

No One Forgotten

Hebrews 13:3 - NCBC, November 7, 2021

Main Point: **God's people remember and proactively serve the persecuted.**

- Why is this topic needed?
 - Unawareness: Our problem of Ignorance
 - Desensitization: Our problem of Indifference
 - Selfishness: Our problem of Inwardness
 - Fear: Our problem of Intimidation
- Who are our persecuted brothers and sisters?
 - Those among us
 - Those connected to us
 - Those unknown to us
- How can we love the persecuted?
 - Visitation: Ministry of Presence
 - Intercession: Ministry of Prayer
 - Practical Help: Ministry of Provision
 - Advocacy: Ministry of Protection
- What motivates our love for the persecuted?
 - We remember Jesus!

Opening Announcements:

- **This month's Recommended Resource** is *A Passion for the Fatherless* by Pastor Daniel Bennett, who is the Senior Pastor at Bethany Community Church in Washington. Grow your love and passion for orphans and orphan care by reading this book!
- **Please plan to Attend our Congregational Meeting Next Sunday during the 9:30a!** Our elders are excited to share some ministry updates with us all as we meet together next week!

<<Let Me Be A Blessing>>



It is so good for us to gather today to remember our Lord Jesus and our brothers and sisters who are persecuted for His Name's sake.

Today we are going to just focus on one verse of Scripture that is found in **Hebrews chapter 13.**



So if you need a Bible, simply raise your hand and we will gladly give you one as our gift to you today.

Whenever you just study one specific verse, it's very important to pay attention to the surrounding context.

After all, "a text without a context is a pretext for a proof text!"¹ So while you're preparing to read **Hebrews 13 verse 3**, let me quickly remind you of its context:

The book of **Hebrews** is a "word of exhortation"² to a group of Hebrew Christians who are facing increased persecution for their public identification with Jesus.³ Through the superintendence of the Holy Spirit, the unknown author writes a glorious sermon to try to convince the Hebrews of the supremacy of Jesus.

Jesus is better than the angels. Jesus is better than Moses. Jesus is better than the High Priest. Jesus provides a better sacrifice and a better rest. You could sum up the entire sermon of **Hebrews** by simply saying, "It is far better to identify with Jesus than with Jewish religious practices... because Jesus is better in every way than all the signs and symbols of the old covenant which are now fulfilled in Him."

So the first 11 chapters of **Hebrews** are full of glorious truths about the supremacy of Jesus. Then **chapter 12** begins with the word, "*Therefore*," and so **chapters 12 and 13** contain the practical "so what?" implications of the supremacy of Jesus that has been so gloriously revealed in the first 11 chapters.

So please understand, **verse 3 of chapter 13** is just one way the supremacy of Jesus should transform our practical living.

Chapter 13 verse 1 provides a great summary of how Christians should live in light of the supremacy of Jesus when it says,

Let brotherly love continue.

After all, when you truly know Jesus personally, and are known by Him, your life will be marked with the fruit of His Spirit, which is love.⁴

Chapter 13 then calls for several ways for brotherly love to be expressed. In **verse 2**, as hospitality to strangers. In **verse 3** (which is our focus today), in remembering the persecuted. In **verse 4**, in marriage and sexual purity, in **verse 5**, in finances, and in **verse 7** and following, towards church leaders. So note this, the superiority of Jesus over all Jewish religious traditions should empower Christians towards greater expressions of brotherly love for one another.

¹ I first heard this phrase from my mentor, Dr. John Street, at The Master's University.

² Hebrews 13:22

³ Hebrews 10:32-39; 12:4

⁴ Galatians 5:22-23



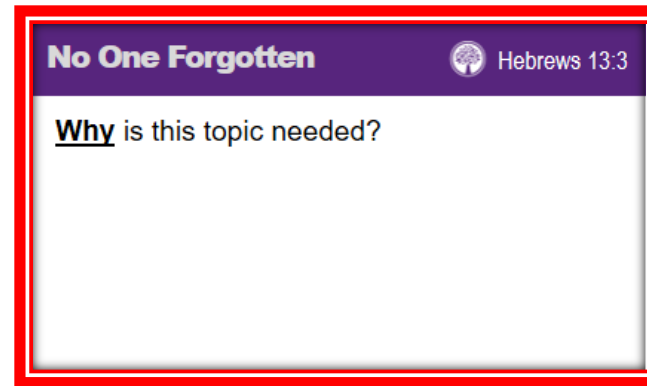
So with that understanding of our verse's context, let's respectfully stand together as I read **Hebrews 13, verse 3**:

³ Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

This is the reading of God's Word. Please be seated.

