

# Title: International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church

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*Text: Matthew 5:10-12*

## Introduction:

1. Over the past few weeks we have read from *Foxe's Book of Martyr's*.
2. We have read about the Apostle Simon the Zealot, three ladies who lost their life in the coliseum; William Tyndale; and the five men who lost their lives in the jungles of Ecuador.
3. Today, we read about living today in places like Somalia and Pakistan who are facing death for their faith in the Savior Jesus Christ.
4. This Sunday is meant to awaken us as a church to the need for prayer of those suffering for their faith throughout the world.

Proposition: **Ephesians 6:18** *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*

Question: Why ought Christians to remember to pray for the persecuted Church?

Transition: The Word of God explains why Christians need to remember to pray for the persecuted Church through the Proclamation of Christ, the Promise of Hatred, and the Partakers of Christ.

## I. Proclamation of Christ (Matthew 5:10-12)

### A. A Happy Condition (10)

1. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake...*

a) **The word *blessed* means fortunate, well off, or happy (Strong's #3107).**

(1) It describes a condition which one finds himself in.

(2) It is a "state or mode of being;" in other words it is a summary of the person's spiritual state.

b) **The person who lives a spiritual life of righteousness will find even in spiritual opposition a state of blessedness in God.**

(1) Humanly speaking this is impossible but by the grace of God, the Holy Spirit within us enables us to respond in a divinely spiritual way to our spiritual tormentors.

(2) Those who live godly lives find persecution a place of blessedness.

2. *...for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

a) **The Kingdom of Heaven is a literal and spiritual reality.**

(1) Literal, the millennial kingdom which Christ will return to setup after the tribulation, which believers will participate in ruling.

(2) Spiritual, the kingdom of heaven which exists today in the hearts of every believer.

b) **The believer who is living a life of righteousness, following in the footsteps of our Savior, godly lives, according to the Word of God and led by the Spirit, currently is dwelling spiritually in the Kingdom of Heaven and shall partake also in the ruling of the physical Kingdom.**

### B. A Honorable Calling (11-12)

1. *Blessed are ye, when men shall... (11)*

a) **Those who are called to live righteous lives, the believer, are called to face the following persecution.**

b) **All for the sake of Jesus Christ.**

2. *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad...*

**a) It is a privilege.**

- (1) You must be doing it right.
- (2) They did it to Christ and did it the saints and prophets of the O.T.

**b) Human language cannot describe what Heaven will be like for you.**

- (1) All that can be said is *great is your reward in heaven*.
- (2) Vague, but exciting because fallen human language could never adequately describe the reward of heaven.
  - (a) Whenever heaven is spoken of in the Bible it is always using words *like* and *as*.
  - (b) Why, because words fail to describe what heaven truly will be like.

**C. Illustration: O.T. Saints and Prophets**

- 1. Daniel – lions den
- 2. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – fiery furnace

**D. Application**

- 1. Why ought Christians to remember to pray for the persecuted Church?
- 2. Persecution is real and takes many forms for every believer who is living a life of righteousness.

**a) Our purpose today is to remember those in the world who are facing persecution of extreme degrees.**

- (1) People are facing arrest, beatings, material harm, and death for their faith in Jesus Christ.
- (2) These people are facing a reality of Christianity we have only read about in the Bible and in books here in America.
- (3) They need to be remembered as brother's and sisters in the Lord and it is our duty, responsibility, honor, and privilege to pray for them.
  - (a) Pray for their faith, that they would remain strong in the Lord.
  - (b) Pray for their safety, so that they may continue to proclaim the righteousness of the Lord and bring others to Christ.

**b) Let us not also forget to pray for each other.**

- (1) This passage makes it pretty clear that those who are living a life of Christ, righteous lives will face persecution.
- (2) You need to be living a life of Christ, a righteous life, which will result in persecution.
  - (a) It may take the form of mockery and rejection from spouses, family, friends, co-workers.
  - (b) A Christian who is not experienced a form of persecution needs to question their walk with Christ.

**Transition: We need to pray for the persecuted Church. First, we need to pray because Christ proclaimed we are going to face persecution. Second, because Christ promised the world is going to hate His followers.**

## **II. Promise of Hatred (John 15:18-19)**

### **A. The reality of following in the steps of Christ is hatred.**

#### **1. *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. (18-19)***

##### **a) What a sobering statement.**

- (1) Jesus spoke to his disciples of the day and of all time in this statement.
- (2) The reality of following Christ in a world that is fallen in sin and following the father of lies, Satan, is becoming the object of hatred.
- (3) The way Jesus Christ was treated on earth will be the way you and I will be treated.

##### **b) What an exciting statement.**

- (1) On the other hand, what a privilege and exciting opportunity for the follower of Christ.
- (2) The follower of Christ to be counted worthy of the same treatment as He was.
- (3) His righteousness exposed the sinful nature of people and their need for salvation through Him and He tells his disciples you will be hated also because of the righteousness you live in Him before the world.

#### **2. A follower of Christ cannot be loved by the world; there must of spiritual necessity be a difference.**

## **B. Application**

1. **Why ought Christians to remember to pray for the persecuted Church?**
2. **No one likes to be hated, let us not kid ourselves on that point.**
  - a) **That is why it is important we lift up those who are facing persecution.**
    - (1) Their faith is being tried and need our prayers.
    - (2) The reality of the hatred Christians are facing in places like China, Somalia, and Muslim dominated countries throughout the world is staggering.
    - (3) These people need our earnest prayers.
  - b) **In our case here in America, there is something wrong with our following of Christ if we are like the world, liked by the world, or endorsed by the world.**
    - (1) Those who do not know Christ personally as their Savior ought not to like us, but hate us for what we stand for: period.
    - (2) It has nothing to do with getting along, but everything to do with following Christ.
    - (3) It is sobering, but it is a privilege to walk in the steps of the Savior.

**Transition: We need to pray for the persecuted Church. First, we need to pray because Christ proclaimed we are going to face persecution. Second, because Christ promised the world is going to hate His followers. Third, because we are partakers of Christ sufferings and glory.**

## **III. Partakers of Christ (1 Peter 4:12-13)**

### **A. Rejoice through it all**

1. *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you. . .*
  - a) **Peter writes to a group of disciples and tells them don't be taken off guard by the persecution you will face.**
  - b) **It is to be expected as disciples of Christ and in reality is a mark of a true disciple which you are to rejoice in.**

2. *...when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*

a) Why are we to rejoice in facing the same trials as Christ?

b) Because the victory is His and when He returns it will be worth it all.

## **B. Application**

1. Why ought Christians to remember to pray for the persecuted Church?

2. The reality of uplifting the persecuted Church in prayer means we are partakers of the glory of Christ.

a) Their perseverance in Christ in the face of the most difficult circumstances glorifies Jesus Christ now and when He returns.

b) Our prayers have the power to encourage their faith and further the work of Jesus Christ.

3. Here today in Three Mile Bay, we also ought not to be taken off guard by trials.

a) A disciple of Christ ought to expect trials/persecutions, it ought to be the norm.

b) If it isn't the norm, then we need to question our commitment to Jesus Christ.

## **IV. Exhortation: Will you make the commitment to pray for the persecuted Church?**