



## EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

1, 2 Peter, Jude Sermon Series

Supports Session 9: Be Prepared

Sermon Title: “Truths About Persecution” (Matthew 5:10-12)

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### Connection to Session 9

Peter told the church not to be surprised when they encountered persecution. Jesus taught the disciples to rejoice when persecuted because of their righteous behavior. As a follower of Jesus, we should expect persecution, and God’s Word tells us several truths that will help us prepare and respond.

### Introduction/Opening

I had the pleasure of growing up in South Texas. We lived about thirty minutes from the coast. While there are some things that I miss about living in Texas, getting ready for a hurricane is not one of them. By the time we started getting ready, the wind was starting to blow, and we were putting up plywood. The cost, however, of not getting ready was too great. So, we worked hard in the wind. As a follower of Jesus, we need to expect storms of persecution to blow and the cost of ignoring said storms is great. Therefore, let’s search the Scripture today for truths about being persecuted so we can prepare when we see it coming.

### Outline

*Context:* If we are to understand the text accurately, we must understand the context. Jesus was teaching what is known as the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-12). He stated that those who live out the beatitudes are blessed. The word “blessed,” as taught in the original language, conveys joy beyond one’s circumstances. Therefore, if someone wants to live a blessed life, the key is to not focus on one’s difficult circumstances. Instead, we are to see the joy of knowing and following Jesus even when our circumstances are difficult.

#### 1. Believers should expect persecution (v. 10)

- a. Some wrongly believe that following Jesus means that our lives will be without persecution. As we learned in our groups this morning, Peter taught followers of Jesus to expect persecution. Similarly, Jesus taught His disciples that we should expect persecution. In looking at the original language, we see that those “who are persecuted” (v. 10) are blessed. The phrase is written as a statement of fact. Therefore, we can quickly conclude that followers of Jesus can expect persecution.
- b. Jesus continued to articulate that persecution is a direct result of righteousness. The word “righteousness” means to be in right relationship with another. The righteousness that Jesus spoke of is between God and those who follow Him. When we commit to following Jesus, we are in right relationship with Him and should expect persecution because of this.

## **2. Believers will be persecuted both directly and indirectly (v. 11)**

- a.** As we move to the next verse, we see another factual statement in the original language. Jesus said that those who are insulted and spoken of falsely because of Him are blessed. Once again, the word “blessed” means, joy beyond one’s circumstances. If we want to personally know the blessing of God in the throes of persecution, we must not focus on the immediate issue. Instead, we are to focus on the One who is walking with us in the middle of the struggle.
- b.** Jesus went on to describe two distinct types of persecution His followers would face.
  - i.** When someone insults us, this can be considered direct persecution. The original language points towards a direct attack from one person to the next.
  - ii.** If this was not bad enough, Jesus said that we can expect indirect attacks as well. To “falsely say every kind of evil against you” (v. 11) indicates things being said behind someone’s back. The insults can be handled in the moment as we can refute what is being said. The false accusations, however, are different because it is truly behind someone’s back.
- c.** It is vital to point out that all of this is taking place because of one’s relationship with Jesus. We cannot claim persecution if we do not land the “big deal” when we are using shady tactics trying to land the deal. We cannot claim persecution if we miss the promotion when we are stepping on others trying to get the promotion. We can, however, claim persecution if we are attacked because we are hungering and thirsting after righteousness (v. 6) found in Christ.

## **3. Believers are to rejoice in persecution (v. 12)**

- a.** As we begin to look at verse twelve, we find the only command Jesus gave in all of the Beatitudes. For those who truly encounter persecution because of their relationship with Jesus, we are commanded to rejoice and be glad. Our rejoicing is not because of the persecution. Our rejoicing is in knowing that our reward in heaven is great.
- b.** We can also feel a sense of satisfaction and gladness in knowing that many before us have experienced the same direct and indirect persecution. One of the worst feelings any of us can have is the feeling of being all alone and being misunderstood. While we would never wish our misfortunes upon anyone else, it is nice to know that others have experienced what we are experiencing. We do not have to look too far into Scripture to see how others were mistreated. This does not make it easy, but it is nice to see we are not alone.

## **Conclusion**

Since we know the command of Jesus here, let’s determine the best ways to apply it. For those who personally know Jesus, we can rejoice and be glad in knowing that our persecution is temporary and that we have a reward in glory waiting on us. Let’s rejoice in knowing Jesus has provided a way for us to experience this reward. For those who are learning about Jesus, can you begin to see the struggle through the eyes of Jesus and not your own? What if He is allowing the struggle to happen as a means to show Himself to you? If this is the case, then the thing that is hurting right now is pointing you toward a relationship with Him. Can you trust Him, turn to

Him, and ask Him to save you? This may not mean the hurt will go away tomorrow, but it does mean He is with you no matter what and you are no longer alone.

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