

## Study of Matthew

August 7, 2022

**Discussion Question:** Where in your life do you feel like you are persecuted? As you evaluate this persecution is it for righteousness?

Matthew 5:10-12 *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” 11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” [KJV]*

Persecute is defined in this verse as to put to flight or to drive away. It is to harass, trouble, or molest one

- When one is persecuted, they are troubled in some form with the goal of the persecutor of causing the persecuted to go away.
- Persecution is abuse, a hostile spirit that is aggressive with the goal of driving away or injuring someone they do not agree with.

The Bible is so full of accounts of persecution that it should be viewed as normative for anyone who will follow God.

We have seen persecution make a comeback in America as our nation becomes more anti-God.

Some would argue this is not a message I want my small children to hear...I say they need to hear so when they are mocked at school they know how to respond but the enemy wants them to be driven away from faith; what Universities are doing to the weak in faith

Let's work our way through some thoughts about persecution so we prepare ourselves for all types of hostility whose goal is to cause us to run away and hide.

Keep **verse 13 – 16** in mind as we work our way through. We are called to be salt and light. The goal of persecution is to harass you to the point that you lose your flavor and you hide your light.

### 1. Reality of Persecution

John 15:20 *“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.” [KJV]*

2 Timothy 3:12 *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”*

If you live a truly committed life as a Disciple of Christ, there is a price to pay for what you believe and the way you live. There is a spiritual battle that rages between the message of the Gospel and the mindset of the world. Because of this difference sooner or later there is going to be conflict and the enemy wants to drive you away. The Christian does not go about trying to stir up trouble, but rest assured that wherever you go trouble is stirred. You smell like death to the world but a sweet aroma to those who are in Christ (**2 Cor. 2:16**)

## 2. Relentless Variety of Persecution

In scripture I am amazed at just how relentless the enemy is in trying to get us to lose our saltiness and hide our light. He uses so many tactics that sometimes we just get weary with trying to discern all of them.

Around the world persecution is done by violent attacks. One reason that I am so vocal on men fulfilling their God given role as leader is because the first group that are persecuted when men are violent is women and children. They not only get ridiculed but violently raped and beaten.

If it was just violent attacks that would be easy to address but he uses a variety of ways with the same goal in mind.

Harass us until he drives us away from following Christ.

- Insults, False Accusations, Mocked, Mistreated
- Ostracized, Intimidated, Threatened
- The way they persecuted the prophets
- Tortured, Stoned, Beaten, Put in Prison, Exiled
- Finally death: Put to death by the sword, hung on crosses, cut in two

We are called upon to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters and to send aid.

- Heb 13:3 *“Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.”* [ESV]

Those who are under intense persecution experience Christ in ways that most of us never do. It is not about them being better or us being worse...rather the greater the persecution the more intense the aroma of Christ seems to be.

All around the world people are harassed for one reason.... The Good news of Christ sets people free. The enemy does not want people free!

But what about us in America...though the violent persecution may be coming....

- I said this November 16, 2014 “If you are to retain your flavor (saltiness) and keep your light from being hid you must be willing to take the insults, false accusations, mocking’s, mistreatment, ostracization, intimidation, and threats.”

Matthew 5: 12 *Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven*

- The reason Joseph could serve in prison
- The reason David could write songs running from Saul
- The reason Daniel could sleep in the lion’s den
- The reason Jeremiah could keep preaching while weeping
- The reason the disciples could rejoice after being beaten
- The reason Paul and Silas could pray and sing in prison at midnight
- The reason John the Beloved could be in the Spirit on the Lord’s day while exiled
- AND it is the reason you and I can rejoice when we are persecuted for HIS name!