

**THEME: Spiritual HOLINESS is better than Earthly HAPPINESS**

**OPENING REMARKS:** I'd like to begin with a question: ***Have you ever suffered***

***persecution because you were living out your Christian beliefs before the world?***

Have you ever been laughed at, physically abused, lost your job, or slandered because you're a Christian? Persecution of Christians is a real thing, and suffering occurs every single day, both around the world and here in the USA. As Christians, we are light in this dark world and there are times when the holy light of Jesus Christ will burn so brightly through you that the unsaved world responds with attack. It is to be expected. Persecution and suffering are the expected reward for godly living. The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:12, "*Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*" So, persecution is to be the expected result for living a godly lifestyle in this world. We should fully expect to suffer physical and verbal abuse at the hands of ungodly sinners. However, what is terrible and strange is when some Christians gossip against, talk about, or even slander another Christian because that saint is trying to do nothing more than be obedient to God in our present day circumstances. For example, some Christians I know are being shunned, unfriended, and even ridiculed for trying to obey God's command to honor our governing leaders in our present day COVID-19 pandemic. MY FRIENDS...THIS OUGHT NOT TO BE THE CASE! Jesus said it is our love for one another that will prove to the world that we are His disciples: "*By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*" (John 13:35)

**OPENING ILLUSTRATION:**

- Kamal (a Christian friend of mine from the middle-east); came to USA to attend seminary; he supports missionaries in Muslim countries.
- He is always harassed by the government there when he goes back. He is often held in custody for days while being interrogated.
- EVANGELISM —> He places a gospel tract on a public bench and watches from a distance. When someone reads it, if they didn't appear offended by it, he follows them when they leave in order to share Christ.

**THEME: Spiritual HOLINESS is better than Earthly HAPPINESS**

**13 Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; 16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. 17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.**

**MAIN POINTS:**

- I. **Blessed While SUFFERING - (vs. 13-14; 16-17)**
- II. **Blessed While SHARING - (vs. 15)**

# I. Blessed While SUFFERING - (v.13-14; 16-17)

**13 Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, ... 16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. 17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.**

- A. (v.13) - "**Who is there to harm you**" - this is not the norm
- B. (v.13) - "**prove zealous**" - intense desire that leads to action
- C. (v.13) - "**what is good**" - kind behavior; generosity, unselfishness
- D. (v.14) - "**even if you should suffer**" - negativity due to godly living
- E. (v.14) - "**sake of righteousness**" -
- *Matthew 10:16-20 ("Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; and you will even be brought before governors and kings **for My sake**, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.")*
- F. (v.14) - "**you are blessed**" -
- not "happy" because of circumstances → but the heavenly reward.
  - *Matthew 5:10-12 ("**Blessed** are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "**Blessed** are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. **Rejoice and be glad**, for **your reward in heaven is great**; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*
- G. (v.14) - "**do not fear**" - this is a command

H. (v.14b) - "**do not be troubled**" - a command; not shaken or stirred up

-----

I. (v.16) - "**keep a good conscience**" - don't assume you've done something wrong just because you're being persecuted.

J. (v.16) - "**slandered**" - to drag your name/reputation through the mud

K. (v.16) - "**revile your good behavior in Christ**" - threaten, insult, mistreat

L. (v.16) - "**will be put to shame**" -

- Romans 12:17-20 (*"Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for **in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.**"*)

M. (v.17) - "**it is better**" - as opposed to experiencing no persecution at all

N. (v.17) - "**if God should will it so**" - God is ultimately sovereign.

- 1 Peter 4:19 (*"Therefore, those also who **suffer according to the will of God** shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right."*)

O. (v.17) - "**suffer for doing what is right**" - good behavior

P. (v.17) - "**Rather than for doing what is wrong**" - do not sin.

## II. Blessed While Sharing - (v.15)

**15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;**

- Q. (v.15) - "**Sanctify Christ as Lord**" - to set apart or make holy; consecrate
- R. (v.15) - "**in your hearts**" - seat of understanding; thoughts processed
- S. (v.15) - "**always being ready to make a defense**" - never taken off guard.
- T. (v.15) - "**asks you to give an account**" - wants you to confess Christ.  
 • "**account**" - 'logos' - word, message
- U. (v.15) - "**the hope that is in you**" -  
 • This is where the emphasis is...your unwavering faith in Jesus Christ!  
 • **Hebrews 11:32-40** - (*"And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, **because God had provided something better for us**, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect."*)

- **Matthew 26:62-64** - (*"The high priest stood up and said to Him, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."*)

V. (v.15) - "**gentleness and reverence**" -

- Rather than rebuke or spite, we give our personal testimony with gentleness and reverence.

-----

**ILLUSTRATION:** Share your Personal Testimony in 30 seconds or less!

- Ask the people to time me on their smartphones
- Then, put in the Church Online chat box how many seconds it was.
- Send me an email about it.
- Or, tag me on social media with the hashtag: **#shareyourstory**

PERSONAL TESTIMONY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

1. Life BEFORE Salvation
2. SALVATION Story
3. Life AFTER Salvation - (with Gospel Presentation)

**\*\*\* GIVE MY 30-Second Testimony \*\*\***

**READ: Acts 26:1-29 - (Paul before Festus, King Agrippa, and Bernice)**

Acts 26:1-11 - "Life BEFORE Salvation"

Acts 26:12-18 - "SALVATION Story"

Acts 26:19-23 - "Life AFTER Salvation"

Acts 26:24-29 - Conversing after giving Personal Testimony

-----

Application:        **Spiritual HOLINESS is better than Earthly HAPPINESS**

-----

CONCLUSION:

- QUESTION: Are you more interested in being Holy or Happy?

**The Pursuit of HOLINESS**

- Matthew 16:24-27 (*"Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds."*)

**The Promise of FUTURE HAPPINESS**

- Matthew 19:27-29 (*"Then Peter said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?" And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life."*)