Let's pray.

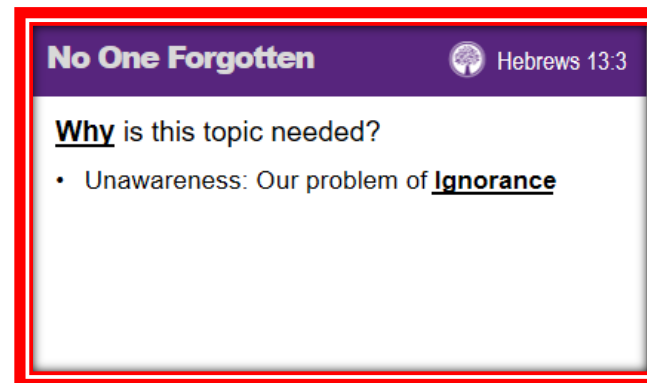
Before we unpack **Hebrews 13 verse 3** together, I want to first answer the begging question of,



Why is this topic needed?

Why is it good for us to remember our persecuted brothers and sisters during our worship gathering together today?

This topic is necessary for all of us since we all struggle with four common problems... Four problems that must be overcome if we are to please our Lord in how we love our persecuted brothers and sisters.



First, we need this topic because of our **Unawareness**. When it comes to persecution, the Midwestern rural American church suffers from the problem of Ignorance.

While we all know many Christians are persecuted for following Jesus today, it's largely out of sight and out of mind in our daily routines. We are very thankful that God has allowed us to still enjoy a significant measure of religious freedom in our own country, but our own freedoms feed an unintentional ignorance about those who are truly suffering for Jesus' sake around the world.

Second, we need to focus on this topic because of,

No One Forgotten Hebrews 13:3

Why is this topic needed?

- Unawareness: Our problem of **Ignorance**
- Desensitization: Our problem of **Indifference**

Our problem of Indifference. In our world of information overload and constant news cycles, it becomes far too easy for Christians today to become desensitized and indifferent to the horrors of Christian persecution.

And yet God commands His children to remember the persecuted and empathize with them. So we focus on **Hebrews 13:3** to overcome the problem of our ignorance, indifference, and then,

No One Forgotten Hebrews 13:3

Why is this topic needed?


- Unawareness: Our problem of **Ignorance**
- Desensitization: Our problem of **Indifference**
- Selfishness: Our problem of **Inwardness**

Our Selfishness. After all, every one of us has a sinful problem of **Inwardness** – we are all sinfully more concerned about our own lives and our own problems than those of others. Sure, we may be aware of Christian persecution, and it may make us sad when we think about it, but we have enough problems of our own to focus on, and so we justify our forgetfulness of our brothers and sisters who are being severely mistreated for publicly identifying with our Lord.

We all need to be reminded that the supremacy of Jesus calls us away from our selfish inwardness, don't we?

Finally, this topic is helpful since all of us wrestle with,

No One Forgotten

 Hebrews 13:3

Why is this topic needed?

- Unawareness: Our problem of **Ignorance**
- Desensitization: Our problem of **Indifference**
- Selfishness: Our problem of **Inwardness**
- Fear: Our problem of **Intimidation**

Sinful Fear. In other words, when we start talking about being persecuted, or helping those who are being persecuted, we have to overcome our problem of Intimidation.

After all, to help the persecuted is to identify with them. But to identify with those who are hated, is to invite others to hate me.⁵ And only the superiority of Jesus is strong enough to overcome our fear and intimidation so that we might truly love Jesus and His family in the midst of a world that violently hates Him.

