



HOW TO PREPARE FOR PERSECUTION

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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How to Prepare for Persecution

SERMON REFERENCE: Matthew 5:10-14

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #1998

According to Scripture, becoming a genuine Christian means facing some kind of persecution. The only way to escape it is to compromise—to conform to this world. Instead, we can prepare for persecution and decide now that no matter what happens, nothing will take our joy from us.

Matthew 5:10 reveals, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Adrian Rogers says, “Joy is a thermostat; it is internal and doesn’t depend on circumstances. Persecution is the thermometer that shows how you are living for the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The first reason we are persecuted is because of the lifestyle we show.

Christians are persecuted “for righteousness’ sake” because we are different. In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus called us the salt and light of this world. Salt irritates the wounds of this world, and light exposes its darkness. In context, Jesus was saying we are to be irritants and exposers of sin.

But we must not confuse punishment for persecution. Adrian Rogers says, “We are punished by good people when we do evil. We are persecuted by evil people when we do good.”

The second reason we are persecuted is because of the lies we suffer.

Jesus was crucified because of false witnesses; likewise, Christians are and will continue to be blamed for things they have not done.

But the main reason for our persecution is because of the Lord we serve.

Jesus says, “for my sake” (Matthew 5:11). The world hates Jesus Christ because He stands against the very things the world stands for: liquor, abortion, pornography, pride, racism, hatred, and selfishness.

As followers of Christ, we can expect to endure personal insult and physical intimidation. But we can enlist our persecution for the glory of God. Because we are children of the King, we reign in life, and we can return good for evil. We must also rejoice in the Lord; we have been identified as a follower of Christ and associated with the Lord... what an honor!

Finally, we should respond in love. We can be great witnesses if we respond to the hate of this world with the love it desperately needs.

Life Application

Knowing the reasons for persecution and the results of it, what is your response? Are you willing to follow Jesus in a world that hates Him? When you are persecuted, rejoice in the Lord and respond in love.



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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) One of the signs of the last days is the persecution of the church.
- b) There is no way that a person can be a genuine Christian and be exempt from persecution.
 - i) 2 Timothy 3:12
 - ii) The Bible-believing Christian may be the most hated and persecuted person on this Earth.
 - iii) Bible Christians endure everything from the limitations of their freedoms and their civil rights, scorn and ridicule in the media, prison, and death.
- c) Matthew 5:10-14
- d) There is a way to escape persecution:
 - i) Just fail to be salt and light.
 - ii) If we compromise and conform to the world, then we will not be persecuted.
- e) In the Christian life, joy is the thermostat.
 - i) We can decide that we are going to live with joy because joy is internal.
 - (1) It does not depend upon circumstances.
- f) If joy is the thermostat, then persecution is the thermometer.
 - i) Persecution shows how we are living for the Lord Jesus Christ.
- g) In today's message, we will look at three main things concerning persecution that will help us and our children prepare to live in these last days as we get closer to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2) WE SHOULD EXPECT PERSECUTION

- a) We are persecuted because of the lifestyle we show.
 - i) We are different.
 - ii) Matthew 5:10
 - (1) We are persecuted for righteousness' sake.
 - (2) The word "righteousness" comes from a Greek word which means "to divide," "to be different."
 - iii) We live in a world that breeds on conformity and inclusivity.
 - iv) The world does not like people being different, but we are different.
 - (1) We are children of light; they are children of darkness.
 - (2) We are alive in the Spirit; they are dead in the Spirit.
 - (3) We live by faith; they live by sight.
 - (4) We understand them, but they do not understand us.
 - (5) We are salt, and salt flavors.
 - (a) If salt is rubbed in a wound, then it irritates and stings.
 - (6) We are light, and the Bible says that men hate the light because their deeds are evil.
 - (a) John 3:19



