

“Blessed are Those Who are  
Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake”

Matthew 5:10-12

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- “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

# “Blessed are Those Who are Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake”

- Persecute - “to pursue, follow after, as one does a fleeing enemy; to vex, or oppress, injure ones name, reputation, property, to endanger or take life” (Barnes Notes)
- From the beginning, people have been persecuting others different from themselves, especially over religious, philosophical, and political differences.
- “Those who think godly living makes them invulnerable to trouble are living in a fantasy world. ‘Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.’” (2Tim. 3:12) (Ray C. Stedman, Let God Be God)

## “Blessed are Those Who are Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake”

- Jesus is not speaking of persons under persecution for any other purpose than that they are Christians walking in righteousness and serving the Lord.
- Jesus is not promising to protect anyone from persecution. God did not even spare His Own Son - Rom. 8:32

# “Blessed are Those Who are Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake”

- “I want men who will believe in Me, even when I do not protect them; I will not open the prison doors where My brethren are locked; I will not stay the murderous Red sickle or the imperial lions of Rome, I will not halt the Red hammer that batters down My tabernacle doors; I want My missionaries and martyrs to love Me in prison and death as I loved them in My own suffering. I never worked any miracles to save Myself. I will work few miracles even for My saints. Be gone, Satan! Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God.” (Fulton Sheen, Life of Christ)
- The persecution of the first century counterintuitively caused the church to grow strong, instead of destroying it

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- “It was strictly forbidden to preach to other prisoners. It was understood that whoever was caught doing this received a severe beating. A number of us decided to pay the price for the privilege of preaching, so we accepted the communists’ terms. It was a deal; we preached and they beat us. We were happy preaching. They were happy beating us, so everyone was happy. God will judge us not according to how much we endured, but how much we loved.” (Richard Wurmbrand, Tortured for Christ)
- If persecution in the first century facilitated the growth of the church as well as that of individual Christians, what will be the effect on the church of a lack of persecution in the 21st century?

# “Blessed are Those Who are Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake”

- “If outside forces and culture were the reasons behind declining and non-influential churches, we would likely have no churches today. The greatest periods of growth, particularly the first-century growth, took place in adversarial cultures. We are not hindered by external forces; we are hindered by our own lack of commitment and selflessness. Persecution is an enemy the Church has met and mastered many times. Indifference could prove to be a far more dangerous foe.” (Thom S. Rainer, *I Am a Church Member: Discovering the Attitude that Makes the Difference*)

# “Blessed are Those Who are Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake”

- Do not make the silly mistake in believing that prejudice and mockery in our time is the same as the persecution of the 1st century; it is not even close
- “No Christian has the right to go around wringing his hands, wondering what we are to do in the face of the present wicked world. The Scriptures say that in the midst of persecution, confusion, wars, and rumors of wars, we are to comfort one another with the knowledge that Jesus Christ is coming back in triumph and glory.” (W. Graham)

# “Blessed are Those Who are Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake”

- This is the beatitude that speaks of the testing of one’s faith
  - 1Peter 1:6-7 - “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ”

# Some Things Are Not Persecution

- There is a difference between being persecuted and being punished for one's misdeeds
  - 1Peter 4:14-16 - “If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”

# Some Things Are Not Persecution

- Persecution arising because one is hard to get along with, stubborn, abrasive, unpleasant, or objectionable in conduct
- Persecution arising because one is weak in faith, immature in actions, and unwise in choices and conduct in life
- Persecution arising from zealous practice of personal religious scruples of conscience or behaviors
- Persecution stemming from a judgmental, bullying, or self-righteous manner of proselyting
- Persecution arising for being a good person, vulnerable to predators and frauds that cheat and take advantage

# Persecution That Is Blessed

- Consider the entire declaration of Jesus -  
Matt. 5:10-12
- The Lord specifies two reasons for this persecution:
  - “For righteousness sake”
  - “For My sake”

# Persecution That Is Blessed

- “The world has no problem accepting and following a religious leader who permits them to stay in their sins; but they will crucify the man who dares to point them to a narrow gate that leads to a narrow way. Jesus was different, and a world that thrives on conformity cannot tolerate differences. We are children of light, and they are children of darkness. We are alive in the Spirit, and they are dead in sins. We live by faith, and they live by sight. We understand them, but they do not understand us. Let a man announce that he belongs to a religious group – be it Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, or what have you – and few people, if anybody, will get upset. But let him announce that he is a Christian, let the name of Christ come into the conversation, and war is declared.” (Warren Weirsbe)

# Persecution That Is Blessed

- John 15:18-21 - “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.”

# Persecution That Is Blessed

- 2Tim. 3:10-12 - “But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra--what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”
- Jesus meant the persecution that comes from following Him, putting our faith in Him, and having our lives changed by Him; he will be different from the world, and the world will notice and react

# Persecution Is Proof Of Faith

- Rom. 8:35-39 - “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

# Persecution Is Proof Of Faith

- 2Cor. 4:8-14 - “We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed-- 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So then death is working in us, but life in you. 13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, I believed and therefore I spoke, we also believe and therefore speak, 14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.”

# Persecution Is Proof Of Faith

- 2Cor. 4:15-18 - “For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. 16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

# Persecution Is Proof Of Faith

- Rev. 2:8-10 - “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: 9 I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.’”

# Persecution Is Proof Of Faith

- Persecution is the proof of our faith for two reasons:
  - Of the beatitudes, it is the only one that is not an internal characteristic of the disciple, but one which he or she must endure from others
  - Persecution demands that all of the other beatitudes are at work in a person's life to facilitate bearing with it
- To withstand persecution for the sake of the Lord and righteousness is evidence of our own faith and an assurance of a home in heaven