

Sunday Word

NOVEMBER 12, 2017

NEWSLETTER

PERSECUTION

What is Persecution? Persecution is inherent in a Christian's life, whether you are a new or long time Christian already, you should have some degree of persecution from the people around you. For the new Christians, you should expect this to happen in your life. persecute in Greek is Dioko means to pursue, follow after or to drive away. In another definition, to persecute is to pursue in a manner to injure, grieve, afflict, harass, punish or even put to death for one's race, belief or sexual identity.

Persecution can take on many forms. The injury can be to the Christian's feelings, or to his family, reputation, property, liberty or influence. It may deprive him of an office or position he held or prevent him from obtaining one for which he is qualified. He could be subjected to a fine, imprisonment, insults, slander, mocking, banishment or even death, just because he believes in Christ .

Matt 5:10-12

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (NIV)

1Peter 3:17

17 For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (NIV)

Human nature dislikes and is suspicious of anyone who is different. True Christianity brings on its own form of unpopularity. Otherwise if want popularity, then we could have just joined with the majority. It has never been easy, because regardless of where we live, Christians are different. A Christian presents the standard of Jesus Christ to the world. Worldly witnesses to this do not understand exactly why but it at least irritates them, pricks their conscience and separates them from the Christian. In some, it leads to open anger, even rage. For instance, while calling it a virtue, worldly people think goodness is a handicap because they fear it will keep them from achieving their goals. Before long their conscience disturbs them and they react by persecuting the good person.

The question then is how do we respond to persecution? Or how do we deal with Persecution? We could either simply or quickly descent into self-pity or angry resentment when we are mistreated, or we could simply compromise, or we could just shrink and become chicken -hearted to avoid persecution?

(1 Peter 2:21-23)

21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."5

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. (NIV)

A wise response to persecution flows from an accurate understanding of God's ways. Others put a period right after the word persecuted. And that's dangerous because it can lead them to conclude that every time they get insults, persecutions, slander, or they experience suffering **not** for Christ sake, they are blessed.

Rejection as a form of persecution is mark for blessing only when it is for the sake of righteousness. If we fail to read carefully this beatitude, there's a danger that we will misapply it. Without this clarification, we might be tempted to think that it is a blessing anytime someone insults us. Sometimes the nasty things people say about us are not a blessing at all. They are just the truth. And the Truth sometimes hurts. What's more? Not all that we call persecution really is persecution.

1 Peter 3:17 points us to an important distinction when it comes to suffering. Not everything we suffer is necessarily suffering appointed to us because we are Christians. Some of the things we suffer are simply the natural consequences of being unwise. We made poor choices or decisions in the past and we suffer today.

Now how do we respond to Persecution for Christ Sake?

1. Be prepared for it.

In John 15:20" Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. (NIV). So better be ready.

Since persecution is a sure thing among Christians, as sure as the sun rises in the east, it's always best to expect it and be prepared for it. We can count on persecution. In fact, persecution serves as a sign of the authenticity of our relationship to Jesus Christ. If you haven't encountered persecution, you're not yet a full blown Christian.

2. Be patient to endure

To those who are already suffering persecution, don't be discouraged. Be a seed that fell on good soil. This is he who hears the word and understands it. He is rooted enough so that storms or persecution may come but he stays steadfast.

3. Pray for those who persecute you (Entrust everything to the Lord)

Entrust everything to the Lord. Remember Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. (NIV)

4. Rejoice for the Reward.

Jesus himself promised us to rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven. So we all should face these trials with a sense of expectation. What's more, Jesus describes this as a blessing, not a wage. When there is a wage, the return is just commensurate with the suffering. What we receive as a wage is assumed to be equal to the effort we have expended. But Jesus doesn't speak in terms of equivalence. He uses the language of grace. Those who are persecuted are not paid for their troubles, they are blessed.

Satan will not stop using people to distract you and to lose your focus but just continue praying for those who persecute you & entrust everything to the Lord.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.) Share a time in your Christian life when you are persecuted because of your faith?**
- 2.) What made you stay strong and stand up for your faith in Jesus?**
- 3.) What lessons have you learned from today's message?**

Pray for each other in your group.