

As far as having Blessed Homes, Jesus taught in Matthew 5, “Blessed are the Homes that Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness.” “Blessed are the Peacemakers and Blessed are the Pure in Heart.” But Jesus also taught, something that many of us may find odd, “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness!”

We’ve been celebrating the fact that...

WE ARE NOT JUST A CHRISTIAN HOME. WE ARE A CHRIST-CENTERED FAMILY.

But often when we start living a Christ centered life in our homes, we find that we do things differently than others. We think differently and we act differently which can bring persecution in various forms.

- **IF YOU ARE A CHRIST-CENTERED FAMILY, YOU WILL BE PERSECUTED.**

You might be thinking, “Whoa, wait a minute Pastor Scott, that’s not what I signed up for. I’ve got enough going on in my life right now. You didn’t tell me that a Blessed Home would be persecuted.” But that is what Jesus said...

Matthew 5:10-12 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. (You are being associated with Jesus!)

12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (You are in good company)

What does it mean to be persecuted for Christ? To be persecuted for righteousness sake?

Persecuted because of righteousness basically means we are living a righteous life, in right standing with God, therefore we are being persecuted for the way you live.

Wait a minute, I thought if we let our light shine before others, they would see our good deeds and glorify our Father in Heaven? Right?

Matthew 5:14-16 14 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Ultimately this will be true, but sometimes people don’t always give glory to God at first, when they see our good works.

- Often our light makes them feel more in darkness.
- Our right standing with God makes them feel less than right with God.
- The blessings of God on our homes may even make others jealous.

Well, that’s a good thing right? That will make them repent and come to Jesus too?

Or it will just make them mad and they will strike out against us and our families. It could go either way.

Some will say, “*Well that’s because you Christians are always acting holier and preaching to everyone else*”. This was not the case with Cain and Able.

- Abel didn’t preach to Cain. Abel’s righteous life bothered Cain.
- God was pleased with the sacrifice of Abel and not pleased with the sacrifice of Cain. Why? Abel did things God’s way, according to God’s desire.
- That resulted in persecution? Yes, Cain killed his brother Abel.

Sometimes it is not what you did or didn't do. You are just persecuted for being righteous.

- Christians are often times made fun of for not having sex outside of marriage.
- Persecuted because they don't go to all the movies that others go to.
- Laughed at for not playing in a particular sports league during church.
- Not social drinking, cursing, or cheating their employees out of payable work hours.

“Everyone else is doing it. Why don't you?” Because we are a Christ Centered Family.

PREPARING YOUR FAMILY FOR PERSECUTION

1) EXPECT IT.

2 Timothy 3:12 **In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.**

- Homeschooling families home school because of their family values and conviction. They are trying to do what they feel is right for their families. I have NO problem with that. But others do. I think Homeschoolers can tell you what persecution is all about.
- When Janet and I helped start a Christian School, I was surprised at the kick back and trash talking. I expected it from the world, but some of the most severe was from other Christians.
- Our family was criticized by others because we wouldn't let our children watch PG 13 movies. (I told Josh Brolin that in California, about “The Goonies”. He just laughed and shook his head.) But I knew my family was getting it and understanding “the why” behind the rules, when my 12-year-old daughter called me from a sleep over and asked, “Daddy, they are watching this movie, and I wanted to check to see if it's ok or not.”
- Back in the VHS days we put a profanity filter on our TV. It made some movies almost impossible to watch. Our children bore some harsh jokes from their so-called friends because of it.

Christ-centered families are going to be different, and it may cost you some things.

- You might not get invited to those neighborhood pool parties anymore.
- You may not get that promotion if you don't party with the boss.
- You may lose that dream boyfriend or girlfriend when they find out you are not promiscuous.
- College professors may give you bad scores on your paper if you disagree with their views.

But Here's The Big Picture

John 15:18-20 “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. (Does the world love you as its own?)

As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

20 Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

Next Step: This week our family will discuss what we do for righteousness sake that might cause a bit of persecution. I will help my family understand the “why” behind the persecution.

2) ENDURE IT.

1 Corinthians 4:12 ...When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we **endure it;**

- Don't whine, gripe about it, or retaliate. The crazy path Joseph walked to become the one who saved Egypt and Israel from starvation was one of severe hardship and persecution. But when I read his story, I can't find any references where he complained- not one.
- Do not repay evil for evil.
1 Peter 3:9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.
- What about Jesus on the cross? Did he complain, whine, or retaliate? No. What did he say?
Luke 23:34 "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."
- You get passed by on the job, endure it and keep working hard.
- You are criticized for FPU by your extended family, endure it and keep doing the right thing.
- Work mates think you are stupid for using your vacation for a mission trip, endure it.
- Folks laugh when you drive an old reliable car instead if a new one you can't afford, endure it.

Why? ... for theirs (yours) is the kingdom of heaven. You get to experience Kingdom living!

The odd thing is that this persecution often binds families together in unity as hard times tend to do. It helps your family have a strong identity in Christ.

- **When family identity is strong, peer pressure is weak.**
- **When family identity is weak, peer pressure is strong.** Expect it. Endure it.

Next Step: This week our family will begin to understand, pray for, and bless our persecutors. In doing so we will inherit God's blessings.

3) EMBRACE IT.

1 Peter 4:12-13 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

1 Peter 4:16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that **you bear that name.**

- Your friends at work make fun of you for praying before lunch. *Embrace the Christ likeness.*
- After the big game, your picked on because you won't go the bar. *Embrace the Christ likeness.*
- Your boss is displeased because you decide not to do a profitable deal that's unethical. *Embrace the Christ likeness.*

**If you are a Christ-centered family—you will be persecuted.
Don't worry when you are...worry when you are not.**

Matthew 5:12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Next Step: This week I will help my family understand why we should rejoice and be glad during persecution.