

# Discussion Guide

February 11, 2024

## Sermon Synopsis

Jesus calls His disciples to follow Him, but in doing so He warns us of the external conflicts we will face as we do so. Because Satan is opposed to the things of God, he seeks to devour all who follow Jesus as Lord. As we face these conflicts, it would be easy to focus on the negative aspects of these hardships, but in this message Jesus presents several truths that encourage and empower all who live for Him. Because of Jesus, we don't have to live in despair when the attacks come. Instead, we can live with confidence in who He is, what He has done, what He has promised, and what He will do. We invite you to listen today and place your confidence in Christ.

### Group Question #1

The sermon from this past Lord's Day had much to say regarding the persecution that Christians experience in the world and the confidence we can and should have in the midst of it. By and large, persecution carries with it an inherent negativity. Persecution is bad. We don't want it. We avoid it. That's what reasonable people say, anyhow. It isn't normal to take pleasure in pain. But, what if we have a skewed perspective about persecution for the cause of Christ? Does scripture speak explicitly regarding the way Christ followers should approach the whole concept? Indeed, it does! As a group, read Philippians 1:21-29. This passage will frame this week's group discussion. The Apostle Paul, in verse 21, says "For me, to live is Christ. To die is gain." Now, if every anyone could say anything that the world today would consider "backwards", it would be this. How could death (and Paul really is talking about his physical death, here) be gain for a Christian? Compare that attitude to the world around us and discuss as a group.

### Group Question #2

In verse 28 of the first chapter in Philippians, we find the important context of verse 29. The Christians in Philippi had "opponents". That's putting it mildly. Christianity, this early in the 1st century was as foreign to Graeco-Roman culture as driving horses and buggies are for modern, 21st century Americans. Opposition to Christianity was widespread and painful across the Roman empire, but, it was horrific in the smaller provinces. Paul tells the Philippians "not to be frightened" by them. Ok, Paul... How on earth do we do that? They're killing people in the streets for goodness sakes! But that is precisely what Paul tells them, isn't it! Why? He says "This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God." If we take Paul's words to their logical conclusion, those who persecute Christ's people signify their own damnation in so doing. Conversely, those persecuted purely on the grounds of their faith may and should see such as a signification of the realness of their own salvation. As a group, talk about the trap that many have fallen into. Have you known or seen someone go out of their way to incite their own persecution as a means to vindicate their faith? Is it any surprise that yelling at folks on the street with a megaphone incites their wrath? What is it about genuine Christianity that pagans so vehemently hate?

### Group Question #3

So, then, it would seem that persecution is, at least in some sense, a good thing. It is a sign and seal of our salvation according to Paul thus far in our little study of this section in Philippians 1. But, verse 29 really pounds it home with a vengeance! Paul says "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should NOT ONLY believe in him but also suffer for his sake." Dear friends, soak that entire sentence into the depths of your souls. There are really three things to see, here: Three key words in verse 29. They are "granted, believe, and suffer for his sake". Granted is the Greek word "χαρίζομαι - charizomai" and its chief meaning is the "giving of a gift"! What gifts have been granted unto believers in Christ according to verse 29? Hint: it isn't just one gift. Being united to God through Christ by faith is a gift, indeed. But, so to is suffering for the name of Christ as well! That is exactly what this text is telling us! But that doesn't answer the question that nags and gnaws upon the sensitive little nerves in our soul's, does it? Why!? Why and how could suffering be a gift from God unto us? Before you answer these questions, as a group, read James 1:1-4 and discuss.

## Matthew 10:16-39

### One Liner of the Week

"Our love for Jesus should be greater than even our love for parents or children."

### Food for the Soul

Monday: Matthew 10:24-42

Tuesday: Matthew 11:1-19

Wednesday: Matthew 11:20-30

Thursday: Matthew 12:1-21

Friday: Matthew 12:22-29

Saturday: Matthew 12:30-37

Sunday: Matthew 12:38-50