

“If You Follow Jesus, the World Will Hate You”
(2 Timothy 3:12)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

This morning, we saw Jesus cleanse the Temple,

And noted the following:

1. That Jesus was zealous for His Father’s glory,

And demonstrated that zeal by doing something to promote it –

He purged the Temple of those profiteering from God’s worship.

What does that say about the majority of religious programming we see in the media today?

2. We saw that He had the right to cleanse the Temple because of who He is –

The Son of God, the One whose Temple it was –

3. And that He exercised that zeal perfectly according to His Father’s will.

From this, we took away three principles:

1. That if we love Jesus and His Father,

We will also stand up for their honor –

The more we love them, the more we will stand up.

2. That we will do so according to our position and opportunities –

We don’t have Jesus’ authority,

But we do have that authority He’s given us –

Whether in government, family, and church.

Of course, there is also the authority that comes
 From the command He has given us in the church and society –
 To look out for our brothers and sisters in Christ,
 As well as for the good of all our neighbors.

3. And we saw that we will temper our zeal with grace according to the situation:

Jesus required more of those who knew and experienced more,
 But was more patient and gracious with those who knew and experienced less.
 Paul also exhorted us, especially when we're dealing with other believers,
 To make sure we deal with them gently.

“Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual,
 restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so
 that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thereby
 fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:1-2).

B. Preview.

But we should note that there is a price to pay for this zeal.

1. This was true of Jesus.

When they asked Him for a sign,
 The sign He gave them – the resurrection – was roughly still three years away.
 Consequently, they didn't see it, or believe it,
 And yet they left Him alone,
 Most likely because of the people who did believe, at least outwardly.
 But that didn't stop them from working secretly to subvert what He was doing,
 Nor did it override their fear that the Romans would come and take away their
 position.

And so Jesus would later pay for His zeal with His life.

2. What I want us to see this evening is that the same is true with regard to us.

If you love the Lord

And are zealous for His glory,

If you use your position and opportunities

To take a stand for Him,

To promote His truth,

Even if you express that truth in the most gracious way possible,

You will still be persecuted.

Paul writes, “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:12).

The question the Lord asks you is, Are you willing to pay this price?

Let’s consider three things:

1. That if you are a believer, you will live an openly godly life (you will be zealous for His glory).
2. That if you live an openly godly life, you will be persecuted.
3. That there are no exceptions to this rule.

II. Sermon.

A. First, let’s consider that if you are a believer, you will live an openly godly life.

1. This certainly follows from what we saw this morning.

- a. To be a Christian means to be a follower of Christ,

It means to imitate His example.

He openly lived the life His Father called Him to live.

If you are a believer, you will as well.

b. We also considered that the blessing of the New Covenant

Is that God puts His Law in your mind and writes it on your heart by His Spirit,

Giving you the power – because He gives you the desire – to obey it.

If you have this power/desire, you will live an openly godly life.

c. The third reason I would offer is that this is what God commands you to do.

Paul writes to the Ephesians, “For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; *walk as children of Light* (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), *trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord*. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret” (Eph. 5:8-12).

And our Lord says in the Sermon on the Mount, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. *Let your light shine before men* in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:14-16).

d. If you love Jesus, by the power of His Spirit,

You’ll want to obey Him by submitting to His command and following His example:

And so you will live an openly godly life.

You will practice righteousness.

John reminds us in 1 John 3:7-10 that this is the only practical, visible difference between the believer and the unbeliever,

“Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he

cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:7-10).

2. What does it mean to practice righteousness?

It means you’ll live according to His Word.

That’s why Paul writes to Timothy, in verses 14-17, “You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*”

If you are a believer, Jesus is being formed in you.

Jesus obeyed His Father’s commandments to redeem you to God

So that you could obey His commandments.

And He has given you His book to be your guide/manual on the Christian life,

That you might know Him,

And that you might know how to live the kind of life that pleases Him.

If you are a believer, you will read and follow it.

B. Second, our text reminds us, that if you live an openly godly life, you will be persecuted.

Paul couldn’t be any plainer than he is in our passage,

“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:12).