So because of our ignorance, indifference, inwardness, and intimidation, we all need to be reminded of how love feels and acts in **Hebrews 13:3**.

So let's look more carefully at the passage now to make sure we understand it's main point:

No One Forgotten

 Hebrews 13:3

Remember

those who are in prison,
as though in
prison with them,
and those who are mistreated,
since you also
are in the body.

The verse is simple enough to understand. The main command is *to continually remember*.

That means to proactively keep in mind, or think about, or be concerned about. We are all forgetful people, and so God commands us to remember. Christians ought to continually remind themselves of two groups of people:

First do not forget *those who are in prison*, and second remember *those who are mistreated*.

Now, in the context of **Hebrews**, these people have been put in prison or mistreated for no other reason than for publicly identifying with Jesus. So this verse is calling us to remember people who are directly suffering for righteousness' sake... not as a consequence for their own crimes or foolish actions.⁶

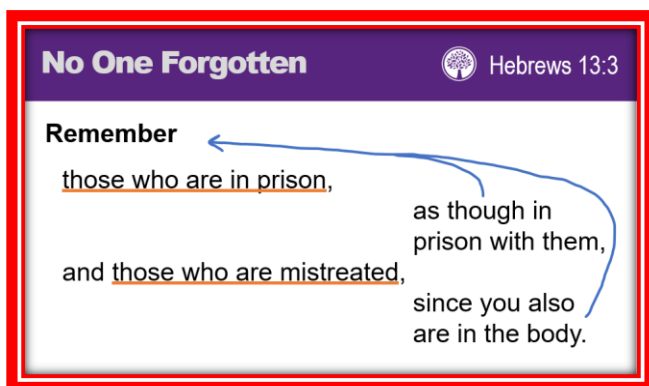
So those who are in prison describes people who have been bound or kidnapped or removed from society simply because they love Jesus and proclaim His love to others.

⁵ John 15:18ff
Page **5a** of 15

⁶ 1 Peter 4:12-16, especially verse 15

Those who are mistreated is a broader more general category that refers to anyone who repeatedly suffers evil or torture or harassment from others because of their faith in Christ.⁷

And for both types of people, Christ-followers are commanded to remember them. To be concerned enough to care about them. To give them focused attention and proactive love. And then notice the manner and reason for our remembering in the text:



First we are to remember those who are in prison,

As though we are in prison with them.

Just think about that for a moment. This is very close association. This is not disconnected indifference. This is basically a restatement of Jesus' golden rule,⁸ that we are to treat others the way we want others to treat us.

So pull the bus over, and ask yourself, if I was kidnapped for being a Christ-follower, how would I want my church

family to remember me? How would I desire for Christians to love me?

If your emotions are coming awake, you're starting to rightly understand this verse.

Now notice that phrase, "Since you also are in the body." This isn't a reference to the body of Christ.⁹ It's a reference to your physical body.

This verse is saying, Remember those who are mistreated, since you know what it is like yourself to feel pain, to be afflicted, or to be harassed. You have a physical body, and you know what its like at some level, to suffer hunger, thirst, pain, shame, and evil at the hands of others. So since you can understand what it's like at least at some bodily level for your brothers and sisters to be mistreated... remember them. Do not forget those who are being mistreated for the sake of your Lord.

You see, **Hebrews 13:3** commands us to personally feel the suffering of persecuted Christians... to truly empathize and sympathize with their suffering...all so that the supremacy of Jesus will be expressed through our proactive love to them in their hour of need.

So that's **Hebrews 13:3**. You could summarize its main point this way:

⁷ Hebrews 11:37

⁸ Matthew 7:12

⁹ As in 1 Corinthians 10:16, 12:27; Ephesians 4:12

No One Forgotten Hebrews 13:3

Main Point:
God's people **remember**
and **proactively serve**
the persecuted.

God's people remember and proactively serve the persecuted.

We must keep our suffering brothers and sisters in our minds, and so closely associate with them with brotherly love that we feel their pain and meet their needs for the glory of our Lord.

So now that you understand what **Hebrews 13:3** means, let's make sure we're thinking rightly about,

No One Forgotten Hebrews 13:3

Who are our persecuted brothers & sisters?