- (7) We are twice-born people in a world of once-born people.
- (8) What we have starts at a different source, it follows a different course, and it arrives at a different conclusion.
- (9) If we are righteous, then the world will try to dumb us down.
 - (a) They will try to reach out and claim us.
- v) There is a difference between persecution and punishment.
 - (1) Some of us are getting what we deserve.
 - (a) It is just simply punishment.
 - (2) Punishment comes from good people when we do bad.
 - (3) Persecution comes from bad people when we do good.
- vi) Jesus said that we are to be persecuted for righteousness' sake and for His name's sake.
 - (1) Matthew 5:10
- vii) 1 Peter 4:14-15
 - (1) The reason some people are being persecuted is because they have simply earned it.
 - (a) They are full of ego, a messiah complex, arrogance, laziness, etc.
 - (b) Some of us try to witness like a prosecuting attorney.
 - (i) Jesus did not say that we will be His lawyers.
 - (ii) Jesus said that we will be His witnesses.
 - 1. Acts 1:8
- viii) If we are being persecuted, then it must be two things:
 - (1) It has to be false.
 - (2) It has to be for His name's sake.
- ix) The word "persecute" literally means "to pursue."
 - (1) It doesn't necessarily mean that they will put us in jail or pour boiling oil on us.
 - (2) They are going to pursue us.
 - (3) The idea is of pursuit to find something that we have done wrong.
 - (a) Luke 6:1-5
 - (i) The Pharisees were following and watching the Lord Jesus, trying to find something that they could blame on Him.
- b) We will be persecuted because of the lies that we will suffer.
 - i) Matthew 5:11
 - ii) Lies will be told about us.
 - iii) The Lord Jesus was crucified because of false witnesses.
 - iv) The first persecution of the Christians in Rome started when Nero lied and blamed the burning of Rome on the Christians.
 - v) We should not believe everything we hear about any Christian.
- c) We will be persecuted because of the Lord that we serve.
 - i) This is the main reason why we will suffer persecution.
 - ii) The devil did not primarily engineer persecution against us.
 - (1) He is just trying to get at Jesus by getting at us because we are Jesus' representatives.
 - iii) Matthew 5:11
 - iv) If we love Jesus, then we are going to be persecuted.



- v) The name of Jesus is always a point of offense.
- vi) The world hates Jesus.
 - (1) The world does not hate the baby Jesus in the manger.
 - (2) The world does not hate the Jesus who fed the multitudes, who opened the eyes of the blind, or who healed the sick.
 - (3) The world hates Jesus for why He came.
 - (a) He came to destroy the works of the devil.
 - (b) Jesus and His Kingdom are against liquor, abortion, pornography, pride, racism, hatred, and selfishness.
- d) John 15:19-21
- e) One of the gifts of a Christian is the ability to suffer for Jesus.
 - i) Philippians 1:29
 - ii) If we love Jesus, then we should not complain when persecution comes because of Him.
 - iii) We should expect persecution.

3) WE MUST ENDURE PERSECUTION

- a) There is really no way that we are going to get around it.
- b) How will persecution come?
 - i) It may be by personal insult.
 - (1) Matthew 5:11
 - (a) They will love to revile us.
 - (2) We may be made the butt of jokes.
 - (3) We are going to be ridiculed.
 - ii) There will be physical intimidation.
 - (1) Matthew 5:11
 - (2) The word “persecute” means “to follow,” but sometimes it means “to follow in order to imprison.”
 - (a) People have been in prison for standing up for the unborn.
 - (3) There are Christians who have been martyred or killed for Jesus.
 - (a) Don’t get the idea that the martyrs only lived in yesteryear.
 - (4) In different parts of the world, Christians have faced prison, torture, and even death.
 - iii) There will be social injustice.
 - (1) Matthew 5:11
 - (2) Mark 13:9-13
 - (a) In this passage, Jesus is speaking to us today, as well as to those who heard Him say this for the first time.
 - iv) Persecution will come from the religious world.
 - (1) Mark 13:9
 - (2) Don’t get the idea that the religious world honors the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible.
 - v) Persecution will come from the governmental world.
 - (1) Mark 13:9
 - (2) The governmental system is against what we believe.
 - vi) Persecution will come from the home.



- (1) Mark 13:12
- (2) The devil has leveled all of the artillery of Hell against the home.
- c) 1 Peter 4:12
 - i) We will have persecution if we live for the Lord Jesus.

