

I Never Promised You a Rose Garden

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. Slide2 Winter Camps:
- B. Slide3 Married Couples Christmas Dinner: This Sat. Final Day to sign up.
- C. Slide4 Christmas Eve Services: 3,7,9pm. Each Candle-lighting. *Loves Pure Light*.
- D. Christmas Opportunities: *No Gifts for Eternity*. Pick up flyer.
 - 1. Really Generous? GenerateHope, *the only program* for trafficking survivors in SD, has the opportunity to **purchase** their safe-house property. They are getting it for 1/3 the market value. They've already raised \$200,000 of the \$300,000 dollars needed. Consider making a gift of any size to help so that they can purchase the home.
- E. Slide5 City Serve: 15 more Project Manager Needed.

II. Slide6 Intro: *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*

- A. (msg) *"You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom. "Not only that - count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens - give a cheer, even! - for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.*
- B. Slide7a Since the beginning of time...man has dealt w/**religious persecution**:
 - 1. The 1st boy named in scripture (Cain) slew his brother over a religious matter.
 - 2. Slide7b 2 Tim.3:12 **In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.**
 - a) This seems to be based on **the nature of Christianity & the nature of the sinfulness of man.**
 - b) There is a tension between *the message and way of life of Christians* on the one hand **and** *the mindset and way of life of the world* on the other *that conflict is inevitable.*
 - c) This conviction is rooted in **the nature of fallen man and the nature of the new creation** in Christ.

d) Sooner or later *a deeply God-centered Christian* will be mistreated for the things he **believes** or the life he **lives**.

3. Slide8 J.C.Macauley said, *If the world had nothing better than a cross for Jesus, it will not have a royal carriage for His followers.*

C. Slide9-12 Relevant for today? Show Stats

1. Let's admit...*We live in the Disneyland of the world, but most don't.*

D. Lets look at 3 areas of Persecution: **Reasons** for Persecution. **Responses** to Persecution. **Rewards** of Persecution.

III. Slide13 REASONS FOR PERSECUTION

A. We must distinguish between **Persecution** & **Punishment**.

1. We are **punished** by *good men* for **doing evil**, and...we are **persecuted** by **bad men** for doing **good**.

a) **Illustration**: As a new believer, at Dal Rae Restaurant/Pico Rivera, *Richard* went into Catholic Church yelled out how evil they were from the back, & got kicked out. *We were persecuted for righteousness sake!* - No, I think it was for stupidity sake.

(1) **We are to suffer for the sake of goodness, not for the guilt of wrongness.**

B. Jesus names 2 Reasons For Persecution: For Righteousness Sake & For His Sake.

C. Slide14 For Righteousness Sake (vs.10)

1. We will be persecuted for upholding **God's standard** of *justice, truth, & goodness*

2. It is the result of believer's **daring to live** the beatitudes.

3. The *root* of righteousness is to **divide**, to be **different**.

a) Jn. 15:19 *If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.*

b) If Jesus caused division while on earth & we seek to be like him, **then** no doubt we will produce the same results. *If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.* Jn15:20

4. **True righteousness** as defined in vs.20 always involves a **relationship** with Jesus. **So**, true righteousness is not done for **its own sake**. It is done for **Jesus' sake**...

5. So, **right living** or **daring to live the beatitudes** will be persecuted or reviled or at least be *spoken against & ridiculed*.
- Slide15 If you stand for **abstinence** before marriage, your life will be an attack on people **hooking up** before marriage.
 - If you embrace **sober living**, your life will be a statement against **a party lifestyle**.
 - If you pursue **self control**, your life will indict **excess eating, excess hoarding, & excess living**.
 - If you live **simply & happily**, you will show the folly of **luxury & overabundance**.
 - If you walk **humbly** w/your God, you will expose the evil of **pride**.
 - If you walk **diligent & honest** in your dealings, you will lay open the inferiority of **laziness & negligence**.
 - If you speak with **compassion**, you will turn **callousness** on its head.
 - If you show **empathy**, you will lay bare **apathy**.
 - If you are **spiritually minded**, you will expose the **worldly-mindedness** of those around you.

(1) **Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake.**

D. Slide16 For Jesus Sake (vs.11) **My sake**

- We are also persecuted for **His Name Sake**.
 - Jesus told them, **they will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.** Jn.15:21
- We are persecuted **by the world** because **they don't know** God nor His Son.
 - This **Ignorance** always breeds **Suspicion**, & Suspicion breeds **Fear**, & whatever a person **Fears...he Attacks**.
- Phil.1:29 **For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.**
- Persecution is when your seeking to **do his will & honor His name**, & as a result you **suffer**.
- So, the 2 reasons for persecutions is because of **Right Living & For His Name**.

IV. Slide17 **RESPONSES FOR PERSECUTION**

A. We must **Respond** to it, *Not React* to it.

1. We need to be prepared w/the *right attitude of mind*. **Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise w/the same mind.** 1Pet.4:1

B. Jesus gives 3 proper responses: We **Reign, Rejoice, & Release Love**

1. **Slide18** Our 1st Response is to **Reign** (Mt.5:10) *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*

a) The believer reigns in the midst of persecution (act like a king)

b) The more Saul *persecuted* David...the more David *reigned* in life *thru* faith in God.

(1) David knew he was the rightful king, **so** he acted like a King.

c) When you know your a king, it is beneath your dignity to *retaliate*, because that only makes you like other people.

