

The background features a faint, light-colored cross centered behind the text. The cross is composed of two overlapping, slightly offset shapes, creating a subtle, ethereal effect. The background is a light, textured grey. In the corners, there are decorative elements consisting of dark red, stylized leaf patterns on thin, winding stems, resembling autumn foliage or grapevines.

The Suffering Choice

Matthew 5:10-12; Selected Scriptures

Sermon Series: Life's Healing
Choices

Matthew 5:10-12 (NIV)

- 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. 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.

Introduction

- Romans 8:29 (Msg) , *“God knew what He was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love Him along the same lines as the life of His Son.... We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in Him.”*

Introduction (cont'd)

- Week 1- ***The Reality Choice***
- Week 2- ***The Hope Choice***
- Week 3- ***The Commitment Choice***
- Week 4- ***The Satisfaction Choice***
- Week 5- ***The Forgiveness Choice***
- Week 6- ***The Heart Choice***

Introduction (cont'd)

- **The Suffering Choice**: to consciously choose to suffer discomfort, insults and abuse for the kingdom of God.

Introduction (cont'd)

- 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NLT), *“As the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him and reflect His glory even more.”*

I. The Recipients of Persecution (v.10)

- ***His Disciples***
- The world persecutes Christians today for the same reason they persecuted Christ. It's because they're different, and that difference is fundamental.

1 Peter 4:12-13 (NIV)

- *“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 4:14-16 (NIV)

- *¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.
¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶
However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.”*

II. The Range of Persecution (v.11)

- Persecution comes in many forms and can range from mild to severe. Verse 11 mentions 3 forms in which persecution can come. It can come:
 - *Verbally*
 - *“Blessed are you when people insult you ...”*

The Range of Persecution (cont'd)

- ***Physically***
- “...persecute you...”
- ***Maliciously***
- “...and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.”

The Range of Persecution (cont'd)

- What these verses DO NOT say
- 1. These verses do not say "Blessed are they which are persecuted because they're obnoxious."
- 2. These verses do not say "Blessed are they which are persecuted because they were arrogant and abusive in their attempts to witness."

The Range of Persecution (cont'd)

- What these verses DO say
- 1. It is not merely those who are persecuted that are blessed, but those who are persecuted for "righteousness' sake."
- 2. To be righteous means to be Christ-like. Those are blessed who are persecuted for being like Christ (1 Peter 3:14-17; 4:14-16).

III. The Response to Persecution (v.12)

- We need an attitude of **ENDURANCE**.
- Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV), *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **longsuffering**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”*

The Response to Persecution (cont'd)

- God is more concerned with your **CHARACTER** than He is with your **COMFORT**.
- Ephesians 4:1-3 (NKJV), *“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

4 Steps to Handling Harassment

- 1. Recognize the SOURCE.
- Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV), *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*

4 Steps to Handling Harassment (cont'd)

- **2. Refuse to RETALIATE.**
- Romans 12:17-19 (HCSB), *“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Try to do what is honorable in everyone’s eyes. If possible, on your part, live at peace with everyone. Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for His wrath. For it is written: Vengeance belongs to Me; I will repay, says the Lord.”*

4 Steps to Handling Harassment (cont'd)

- 3. Respond POSITIVELY.
- Romans 12:21 (NKJV), *“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*
- Matthew 5:44 (NKJV), *“Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”*

4 Steps to Handling Harassment (cont'd)

- 4. **Rest in God's PROTECTION.**
- Psalms 37:7-9 (NKJV), *“Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret--it only causes harm. For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the Lord, They shall inherit the earth.”*

Invitation

- Are you being persecuted?
- How do you deal with harassment?
- **He is no fool who follows God – even if he is criticized.**