



GOOD NEWS

for the unsaved WORLD!

(#52)
Responding to persecution.

SOME COMMENTS RELATED TO LAST WEEK

WATCHING YOUR ATTITUDE WHEN YOU SPEAK.



Speaking appropriately to people does NOT always mean they will like what you have to say. It may require harsh-sounding or stern words.

SPEAKING APPROPRIATELY
MAY SOMETIMES INVOLVE REBUKE AND CONDEMNATION.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!* You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you don't go in, and you don't allow those entering to go in."
Matthew 23:13 (CSB)

IF you have to do this...
THEN WATCH YOUR ATTITUDE!

* (These were like the modern-day preachers who preach a False Gospel – a fake "good news." They lead others astray, so that they perish.)

① DON'T USE "APPROPRIATE" AS AN EXCUSE FOR SIN!

- These New testament examples were spoken by people who loved God and neighbor. It was love for God and his glory that compelled them to speak the truth, even when people hated it.

"You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him-- you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it."
Acts 7:51-53 (NIV)

★ The person who said this...
★ also said this... (when they killed him).

"Lord, don't hold this sin against them." After he had said this, he died.
Acts 7:60b (GW)

② SPEAKING IN A "STERN" MANNER IS OFTEN NOT APPROPRIATE!

- The above examples were spoken to people who knew God's Word, but chose to disobey it.
- It would NOT be appropriate when speaking to someone who didn't understand God's Word, but wanted to!

Here is how you should respond when a person is asking about the truth (not opposing it).

And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.
But you must do this in a gentle and respectful way.
1 Peter 3:15b-16a (NLT)

③ THERE MAY ALSO BE TIMES WHEN YOU SHOULD STOP SPEAKING!

- After Jesus rebuked the Pharisees.


"Do you realize that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?"
"Leave them alone. They are blind guides of the blind. If one blind person leads another blind person, both will fall into a ditch."
Matthew 15:12b, 14 (ISV)
- When the Jews opposed and insulted Paul.

"Your blood be upon your own heads—I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."
Acts 18:6b (NLT)

In both cases, those who got angry should have admitted the truth and repented, instead of taking offense.

TODAY'S FOCUS

**WATCHING
YOUR ATTITUDE
DURING PERSECUTION.**



If you are following Jesus, people may persecute you regardless of how you communicate with them... just because you are following Jesus.

HOW should we respond to persecution?

But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

1 Peter 2:20b-23 (NIV)

JESUS SAYS → "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

John 16:33b (NIV)

1. WE ARE NOT TO RESPOND THE WAY THE WORLD DOES.

"But I tell everyone who is listening: **Love** your enemies. **Be kind** to those who hate you. **Bless** those who curse you. **Pray** for those who insult you."

Luke 6:27-28 (GW)

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. **Do not repay** anyone evil for evil. Do not be conquered by evil, but **conquer evil with good.**

Romans 12:14, 17a, 21 (CSB)

SCRIPTURE TEACHES US HOW TO DO THESE THINGS – to express love, kindness blessing, graciousness, etc. *Beware the world's counterfeits, which are rooted in a rejection of God's Word!*

(MORE EXAMPLES.)

When we are reviled, we **bless**; when we are persecuted, we **endure** it; when we are slandered, we **respond graciously.**

1 Corinthians 4:12b-13a (CSB)

See to it that no one repays evil for evil to anyone, but always **pursue what is good** for one another and for all.

1 Thessalonians 5:15 (CSB)

Do not return evil for evil or insult for insult, but instead **bless others** because you were called to inherit a blessing.

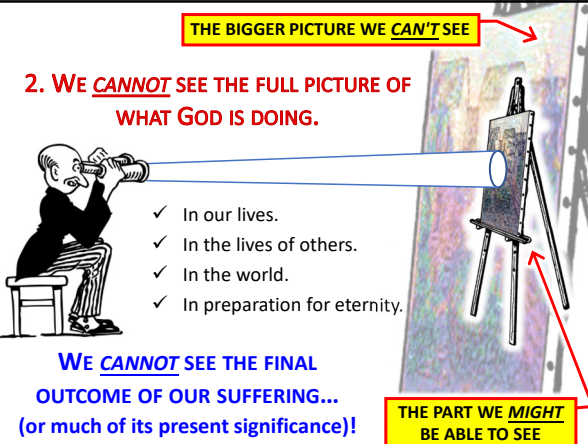
1 Peter 3:9 (NET)

FALSE TEACHERS MAY IMITATE THESE THINGS, when they want to ignore and belittle you. (Example: "I'm sorry you feel that way... may God bless you!")

It may make them feel "vindicated," and the world may be impressed (and deceived). But they will be seen for what they are, when Jesus returns to judge the world.

THE BIGGER PICTURE WE CAN'T SEE

2. WE CANNOT SEE THE FULL PICTURE OF WHAT GOD IS DOING.



- ✓ In our lives.
- ✓ In the lives of others.
- ✓ In the world.
- ✓ In preparation for eternity.

WE CANNOT SEE THE FINAL OUTCOME OF OUR SUFFERING... (or much of its present significance)!

THE PART WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO SEE

2a. We know only a little about what God is doing in our lives – whether now or in eternity. (But what we know is good!)

- ✓ Ultimate good.

And we know that God causes everything to **work together for the good** of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

Romans 8:28 (NLT)
- ✓ Spiritual growth

... but we also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces **endurance**, and endurance, **character**, and character, **hope**.

Romans 5:3b-4 (NET)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops **perseverance**. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be **mature and complete**, not lacking anything.

James 1:2-4 (NIV)

✓ Blessing and a future

God **blesses** those who are persecuted because they live for God, for the **Kingdom of Heaven** is theirs.

