LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Matthew 5 (Part 8) :10-16

You Are The Light of the World

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

I have to be honest with you that whenever we are dealing in the scripture with something related to Christian persecution, it's not uncommon for me to kind of get a little bit of a blank stare from the people who are listening. And we know what it says and we know all that stuff, but frankly here in the United States of America, we really know very little about this subject from an experiential standpoint. We've heard that there is persecution currently in other parts of the world. We know obviously the biblical references to the persecution of the church, but to be completely honest with you, even though we are living in a culture today that is becoming increasingly uncomfortable with our public declarations of faith, for the most part there haven't been any strong outbreaks of persecution upon the church and so forth. And so because of that, we tend to kind of have a hard time relating to some of these verses.

I mean persecution, persecution, you know. But you know, this is God's Word. And first of all, number one, as Christians I think we need to just know what the scripture is revealing to us here. Secondly, you know, this is a subject that Jesus talks about quite a bit. And I think because of that, it's important that we just know and we understand what the Word has to say about persecution.

And finally, you know, I can't guarantee you that an outbreak of real genuine persecution isn't that far off, you know. I mean, we seem to be kind of primed and cocked, if you know what I mean, in our culture today, in our world today. The level of uncomfortableness, is that a word? With Christian values and Christian convictions and so forth is growing in the United States of America. When we will see a flat-out outbreak of attacks upon the church, I don't know.

But it could be that it's something that might be soon. So what I want to do is I want to take the verses that we're looking at here today about persecution, and I want to advance them in the form of three simple questions that we are going to ask and hopefully answer also this morning. And I'll put them on the screen for you. They are, first of all, why are Christians persecuted? Secondly, how did Jesus expect his followers to react to that persecution?

And then finally, what warnings did Jesus give about negative reactions to persecution? Now, that's not negative reactions by other people, it's negative reactions by us. In other words, what warnings did he give us about negatively reacting to the negative reactions that we receive? So we'll deal with those things. Let's start with the first question.

Why are Christians persecuted? Well, I don't know if this makes you feel any better at the outset of this, but I will tell you that it's not personal. The reason that the world doesn't like you is not you, at least as it relates to your faith in Christ and so forth. In fact, it goes way beyond you. Here's the answer to the question that is given to us in kind of a condensed form in the scripture.

It was spoken here in the third chapter of John, and it goes like this. This is the verdict. Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. And everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light. Why?

For fear that his deeds will be exposed. All right. I'm going to leave this passage up on the screen here for you for a little while because it's important we know and understand what this says to us. It gives us a great deal of insight and understanding into why believers, frankly, throughout the ages have experienced persecution at the hand of the world. It begins by saying light has come into the world.

And, of course, the perfect demonstration of that light, the most perfect demonstration, of course, is Jesus Christ himself and his work that he came to do on the cross. Light has come into the world. Jesus came to die on the cross for our sins, and there's no greater expression of the light of God. And, of course, that's a metaphoric statement. We'll talk about what it means in a moment.

But there's no greater expression of God's love, his power, his goodness, and so forth than in the person of Jesus Christ manifest among us, born as a man, dying on the cross for you and I. So light has come into the world. But it says here that people have rejected that light, and we know how they do that. They reject the cross of Jesus Christ, right? And we're told in this verse why they reject the cross.

It's because they loved darkness. And darkness, of course, means they loved their sin more than anything else. They were unwilling to let go of it, and so there you have it. And we know what that means. We know what that's like to love something so much that we don't want to let go.

We can all relate to that. Have you ever had something in your life that you wanted so badly that you just didn't want anybody saying anything? You didn't want anybody speaking negatively about that thing that you love, that thing you love to do, that person you like to be with, that situation that you're in, whatever it may be, you know that it's something that you probably shouldn't be doing. In fact, you may

even know for sure that it's something you shouldn't be doing or whatever, but you don't want anybody telling you that because it just, frankly, just kind of rains on your parade, and it just bums you out, and you don't want people bumming you out all the time, right? Have you ever been there?

You're going to do something, but you're not going to tell anybody, and you're willing to deal with the fallout. You just don't want anybody coming up to you ahead of time and going, what are you doing? Why are you doing that? That's wrong. You don't want anybody telling you it's wrong.