4) WE CAN ENLIST PERSECUTION

- a) We can use persecution for the glory of God.
- b) Matthew 5:12
- c) How do we enlist persecution and take what the devil meant for evil and turn it into good?
 - i) Reign in life.
 - (1) Matthew 5:10
 - (a) If we are saved, then we are in the Kingdom.
 - (2) There are three levels of life:
 - (a) The hellish level.
 - (i) This is when good people are persecuted by bad people for doing good.
 - 1. This is returning evil for good.
 - (b) The human level.
 - (i) This is returning good for good and returning evil for evil.
 - (c) The heavenly level.
 - (i) Those who are children of the King return good for evil.
 - (3) Matthew 5:43-45
 - (a) Verse 43 speaks of the human level of life.
 - (b) When people persecute us, don't get even with them.
 - (i) We are reigning with the Lord.
 - (ii) We are in the Kingdom.
 - (iii) Those who persecute us are either on the human level or the hellish level.
 - 1. May we not stoop down to their level.
 - ii) Rejoice in the Lord.
 - (1) Matthew 5:12
 - (2) Why do we rejoice in the Lord?
 - (a) We have to earn persecution.
 - (b) We are not going to be persecuted if we do not live for Jesus.
 - (c) If we are being persecuted, we can thank God that others can see Jesus in us.
 - (3) Acts 5:41
 - (a) The apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.
 - iii) Release love.
 - (1) We are to keep loving.
 - (a) This is not sympathy; this is love.
 - (2) If we do this, then we will be like the prophets.
 - (a) Matthew 5:12
 - (3) The word "martyr" and the word "witness" are the same word in the Greek language.
 - (4) When Stephen was being stoned, love came out of his mouth.



- (a) Acts 7:54-60
- (b) He began to pray for those who were persecuting and stoning him.
- (c) His face shown like an angel, and He saw Jesus standing in Heaven.
- (d) Stephen was not ashamed of the Lord Jesus.
- (e) There was a man watching all of this, and his name was Saul.
 - (i) Saul was holding the clothes for those who were stoning Stephen.
 - (ii) Saul hated Christians, but he never got that sight of Stephen out of his mind.
 - (iii) On the road to Damascus, Jesus appeared to Saul.
 - 1. Acts 9:5
 - 2. There was something “goading” Saul.
 - a. It was “a face like an angel.”
 - i. Acts 6:15
 - b. It was a man who showed supernatural love.

5) CONCLUSION

- a) We are going to be persecuted.
 - i) If you are saved, then not only should you expect it and endure it, but you should also enlist it for Jesus.
- b) Stand up for Jesus as soldiers of the cross.
- c) May you never be ashamed of the one who died for you.
 - i) Have you met this one who died for your sins?
- d) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- e) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16



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Would you be finding please Matthew chapter 5 in your Bible? We're going to be talking about one of the signs of the last days and that is the persecution of the church. Did you know that's one of the signs that we're living in the last days? And I want to speak to you today about how to prepare for persecution, for as surely as I am standing here, the church will know more and more and more persecution. And there is no way, no way that you can be a genuine Christian and be exempt. For example, the Bible says in Second Timothy 3:12, "Yea, and all that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." That's a pretty clear statement, all and shall. No ifs, ands, and buts about it. The new whipping boy in the world today is the Bible-believing Christian. He may be the most hated and persecuted person on this Earth. Bible Christians today endure everything from the limitations of their freedoms, their civil rights, scorn and ridicule in the media, and many are going through prison, and many through death.

Now what does the Bible have to say about that? Well, look if you will please in Matthew chapter 5 and hear the words of Jesus, verse 10 through 14, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." I'm glad that's there, aren't you? Jesus said, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in Heaven. For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Ye are the salt of the Earth, but if the salt have lost its savor wherewith shall it be salted? It's thenceforth good for nothing." And may I suggest that we have too many good for nothing Christians. "It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." Now there is a way that you can escape persecution, just fail to be salt and light. Just compromise. Rub shoulders with this old world. Be conformed to this world. You won't get any persecution.

