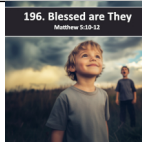


Persecution — Day 1



🎵 Listen to
Scripture Song:



Today's Promise (#196) — KJV

Matthew 5:10–12 "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 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..."

💖 Apply the Promise!

When people treat us unfairly just because we love Jesus, we don't have to be discouraged. We can actually be incredibly happy, knowing that heaven is cheering for us and a great reward is waiting!

📖 Bible Story (Acts 4)

After Jesus rose from the dead, Peter and John boldly preached about Him in Jerusalem. They told the people that Jesus was alive and that everyone should obey God.

The religious leaders were angry. They did not want anyone teaching in Jesus' name, so they arrested the apostles and brought them before the council. The leaders commanded them to stop speaking about Jesus.

But Peter and John knew they had to obey God. They could not stop telling what they had seen and heard. Jesus had died, risen again, and changed their lives, and they loved Him too much to be silent.

This made the leaders even angrier. They ordered the apostles to be beaten. Then they warned them again not to speak in Jesus' name and let them go.

The apostles walked away with sore backs, but their hearts were full of joy. They were not happy because pain felt good. They were happy because they had been allowed to suffer for the One who had suffered so much for them.

Instead of feeling ashamed, they remembered that Jesus saw everything. Heaven knew they had stood faithfully for Him. That made their hearts strong. Then they went right back to teaching and preaching about Jesus.

Their story reminds us that when we are treated unfairly for loving Jesus, He can help us rejoice instead of feeling defeated. If we stay close to Him, He can fill our hearts so full of His love, courage, and hope that unkind words or unfair treatment cannot shake us.

☀️ True Story

In the early 1900s, a medical missionary named Eric B. Hare traveled to the deep jungles of Burma, a country now called Myanmar. He opened a clinic and a school to teach the local children about Jesus. When many of the young students gave their hearts to the Lord and decided to follow the Bible, the powerful village elders were furious.

The adults and other villagers constantly mocked the Christian children. They laughed at them, teased them, and called them foolish for giving up the village's traditional spirit worship. It was a very difficult, scary time for the young students. They could have easily become discouraged, yelled back, or run away crying. But Eric Hare taught them a better way.

When people laughed at them or made fun of their faith, the children stood together and sang hymns about Jesus. Instead of looking ashamed, their faces were bright with joy. Their songs rose above the teasing and reminded them that Jesus was with them.

The mockers expected the children to be afraid or angry, but the children answered with praise. The joyful, confident singing completely confused and silenced the people making fun of them.

Their story reminds us that when people make fun of us for loving Jesus, we do not have to be discouraged. We can remember that heaven sees, Jesus is near, and our reward is with Him. God can fill our hearts with so much joy that even unkind words cannot stop our song.

💬 Discussion Questions:

- What did Peter and John bravely tell the religious leaders when they were commanded to stop speaking about Jesus?
- What did the young students in Burma do when the village elders made fun of them for following the Bible?
- If someone makes fun of you for believing in Jesus, how can you remember heaven and stay joyful?

🎨 Activity:

Give everyone a small square of bubble wrap. Explain that the bubbles represent our hearts, and our fingers pressing down represent persecution or people making fun of us. Have them press the bubbles and listen to the loud "POP!" Explain that instead of being crushed quietly, the pressure actually creates a fun, joyful noise! When we are persecuted for loving Jesus, God gives us the power to "pop" with joy!

Persecution — Day 2



Listen to
Scripture Song:



Today's Promise (#197) — KJV

Matthew 5:38–42 "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."

Apply the Promise!

When someone treats us unfairly or hurts us, we don't need to hurt them back. Jesus gives us the amazing strength to "turn the other cheek" and respond to hatred with overwhelming love!

Bible Story (Matt. 26 & Luke 22)

Jesus lived a perfect life of love. He healed the sick, comforted the hurting, and taught people about His Father. But the proud religious leaders hated Him because His pure life showed the deep selfishness in their own hearts.

One night, guards arrested Jesus and brought Him to the palace of the high priest, desperate to find a reason to condemn Him to death. They paid men to tell terrible, twisted lies about the Savior, treating Him like a criminal even though He had done nothing wrong.

Through all the shouting and false accusations, Jesus stood perfectly calm and silent. His quiet dignity infuriated the high priest. Finally, the high priest demanded to know if Jesus was the Son of God. When Jesus answered with the truth, the leaders flew into a terrible rage.