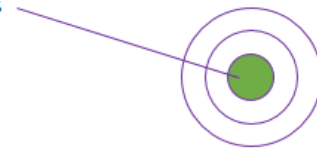
Who are our persecuted brothers and sisters?

After all, we must overcome the problem of ignorance. And the church must first be biblically aware of,

No One Forgotten Hebrews 13:3

Who are our persecuted brothers & sisters?

- Those **among** us



Those among us who are being persecuted.

Because you could think of our persecuted brothers and sisters like a cluster of concentric circles...and of course those whom we are most responsible to remember and serve are those persecuted brothers and sisters that are part of the same local church family as the one we are in.

Now, you say, well pastor, there's no one in our local fellowship that is currently in prison or suffering physical torture for following Jesus. And while that's probably true for most American churches today, we must not forget those among us who are indeed being persecuted for righteousness' sake.

For example, in our church family here, we have several members who are married to unbelievers who are hostile to the Christian faith, and who often ridicule or harass our brothers and sisters for nothing else than their love for Jesus. Although these loved ones haven't yet been imprisoned or physically abused, the pain of their mistreatment from their own unbelieving family can often

feel severe. Others of us occasionally experience lesser persecution in our workplaces or classrooms.

So **Hebrews 13:3** causes us to ask, *Have I forgotten my persecuted brothers and sisters in my own church family? Am I loving and caring for them the way I would want to be loved and cared for if I was suffering what they are experiencing for Christ's sake?*

And if you are one of our brothers or sisters who is being persecuted for Jesus in some way, can I just speak with you for a moment? You are not forgotten. Your church family desires to remember you, and love you, through this painful path Jesus is leading you down. Please let us know how you are suffering, so that we might glorify the supremacy of Jesus by remembering you. Although some in this world hate and despise you... you are not forgotten. You are loved, for you are a coheir of Jesus with us!!

Now as we move outward, we must remember those persecuted brothers and sisters who are not physically among us,

No One Forgotten Hebrews 13:3

Who are our persecuted brothers & sisters?

- Those **among** us
- Those **connected** to us

But are connected to us.

Here at New Castle Bible Church, we currently partner with three different Global Outreach partners who are serving Jesus in the midst of hostile persecution. They or other Christ-followers around them are actively mistreated for the sake of Jesus.

So think carefully now... what biblical responsibility do you have for these connected GO partners in light of **Hebrews 13:3?**

Today we've stuffed the worship folder with prayer cards for these three families. There's the A&Js in North Africa, the K&Hs in Topaz, and the family who serves in Nigeria. We have to use pseudonyms and abbreviations to protect their identity since they would be in danger of kidnapping or death if the Muslim leadership became aware of their Gospel ministry in their countries.

This week I talked on the phone with our GO Partner in Nigeria, and he shared how he and his family are constantly being watched, and they live with the constant threat of being kidnapped by the Islamic extremist.

He shared with me some of the horrific realities that he and his staff of 180 workers in Nigeria experience on a daily basis as they are now caring for over 1,300 widows who have watched their husbands beheaded or shot for being publicly known as a Christ-follower. .

Recently, Islamic extremists came and destroyed 5,000 homes...burning all Christian churches to the ground...and displacing 30,000 Christians from their community...all just 20 minutes away from where our GO Partner lives. For these partners who are connected to us, imprisonment and mistreatment is a very real threat.

So we must not be ignorant, or indifferent, or intimidated, or inward as a local church. **Hebrews 13:3** calls us to a greater love.

Finally, as we move from the persecuted among us, to the persecuted connected to us, we finally consider the outer ring of those,

No One Forgotten Hebrews 13:3

Who are our persecuted brothers & sisters?

- Those **among** us
- Those **connected** to us
- Those **unknown** to us

unknown to us.

This is where parachurch ministries like *Voice of the Martyrs* or *Operation World* help to inform and connect us to our persecuted brothers and sisters who might otherwise be unknown to us.

On the back of today's notes page, I've listed some recommended links that could help you remember our suffering brothers and sisters who would otherwise be unknown to us.

