***PERSECUTION***

INTRODUCTION:

2 Timothy 3:10-12

Everyone who wants to be a Christian will be persecuted.

Persecution for the Christian is normal and to be expected.

I. JESUS WAS PERSECUTED.

A. Mark 3:20-22

I. Jesus' family thought he was out of his mind.

2. Jesus was accused of demon possession.

B. John 7:11-12

I. There was widespread gossip and slander about Jesus

2. He was accused of deceiving people.

C. John 7:l5-52

1. The Pharisees (mainstream religion) did not accept Jesus.

2. Nicodemus' principle: hear Jesus' side before passing judgment on gossip.

• Have you suffered persecution for Jesus? Why or Why not?

II. THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH WAS PERSECUTED

A. Acts 11:44-52

1. The religious leaders were jealous of the apostles' impact.

2. In spite of the persecution, the disciples rejoiced.

B. Acts 26:19-25

Paul's strong message of repentance stirred up opposition.

Paul was thought to be insane.

C. Acts 28:21-22

1. The church was highly controversial.

2. The church was called a sect.

• Has your church ever been persecuted? Why or why not?

III. JESUS AND THE APOSTLES' WARNED ABOUT PERSECUTION

A. John 15:18-20, 16:1-4

1. We will experience persecutions just like Jesus did.

2. Jesus warned the disciples so they would not go astray.

B. 1 Peter 4:1-4

1. People are threatened by Christian living.

2. They heap abuse to justify their actions.

Do not be surprised or ashamed.

C. John 3:19-21

1. The real issue is sin being exposed

IV. OUR ATTITUDE ABOUT PERSECUTION

A. Matthew 5:10-12

1. Persecution comes because of righteousness.

2. Rejoice and be glad for great is your reward in heaven.

B. Philippians 1:27-28

1. Conduct yourself as Jesus did: Trust God and do not retaliate (1 Peter 2:2)

2. Do not be frightened.

C. Acts 5:41-42

1. Rejoice because you've been counted worthy of suffering disgrace.

2. Never stop teaching and proclaiming the good news.

CONCLUSION

A. What is your attitude about persecution?

God's desire is for persecution to bring about refining, strengthening and maturity.

Satan's desire is for persecution to cause fear, doubt and mistrust.

B. Arc you willing to be persecuted?

Remember that, "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus  will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3: 12)