Why? Because you love it, and you want to do it, and that's what this verse says. Men refuse to come into the light because they love darkness. Well, what is coming into the light do? We know what light does.

It illuminates, right? It shows things for what they are. We don't want to see it for what it is. We just want to enjoy it. I've been there.

I think you probably have too, okay? So what is the response of those who want very much to do what they want to do, and they don't want anybody telling them not to do it or telling them that it's wrong? Well, they're going to get rid of the light, right? They want to extinguish the light. People, that's what persecution is all about.

Persecution is darkness trying to shut off the light. You know, it's kind of like, hey, shut off that light, would you? I don't want to see what's going on here. I just want to enjoy it. Sin lives in darkness.

It breeds in darkness. It flourishes in darkness. Light exposes sin, and that's why darkness hates the light. Well, here's the good news. You ready for this?

You are the light bearer. We are the body of Christ, the bearers of light in this world. That's our job. That's our calling. And so consequently, we are going to experience the brunt of opposition as it relates to just simply living for Jesus Christ.

Do you remember what he said, actually, in verse 14? Look at verse 14 right there in your Bible, the very first part of verse 14. It says, you are the light of the world. That's Jesus talking to you and me. You are the light of the world.

You know, earlier he said, I am the light of the world. Now he says, you are the light of the world. Speaking of himself, he says, this light shines only for a short time because he knew that his ministry on earth would just exist for a short period of time, and then he would go to be with the Father. Well, what happens to the light after that? Well, it gets passed on to me and you, the body of Christ.

We take over shining the light and so forth. So there's a light in the world. There's darkness in the world. They're diametrically opposed to one another. And so what is the light and what is the darkness?

These are obviously symbolic terms. Well, really, they're kind of the differences in values, beliefs, you know? We have these two kind of irreconcilable value systems. One that comes from the world and is a product of man and his wisdom and what he wants to do. And the other value system comes from the Bible, comes from the wisdom of God.

It is part of the kingdom of God. And they clash all the time. Bam! Just always hitting heads together. And persecution is simply that clash between those two irreconcilable value systems.

They are in total conflict with one another. They absolutely have nothing in common. And when you and I get serious... about our walk with Jesus Christ, and we begin to reflect the values of the kingdom, we're going to attract opposition because of the opposing views of the values of this world, okay? By the way, you know, I'm learning over the years.

I was sharing with our kids at refuge last Sunday night that asking the question of people today, are you a Christian, is a exercise in futility. You guys have heard me share that before, but I don't ask people anymore, are you a Christian? Because it's a ridiculous question. You know, about 95% of the people in the United States would answer yes to that, and the majority of those don't have a clue even what it means. But people will quickly say, oh, I'm a Christian.

And do you believe in the Bible? Well, no. Who was Jesus? Oh, he was a cool guy. Really?

And you're a Christian? Oh yeah, oh yeah. And then you start asking them questions like, you know, what makes a Christian, you know, and how do you become one, and then you start finding out kind of what's really going on. Let me define this idea of reflecting the light of Christ, okay? It's not just being a Christian, it's living a godly life, okay?

I mean, if we're going to really put the rubber on the road, as the saying goes, then that's what it's really all about. It's not just simply becoming a Christian from the standpoint of putting my faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. That's all good and fine and wonderful, and I hope you've done that. It's when we begin to live out that life that we begin to gain that sort of that opposition from the world. As we begin to express the values of the kingdom of God, and they begin to radically alter our lives, and we live a different life than the one that we were living before, and so forth.

Here's how the Apostle Paul put it when he wrote to Timothy in his second letter. He said, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. There's your promise verse for the week. Put that up on your fridge. Like, I'm gonna claim the promise of God.

If I walk in a godly manner, I will suffer and experience persecution. Did you notice that Paul didn't write to Timothy and say everyone who accepts Jesus Christ will be persecuted? Because it is possible, and we'll talk about this toward the end of this, but it is possible to be a believer from the standpoint that I've accepted the Lord and what he did for me on the cross, but I'm really not going to live it in any kind of an outward way. I'm gonna kind of, you know, keep things cool, keep my distance. I'm just not gonna really, you know, try to be very active in the shining of that light.