You can sign up for a daily email from Operation World, a weekly email from Voice of the Martyrs, or a monthly newsletter from VOM.

Because sometimes seeing the faces and hearing the voices of your own brothers and sisters in Christ is what we need in order to help us feel what they are feeling, and love them the way Jesus calls us to love.

Just to give you a taste of some of these resources, please direct your attention to the screens now as we watch a brief video from VOM Radio and hear from our brother in Morocco, our brother in N. Korea, our sister in Eritrea (air-a-tree-a), and our sister in Tibet. Allow yourself to feel what they are feeling as they all briefly express how suffering for Jesus is worth it!



<<Show 2:30 video here>>

Without a doubt, our persecuted brothers and sisters have much to teach us about God's love. We must inform ourselves, and sensitize ourselves to their suffering, so that the supremacy of Christ might be shown in how we remember and proactively serve them in their hour of need.

Now of course, the next question is,

No One Forgotten Hebrews 13:3

How can we love the persecuted?

How can we practically love the persecuted?

Regardless of whether we are remembering those among us, or those connected to us, or those yet unknown to us... how can we practically obey **Hebrews 13:3**?

I want to quickly suggest four ways we can love the persecuted:

No One Forgotten Hebrews 13:3

How can we love the persecuted?

- Visitation: Ministry of **Presence**

First through Visitation, the Ministry of **Presence**. We see this illustrated in **2 Timothy 1:16** where Paul was often refreshed by Onesiphorus while he was imprisoned for Christ's sake.

So think carefully... even if someone is just in the figurative bondage of oppression or constant affliction or conflict...how could you build up your brother or sister by letting them know that they are not alone. They are not forgotten. You are with them, and you are praying for them.


No One Forgotten Hebrews 13:3

How can we love the persecuted?

- Visitation: Ministry of **Presence**
- Intercession: Ministry of **Prayer**

Because of course the second way we can practically remember the persecuted is with Intercession, or the Ministry of **Prayer**. This is where the weekly emails from Voice of the Martyrs are particularly helpful for me. Everytime I read an emailed testimony from one of my brothers and sisters, I pray for them. Whenever I get an update from one of our GO Partners, I pray for them.

Third, we are called to love by giving,

No One Forgotten  Hebrews 13:3

How can we love the persecuted?

- Visitation: Ministry of **Presence**
- Intercession: Ministry of **Prayer**
- Practical Helps: Ministry of **Provision**

Practical Help, or the Ministry of Provision.

When we see tangible needs for food, clothing, or shelter, and God has given us the ability to meet those needs, we are responsible to remember our brothers and sisters and give them what we would want to receive if we were in their very situation.

And let's remember, that the greatest need for any of God's children is always the Word of God. So Jesus' body always prioritizes the giving of God's promises in our ministry of provision... for we know that only God's Word is powerful enough to sustain the human soul through long-lasting affliction and suffering.

Finally, we express Christ's love for the persecuted when we participate in,

No One Forgotten  Hebrews 13:3

How can we love the persecuted?

- Visitation: Ministry of **Presence**
- Intercession: Ministry of **Prayer**
- Practical Helps: Ministry of **Provision**
- Advocacy: Ministry of **Protection**

Advocacy, or the Ministry of Protection.

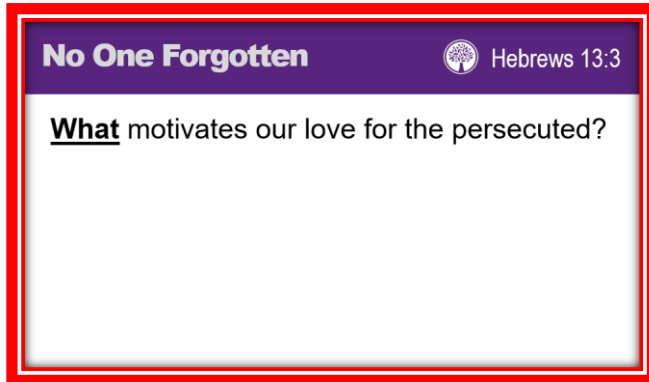
If you ever become aware that an unbeliever is threatening physical harm to one of our brothers or sisters, our love for them empowers our protecting advocacy... seeking to give them safe refuge when possible, and making gracious biblical appeals to the appropriate authorities when necessary.

