll lie or tell half-truths, or insinuate things that they know aren’t true to _____ up trouble.

The Natural Reaction

Remembering that these injuries are to be expected in the Christian life, and that no strange or unusual thing has happened to us helps us _____ it.

The natural reaction is to get _____ and retaliate. But, Jesus didn’t do so. Isaiah 53:7 tells us **He was oppressed and afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth,** and we must not either.

The Bible teaches us not to reply in kind to the evil of others. 1 Peter 3:9 **not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you would inherit a blessing.**

The second thing that we are going to be tempted to do, is to feel _____ toward those who are persecuting us. This is only natural, but it is not _____. And this is _____ to live out in practice.

The last thing that we’re going to be tempted to do is to be down-cast and feel _____ for ourselves. A sense of depression or oppression can _____ us if we are not careful. The temptation during this time is going to be to accuse God of being _____.

This is a dangerous place for the Christian to be. Psalm 73:21 **21 When my heart was embittered And I was pierced within, 22 Then I was stupid and ignorant;**

But this kind of thinking is far from _____ – it is deadly. It represents the edge of the pit of _____.

For Christ’s Sake

Persecutions are not the real danger, but the _____ comes from our un-Christian reactions to them. Remember _____ the persecution is coming upon us in the first place: “For Christ’s Sake”. It serves a purpose. If our first consideration is “what would be well-pleasing in His sight”, then our suffering can continue to be “For Christ’s sake”. If your suffering is for Christ, then He will give you the _____ to endure it. Philippians 1:27 **27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, ...standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28 and in no way alarmed by your opponents which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and this too, from God. 29 For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer on His behalf,**

Our reaction to persecution

1. Rejoice

The word used here is chairō (he-arroh). It means to rejoice and be glad—in a state of happiness or well-being. But this word also means an _____ that one chooses. Jesus isn't saying that we should rejoice because of the persecution itself: but because of the opportunity it brings to make a choice. To rejoice and we learn to trust God more.

2. Be glad

The word translated be glad here is agalliao (agalyaow), which means to exult, to feel elation or jubilation, especially as a result of success. We should smell _____ when God allows a persecution to come upon us. What can they do to you, _____ you and send you to heaven? There is no-one strong enough, and nothing that anyone can do will remove you from the care, loving-kindness and provision of God. **35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or trouble, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 Just as it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We were regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.** There is just no way we can lose, even if we are killed, as long as we do not lose heart. As long as we stand, we win. So, _____.

3. Pray for our enemies

Jesus teaches us another way to cope with persecution a little later on in the Sermon on the Mount, saying in Mathew **5:44 44 But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.** And in Luke 6:28 **bless those who curse you, pray for those who are abusive to you.** Learn to pray for them instead of letting your anger rise up in resentment and bitterness. Pray for them, and you will sooner or later find any anger or resentment you have toward them _____ away. Not the easiest thing to do, but the _____ are great, both in this life and in eternity.

4. Be kind to them.

Our temptation is always going to be to fight fire with fire, to repay them evil for evil, to take vengeance, to feel bitter toward them, and even to feel downcast because of them, but as a Christian, we must follow The Way, which as Paul described it in Romans 12:20 **20 "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."** We serve the Lord best in obedience and _____ in Him. And service to God never goes unrewarded.

for your reward in heaven is great

Jesus counsels us to look _____ to our reward in heaven. Our primary motivation should always be _____ for Jesus, since He first loved us, and died for us, so that we can be saved. But, when I find myself tempted by resentment or depression, I find that the thought of eternal glory in a place where every tear has been wiped away by God is very _____. As Christians, we are to think about _____.

In 1 Peter 4:14 we are assured **If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory, and of God, rests upon you.** And so, if we are reviled, if people rail against us, scorn and malign us because we are Christians, we can look at it as a blessing for a very specific reason: God has given us an opportunity to _____ His name on Earth, and has given us spiritual strength to endure. Jesus said in Mathew 10:42 **42 And whoever gives one of these little ones just a cup of cold water to drink in the name of a disciple, truly I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."** And times of persecution and suffering for Christ are the times when we can really let our _____ for Jesus show. We can join Paul in saying in verse 18 **For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**

Get God's eternal perspective on the matter, stand firm, and don't despair, because getting to be with God in Heaven for one instant will make it all worth it, and you get to have this for eternity, if you are in Christ. Or as Paul put it in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 **17 For our momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.**

So they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

We look to the prophets and saints who have gone before us for _____ of how to endure.
And we see that their example is one that kept their _____ on Jesus, and looked forward to the
reward of being with Him. That is the secret to _____ persecution in the Christian life.