

Rooted - Feb 21st - My Response is My Responsibility - Clay Weed

Key Scriptures:

Colossians 1:24 - 29

Philippians 3:10

John 16:33

James 1:2-3

Colossians 2:1-4

Romans 1:16

Romans 8:10-11

TALK IT OVER

Start reading

Philippians 3:10

I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead.

I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death,

John 16:33

Jesus said, "In this world, you will have trouble; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

James 1:2-3

2 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.

Colossians 1:24

24 I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue for his body, the church. 25 God has given me the responsibility of serving his church by proclaiming his entire message to you.

Colossians 2:1

I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally.

Colossians 2:2-4

2 I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. 3 In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments.

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentiles.

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- When you hear the word "persecution," what are the first thoughts that come to mind?

Start thinking. Ask a question to get your group thinking.

- Persecution for your faith can come in many different ways: bullying, mockery, loss of friendships, arrests, death, etc. Have you ever experienced any persecution for your faith? How did it make you feel? Feel free to share about it with the group if you feel comfortable.
- **Read Philippians 3:10.** It's comfortable to desire to know God and experience His mighty power...but to "suffer with him, and share in his death"? Why is it important to identify with God in the good times and tough times? Are there areas in your life that need to die?
- Pastor Clay shared statistics regarding 340 million Christians who were persecuted and discriminated against in 2021. How does this make you feel being a Christian in America?
- **Read John 16:33 and James 1:2-3.** Share how these verses speak to you personally on how we are supposed to handle hardships in life. Have you ever used either or both of these scriptures when going through a hard time? If not, these are a great tool to have during times of trouble.

Start sharing. Choose a question to create openness.

- **Read Colossians 1:24-25 and 2:1.** Pastor Clay mentioned two types of Suffering: External Punishment and Internal Pain. Can you remember a time when you agonized over the fact that someone you know didn't know Christ? How do you think you arrived at that point (emotionally, mentally, spiritually)? What did you do about it? Why?
- Paul was a man with passion. What are your greatest passions?
- Paul was intentional about helping people become stronger in their relationship with Jesus. Do you have someone that influences you and your growth as a Christian? Are you currently influencing someone else in their walk with Christ?
- Paul wrote about his ministry with authority and boldness in spite of his difficult circumstances. **Read Romans 1:16.** Looking at your life right now, identify roadblocks that may be keeping you from speaking with authority and boldness about your faith and its Savior. Brainstorm strategies for overcoming the roadblocks with your small group.

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Clay shared that 2.6 million people die each year. That is 7,123 each day 297 each hour, and 5 each minute. Allow these stats to sink in. Commit to praying for opportunities to share your faith in Jesus this week.

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

- Jesus, thank you that we have hope, even in times of trouble, because of Your love and mercy for us. Help us not to keep all of this to ourselves, but to share it with the people who intersect our lives who are far from you. - Amen

Start digging. For further study.

- Read the 2nd page and discuss it.

Question: "How should a Christian respond to persecution?"

Answer: There is no doubt that persecution is a stark reality of living the Christian life. Christian persecution is to be expected: the apostle Paul warned that “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12). Jesus said that, if they persecuted Him, they will also persecute His followers (John 15:20). Jesus made it clear that those of the world will hate Christians because the world hates Christ. If Christians were like the world—vain, earthly, sensual, and given to pleasure, wealth, and ambition—the world would not oppose us. But Christians do not belong to the world, which is why the world engages in Christian persecution (see John 15:18–19). Christians are influenced by different principles from those of the world. We are motivated by the love of God and holiness, while the world is driven by the love of sin. It is our very separation from the world that arouses the world’s animosity (1 Peter 4:3–4).

Christians must learn to recognize the value of persecution and even to rejoice in it, not in an ostentatious way but quietly and humbly because persecution has great spiritual value. First, the persecution of Christians allows them to share in a unique fellowship with the Lord. Paul outlined a number of things he had surrendered for the cause of Christ. Such losses, however, he viewed as “rubbish” (Philippians 3:8) or “dung” (KJV) that he might share in the “fellowship of [Christ’s] sufferings” (Philippians 3:10). The noble apostle even counted his chains as a grace (favor) that God had bestowed upon him (Philippians 1:7).

Second, in all truth, Christian persecution is good for believers. James argues that trials test the Christian’s faith, develop endurance in his life, and help develop maturity (James 1:2–4). As steel is tempered in the forge, trials and persecution serve to strengthen the character of believers. A Christian yielding graciously to persecution demonstrates that he is of superior quality as compared to his adversaries (see Hebrews 11:38). It’s easy to be hateful, but Christlikeness produces kindness and blessing in the face of evil opposition. Peter says of Jesus, “When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:23).

Third, Christian persecution enables believers to better value the support of true friends. Conflict can bring faithful children of God together in an encouraging and supportive way they might not have known otherwise. Hardship can stimulate the Lord’s people toward a greater resolve to love and comfort one another and lift one another to the throne of grace in prayer. There’s nothing like an unpleasant incident to help us reach a greater level of brotherly love.

Even in the face of Christian persecution, we can press on. We can thank God for His grace and patience with us. We can express gratitude for those whom we love in the Lord and who stand with us in times of distress. And we can pray for those who would accuse, misuse, or abuse us (2 Corinthians 11:24; Romans 10:1).