Advocacy groups like the Voice of the Martyrs will occasionally invite believers to sign a petition or write letters to appeal various injustices that our brothers and sisters are experiencing. This can be a very loving way that we remember our loved ones, as if we are suffering right there with them.

This week, our GO Partner in Nigeria shared how he and his staff read through hundreds of letters that had been collected through Voice of the Martyrs for these widows and children. He shared how he got to deliver these letters first-hand to all the widows and see how this loving expression brought so much comfort to God's people in Nigeria.

You see, **Hebrews 13:3** calls God's people to remember and proactively serve the persecuted, through the ministry of presence, prayer, provision, and protection.

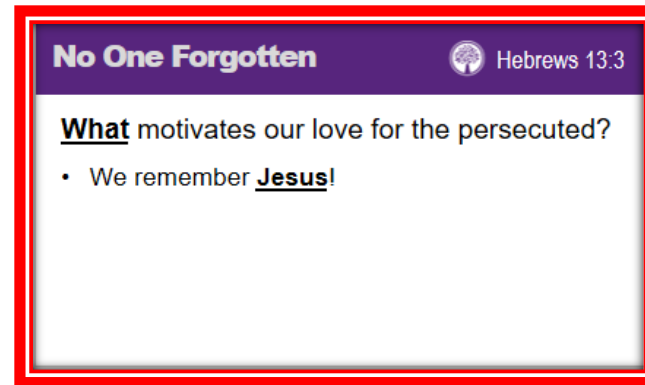
So then, perhaps the only question left to ask is,



What motivates our love for the persecuted?

What power is strong enough to overcome the barriers of our selfishness and fear that keep us from remembering our loved ones in their suffering?

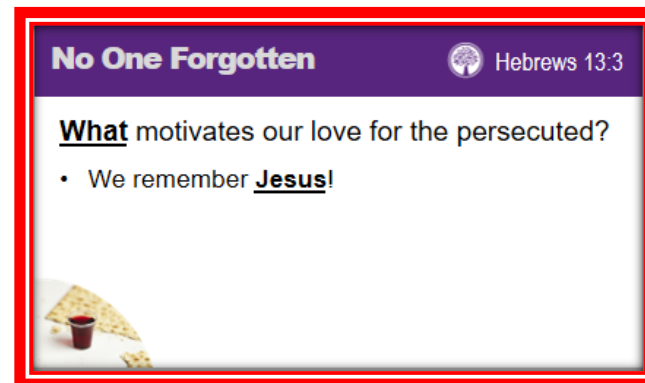
And there's really only one answer to this question, right? The only way Christians today will keep on remembering the persecuted is if,



We remember Jesus!

After all, Jesus Himself willfully submitted Himself to this world's persecution and mistreatment. And when we remember who Jesus is, and what Jesus did for us, in our place, it inspires and empowers us to love others with the same kind of love that He has given us.

So at this time we want to just take a few moments on this day of prayer for the persecuted to remember Jesus together as we celebrate communion.



Church, will you remember that Jesus came to deliver His own people from their sins, but His own people did

not receive Him?¹⁰ Will you remember how Jesus lived a perfect life on earth – a perfect life of love without sin – and then gave Himself willingly as the eternal blood sacrifice to pay for your sins? Will you fix your attention on Jesus dying the death your sins deserved on the cross, and shedding His blood to purchase your welcomed acceptance by our Holy Creator? Will you remember how Jesus rose from the dead to triumph over death and sin’s power...and to give you everlasting life?

O church – only when we remember how much God has loved us will we find the grace to love others the same way.¹¹

So I’d invite you now to open up the top of that communion cup that was provided to you today, and prepare to eat the bread wafer together in a moment.

Jesus taught us to remember Him in this way on the night before His death, when He met with His disciples and transformed the Passover celebration into a Memorial Feast of His death.