"God **blesses** you when you are mocked and persecuted and lied about because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a **great reward** awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted, too."

Matthew 5:10-12 (NLT)

✓ Eternal glory.

Therefore we do not despair, but even if our physical body is wearing away, our inner person is being renewed day by day. For our momentary, light suffering is producing for us **an eternal weight of glory** far beyond all comparison because we are not looking at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen. For what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NET)

✓ Ultimate victory (even if the trials kill us)

What will separate us from the love Christ has for us? Can trouble, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, or violent death separate us from his love? As Scripture says:

"We are being killed all day long because of you. We are thought of as sheep to be slaughtered."

The one who loves us gives us **an overwhelming victory** in all these difficulties.

Romans 8:35-37 (GW)

✓ A crown of life

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive **the crown of life** that God has promised to those who love him.

James 1:12 (NIV)

2b. We don't know if God is working in the lives of those who persecute us.
(We might never know in this present life.)

✓ Some may turn to Jesus!

EXAMPLE: A JAILOR WHO TURNED TO JESUS!

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Acts 16:29-30 (NIV)

✓ Even if they remain unsaved, they will someday honor God!

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

1 Peter 2:12 (NIV)

✓ We don't have to know the end results right now!

EXAMPLE: SAUL (PAUL), A PERSECUTOR WHO TURNED TO JESUS!

Now Saul heartily approved of putting Stephen to death.

Acts 8:1a (ISV)

I persecuted people who followed the way {of Christ}: I tied up men and women and put them into prison until they were executed.

Acts 22:4 (GW)

{ Those who were died during the persecution didn't know that Saul [Paul] would one day turn to Jesus! }

But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace. Then it pleased him to reveal his Son to me so that I would proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles.

Galatians 1:15-16 (NLT 2015)

2c. We don't know if our persecutors really understand how wrong their actions are.

{ When people sin and suppress the truth, it blinds them to the truth. Because of this, they may have lost the ability to recognize the sinfulness of their actions. }

✓ Those who killed Jesus did not fully understand what they were doing.

"Now, brothers, I know that you **acted in ignorance**, as did your leaders."

Acts 3:17 (NIV)

"Father, forgive them; for they **do not know** what they are doing."

Luke 23:34b (NASB)

✓ Before Jesus called him, the apostle Paul (Saul) persecuted Christians... and he thought doing so was pleasing to God!

How thankful I am to Christ Jesus our Lord for considering me trustworthy and appointing me to serve him, even though I used to scoff at the name of Christ.

I hunted down his people, harming them in every way I could. But God had mercy on me because I did it **in ignorance and unbelief**.

Oh, how kind and gracious the Lord was! He filled me completely with faith and the love of Christ Jesus.

1 Tim. 1:12-14 (NLT)

This type of ignorance is sin. It is the end result of previous sinful choices, and a suppression of the truth. (The more we sin, the more sin enslaves.)

2d. Sometimes people get involved without any knowledge of why they are doing so.

- ✓ Those who wanted to persecute Christians often got others to help them.

EXAMPLE: A RIOT (INCITED BY JEWISH LEADERS).

But the Jewish leaders were jealous, so they gathered some worthless fellows from the streets to form a mob and start a riot.

Acts 17:5a (NLT)

EXAMPLE: A CONFUSED MOB (STIRRED-UP SOME BY SILVERSMITHS, WHO PROFITED FROM IDOL WORSHIP... AND WERE LOSING MONEY).

[The silversmiths] became furious and began shouting... The confusion spread throughout the city... Most of the people didn't even know why they had come together.

Acts 19:28b, 29a,32b (GW)

3. REALIZE THAT WITHOUT A RENEWED MIND (ROM. 12:2), PEOPLE, BY NATURE, SEE THINGS IN A WRONG WAY... EVEN WHEN THE TRUTH IS OBVIOUS.

- ✓ They may accuse you based on false assumptions.

ACCUSATION:

"[Paul] defiles [the temple] by bringing Gentiles in!"

Acts 21:28b (NLT)

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED:

... they assumed Paul had taken [a Gentile] into the Temple.)

Acts 21:29b (NLT)

My accusers saw me in the Temple as I was completing a purification ritual. There was no crowd around me and no rioting.

Acts 24:18 (NLT)

- ✓ They may blame you for what they do.

WHO CAUSED THE RIOTS AND DISTURBANCES?

When the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, they went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up.

Acts 17:13 (NIV)

Today, we may have more problems with non-Jews.

... some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the Temple and roused a mob against him.

Acts 21:27b (NLT)

But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.

Acts 14:2 (NIV)

WHO WAS BLAMED? (= PAUL AND OTHERS)

"These men [= Paul and others] who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, ..."

Acts 17:6b (NIV)

- ✓ They may make all sorts of false accusations against you!

EXAMPLE: "YOU ARE AGAINST THE BIBLE!"

"We heard [Stephen] blaspheme Moses, and even God."
"This man is always speaking against the Temple and against the law of Moses."

Acts 6:11b, 13b (NLT)

"This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere to turn against the Jewish people, Moses' Teachings, and this temple."

Acts 21:28b (GW)

EXAMPLE: "YOU ARE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT!"

"They are all acting contrary to Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king—Jesus."

Acts 17:7b (CSB)

4. YOUR MISSION: HOW ARE YOU TO RESPOND?

SPEAK IN A WAY THAT HONORS GOD!

Speak an accurate message that cannot be condemned. Then those who oppose us will be ashamed because they cannot say anything bad about us.

Titus 2:8 (GW)

LIVE IN A WAY THAT HONORS GOD!

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

1 Peter 2:12 (NIV)

... AND LEAVE THE REST TO GOD!

Credits (1)

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