When I was going to college, I had a job as a construction worker, a carpenter's helper. And they asked me, those carpenters on that job, said, "What are you going to do, son?" I said, "God's called me to preach." I began to get it in the neck from that time on, all the preacher jokes and all of the dirty language and so forth. And then one man called me aside, he looked at me very seriously. He said, "Young man, if you're going to be a preacher," said, "let me tell you how to be a good one." He said, "I know a preacher. Everybody loves him." He said, "He never talks about politics or religion." And so, he said, "If you'll just be a preacher, never talk about politics and religion, you can be loved." Just rub shoulders with this old world and everybody perhaps will love you. Let me tell you something, in the Christian life, joy is the thermostat. You can set the thermostat and decide that you're going to live with joy because joy is internal and it doesn't depend upon circumstances. But if joy is the thermostat, persecution is the thermometer. It shows how you are living for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there're three things I want to lay on your heart today, and they come out of this passage. And I pray God as you prepare to live in these last days, and by the way, these are things you better write indelibly upon the hearts and minds of your children. Now, you may make it; they may not, unless you write this upon their hearts. Three things about persecution as we get closer to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Number one, **we should expect persecution**. Now why are we persecuted? Why will Bible-believing Christians be persecuted and why have they been persecuted for two thousand years? Three reasons; number one, **the lifestyle we show**; we are different. Look if you will in Matthew 5 verse 10, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for,” what? “for righteousness’ sake.” That’s why you’re persecuted, for righteousness’ sake. Do you know what the word righteousness means? It comes from a Greek word which means to divide, to be different. We live in a world that breeds on conformity; inclusivity. The world does not like people being different. But listen, friend, we are different. We’re children of light. They’re children of darkness. We are alive in the Spirit. They are dead in the spirit. We live by faith. They live by sight. Therefore we understand them, but they don’t understand us. And we’re different and they hate differences. We’re salt. We know that salt flavors, but I want to tell you something else. You rub salt in a wound, it irritates, it stings. And we’re light. And when people are in a dark room and you turn on the light, they say, “Hey, turn off that light!” John 3:19, “Men hate the light because their deeds are evil.”

Now when we live a different lifestyle, and by the way, we’re twice-born people in a world of once-born people. What we have starts at a different source, it follows a different course, it arrives at a different conclusion. I used to think that there were two ways, here’s the broad way and here’s the narrow way. And some people are on the broad way and over here we’re on the narrow way looking over at them, and they’re over here in the broad way, looking at us. That’s not the way it is folks. Here’s the broad way going this way. Here’s the narrow way going this way. Right against the tide. It starts at a different source. It follows a different course. It ends at a different conclusion. We’re twice-born people in a world of once-born people. We are different! And the world does not like the difference. If we’re righteous, they will try to dumb us down. They’ll try to reach out and claim us.

Now when I’m talking about persecution, you must understand there’s a difference between persecution and punishment. Some of us are getting what we deserve. It’s just simply punishment. What is punishment? Punishment comes from good people when we do bad. Persecution comes from bad people when we do good. Now some of us, we’re getting what we deserve. You know, Jesus said, “We’re to be persecuted,” what? “for righteousness’ sake and for His name’s sake.” Just put in your margin what Simon Peter had to say about that in First Peter chapter 4 verses 14 and 15. Now listen, listen to what Peter said, “But if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and God resteth upon you; on their part He,” that is, Christ, “is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified.” But now listen to the caveat that He put here, “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters.” The reason some of us are being persecuted is we have simply earned it. We’re full of ego, a messiah complex, arrogance, laziness, bad manners and sometimes bad breath. And we’ve got it coming to us. No, I’m not talking about punishment. I’m talking about persecution. Some of us try to witness like a prosecuting attorney. Jesus didn’t say, “You’ll be My lawyers.” He said in Acts 1 verse 8, “You’ll be My witnesses.” If we’re being persecuted, number one, it’s got to be false, and number two, it’s got to be for His name’s sake. Do you know what the word persecute literally means? It means to pursue. It doesn’t necessarily mean they’re going to put you in irons. It doesn’t necessarily mean they’re going to pour boiling oil on you. They’re going to be pursuing you. And the idea of is pursuit to find something that you’re doing wrong. Do you remember one day, in the Gospel of Luke chapter 6 verses 1 through 5, that Jesus was going through the wheat fields, and His disciples were hungry and they got some wheat and rubbed it in their hands and began to eat that wheat? The Pharisees said, “Look! It’s the Sabbath day! He’s threshing wheat on the Sabbath.” Jesus reminded them that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. But here’s the interesting thing. What were a bunch of Pharisees doing out in the wheat fields anyway? You think about it. You see them down there. Like, “Hee Haw,” you know, rising up out of



the cornfield. Following Him! Watching Him! Trying to find something that they could blame Him with! One of the reasons we'll be persecuted is the lifestyle we show.