They declared He was guilty of a crime and began to viciously mock Him. The guards blindfolded the Creator of the universe. They began spitting in His face and striking Him with their fists. One officer even slapped Jesus across the face, sarcastically demanding that He prophesy who had hit Him.

Jesus possessed limitless power. He easily could have called down ten thousand angels to instantly stop every cruel person in the room. But instead of returning an eye for an eye, Jesus quietly endured the agonizing humiliation. He proved that true strength is not losing our temper or fighting back. When others mock us or treat us unfairly, He can give us the strength to answer with grace and keep their wrong spirit from becoming our spirit!

True Story

In the early 1900s, a young Japanese Christian named Toyohiko Kagawa moved into a poor neighborhood in Kobe, Japan. He wanted to live among people who were suffering and show them the love of Jesus.

Toyohiko shared his food, clothing, and money with people in need. He taught children, helped the sick, and cared for those many others ignored.

Not everyone appreciated his kindness. One day, a violent gang leader approached the young missionary and demanded money. When Toyohiko gently refused to pay the bribe, the tough man flew into a terrible rage.

Without warning, the angry thug suddenly lashed out and struck Toyohiko brutally across the face. The heavy punch was so fierce that it actually knocked out several of his front teeth! The natural human instinct would be to fight back or scream for help.

But Toyohiko did something miraculous. With blood dripping from his mouth, the young missionary simply turned his head and calmly offered the angry thug his other cheek.

The man was stunned. Toyohiko's gentle response was so different from what he expected that it helped soften his heart.

Toyohiko Kagawa's story reminds us that returning evil for evil only keeps anger alive. When we belong to Jesus, He can help us stop the anger from bouncing back. We can choose gentleness, patience, and love, even when someone treats us unfairly.

Discussion Questions:

- When the religious leaders slapped and spit on Jesus, how did He react?
- When the violent gang leader knocked out Toyohiko Kagawa's teeth, what did the young missionary do?
- Imagine you are on the playground and someone pushes past you to steal the swing! What unexpected 'turn the other cheek' move could you use to show kindness?

Activity:

Have everyone stand in a circle. Gently toss a hard rubber ball against a hard, brick wall (or the floor) and watch it bounce aggressively right back! Now, toss the same hard ball directly into a soft, fluffy pillow. It instantly stops and drops to the ground. Explain that when people throw mean words or actions at us, being soft and forgiving completely stops the anger from bouncing back!

Persecution — Day 3



🎵 Listen to
Scripture Song:



Today's Promise (#198) — KJV

Matthew 5:43–44, 46 "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, 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... For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?"

💖 Apply the Promise!

It is incredibly easy to love our close friends, but Jesus calls us to a much higher standard. He gives us the supernatural power to actually love our enemies, pray for the people who are mean to us, and show kindness to those who want to see us fail!

📖 Bible Story (1 Samuel 24)

For years, King Saul hunted David and tried to kill him. David had done nothing wrong to Saul, but Saul was jealous and angry. David had to hide in caves and mountains to stay alive.

One afternoon, King Saul walked into a dark, cool cave to rest. He was unaware that David and his men were hiding at the very back of the exact same cave! David's men whispered that this was his chance to get rid of his enemy. David could have hurt Saul and ended years of running.

But David would not do it. He quietly cut off a corner of Saul's robe, but even that troubled his heart. He knew it was not his place to take revenge. David firmly told his men that he would never lift a hand to harm the king.

After Saul left the cave, David called out to him. He showed Saul the piece of cloth and explained that he could have hurt him, but chose not to. David wanted Saul to understand that he was not his enemy.

Saul was deeply moved. He realized David had treated him with more kindness than he deserved. David had the chance to repay evil with evil, but he chose mercy instead.

David trusted God to handle justice. He refused to let Saul's hatred turn his own heart hateful. Instead of using his power to destroy his enemy, David showed patience, respect, and trust in God. This story reminds us that loving our enemies does not mean pretending wrong is right. It means we give revenge to God, pray for those who hurt us, and refuse to let bitterness rule our hearts. When Jesus lives in us, He can give us the strength to answer hatred with mercy.

☀️ True Story

During World War II, an American airman named Jacob DeShazer flew on a dangerous mission over Japan. After his plane ran out of fuel, he had to parachute into enemy-held territory. He was captured and thrown into a prisoner-of-war camp. For years, the guards starved him and treated him terribly. Jacob's heart filled with bitter anger, and he desperately wanted revenge.

