

FAIRVIEW MEMORIAL MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

WINTER BIBLE STUDY

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Lesson Title: Christian Conduct, Confronting Adversity

Scripture Text: Matthew 5: 43-48

Introduction: As God's children we are told in His word to live in ways that are extremely challenging. Examples: (1) (Luke 9:23) *And he (Jesus) said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.* (2) (Romans 12:1-) *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.* (1st John 2:15) *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

The words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 5: 43-48, are perhaps the most challenging of all. **LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, BLESS THEM THAT CURSE YOU, DO GOOD TO THEM THAT HATE YOU, AND PRAY FOR THEM WHICH DESPITEFULLY USE YOU AND PERSECUTE YOU!** The focal point of this lesson is how we are to exhibit proper Christian conduct toward those whose conduct toward us is anything but proper.

Is it really a great accomplishment to love someone who loves you, to be kind to those who are kind to you, to be respectful to someone who is respectful of you?

Let's consider these questions in light of what Jesus said. What reward do you have if you love them which love you? The publicans do that!

The Apostle Peter wrote: 1st Peter 2: 20-23: *For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again.*

Note: The saying I don't get mad, I get even, is not the Christian way!

Proverbs 25:21-22: *If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.*

Paul used this in Romans 12: 18-21: *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in doing so thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Paul wrote to Timothy, (2nd Timothy 4:14-15) *Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.*

Note: These teachings obviously don't mean that we are never allowed to say anything to anyone: Paul did warn Timothy about Alexander the coppersmith.

In Matthew 26:55, when they had come to take Jesus, He said; *Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.*

Persecution will come to those who live godly lives: 2nd Timothy 3: (10-12). *But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience. Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

John 15:20: *Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, **they will also persecute you:** if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.*

There are many ways in which we can suffer persecution. The Bible does not say that all who live godly lives will be beheaded or burned at the stake. Persecution does not always come in physical form.

Believers often suffer rejection, isolation, people going out of their way to avoid you, laughed at and mocked by others, people tempting you to do things they know you believe to be wrong, to get you to join them in their evil deeds.

Proverbs 1: 10-15: *My son, if sinners entice you, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: Let us swallow them up as alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: We shall all find precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil; cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path. (**MISERY LOVES COMPANY.**)*

All that will live godly in Christ Jesus: It must also be realized that we can avoid persecution if we don't live this way. If we hide our faith, if we remain silent about our beliefs, if we don't stand up for the Lord and His word, perhaps we will avoid the world's wrath.

Ephesians 5:11: *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, **but rather reprove them.***

Matthew 14 3-4: *For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias sake, his brother Philips wife. For John had said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.*

Jesus said, *Judge not that ye be not judged.* (Matthew 7:1) Many people distort the true meaning of this and use it as a crutch to convince others that they should not speak against anything they're doing, you're not showing me love if you do that, however, true love actually requires reproof!

We believe we should have the freedom to serve the Lord and not be harassed. We consider religious intolerance as a great infringement of our rights, people should be allowed to assemble, and to worship God according to their beliefs without being in violation of any civil laws, our Baptist forefathers certainly believed that. However, religious liberty has only allowed us limited freedom. Under the cloak of religious liberty, we are allowed to assemble without being beaten or jailed for doing so, but religious liberty never promised that we would be free from persecution.

We have a tendency to look at persecution as something we don't want, but the Bible tells us about the blessings of being persecuted.

Matthew 5:11-12: *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

Jesus taught that it doesn't speak well of us if this doesn't happen. Luke 6:26: *Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets.*

Again, if you are suffering persecution, you are obviously living godly in Christ Jesus. That's a good thing!

1st Peter 4: 14-16: *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busy body in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*

Acts 5: 17-42, gives us an account of the apostles being put in prison, and the angel of the Lord came at night, opened the prison doors, and set them free. They went right back to work preaching the gospel. When the authorities found out they brought them right back. Acts 5:27-33: *And when they had brought them, they set them before them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's*

blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. When they had heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took council to slay them. They would have likely been put to death had not Gamaliel cautioned them and persuaded them not to. The end result was: Acts 5: 40-42: *And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded them that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.** And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*

James 5:10-11: *Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*

May God's grace be upon us, and help us to show love to those who don't show love to us. To pray for people who mistreat us, that our attitude toward them would be like the Stephen's attitude toward those who stoned him, Acts 7:60, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* Like Jesus toward those who crucified Him, Luke 23:34: *Father, forgive them; for thy know not what they do.*