

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 5:10-11

OPENING

Persecution can be a hard topic to work through as Christians. Throughout Church history, Christians have been mocked, harassed, physically tortured, arrested, imprisoned, and looked upon with suspicion. This persecution has all occurred in various degrees depending on the historical context, but since its inception, the Church has often had to deal with opposition. What are your immediate reactions to persecution? How have you experienced it? What has been your response?

QUESTIONS

1) Read Matthew 5:10-11. Spend some time considering the radical claim that persecution is actually a blessing. Do we really believe this? How can we come to grips with this sobering reality?

2) The persecution in mind here is for righteousness' sake and when others speak against us for our association with Jesus (v. 11: "on my account"). In other words, we are persecuted for doing God's will and for aligning ourselves with Jesus. This is how we should filter any opposition we receive. How might this kind of persecution look in your life? What does it cost you to follow Jesus?

3) Read the story of Stephen in Acts 7:54-60. Consider that Jesus is "standing at the right hand" of God in approval, while everyone else is hurling insults and accusations. How does this encourage you? How might it help you face persecution in the future?

4) The kingdom of heaven belongs to those who endure persecution for Jesus' sake. Consider the reality of this promise and how suffering for Jesus' sake is always better than the comforts of the world. Do you truly believe the kingdom is worth enduring persecution? How can we be encouraged by these promises when we feel like shrinking back from being associated with Jesus?

SCRIPTURE

Write which passage of scripture you are reading.

OBSERVATION

What is this text saying? What is the context? How does it fit with the verses before and after it? Are there any commands or instructions?

APPLICATION

How can you apply this verse to your life? What does this mean today? What is God saying to you?

PRAYER

Respond to the passage in prayer. Ask God to help you apply this truth to your life and spend some time listening to what He may be telling you.