But one day, the guards allowed Jacob to read a Bible. He read the exact words of Jesus in Matthew 5 to "pray for them which despitefully use you." Jacob realized his hatred was not making him free; it was keeping his heart in another kind of prison. He knew he could not forgive on his own.

Jacob began to pray for the exact guards who were hurting him. He asked God to take away his hatred and give him love instead. Slowly, God answered that prayer. Jacob started treating his cruel guards with deep respect.

After the war ended, Jacob returned to Japan, not with bombs or revenge, but as a missionary. While he was there, he printed a little booklet sharing how Jesus had completely replaced his hatred with forgiveness. One of the Japanese men who read it was the famous pilot who led the attack on Pearl Harbor, and that booklet inspired him to give his heart to Jesus, too! Jacob spent the rest of his life preaching the gospel to the very nation he had once hated.

Jacob's story shows that when you choose to pray for your enemies, God can give you the supernatural power to genuinely love the people who hurt you the most.

💬 Discussion Questions:

- When King Saul walked into the cave, what did David do instead of hurting him?
- While locked in his prison cell, what did Jacob DeShazer start doing for the cruel guards?
- Jesus said it is very easy to love people who are nice to us. Why do you think choosing to pray for an "enemy" can actually heal our own hearts, too?

🎨 Activity:

Hand out small, blank cards. Tell the children to think of someone who frustrates them or is hard to get along with. Have them use bright, cheerful crayons to draw a beautiful picture or write a kind prayer specifically for that person! Explain that Jesus gives us the special power to create something beautiful and loving for the exact people who make things difficult for us.

Persecution — Day 4



🎵 Listen to
Scripture Song:



Today's Promise (#199) — KJV

Matthew 10:22, 28 "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved... And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." **Revelation 2:10** "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

💖 Apply the Promise!

When people hate us or treat us unfairly just for loving Jesus, we do not need to be afraid. If we stay brave and faithful to the very end, God promises us an eternal, beautiful crown of life!

📖 Bible Story (Acts 14)

Paul and Barnabas were preaching about Jesus in the city of Lystra. While they were there, God used Paul to heal a man who had never been able to walk. The people were amazed when they saw the man leap up and begin walking.

At first, the crowd was excited. They even wanted to treat Paul and Barnabas like gods. But Paul and Barnabas quickly stopped them. They told the people that they were only men and that everyone should turn from idols to the living God.

Then some angry men came from other cities and turned the crowd against Paul. The same people who had just been amazed by him now listened to lies about him. Soon the crowd became violent. They threw stones at Paul until they thought he was dead. Then they dragged his bruised body outside the city and left him there.

The believers gathered around Paul, probably wondering if he would live. Then, by God's mercy, Paul got up. His body was sore, but his faith was not broken. He did not decide that following Jesus was too hard or too dangerous.

Instead, Paul went back into the city. The next day, he left with Barnabas and continued preaching in another place. Later, he even returned to encourage the believers and remind them that following Jesus can include hardship.

Paul's story shows that people may praise us one day and reject us the next. They may misunderstand us, turn against us, or treat us unfairly because we love Jesus. But God can give us courage to stand up again, keep trusting Him, and stay faithful until the end.

☀️ True Story

In West Africa, a teenager named Ramata became very sick. After local Christians prayed for her, God healed her body. As she learned more about Jesus and His forgiveness, she made the life-changing decision to give her heart to Him.

But Ramata's family was angry about her new faith. They wanted her to stop following Jesus and return to their old religion. When she refused, they treated her cruelly and tried to make her give up her faith.

One day, they locked Ramata in a small room without food or water. They thought suffering would make her stop trusting Jesus. Ramata was afraid and weak, but she prayed, asking God for courage and strength to remain faithful. She could not see a way out, but she believed Jesus could still see her inside that dark room.

For four days, Ramata stayed locked inside. God did not forget her. When her family finally opened the door, they were shocked to see that she was still alive. Other Christians helped, and Ramata was released.

Even after that, life was not easy. Ramata's family still rejected her for many years. But she kept trusting Jesus, and God gave her strength to remain faithful.

Later, by God's grace, Ramata and her father forgave each other. Her story reminds us that people may mistreat us because we love Jesus, but they cannot take Jesus out of our hearts. We do not need to be afraid of those who hurt the body. If we stay faithful to Christ, He will give us courage, strength, and a reward that lasts forever.