I've accepted the light, but as far as conveying it to others, well, you know, that'll get you in trouble. So please understand, the issue at hand with Christian persecution is not about simply becoming a Christian. It has to do with living the life that Jesus calls you and I to live in the world, which is completely and diametrically opposed to the values of the world. That's what gets us into trouble. That's why the world wants to extinguish the light in our lives that is emanating from our lives and so forth.

There's a whole lot more that I could probably say about this subject of why we are or we experience persecution, but that's probably gonna have to suffice for now. The second question that we said that we were going to look at is, how did Jesus expect his followers to react to persecution? This is just another example of the upside down kingdom. Whereas the world would expect to people opposing them by, you know, getting discouraged and so forth. Look what Jesus tells us in verse 12 in your Bible there.

It says, rejoice and be glad. Why? Because great is your reward in heaven. For in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. It's pretty amazing stuff.

I find it particularly interesting that our God is taking note of the times that you and I run into opposition, however severe it may be, related to our faith in Jesus Christ and our willingness to convey his light to a lost and dying world. He's taking note. And there is a reward that awaits you and I someday in keeping with that level of persecution. And it shows that we're genuine, you know? I mean, if we're getting persecution for our faith in Jesus Christ, and I'm not talking about persecution because we're obnoxious.

I'm talking about persecution that comes out of the fact that we are truly conveying the character and values of the kingdom of God to a lost and dying world. There is a reward. What is the reward? I don't know. I wish I could tell you.

The Bible says, no, eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him. So I wish I could sit and tell you that. It kind of makes it hard to get all excited, doesn't it? I mean, have you ever told your kids, kids, we've got a surprise for you? They go, what?

You go, not telling. What are they going to do? It's kind of tough to kind of, you know, get all excited about something you can't relate to and you don't know anything about. By faith, however, we know that what God has prepared for us is good stuff. And that alone can kind of get our senses a little excited about what is coming down the pike.

So we'll just kind of leave it there. But our third question that we're dealing with here this morning, and we'll put up on the screen here, is what warnings did Jesus give about the negative reactions we might have to persecution? And he begins to address that. Look again in your Bible in verse 13. Chapter 5, verse 13.

Here's what Jesus says. He says, listen, you are the salt of the earth. Well, what if the salt loses its saltiness? How can it be made salty again? It's no longer good for anything.

Just to be thrown out, trampled by men. And then he says, also, you know, you are the light of the world. But he says, you know, a city on a hill can't be hidden, nor should it be. He says, neither do people light a lamp and then cover it up, put it under a bowl. Why in the world would you do something like that?

Rather, they put it on its stand and it gives light to everyone in the house. And then he says in verse 16, in the same way, let your light shine before men. Why? So that they may see your good deeds. And what that good deeds means, let them see what God has done in you so that they would give glory, he says, to your father or praise to your father in heaven.

I find it interesting that these verses come right on the heels of what Jesus says about persecution, that we're going to be persecuted when we want to live a godly life. These verses are the very next thing we read. Why are they here? Because there is a temptation. When we receive opposition to our walk with the Lord and simply living our life for Jesus, there is the temptation for us then to withdraw, to draw back and kind of go, whoa, I wasn't kind of expecting that or that was a little harsh.

And you know, the fact of the matter is we all like to be liked. We all want to be liked. I want to be liked, don't you? Don't you like it when people like you? And isn't it kind of a drag when people don't like you?

I don't like it when people don't like me. Pastor Paul, I don't like you. That's enough to ruin my day. So there's this desire, you know. And so when now I'm living my life for Jesus and somebody comes along and they're like, hey, shut off that light.

I don't want to see what your light is showing me. Turn it off. And of course they never say that. What they do is they come out and they say, oh, you self-righteous, smug Christians. Why don't you just go live somewhere by yourself and leave us alone?

We don't want your weird, crazy man-made religion. So they come up with all these sort of, you know, statements and phrases to try to make you look like the bad guy because you're living for Christ, wanting to live a godly life and so forth. And that hurts. And that can, you know, that can affect me to the point where I may be tempted to be something I am not. Do you see what Jesus is saying here?

