



The Church - The Persecuted Community of Faith

Key idea:

The Church is the community of those who are God's people through faith in Christ and are therefore exiles in this world. Consequently, they must persevere through suffering and persecution, knowing God is worth far more than this passing age.

Key text: Hebrews 11

Key points:

1. We become part of God's people through faith in Christ, but this automatically makes us exiles in this world.
2. God's exile people suffer a sense of homelessness in this world.
3. God's exile people often suffer hostility and persecution from this world.
4. The people of God must persevere through suffering, and they are enabled to do this only as they draw close to Christ and experience His daily Presence and a foretaste of their eternal reward.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?
2. Why does being part of God's people necessarily make me an exile in this world?
3. How does Hebrews 11 use Old Testament stories to drive home the fact that we are aliens and strangers in this world and therefore should expect struggle, suffering, and persecution?
4. Hebrews 11 indicates that all of the heroes of the faith did not receive the things God had promised them. However, we live in the New Covenant. Does this mean that we receive the things promised? Or do we too have to await the fulfillment of God's promises to us?
5. Why is the example of Moses such a powerful one when considering the need to be willing to forego the status, wealth, and power this world offers?

6. A prominent message in the evangelical world in America today is that if we come to Jesus and have faith we can experience our “best lie now”. Is this message true? Why is it so popular?
7. When I consider my own relationship to American culture, am I more likely to compromise because of overt pressure from the government or others, or because of the allure and ease promised by our consumer culture? How can I prepare to withstand the pressure to which I am most susceptible?
8. How does our modern consumer culture make it more difficult for me to be prepared to suffer for the faith?
9. As we are learning about and praying for the persecuted church this month, make sure to take time each day to pray for your brothers and sisters who are suffering!
10. Who will I call or see to encourage this week?