

ACTNow! (Applying Christ's Teaching NOW) follows the weekly sermon series of TPMC, and challenges us to apply and put into practice the biblical truths we hear each week. It is the recommended Bible discussion material for TPMC's Cell Groups, and leader's notes are available to all Cell Group Leaders and at the Information Counter.

## **Blessed Are Those Who Are Persecuted**

Matthew 5:10-12

Rev Reuben Ng

### **SERMON SYNOPSIS**

- In line with the theme of "paradoxical blessings and virtues", the eighth beatitude issues a strong challenge and also blessing to us as Christians. When we are invited to Christ's gift, we are also invited to obedience to His teachings. This last beatitude ties in with the closing promise made by Christ (v. 12): if we take up our cross and follow Him, great our reward will be in heaven.
- Many Christians around the world are unable to freely practice their faith like we can in Singapore. These Christians have been persecuted for believing and doing what is right. The apostles Peter and Paul recognise that it is inevitable to face opposition for believing in Christ and following Him (1 Peter 3:14, 4:14, 2 Timothy 3:12).
- True "persecution" is persecution for the sake of righteousness – it does not refer to the reaction of other people to Christians' intolerant and insensitive behaviour. Such behavior is not Christ-like.
- Is it possible that living in a comfortable country with religious freedom, we are being lulled into complacency? Living out the beatitudes ought to lead to some 'friction' or discomfort with the world.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Being privileged to live in a country with religious freedom, we may not face direct opposition that prevents us from practicing our faith. However, the ideals of the world still often conflict with our Christian values and beliefs. What are some ways that you have noticed or experienced this in your life?

[Verses to help us go deeper:]

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- 2 Timothy 3:12 says, "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted". The bible makes it clear that persecution, whether big or small, comes hand in hand with living like Christ. What is the reason for such persecution? How can we endure it and even grow from it?  
[Verses to help us go deeper: John 3:19-20, Luke 16:13-15, John 15:18-20, Matthew 12:21-25, James 1:2-4]

- We may wish to reexamine our lives if are never subject to opposition or friction in living out our faith. In some areas, we may not experience persecution because we pursue the approval of this world. Are there any examples in our lives? What will we do about it?

In other areas, we may not realise that we may face opposition due to being insensitive and unloving, or due to other faults and sins. Are there any examples in our lives? What will we do about it?

[Verses to help us go deeper: John 15:18-19, Acts 14:22, 1 Peter 4:15-16]

### PRAYER POINTERS

- Thank God for the message He sent through Christ and for the ability to overcome obstacles to our faith.
- Pray for persecuted Christians throughout the world, that they may receive protection and grace in their struggles.
- Pray for wisdom and love in interacting with our non-believing friends, that we may bring God's word to them without being afraid of persecution.

### MEMORY VERSE

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.  
[2 Corinthians 4:17, NIV]

### PRACTICAL HANDLE

Do we avoid persecution and conflict that comes from fully following Christ's teaching? Think of a situation where you wanted to speak out or act on God's teaching but did not because of what others might say or think. Plan in advance what to say and do the next time that situation arises.