

***Pastor's notes for the last part of "Upside Down: The Joy of Persecution"
which was interrupted by a power outage.***

Don't Be Surprised

18 "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. (John 15:18-20)

*Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted
(2 Timothy 3:12)*

*12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.
(1 Peter 4:12-13)*

Don't Be Afraid

But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, (1 Peter 3:14)

26 "So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 27 What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. 28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? [b] And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. 32 So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, 33 but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 10:26-33)

Don't Retaliate

27 "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. (Luke 6:27-28)

*21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.
(1 Peter 2:21-23)*

Remember Who the Real Enemy Is

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)

Pray

*But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,
(Matthew 5:44)*

*27 “But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,
28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. (Luke 6:27-28)*

For GRACE expressed/experienced as...

- For strength - for you
- For salvation - for them

Love The Persecutors

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(Matthew 5:44)*

*27 “But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,
28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. (Luke 6:27-28)*

- One helpful tip - remember who you were before you knew Jesus
- You and I were just as guilty as anyone else
- Deceived people do foolish things
- Jesus prayed God would forgive those involved in His death because they didn't know what they were doing
- Stephen prayed the same things as he was martyred
- “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” Last thing Stephen said

Endure - DON'T GIVE UP!!!

*and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure
(1 Corinthians 4:12)*

Rejoice - vs.12

- Doesn't mean we should enjoy it! Just that we choose joy in it!
- “Rejoice” meaning - be glad, be delighted; Greetings!; in some contexts (as in the mocking of a king), “Long live!;” in other contexts it is a mere “Hello!”
- Welcome it
- Mockingly - long live the persecution - is that all you've got?
- “Be glad” - means be extremely joyful, be filled with delight
- Persecution produces ELITE JOY!

A Romanian pastor described how he was imprisoned and tortured mercilessly and yet experienced joy. Locked in solitary confinement, he had been summoned by his captors, who cut chunks of flesh from his body, and was then returned to his cell, where he was starved. Yet in the midst of this sadism, there were times when the joy of Christ so overcame him that he would pull himself up and shuffle about the cell in holy dance. So remarkable was his joy that on his release from prison and his return to his home, he chose to fast the first day in memorial to the joy he had known in prison.

I Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. James 1:2-3
Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. (Acts 5:41)

Why can we rejoice when we are persecuted?

- First, it is evidence that you are a citizen of the kingdom of heaven (v. 10).
- Second, a great reward awaits you in heaven (v. 12).
- Third, you will find yourself in excellent company, “For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (v. 12).

God will not permit what has been done for his glory to go unrewarded. Hear Paul’s assurances:

“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7)

What then will it be like for such saints the first thirty seconds in heaven? The first half hour? The first day? The first 10,000 years?