

Confident Witnesses in a Challenging World

Matthew 10:21-33

Pastor Steve Mueller

Do we live in an age of persecution?

Listening to many Christians, you would think that we are under the greatest persecution ever seen.

But these do seem to be harder days to be Christian.

Religious freedom seems to be under assault.

Partly because of the confusion of morality and Christianity

Take a religious stand and you're branded intolerant.

Taking a stand for what you believe in is difficult – but that's the point. What does it cost to take a popular stand?

Jeremiah knew times of persecution and saw God's faithfulness.

He brought an unpopular message to Israel.

He complains to God about it.

"I've become a laughingstock... you have deceived me" (Jer 20:7)

But he was compelled to bring this message.

"...there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot." (Jer 20:9)

He bore the cost for being faithful, but God was faithful to him.

"The LORD is with me as a dread warrior... Sing to the LORD; praise the LORD! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers." (Jer 20:11-13)

Jesus teaches His disciples that they will face persecution and have to bear the cross.

"Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death,²² and you will be hated by all for my name's sake." (Mt 10:21-22)

Jesus does not say such things to frighten us but to prepare us.

Jesus does not send us into difficult times alone, He goes before us.

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master." Mt. 20:24-25

He faced true persecution and oppression.

He suffered the only truly innocent death that we might be secure.

He gives us His wages instead of our own. (Rom 6:23)

God promises protection – and He keeps His promise.

"do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." (Mt 10:28)

He who knows the sparrows and numbers your hairs knows what you face. (Mt 10:29-31)

We who acknowledge Him will be acknowledged by him

"everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 10:32)

God calls us to faith, and sends us into the world.