He says, listen, take salt for example. Salt is made for a purpose to be salty. And if it loses its ability to simply be what it is, what it is purposed to be, it is not good for anything beyond that. What do you do with salt if it doesn't do what salt does? Now, I've heard someone say from a scientific level that, you know, technically speaking, salt cannot lose its saltiness.

That's not the point. Jesus isn't making a scientific statement. He's saying, what if the purpose that something is created for ceases to be its purpose? What are you going to use it for? You know, nothing.

Toss it out, throw it away. Do you understand what Jesus is saying to you? You have a purpose. It is to flavor the world and to cause a resistance of sin. Do you know that salt was used before the days of refrigeration to actually retard the decomposition process of meat and that sort of thing?

And if you use salt in a proper sort of a way, meat could last for a long time, even without refrigeration. You know what happens if your refrigerator or your freezer breaks down, the compressor goes out, and you come home to find a pool of water on the floor, and you've pretty much got to throw everything out. But salt can be used as a preservative. Most of us know that, but it applies to the role that you and I have in the world, that shining of our light, but also that being salt in the world to be that preservative against the decomposition and deterioration of this world through sin. That's your calling.

That's your role, and mine too. So what if we just stop being what we are? Well, what are you going to do? Did you ever stop to think about the fact that your purpose, that God put you here is to be salt and light? You know, we get so fixated on our job and what we've planned to do and what we've been schooled to do, and it becomes our identity.

You know, before I was walking with the Lord, there was only one thing I ever wanted to do. From the earliest days when I turned on a radio, I wanted to be a disc jockey. I wanted to work in rock and roll radio, and I did that. In fact, I started working when I was 15 years old in a radio station a little close to home, and I moved on from radio station to radio station, and I loved what I did, but it defined me. It was my purpose.

I literally got up in the morning and went to bed at night to work on the radio. And then I got saved. And I realized God didn't put me on this earth to work on the radio. I mean, it's okay that somebody can work on the radio. It's okay to do what you do.

Whatever it is you do, great, wonderful, do it. There's nothing wrong with what you do, but it's not your purpose. Your purpose is to be salt and light. God will use the job that you do. He'll work within the context of what you do, but you know, it's funny when we meet somebody, we get in a room and say, hey, how are you?

My name is Aaron. My name is Paul. Yeah, yeah, yeah. What do you do for a living, we say to them. Have you ever had somebody walked up to you and go, hi, hi, nice to meet you.

What is your purpose in life? Now, that'd be a little weird, wouldn't it? What is your purpose in life? Why are you here? Why do you exist, you know?

Why are you on this earth? Oh, I don't know, just to eat and live, I suppose, or something like that. No, you are here by God. He has purposed your life to be a reflection of his own glory and goodness and the values of the kingdom and to be salt and light in a world that is dark and deteriorating and decomposing right before your eyes. That's why you're here.

And all the other trappings and distractions that come along in life are to come under the shadow of what our purpose is before God, to live our lives for him. And so he uses these wonderful pictures of salt and light. And just like he used with salt becoming non-salt, I don't know what other way to term it. He says, what if light doesn't do what it was intended to do? Can you imagine somebody, you know, back in those days, lamps obviously were oil-burning vessels, usually clay vessels that had olive oil in them, and then a wick that was laid out into a little opening from the thing, and they would light that, and it would draw the oil from the lamp.

That's how they illuminated their homes and so forth. He says, think about this for just a minute. Would somebody light that lamp and then put a bowl over the top of them? Go there, good, perfect. No, that's dumb.

It's a misuse of the lamp. Furthermore, it's a ridiculous sort of a thing because the purpose of the lamp is to illuminate, to shine into the darkness that people might see their way, right? Do you guys know what your purpose in life is? It's to be a light, to illuminate so that people might see their way to come to Christ. That's your purpose.

Why in the world would you take a lamp and then cover it up? That's ridiculous, it's dumb. Nobody would do that. It doesn't make any sense. And yet Christians do it all the time.