Another reason that we will be persecuted, friend, is not only the lifestyle that we show, but **the lies that we'll suffer**. Look if you will again, He says in Matthew 5 verse 11, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My name's sake." I'm going to surprise you, it may shock you, but did you know they'll tell lies about you? They will tell lies about you. How did Jesus manage to get crucified? False witnesses. Isn't that right? False witnesses. What started the first persecution on Christians in Rome? It was Nero, who told a big one. Nero burned Rome, according to history. He needed a scapegoat. He was in a vast remodeling project and he wanted to get rid of the slums, so he said, "Here's a good way to do it, a match." Well, not a match. They didn't have matches. However, they got the fire started. And they burned Rome. It backfired on him, no pun intended. It backfired on him, and he's trying now to put the blame. He said, "Blame those Christians. They're the ones talking about setting the world on fire. Blame those Christians." Now you might as well get ready, folks. They're going to lie about you. They'll lie about anybody. They'll lie about me. Don't believe everything you hear about any Christian, okay? "They will say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My name's sake." The lifestyle we show, that's one reason. We're different. The lies that we suffer.

Here's the third reason, and here's the main reason; **the Lord that we serve**. The devil didn't primarily engineer it against you; he's just trying to get at Jesus by getting at you, because you're His representative. Notice what He says here. Look at it again. He says in Matthew 5 verse 11, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely," watch it now, "for My sake." The Lord that you love! If you love Jesus, you're going to be persecuted. The name of Jesus is always a point of offense. Now it may surprise you also to know that this world hates Jesus. Oh, you say, "Not the world. The world doesn't hate Jesus." Well, the world does hate Jesus. Now wait a minute. I have to qualify this and tell you which Jesus the world hates. The world does not hate the baby Jesus in the manger. All the world loves Christmas, most all the world. I mean, here's a little baby in a manger, dimpled feet on straw. And here's a mother nursing a baby. Why, the merchants love that. Hey folks, let me tell you something, Christmas is a big business. The world doesn't hate the baby Jesus. I'll tell you something else. The world does not hate the Jesus that fed the multitudes and opened blind eyes and healed the sick. That's not why the world hates Jesus. Do you want to know why the world hates Jesus? Well let me tell you why the world hates Jesus. The world hates Jesus for why He came, and that was to destroy the works of the devil; to destroy the works of the devil. Jesus and His kingdom is against liquor, against abortion, against pornography, against pride, against racism, against hatred, against selfishness; the works of the devil. That's why they hate Him.

Here's what Jesus said in John chapter 15, beginning in verse 19 through verse 21, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, 'The servant is not greater than his lord.' If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you," listen, "for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me." Why are we persecuted? The lifestyle we show, the lies we suffer, but primarily the Lord we serve; "For My name's sake." Did you know that one of your gifts is the ability to suffer for Jesus? Philippians 1 verse 29, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." Do you love Jesus? Then don't complain when the persecution comes. Because of Him; for His dear name's sake. So here's the first point. Here's what I'm trying to lay on your heart. We should expect persecution.



Here's the second point. Not only should we expect persecution; **we must endure persecution**. There's no way really that we're going to get around it. Now let me tell you how it's going to come as you endure it. First of all, it may be **personal insult**. Look again if you will in Matthew 5 verse 11, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you." They love to revile you. You're going to be made the butt of jokes. You're going to be ridiculed. And now you know it's actually reviling Christians is big business. There will be this reviling.

