

OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

THE GOOD NEWS: IT'S YOUR STORY TO TELL

THE PERSECUTION

OCTOBER 1-7, 2017



SERMON OUTLINE

The Persecution

Acts 11:19-12:24

1. Persecution Spreads the Good News
2. Persecution Adds to the Cost of Witnessing
3. Persecution never Robbed believers of Laughter
4. Persecution Costs the evil doer Dearly

Even in the Face Of Evil, Jesus will build his Church through Your Witness

What do I need to do with what I have heard today?

MAIN POINT

The Spirit uses persecution as a means to spread the Good News.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. Though we may not face persecution like the Christians in Acts 11 and 12, we do face efforts to shut down God’s mission. What are some ways we face this in our workplaces or our neighborhoods? How can we prepare for these encounters?

2. Have you ever had to take a moral stand that ended up costing you something? If so, what was it and what did you learn from that experience?

Leader: Many of us have grown up in a time when little cost is associated with following Jesus. That was not the case for Peter, who was called to pay the cost of following Christ with his life. At the end of 1 Peter 3, Peter encouraged the churches he shepherded to always be ready to share the hope that is within them. Sharing this hope is not dependent upon the costs, but upon one’s faithfulness to Jesus. Jesus Himself tells us that following Him comes with a cost (Luke 9:23-27), but we can be assured that cost is worth it. As we see repeatedly throughout Acts and the New Testament letters, the Spirit uses persecution to spread the Good News.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 PETER 3:8-12.

3. Peter addressed these verses to “all of you.” What would an emphasis on community do for people who are facing persecution? How does it make us stronger as we face various challenges?

Leader: In this section of Peter’s letter, he addressed the Christian community as a whole. To live harmoniously literally means “to be like minded.” This does not mean that we will never have a difference of opinion, but rather, that we will strive to live at peace with everyone (Rom. 12:18). A Christian community is comprised of people who are unified in heart and mind. Additionally, Christian community is comprised of people of all nationalities, races, ethnic groups, genders, and ages. All are welcome through the blood of Christ. Such community will be there to support us when life presses in and following Jesus is not easy.

4. How do you most often respond when someone wrongs you? Why do you tend to respond this way? How did Peter say we are to respond (v. 9)?

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

5. Think of an example of verses 10-12 in action from Jesus' earthly ministry or the stories we have heard in Acts. How does that example help you better understand what these instructions look like when lived out?

Leader: When someone wrongs us, it is natural to want to respond in kind. The saying goes "hurt people hurt others," but Christ has healed our hurts and given us new hearts. Our new hearts are guided by a new ethic. We are to love unconditionally and repay evil with good. In doing so, we receive a blessing from God. When we do good to others, the eyes of the Lord are upon us, and He is open to our prayers (v. 12). Loving Jesus transforms the way we love others. When we are insulted, even for our faith, we do not respond with insults. Instead, we seek to do good to all people as a testimony to the God who saved us. We cannot control what happens to us, but we can control how we respond. Responding in love means repaying evil with good.

> [HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 PETER 3:13-17.](#)

Leader: In verses 13-17, Peter connects the persecution that may come from living for Christ and pursuing peace (vv. 8-12) with the spread of the Good News about Jesus.

6. If someone asked, are you prepared to explain what you believe and why? How would you describe the hope that is in you?

Leader: At the beginning of his letter, Peter described believers as those who have experienced "new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead . . . [and who] are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5). Two weeks ago, we talked about how Acts 10 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 tell us the basis for the Good News: Christ died for our sins and was raised to new life; He appeared to many witnesses; and those who believe in Him receive forgiveness from sin. Your story of hope is the story of how God has saved you and changed you.

7. Why can it be so difficult to maintain "gentleness and respect" in conversations about our faith?

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Leader: Peter, like Paul (Col. 4:6), closed his teaching on evangelism by reminding his readers that the manner in which they share the Good News matters—they must share the gospel with “gentleness and respect” (v. 16), regardless of how others respond. Oftentimes, our pride and eagerness to defend ourselves can lead us to say things that we wish we hadn’t said. Peter admonishes us to be gentle and respectful, even if we are suffering for doing what is right. It may or may not make a difference to those who are accusing or persecuting us, but others will see our reasonableness and may be more attentive to what we have to say.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

8. Share about a recent comment you heard or conversation you had that could have been an opportunity to bring up your hope in Christ.

9. How might we help one another prepare to give a good defense of the faith through our small groups?

Leader: One of the ways we support one another in community is by encouraging and challenging each other to share our stories of hope more often. We can practice our stories together to grow more comfortable, challenge each other to pray weekly for people in our lives who need to know the hope of Jesus, and share about missed opportunities as well as how to be on the lookout for new ones. Let’s make this an important part of our time together each week.

PRAYER

Pray that God would make you ready to share Him with others. Ask that God would shape your conduct and life in such a way that you are able to have a visible hope that is evident to others.

MEMORIZE

¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. —1 Peter 3:15

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

1 PETER 3:8-17

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3:8-12. In climactic fashion, Peter commanded Christians (“temporary residents,” 1:1) not to return evil for evil so they could receive God’s blessing. The apostle’s teaching here (v. 9) reflects that of Christ elsewhere (Mt. 5:43-44; Lk 6:27-28).

3:13-14. Doing what is good will harm no one, though believers may suffer for it—in which case they should count it a privilege to suffer for a lifestyle that pleases God (Jms. 1:2).

3:15. Honor... in your hearts means “to acknowledge as holy” from the center of one’s being. This inner reverence for Christ should lead believers to always be ready, especially in the midst of persecution and suffering, to give a frank defense of the hope within them. On “hope,” cp. v. 5; 1:3,21.