2. **Slide19** Our 2nd Response is to **Rejoice** (5:12) **Rejoice & be Exceedingly glad**

a) **Yea right!** What a shocking piece of counsel. We're belittled, mocked, or even tortured or killed. **HOW** do we rejoice & be exceedingly glad?

b) *The disciples did when they were persecuted.* Acts 5:40,41 **when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.**

c) What can justify this *counsel* to people in pain? *Rejoice & be Exceedingly glad*

(1) **I see two possibilities: either this is the talk of an insensitive, sophomoric, ivory tower theologian who has never known what it is to scream with pain, or this is the talk of One who has seen something and tasted something and knows something about a **reality** that most people have never tasted or glimpsed.** John Piper

(2) **Jesus** can say it because he knows beyond any shadow of a doubt *that* the reward of heaven will more than compensate for any suffering we must endure in the service of Christ.

(a) **Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven.**

(b) **There is a mystery here...**the mystery of **joy** in the midst of **agony**; the mystery of **gladness** in the midst of **misery and groaning**. **And this mystery**

is contained in a miracle, namely, the miracle of faith - the bedrock assurance that **heaven** is a *100-fold compensation* for every pain.

(c) **To the degree that...you believe what Jesus sees in heaven.**

d) **Slide20** It's what gave **Bishop Ridley, Rowland Taylor & John Bradford** the impulse to *kiss the stakes* at which they were burned [Zach Taylor 12 pres/Lady Bird Johnson, Liz Taylor]

e) **Slide21** It's what moved **Obadiah Holmes**, after 90 lashes that turned his back to jelly for Jesus, to say to the magistrates, "*You have struck me with roses.*"

f) **Slide22** It's why **Thomas Hardcastle** said that persecution is "*a precious season of grace*"? [Bloody Mary/Queen Eng]

g) **Read - Jesus Freaks** opening, pg.17. [17yr old, Rachel Scott's story at Columbine HS] *Rachel's Challenge*

3. **Slide23** Our 3rd Response is to **Release Love** (5:44 *read*)

a) This is the *result* of reigning & rejoicing.

b) **Love** -not shallow sentiment. *It is a settled attitude of the mind & heart that leads to definite actions of the will.*

(1) Simply, we should treat our **enemies** the way God has treated us.

(2) We shouldn't pray for fire from heaven to **Consume** our enemies, **but** pray the Spirits fire to **Convert** our enemies.

V. **Slide24** **REWARDS FOR PERSECUTION**

A. One reward is named in vs.10, *for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

1. Not **entering** it, **but enjoying** it...*now*. *Right here & now we can live like Kings.*

B. Another Reward is our **identification** w/Christ & the Prophets vs.12.

1. *What a Holy Band of Saints to belong to.*

2. Here were believers *of whom the world was not worthy.* Heb.11:38

C. **Today** we can enter into the riches of the kingdom & the Fellowship of the Martyrs; **but** there is also a *Future Reward*, *for great is your reward in heaven.*

1. Never minimize the *present power* of a **future reward**. (It is encouragement)

2. **Slide25** Rom.8:18 *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*

3. Heb.11:26 *He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.*

4. 2 Cor.4:17 *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*

a) It is easy for the comfortable saint to despise promised rewards; **but** let him go into the fires *& he might change his mind.*

D. Slide26 Someone said, Life on earth is the **womb** of eternity.

1. We don't remember anything in the womb.

2. **But** think of this world *compared* to that **watery-world**. We would never have known *bacon & coffee, walking barefoot in sand at the beach, or seeing the blue of the sky, or experiencing love & relationships.*

3. **So, what will the next world be like?** *Nothing* compared to this one.

a) Never minimize the *present power* of a **future reward**.

E. Slide27 Jesus wills for his disciples to desire the reward of heaven **more than** we desire the reward of the world. **Jesus wills for us** to have our treasure in heaven **not** on earth. **Jesus wills for your heart** to be so set on heaven **that** to leave this earth is a cause of rejoicing. **Jesus wills for us** to have our **hearts** primarily in heaven, our **hopes** primarily in heaven, our **longings** primarily in heaven, our **joy** primarily in heaven.

1. **How shall we rejoice and be glad** when these things are taken from us **if we have not loved heaven more?**

F. **END**

G. It is difficult to believe that man would persecute people who are: *Humble, Meek, are Seeking after Righteousness, are Merciful, & are trying to make Peace, but they do.*

H. This world welcomes *a compromising Christian*, **but** it hates *the Christian who does the will of God.*

I. Slide28 Consider **the children** of **John Rogers**. He was **burned alive** because of his faith in Christ. His **wife** and **children**, being **11** in number, and **10** able to go, & **1** at her breast, met him by the way as he went towards Smithfield. His children called out encouragements to him through their tears **that** he might **be strong** and **not turn back** and dishonor Christ.

1. Rev.2:10 (msg) **Fear nothing in the things you're about to suffer - but stay on guard! Fear nothing! The Devil is about to throw you in jail for a time of testing 10 days. It won't last forever. Don't quit, even if it costs you your life. Stay there believing. I have a Life-Crown, sized and ready for you.**
2. *Look to the **prophets**. Look to the **disciples**. Look to the **martyrs**.* Whatever you must do, get your heart in heaven & eyes off the world.
3. *"He is no fool who **gives** what he **cannot keep** to **gain** what he **cannot lose**."*

Jim Elliot

J. **Communion:**

1. **Bread** -
2. **Cup** -