There will be this personal insult, but there'll be something else. Not only will there be person insult, there will be **physical intimidation**. Notice again as to what He says in Matthew 5 verse 11, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you." Now I said persecute means to follow, but it means sometimes to follow in order to imprison. There're people in prison right this moment because they've stood up for the unborn. I mean, they are in jail right now. Don't get the idea that the martyrs lived in yesterday. We're going to find physical intimidation. In China, if Christians will not line up behind a state-run church, they face prison, torture, maybe death.

I'll tell you what else we're going to face; **social injustice**. He says, "They're going to say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake." Jesus elaborated on this in Mark chapter 13 verse 9 through 13. Now Jesus is speaking to us as well as these who heard Him say this the first time, "But take heed to yourselves; for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten; and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them. And the Gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak, for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye," believers, "shall be hated of all men for My name's sake. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." What I'm talking about is, not only should we expect persecution, we must endure persecution.

It's going to come from the religious world. He says in the verse, in verse 9, "They'll deliver you up to councils and synagogues." Don't get the idea that the religious world really honors the Lord Jesus, not the Christ of the Bible. It's going to come from the governmental world. In verse 9, "You're going to be brought before rulers and kings for My sake." Did you know the government is loaded against what you and I believe? I mean, the system. The ACLU said in California, "It is our position that teaching that monogamous, heterosexual intercourse within marriage is a traditional American value." That is, if you teach that one man should be married to one woman and that men should cohabit with women and vice versa, that, they said, "Is an unconstitutional establishment of religious doctrine in public schools." When you tell boys and girls that God wants you to get married before you have sex and that God wants sex between male and female rather than between male and male, and female and female. They say, "Hey, that's a religious value; therefore, that is unconstitutional." It may come, friend, from religious circles; it may come from governmental circles.

A lot of it will come from home. Look in Mark 13 verse 12, "The brother shall betray the brother to death, the father the son; and children rise up against their parents." Know what the devil is doing now? He has leveled all of the artillery of Hell against the home. But some of you sit there with a broken heart because you have a husband, a wife, father, mother, son or daughter who persecute you for the very fact that you come to church on Sunday morning. It's a fight just for you to get out of the house. And when you come back home, you'll get some smart remark about that church down there and what you believe. Folks, it's a part of being saved. It is a part of being a Christian. And don't think it's strange. You'll say, "Oh man, something has gotten wrong!" Nothing has gotten wrong. Peter said concerning the fiery trial, he said in



First Peter 4:12, “Don’t think that some strange thing has happened to you, as though some strange thing has happened to you.” It comes with the territory. So the first thing, there is the persecution. Listen; there is the persecution we should expect. There is the persecution we must endure. You’re not going to get out of it, not if you live for Jesus.

Now here’s the third thing; there is **the persecution we can enlist**. You know, we can use it. We can use it for the glory of God. Notice if you will as to what our Lord says here. He says in Matthew 5 verse 12, “Rejoice, be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in Heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” How do you enlist persecution? How do you take what the devil meant for evil and turn it into good? Well, number one; just continue **to reign in life**; reign, R-E-I-G-N, not R-A-I-N; to reign in life. Notice what He says. Look at it. Go back to Matthew 5 and verse 10. He says, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the,” what? “the kingdom.” The kingdom. We’re in the kingdom. There are three levels of life. There is the hellish level. There is the human level. There is the heavenly level. What is the hellish level? That’s when good people are persecuted by bad people for doing good. That is returning evil for good. That’s the hellish level. There’s a lot of hellishness around. Then there’s the human level. Do you know what the human level is? Good for good and evil for evil. That’s the human level. What is the heavenly level? The heavenly level is those who are children of the king and that is, we return what? Good for evil. Now look, you’re in Matthew chapter 5; just fast-forward over there to verses 43 through 45. Look at it. Oh, this is tough, but we got to believe it, because it’s in the Word. Jesus said, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.’” That’s the human level. “But I say unto you, ‘Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. That you may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven. For He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.’” People persecute you, don’t get even. Don’t get even. Why? Where are you? You’re in the heavenly level reigning with the Lord. You’re in the kingdom. Where are they? They’re either on the human level or the hellish level. Now watch it. You say, “I’m going to get even.” Here you are, here they are. So you get even; you come down even to their level. You see what you did? You get even, you get even. No! Don’t get even! Reign! Rule! You’re in the kingdom!

