

Joy in the Lord Part 9: Joy for the Persecuted and Oppressed

April 23, 2023

Matthew 5:10-12

Jesus defines what it costs to be a disciple of His in Luke 14:26-33. The cost is all we possess. Sources of persecution: unbelieving spouse and family members, a believing spouse, adult children, co-workers, bosses, and church members. Peter calls us sojourners and pilgrims in 1 Peter 2:11, this is our temporary home.

3 Topics to Better Understand Persecution:

- 1) **Principle Elements:** a) certainty, V11, Jesus says what to do “when” persecution comes. 2 Tim. 3:12, Paul says all who desire to live godly **will** suffer persecution. 1 Pet. 4:12, says to not consider it strange to endure the fiery trial which will try us.
b) variety: 3 kinds: 1) V11, insults or reviling, mocking, and shaming. 2) V11, harassment or persecution, which includes running after you (Matt. 23:34). c) slander: V11, falsely saying all kinds of evil.
c) predictability: for two reasons: 1) V10, for righteousness’ sake. Godly behavior exposes evil in others. Unbelievers are surprised when you don’t join them in sinful acts, 1 Pet. 4:3-4. 2) V11, for the sake of Christ’s name.
- 2) **Primary Source:** Government. Christians are commanded to submit to authority and government seeks to control its citizens. Rom. 13 and 1 Tim. 2:1-2 declare God’s intent for believers to submit to authority. But what are the limits of this authority and the building blocks of society which government should protect and sustain?
 - 1) Independent Yahweh Worship: Gen. 8:20, Noah offered sacrifices to Yahweh after the flood.
 - 2) Submissive Fearless Development: Gen. 8:21-22, God has promised seasons and harvests will remain until the end. Government should not promote animals or earth over people.
 - 3) Divine Family Design: Gen. 9:1, people should fill the earth and family should be protected.
 - 4) Plentiful Food Provision: Gen. 9:2-3, animals are given by God for food.
 - 5) Righteous Societal Justice: Gen. 9:5-6, government should execute evil people. Government should promote good and punish bad. What are the limits to submission to government? Most obvious: mandates to sin against God. Mandates that stop believers from obeying God, to control the church, and to control or authorize worship. Believers accommodate government laws that are reasonable and in efforts to live in peace. Acts 5:29 is our duty when considering who we should submit to and obey.
- 3) **Personal Response:** 4 Ways to Respond to Persecution: 1) Honestly evaluate: count the cost, is it worth it, Luke 14:25-33? 2) Respectfully Disobey: quietly disobey as you are able. 3) Willingly Suffer: if you can’t obey government. 4) Rejoice Confidently: be counted worthy to suffer. a) Joy in confirming personal salvation, 1 Pet. 1:6-7. b) Certainty of future, Matt. 5:12. c) Joy in a purified church, Smyrna was persecuted and endured.

Matthew 5, verses 3-5 are internal responses. Verses 6-9 are internal motives with external evidence that can be demonstrated. Verses 10-12 though are purely external and proves our salvation in Christ. It exposes who we serve and trust. 1 Pet. 1:6-7, it is a joyful thing to suffer for Christ.

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Further Discussion and Application

Rom. 8:18 provides a perspective on how we should value the life we have on earth. What can we glean from Paul's perspective? What is our hope in Rom. 8:28-30? How does our glorification fulfill the promises made to us by the Father?

Persecution by the world should be expected in the coming days. How can we prepare for this time? How can we organize and arrange our lives to be ready? 1 John 2:15-17 is the command to not love the world and the things in it. How should we respond in obedience to the Lord?

Joy is the result of persecution for the believer. How has your life been strengthened by enduring persecution? What did God demonstrate to you during this time?

God put you in this time and at this place. He determined where you would live, the relationships you would have. How does His sovereignty comfort us during trials? How does Scripture answer the question: Has God made us able to endure the trial and suffering?

Paul's life was one of constant persecution. How did Paul respond to persecution? See Col. 1:24-29, 2 Cor. 11:16-33, Acts 16:16-34, Phil. 1:12-18 and Rom. 8:18. How does James tell us to react to trials, James 1:2-8?

What hymns and songs do you know that encourage you to continue serving and following Christ? What are your favorite ones and why?