So loved ones, this ceremonial meal that we are about to eat together is designed only for those who have repented of their sins and trusted their eternal destiny to the work of Christ alone. If you aren’t yet a Christian, please refrain from eating...and just observe us. Because there’s no spiritual power in the wafer or the juice we’re about to consume. It’s a feast of remembrance. These are just physical symbols that help us remember how Jesus’ body was crushed to save us

from sin, and His blood was spilled to wash us whiter than snow.

So as we prepare to remember Christ’s sacrifice for the payment of our sins, I’d invite you to just bow your heads and pray. Confess any sin that stands between you and joyful intimacy with God. Confess your faith that Jesus’ death and resurrection is enough to secure your eternal acceptance forever with God. Thank God for His mercy and grace, and His Spirit that is even now at work in you. Praise Jesus for His love.

And then in a minute, I’ll lead us in prayer together before we all eat the bread and remember Jesus’ sacrifice together.

Let’s pray.

<<Prayer>>

Amen.

The Lord Jesus on the night He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”¹²

Let’s eat together.

Now please stay seated as we sing together the wonderful hymn, *At the Cross*, which helps us to celebrate how God so loved us that He sent Jesus to die

¹⁰ John 1:11

¹¹ 1 John 4:19

¹² 1 Corinthians 11:23-24

so that our present sufferings might be connected to eternal glories and light forever with our amazing God.

<<At the Cross>>

Amen. Now please peel back the lid of your communion cup and prepare to drink the juice together. This juice represents Jesus' blood. Do you remember, how after supper Jesus took the cup saying,

*This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me?*¹³

Let's drink together.

Amen.



No One Forgotten Hebrews 13:3

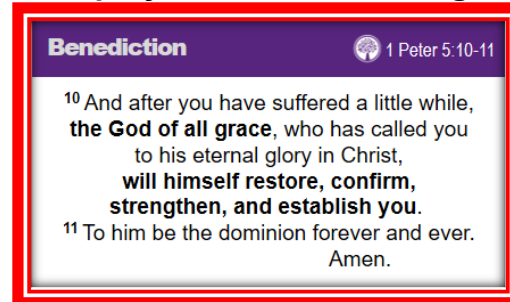
Main Point:
God's people **remember**
and **proactively serve**
the persecuted.

Church, Jesus willfully submitted Himself to persecution in order to deliver us from our sins. So as we remember Jesus, we are motivated then to remember and proactively serve the persecuted who are in Jesus' family.



May not one of God's family ever be forgotten by the church in their time of suffering, all so that the supremacy of Jesus and His love might be better known.

Let's pray our benediction together:



Benediction 1 Peter 5:10-11

¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, **the God of all grace**, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, **will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.**

¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever.
Amen.

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 5:10-11



¹³ 1 Corinthians 11:25

Recommended Resources on No One Forgotten:

- Matthew 5:10-12
- Luke 6:22-23
- Acts 5:41
- 2 Corinthians 4:7-5:20, 12:10
- Colossians 1:24
- 2 Timothy 1:16; 3:12-13
- Hebrews 10:32-39, 11:26, 13:3
- 1 Peter 2:19-25, 3:8-17, 4:12-19

- Daily Operation World Prayer Email:
<http://www.operationworld.org>
- Weekly Prayer for Persecuted:
<https://www.icommittoprayer.com/>
- Voice of the Martyrs: <https://www.persecution.com/> and
<https://www.vomradio.net/>

- Foxe's Book of Martyrs, Foxe
- Jesus Freaks, D.C. Talk
- The Insanity of God, Ripken

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Read Matthew 5:10-12. Would it ever be possible for you to, "rejoice and be glad" when persecuted? Why or why not?
2. Read John 15:18. Are you surprised by the world's antagonism towards you? How does this passage help you better prepare to bear witness when persecuted?
3. Read John 15:26-27. How can you bear witness for Christ? What practical difference does the Spirit of Truth bring to your witness?
4. Read Hebrews 13:3. How is God calling you to serve those who are presently suffering for Christ's sake?
5. Are you willing to bear witness for Christ when representing Him costs you or your loved ones? Why or why not? Share together, and pray for God to increase your faith, hope, and love in Him.