I read a book one time by a man called, *Some Dogs I Have Known*. He was an old Methodist preacher. He had a lot of wisdom. He said one day he was in a town, he saw one of these massive bulldogs going, you know the guy’s got big shoulders and little tiny hind legs, you know, going down the road like this, big old mouth. And he said a little feisty dog came out and began to yap at that bulldog. He said the bulldog never looked back, going down the street. And he watched. He said, he could snap him up, he could break him in half. Have him for breakfast! The old bulldog never looked back. This preacher went home and he wrote this. He prayed, “Oh God, whatever that bulldog’s got, I want. Oh, for the ability to walk with strong tread straight ahead and let them yap and snarl, growl and bark to their heart’s content.” And then he said, “God, give us men whom the acclaim or howling threat of the multitude do not move. Men who walk amid criticism, condemnation, anathema, cursings, content to know that in their very molding and making there is something so royal as to defend them forever against such mouthing. Men who are too tall for stooping. Men whose ears are too close to Heaven to hear the little growls from the throats of the worm-like things of earth.” That’s good, isn’t it? God, help me not to stoop to come down to their level.

But not only reign in life; **rejoice in the Lord**. Look if you will in Matthew 5 verse 12, “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad.” Why do you rejoice in the Lord? Well, listen folks, as I said, you have to earn persecution. You’re not going to get it if you don’t live for Jesus. But if you’re getting it, you say, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! They see Jesus.” Do you remember when they took those apostles there and they told them, they warned



them, said, "Don't you preach any more in the name of Jesus. We'll put you in prison. You saw what we did to Him. You know what we can do to you." The Bible says in Acts 5:41, "They departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. Reign in life! Rejoice in the Lord, if it comes.

And thirdly, **release love**. Just release love. Just keep loving. This is not sympathy, this is love. And you know, if we'll do this, we'll be like the prophets. He said, "That's the way they persecuted the prophets. But thank God for the prophets. Did you know that the word martyr and the word witness are the same word in the Greek language?"

There was a man who was being persecuted. His name was Stephen. Read about it in Acts chapter 7 verses 54 through 60. He was a deacon. And he was being persecuted. They were stoning him, and you never heard such love as to come out of a man's mouth. He began to pray. As they're stoning him! He began to pray and he said, "Lord, don't lay this sin to their charge!" And he prayed for those who were persecuting him and stoning him. The Bible says, "His face shown like an angel." He said, "I see Heaven open. I see Jesus standing there." I thought He was seated. He might have been seated most the time, but He's standing, saying, "Welcome home, son. Welcome home. Welcome home, Stephen. You weren't ashamed of Me." I have a son named Stephen. "You were not ashamed of Me."

There was a man there, standing there, who watched all of that. Matter of fact, he was holding the clothes for everybody. His name was Saul. He hated Christians! But he never got that sight out of his mind. Later on the road to Damascus, in Acts 9 verse 5, Jesus appeared to him and said, "Saul, it's hard for you, isn't it? 'It's hard for you to kick against the goad.'" He's talking about the ox goad, because there was something goading him. Do you know what it was? "A face like an angel." A bloody face shining like an angel. A man who showed supernatural love! We're going to be persecuted, but you know what? Not only should we expect it and endure it, we ought to enlist it for Jesus. Amen? Amen.

Father, help us to stand up, stand up for Jesus as soldiers of the cross. To lift high His royal banner, that it must not suffer loss. Lord Jesus, help me never, never, dear Savior, to be ashamed of You who died for me. Now, while Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. If you're not certain that you're saved, would you like to be saved, would you? Would you like to know that you really do have life? Jesus said, "I've come that you might have life." Could I lead you in a prayer? We'll call this prayer the sinner's prayer. And you can pray and accept Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. You can do it right now. Would you pray this prayer? "Dear God, I know that You love me. Thank You for loving me. And I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me and You promised to save me if I would trust You. Jesus, I do trust You. I believe You're the Son of God. I believe you paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And now I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Come into my life. Take control of my life and begin today to make me the person You want me to be. And Jesus, give me the courage to make it public. Help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray, Amen."



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