💬 Discussion Questions:

- After the angry mob dragged Paul out of the city, what amazing thing did he do instead of running away in fear?
- When Ramata was locked in a dark room without food or water, what did she pray for instead of giving up her faith?
- Imagine someone tries to scare you by saying you can't be in their club if you love Jesus. What is a brave, confident way you could respond to them without being afraid?

🎨 Activity:

Have the children sit in a circle. Take a soft, lightweight ball (like a foam ball or a beach ball) and physically press it down hard under a pillow or a heavy blanket. Explain that persecution is when the world tries to press Christians down or make them afraid. Suddenly, pull the pillow away and watch the ball instantly pop right back into its original shape! Explain that just like Paul and Ramata, God gives us the supernatural power to "bounce back" with courage.

Persecution — Day 5



 Listen to
Scripture Song:



Today's Promise (#200) — KJV

2 Timothy 3:12 "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Luke 6:23 "Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven..."

1 Peter 3:14 "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;"

Apply the Promise!

When we suffer for doing what is right, we do not need to be afraid. Even though following Jesus can bring hard times, God promises that our heavenly reward will make us leap for joy!

Bible Story

Before Jesus died, His disciples were frightened. When soldiers came to arrest Him, they ran away. After Jesus was crucified, they hid behind locked doors, trembling with fear that the religious leaders would come to execute them, too. But after Jesus rose from the dead and filled them with the Holy Spirit, everything changed!

The disciples realized that if Jesus could conquer the grave, they had absolutely nothing left to fear on this earth. They boldly marched out of hiding and began preaching the gospel. The angry kings and religious leaders ordered them to stop, but the disciples loved Jesus too much to stay quiet.

Because they chose to live godly lives, they faced terrible persecution. Some of them were beaten. Some were put in prison. Later, many followers of Jesus suffered greatly because they would not give up their faith. But they remembered that people could hurt their bodies, but they could not take away eternal life with Christ.

The disciples did not become brave because persecution was easy. They became brave because Jesus was real to them. They knew He had conquered death, and they believed His promise of a heavenly reward.

Their story reminds us that following Jesus may bring hard times, but we do not need to be afraid. When we belong to Christ, He can give us courage to stay faithful. Even if people mock us, reject us, or treat us unfairly, Jesus sees, Jesus strengthens, and Jesus has a crown of life waiting for those who love Him.

True Story

In the 1800s, a ruler named Queen Ranavalona took the throne in the island of Madagascar. She despised the Christian missionaries who had recently brought the Bible to her country, and in a furious rage, she completely outlawed Christianity. She passed a new law declaring that anyone caught praying to Jesus, singing hymns, or even owning a tiny scrap of scripture would be punished or executed.

Thousands of new believers were forced to flee for their lives. But instead of abandoning their faith, the Christians of Madagascar went deep underground! They secretly hiked into the thick, treacherous jungles and hid inside dark, damp mountain caves. In the pitch-black shadows, they would light small fires, quietly sing praises to God, and carefully read their hidden, worn-out Bibles.

The queen's ruthless soldiers hunted them continuously. One of the first believers they captured was a brave young woman named Rasalama. The soldiers locked her in heavy iron chains and demanded that she give up the names of the other Christians hiding in the caves. But Rasalama completely refused to betray her Savior or her friends.

On the morning she was led to her execution, Rasalama did not cry or beg for mercy. Instead, she joyfully sang beautiful hymns the entire walk! Her breathtaking courage absolutely stunned the angry soldiers and deeply inspired the secret church. Because believers like Rasalama bravely endured the darkest persecution, the church in Madagascar secretly survived the queen's reign, proving that earthly rulers can never extinguish the glorious light of Christ!

Discussion Questions:

- The disciples went from hiding in a locked room to bravely giving their lives for Jesus. What do you think made them suddenly so courageous?
- When Rasalama was being led to her execution, what did she do instead of cry?
- Since most of us have freedom, how can we show God that we truly treasure His Word today?

Activity:

Turn off all the lights in the room so it is pitch-black! Give the children a small flashlight and a Bible. Have them build a quick "cave" using blankets and chairs, then crawl inside to read a verse together using only the flashlight. Explain that thousands of Christians around the world still have to hide in secret places just to read God's Word without getting arrested!