He wrote this from his own experience.

He says to Timothy, “Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, *and* sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium *and* at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!” (vv. 10-11).

This came as no surprise to him –

He didn’t begin to follow Jesus only to find out it wasn’t what he signed on for –

Jesus told him at the outset this would be the case.

When Jesus told Ananias to go, lay hands on and pray for Paul, and Ananias was reluctant because of what he had heard about him,

“The Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; *for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake*’” (Acts 9:15-16).

Jesus said this would be true of all who follow Him:

“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me” (John 15:18-21).

If you live like Jesus,

If you have something of His zeal,

If you act or speak for the glory of His name,

You will be persecuted.

Why will you be persecuted?

Because the people who live in this world aren’t basically good, but evil.

What Paul says would be true of those in the last days –

And I personally believe he was referring to the final days

Before God brought His judgment on Jerusalem –

Is equally true of those in the world today:

“For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these” (vv. 2-5).

They don't seem that bad when you bump into them in your neighborhoods or in the work place,

But that's because the Lord is restraining them.

If He was to subject them to the things that provoke their sins,

Or remove His restraint on them,

Then you'd see what they're really like.

Just read the newspaper, or watch the news.

Look at what's happening to those few brave souls

Who are willing to take a stand against the sins of our nation,

Or who are not willing to support the sinful acts of their neighbors.

We all still have something of the old man in us –

We all know what our sin makes us capable of.

Paul said these would also be in the church:

They would be “holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power” (v. 5).

They would outwardly behave like Christians –

Go through the right motions,

Say the right things –

But have nothing of the power of God's Spirit –

Not really love Him.

The world in the church can persecute you just as much or more

Than the world that's in the world.

The thing that highlights the evil of their sin

Is why they're persecuting you: Because you're trying to love them.

What does the Lord actually call you to do in living like Him?

To love God and your neighbor as yourself.

What does He send you to say to the world?

That they need to stop hating God and their neighbor,

And begin loving God, and their neighbor as themselves –

That they must be willing to turn from their hatred and trust in Christ.

What the world really hates is the kind of love God approves of –

And that is what shows sin to be so sinful.

C. Finally, Paul says there are no exceptions to this rule: “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (v. 12).

If you live with a zeal for God's glory –

If you openly love Him and your neighbor –

In the various positions God has given you –

As an officer of the state, as a husband, as parents,

As elders or deacons, as citizens or neighbors –

In the various opportunities God gives you in which to serve Him –

As you interact with others –

Even if you do it perfectly –

You will be harassed, oppressed, persecuted.

Jesus lived with this kind of zeal.

He openly loved His Father and His neighbor perfectly.

And yet He was hated and murdered by His own people –

The world in the church.

When you love others in this way and suffer for it,

It's not necessarily because you did it imperfectly –

Although for us, that's a possibility –

It's because darkness hates the light.

Jesus said, "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed" (John 3:19-20).

If you are going to serve the Lord as He calls you,

You will be persecuted.

The more effectively you serve Him,

The more you will be hated.

Are you willing to serve Him on these terms?

This is an important question,

Because the thing that effectively stops us more than anything else

In serving the Lord, in bringing the Gospel to others,

Is the possibility we'll be hated and persecuted,
 That we won't be accepted,
 Become the brunt of the world's jokes,
 That we'll have to stand on the outside,
 Or give up our chance to be something more in this world.

But that's exactly the price Jesus says you must be willing to pay
 If you are even to begin to follow Him.

He says in Luke 14:26-35, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand *men* to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

What if you're not willing to pay this price?

Is it really worth what you might gain? Not at all!

Jesus says, "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**" (Matt. 16:26-27).

If you're not willing to live for Christ,
 But embrace the world instead,
 You might have fun for a season,

But afterwards it will cost you your soul.

To escape hell and to be in heaven forever

Is worth any price you might have to pay.

Paul says you must be willing to suffer persecution.

“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (v. 12).

Are you willing to pay that price?

If you want to see heaven, you must.

If there is any hope that our Lord’s kingdom will advance,

We must all be willing to pay it.

May He give us all the grace to do so. Amen.

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