

Third Presbyterian Church
Bible Study
Sermon on the Mount – Lesson 8
“Through the Fire”

Matthew 5:10-12 (NIV)

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**.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why does verbal persecution affect us so much?
2. What kind of persecution for Christ's sake you have experienced? Please share
3. Why do you feel that God allows some persecution to disrupt our comfort zones?
4. Speak to the following statement from sermon: God does not protect us from persecution, God protects us in persecution.
 - a. How does this reality change your perspective about enduring persecution?
5. Christians are thermostats not thermometers, a Christian Sets the temperature not just reports it.
 - a. How can we operate in this reality without being judgmental and dogmatic about our faith?
 - b. How is it possible to change the temperature without saying anything?
6. Does the fact that the world hated/rejected/persecuted Christ first give you strength in your persecution for His sake?
7. Have discussion on the following: we need to be more protective of one another and stop receiving hearsay as fact and condemning one another before we know the whole story.
 - a. If you are a constant recipient of gossip, then you have a willing spirit to receive it.
8. Our response announces what we believe. If some says something that is not the truth then i don't need to respond to it as the truth. Am i going to respond to the lie or respond to what God says.
 - a. Why do we respond with so much energy to lies about us?
 - b. What can we do to respond in a godlier fashion?
9. **Share your major takeaways from the sermon/lesson this week.**

Commentary

9. (5:10-12) Persecuted (*diōkomenoi*): to endure suffering for Christ; to be mocked, ridiculed, criticized, ostracized; to be treated with hostility; to be martyred.

1. There are three major kinds of persecution (*diōkomenoi*) mentioned by Christ in this passage:

⇒ Being reviled: verbally abused, insulted, scolded, mocked (cruel mockings, Hebrews 11:36).

⇒ Persecuted: hurt, ostracized, attacked, tortured, martyred, and treated hostilely.

⇒ Having *all manner* of evil spoken against: slandered, cursed, and lied about (cp. Psalm 35:11; Acts 17:6-7; cp. "hard speeches," that is, *harsh, defiant words*, Jude 15).

2. Who are the persecuted?

a. The person who lives and speaks for righteousness and is reacted against.

b. The person who lives and speaks for Christ and is reviled, persecuted, and spoken against.

3. Persecution is a paradox. It reveals that the true nature of the world is evil. Think about it: the person who lives and speaks for righteousness is opposed and persecuted. The person who cares and works for the true love, justice, and salvation of the world is actually fought against. How deceived is the world and its humanity, to rush onward in madness for nothing but to return to dust, to seek life only for some seventy years (if nothing happens before then)!

4. Believers are forewarned, they shall suffer persecution.

a. Believers shall suffer persecution because they are not of this world. They are *called out* of the world. They are in the world, but they are not of the world. They are separated from the behavior of the world. Therefore, the world reacts against them.

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19).

b. They shall suffer persecution because believers strip away the world's *cloak of sin*. They live and demonstrate a life of righteousness. They do not compromise with the world and its sinful behavior. They live pure and godly lives, having nothing to do with the sinful pleasures of a corruptible world. Such living exposes the sins of people.

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you....If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin" (John 15:18, 22).

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

c. They shall suffer persecution because the world does not know God nor Christ. The ungodly of the world want no God other than themselves and their own imaginations. They want to do just what they want—to fulfill

their own desires, not what God wishes and demands. However, the godly believer dedicates his life to God, to His worship and service. The ungodly want no part of God; therefore, they oppose those who talk about God and man's duty to honor and worship God.

"But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me" (John 15:21).

"And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me" (John 16:3).

d. They shall suffer persecution because the world is deceived in its concept and belief of God. The world conceives God to be the One who fulfills their earthly desires and lusts (John 16:2-3). Man's idea of God is that of a *Supreme Grandfather*. They think that God protects, provides, and gives no matter what a person's behavior is, just so the behavior is not too far out, that God will accept and work all things out in the final analysis. However, the true believer teaches against this. God is love, but He is also just and demands righteousness. The world rebels against this concept of God.

"They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me" (John 16:2-3).

"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" (John 15:20).

"These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not know the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you" (John 16:1-4).

"That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto" (1 Thes. 3:3).

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29).

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you" (1 John 3:13).

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified" (1 Peter 4:12-14).

5. Persecutions can erupt from the most devilish imaginations of men (see Deeper Study #1—1 Peter 4:12 for a description of some of the sufferings of God's dear people).
6. What is to be the believer's attitude toward persecution?
- a. It is *not* to be retaliation, pride, spiritual superiority.
 - b. It *is* to be joy and gladness (Matthew 5:12; 2 Cor. 12:10; 1 Peter 4:12-13).
7. The persecuted are promised great rewards.
- a. The Kingdom of Heaven—now.
 - ⇒ They experience a special honor (Acts 5:41).
 - ⇒ They experience a special consolation (2 Cor. 1:5).
 - ⇒ They are given a very special closeness, a glow of the Lord's presence (see note—' 1 Peter 4:14).
 - ⇒ They become a greater witness for Christ (2 Cor. 1:4-6).
 - b. The Kingdom of Heaven—eternally (Hebrews 11:35f; 1 Peter 4:12-13; see Deeper Study #3—Matthew 19:23-24).