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What Should I Expect?

Weekly Bible Study Schedule

Tuesday, April 4, 7:00 AM in HHR #5
(breakfast provided)

Thursday, April 6, 7:00 AM in HHR #5
(casual conversations about the Bible and life)

Capitol Commission is non-partisan and non-denominational

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt 5:10 ESV)

We have come to the last message in our study of the Beatitudes. These eight characteristics describe the Christian life. It's the life God calls us to pursue.

What happens when I pursue this life?

“When you are reviled and persecuted and lied about because you are my followers—wonderful! Be *happy* about it! Be *very glad*! for a *tremendous reward* awaits you up in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted too.” (Matt. 5:11-12 TLB)

➔ You Will Be Persecuted by the World

Jesus used the word “persecuted” three times, which means: harassed or ill-treated. Pursue the Christ-life, you can expect opposition. The world does not love the church. Some tolerated the Church, others are hostile to the Church, still others despise the Church.

“All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed.” (John 3:20 NLT)

Evil cannot dwell with good; hate cannot dwell with love; and darkness cannot dwell with light. Persecution is normative for the Christ-life. The Bible is replete with examples of people persecuted for their Godly life.

The Genesis of persecution for righteousness sake is found in the narrative of Cain and Abel. Why did Cain murder his own brother Abel? Was it a sibling spat gone wrong? Hardly.

We must not be like Cain, who joined the Evil One and then killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because he was deep in the practice of evil, while the acts of his brother were righteous. So don't be surprised, friends, when the world hates you. This has been going on a long time. (1 John 3:12-13 MSG)

Abel set the pattern for persecution against righteousness. Opposition against the righteous has been a pattern for a long-time that continues today.

“All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” (2 Timothy 3:12)

The sinful nature is at odds with God. If they persecuted Jesus they will persecute you.

The Bible records in the book of Acts chapter 7, an act of persecution against a man named Stephen that was martyred because of his faith. In 35 AD persecution forced many Christians out of Jerusalem into other parts of the world. Resulting in the expansion of Christianity.

It's difficult to quantify the number of Christians killed for their faith around the world. I've read the number to be between 90,000-105,000 annually. The Center for the Study of Global Christianity (CSGC) at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary estimates the number of Christians who died as martyrs between 2000 and 2010 is about one million by their reckoning: 100,000 per-year, 274 per-day, 11 per-



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hour, 1 per-every 5 minutes. In 2016, rt.com estimates martyrs added up to 90,000, 1 per-every 6 minutes. Keep in mind, to my knowledge, these numbers do not include complete data from India and China where many in Christian communities survive in secrecy.

To “revile” is to insult or to slander. It includes mocking, slandering, even intimidating, and tormenting. It is any kind of persecution with the tongue.

I recall a time as a college student in New York when I received verbal threats by my classmates because I answered a professor’s question from a biblical world-view. Most of the class turned to me and hurled verbal assaults at me because of my faith in Christ.

Persecution can help us make us stronger in the faith. The insults and mockery by my classmates only made me stronger in my faith. I continued my course only to have a serendipitous encounter with a hostile classmate that ended up with her sharing her painful story and heartache with me. You never know what God is doing in a person’s life.

➔ You Will Be Blessed by God

Persecution in one’s life can be a time of great fellowship with God. You can experience more of God, more of His presence and assurance, more of His affirmation and love in ways impossible without persecution.

Peter says, “If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (1 Peter 4:14).

The Apostle Paul speaks of entering:

“the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings” (Philippians 3:10).

There is a fellowship with Christ when you share the cup of his sufferings.

It reminds me of the account three godly men persecuted for their faith—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that were thrown into a fiery furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors,

“Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” He answered and said, “But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.” (Dan. 3:23-25)

Whatever the persecution – in word, in body, or in death, Jesus is with those persecuted for His name sake. You are not alone.

- When we live into the beatitudes
- When we live out our faith
- When we model the Christ life, be it, in word or in deed, in death or in life...

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 5:13-16 ESV)