

Prepare to Face Persecution and Do Good

Luke 6.20-36; 1 Peter 4.12-19

When evil takes root in society, Christians face persecution. To avoid this, some will conform. Jesus warns against this: We must be willing to be persecuted for doing what is right. At the same time, we must not return evil for evil, but rather do good and show mercy.

Jesus' Exhortation: A Woe and A Woo

- Beware the lure of the praise of men
- Love your enemies, do good to them
- Like Father, like son: The 'spitting image' of Dad!

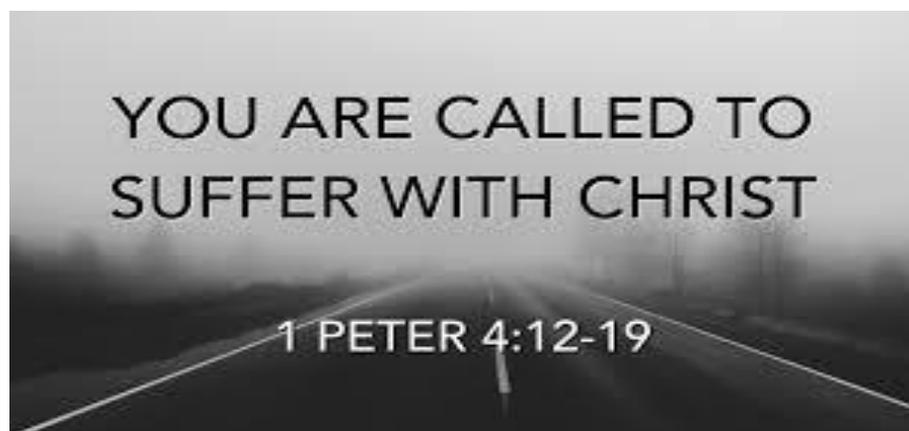
Jesus' Example: Don't Be Surprised When You Suffer

- Sharing in the sufferings of Christ (cf. Col. 1.24)
- Sharing in His glory (cf. Rom. 8.17b-18)
- 'It is time for judgment to begin...'

'Coals of Fire': When Grace and Truth Clash

(Prov. 25.21-22; Rom. 12.19-21)

- God will judge evil; leave it to Him!
- God doesn't want to 'win' – He wants to save!
- Hold to truth, but display grace.



1. The expectation of suffering persecution for our faith seems odd to Americans. We've lived our lives in a 'bubble of freedom' which most of the world has *never known*. The many passages in the New Testament promising trials, recording trials, and even promoting their positive results, should cause us to expect them! See Matt. 5.10-12; 14.3-12; Lk. 6.27-35; Jn. 16.2-4, 33; Acts 7.57-8.1; Phil. 1.29-30; 2 Tim. 3.10-12; Heb. 2.10; 12.3-11; and 1 Peter 3.14-16.
2. One of Satan's prime goals in promoting persecution of Christians is to get us to abandon our faith, or if he can't do that, cause us to quietly conform to our sinful culture. The pressure to suppress our convictions will be great, and unless we are prepared – and even *expecting* – to suffer for our faith, we will be prone to capitulate to evil. Consider: How do you think Jesus' words to His disciples in John 15.18-21 contributed to them withstanding persecution? Read 1 Thess. 2.1-2, 14; 3.4. How would Paul's own suffering, and his warning to the Thessalonian Christians, have helped them prepare for the trials they had to face?
3. American Christians generally think of persecution as something to be avoided, but not the New Testament (see James 1.2-4)! In fact, Christians who face persecution generally exhibit a joy which we cannot understand. Read stories of persecuted Christians on VOM and Open Doors websites. Despite their suffering, they are joyful! Listen to the discussion between Alisa Childers and Rod Dreher on this subject (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_KLM9GRTgI). How can we move beyond our 'comfortable Christianity'?
4. Discerning our purpose as Christians here on earth can help us deal with the coming persecution. Read Prov. 25.21-22, Rom. 12.19-21, and 1 Pet. 4.12-19. To whom do we entrust judgment of sin and sinners? Is God capable to handle this? When we are wronged in any way, or suffer persecution, how do we reflect God's love and mercy? What does it mean to 'heap coals of fire on the heads' of those who mistreat us? What does God promise to those who stand true for God in the face of persecution?