

SERMON STUDY NOTES

6th October 2019
Speaker: Martin Armstrong

Blessed are the Persecuted: Matthew 5:11-12

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 'Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.' Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way, they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

1. Jesus makes it clear that if we live according to the beatitudes, persecution is to be expected. Suffering is inevitable. Jesus is not saying: 'Don't be surprised if suffering comes'. He's saying 'be surprised if it doesn't'.
Discuss
2. Can you think of a time when you experienced persecution / insults because of Christ?
3. Many people bring abuse and criticism upon themselves because of how they live. *Give some examples of how we may do that.*

4. We tend to think that persecution happened mainly in ancient times. But the record keepers state that more Christians were martyred in the 20th Century than in all the previous centuries combined - dating back to Christ. *Why is that?*
5. We talk about persecution from violence and causing death. In some countries and cultures, persecution is much more sophisticated. Give some examples of other more subtle forms of persecution.
6. Richard Wurmbrand wrote the book 'Tortured for Christ'. He was imprisoned for 25 years for being a Christian preacher. It was strictly forbidden to preach to other prisoners, and he understood that anyone caught doing this received severe a beating. He wrote '*A number of prisoners decided to pay the price for the privilege of preaching, so it was a deal: we preached and they beat us. We were happy preaching; they were happy beating us - so everyone was happy.*' **Discuss**
7. What have you done in the last month that has caused anyone to challenge your faith? When have you risked speaking out for Jesus? How have you defended the cause of Christ? How have you identified yourself as a Christ follower?

James 1:12 *Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.*

Pray for each other as you share about your individual circumstances and difficulties.