And it's a sad sort of a situation. Why is it that we bend to the pressure of the world? Well, because the world's really good at putting on pressure. I mean, they really are. And they've got it down.

And they've got all kinds of arguments that can weaken our determination and our conviction to live that godly life that God has called us to. One of the ways they like to do it is through the doctrine of tolerance. You hear about that a lot today. And I'm okay. I mean, tolerance is an okay thing from general sorts of perspectives.

But when it gets to the point where the world defines it, it goes too far. Because the world essentially defines tolerance as never asserting any belief or conviction that opposes any other belief or conviction. And that's how the world defines tolerance. And they're very intolerant of people who disagree. And there are things that you and I believe, because Jesus taught us in the word, that appear very intolerant from a worldly standpoint.

Let me give you just one example. John 14, verse six. Jesus said, I am the way. I am the truth. He said, I am the life.

And look at what he goes on to say. No one comes to the Father except through me. Now, by the definition of the world's understanding of tolerance, that is an intolerant statement. And the reason it's intolerant by their definition is because it's exclusive. Because we are conveying to the world what Jesus said about himself, which is he is not just a way.

He is not just a truth. He is not just a life. He is the way and the truth and the life. And no one comes to the Father except through him. That's it.

And the world wants to believe in this pluralistic sort of a multitude of ways to reach God, to reach heaven or whatever they want to call it. And they'll say, you know, in our great and wonderful tolerance, we're willing to embrace you Christians from the standpoint that Jesus is a way, but the moment you guys start saying Jesus is the way, the only way, well, that's where we put our foot down because you're now

being intolerant of other people's beliefs. And that can just get hammered in our hearts and minds to the point where eventually we just begin to back away. And we start to lose our savor from a salt standpoint. We start to dim our light from an illumination standpoint.

And pretty soon we're just kind of blending in, embracing the values of the world, or if not embracing, at least no longer opposing in any way. And it's really kind of a sad sort of a situation. There's a great quote by one of my favorite authors, A.W. Tozier, that I want to give you here on the screen. It goes like this.

He says, I can only say, let us be tolerant wherever we can be, and let us be charitable toward all those we cannot tolerate, but let us not imagine, even for a minute, he says, that we are called upon to take an on-the-fence stand. And he's talking about as it relates to the truths of the Bible. He says, listen, when it comes to the truth of God's word, great, let's be tolerant. And when we can't tolerate another belief because it opposes what the Bible says, let us at least then be charitable. Okay, I think that's wise counsel.

But he says, listen, don't ever think for a moment that our calling toward charity and love and grace and acceptance in any way brings us to a place where God wants us to be on the fence related to these truths and regarding what the Bible has to say. We are to stand fast in the truth of God's word, regardless if it gets us in trouble or not. And you know what? It always has. It always has gotten Christians in trouble.

Don't know why we think we should be any different. Jesus said it this way, listen, when they hate you, just remember, they hated me first. That's the way he termed it. And in that way, he was preparing us for the eventuality of what's gonna happen when you and I decide to really get serious and walk with Jesus Christ. Christ and convey the values of the kingdom to a lost and dying world.

Let me end with this passage from 1 Peter, and this is great. Peter writes and he says, Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. He says, Rather rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, listen, you are blessed, for the spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as one suffers for being like a murderer or a thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler, a busybody.

However, if you suffer as a Christian, meaning because you are shining the light and bringing salt, do not be ashamed, don't be ashamed of that, but praise God that you bear that name. Don't you appreciate the fact that we get to bear the name of Christ in this world? I mean that, people, that's an honor. That's an

honor. You and I have this honorable sort of a thing going on, where God actually allows us to bear his name.

Wow! Well, guess what? Because we bear his name and we begin to take on the family traits, we're going to receive the same kind of response that the world had for the one that we follow. Jesus said, No servant is greater than his master. If the master of the house was called a liar and heaven knows all the other things that he was called, servant probably will too.

So don't be ashamed and don't be surprised, like, what is that? No, this is totally normal, totally normal, but rejoice, we're told over and over. Rejoice that you bear the family resemblance. Blessed are you when you are persecuted, for yours is the kingdom of heaven.