



# OVERCOMING OPPOSITION

## Matthew 5:10-12

- Jesus - *“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* (Matthew 5:10-12 NIV)
- **Christians are the most persecuted people on Earth around the world.**
- **In the United States we face mostly *silent oppression* - we’re pressured to be quiet in regards to our beliefs and ethics.**
- Jesus - *“God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right . . . God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you . . . because you are My followers.”* (Matthew 5:10-11)
- **People dislike real Christians because of the lives we live and the Lord we love.**
- *“Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”* (2 Timothy 3:12)
- **Christianity is not for weaklings - it takes courage to boldly live for the Lord.**
- ***How are we to respond when we face opposition or persecution from others?***

### ***When Dealing With Opposition:***

### **WE HAVE SOME TRUTHS TO CONSIDER**

#### ***We Need To Remember That:***

- **OPPOSITION CAN MAKE US MORE LIKE JESUS**
  - Jesus - *“If the world hates you, remember that it hated Me. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you.”* (John 15:18-19)
  - **To become like Jesus (Romans 8:29, Ephesians 4:13) we have to go through what Jesus went through.**
  - *“If you are insulted because you bear the name of Christ, you will be blessed, for the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you.”* (1 Peter 4:14)
  - **When we are criticized because of our devotion to the Lord we should consider that a compliment.**
- **OPPOSITION CAN DEEPEN OUR FAITH**
  - **If we don’t have opposition, we won’t grow in our faith.**

- *“We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment.”* (Romans 5:3-5)
- **OPPOSITION WILL BRING US ETERNAL REWARDS**
  - Jesus - *“God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you . . . Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven.”* (Matthew 5:11-12)
  - **We don’t get rewarded for being rude or obnoxious - we get rewarded for being like Jesus.**

***When Dealing With Opposition:***

**WE HAVE SOME PRINCIPLES TO LIVE BY**

***When Dealing With Opposition:***

- **WE SHOULDN’T BE SURPRISED BY PERSECUTION**
  - *“Don’t be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening.”* (1 Peter 4:12)
  - Jesus - *“Do you remember what I told you? ‘A slave is not greater than the master.’ Since they persecuted Me, naturally they will persecute you.”* (John 15:20)
- **WE SHOULDN’T BE WORRIED ABOUT OUR FATE**
  - *“Even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don’t worry or be afraid of their threats. Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life.”* (1 Peter 3:14-15)
  - **We overcome our fears by focusing on God and trusting in His provision.**
  - The Lord - *“Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”* (Joshua 1:9)
  - **We overcome our fears by focusing on the Lord and depending on His presence.**
  - *“Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? Does it mean He no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? . . . No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.”* (Romans 8:35, 37)
- **WE SHOULDN’T BE ASHAMED OF OUR FAITH**
  - *“It is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by His name!”* (1 Peter 4:16)
  - **We don’t need people’s approval to be fulfilled.**
  - *“Stand firm against the Devil and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering.”* (1 Peter 5:9)
- **WE SHOULDN’T BE HARD TO DEAL WITH**

- *“We are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.”* (Ephesians 6:11-12)
- **We need to remember that Satan is our enemy, not other people, and he is the one who brings opposition against us.**
- *“A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone . . . and be patient with difficult people. Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people’s hearts, and they will learn the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil’s trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants.”* (2 Timothy 2:24-26)
- **We must refuse to retaliate when people try to hurt us.**
- *“Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God.”* (Romans 12:18-19)
- *“I will never allow another man to control my life by making me hate him.”* (George Washington Carver)
- *“He (Jesus) did not retaliate when He was insulted, nor threaten revenge when He suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.”* (1 Peter 2:23)
- **WE SHOULDN’T BE AFRAID TO SHARE OUR FAITH**
  - *“A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria. . . . But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went.”* (Acts 8:1, 4)
  - **To light up our world we must shine bright when the darkness is closing in around us (Matthew 5:16).**
- **WE SHOULDN’T BE DISTRESSED BY OUR CIRCUMSTANCES**
  - Jesus - *“God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you . . . Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven.”* (Matthew 5:11-12)
  - **We can rejoice when experiencing persecution because we know we’re being like Jesus and we will experience great rewards in the coming days.**
- *“Those who suffer . . . should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.”* (1 Peter 4:19)
- **People go through suffering caused by life circumstances (John 16:33), sinful decisions (Galatians 6:7) or because of persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).**
- Jesus - *“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven.”* (Matthew 5:43-45)
- **May the trials and sufferings we experience make us better rather than bitter.**
- *“These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold . . . When your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you*

*much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.” (1 Peter 1:6-7)*

## **QUESTIONS TO PONDER**

- **Why are Christians persecuted around the world?**
- **What kind of persecution do we face here in the U.S.?**
- **How am I to respond to persecution or opposition?**