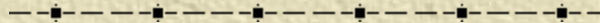




Real Blessing: Persecution

Matthew 5:10-12



Real Blessing: Purity of Heart

Matthew 5:10-12

¹⁰ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Just a Few Questions

- ✦ Who is this Beatitude talking about?
- ✦ What is the cause of persecution?
- ✦ What is the righteousness?
- ✦ What is the response to the persecution?
- ✦ What is the motivation for the response?

Who is Jesus Speaking to?

✦ Disciples

✦ Crowd

✦ Those who are truly blessed

- Poor in Spirit, theirs is the kingdom of heaven
- The Beatitudes are about those who have citizenship in the kingdom of heaven

✦ First Three:

- Spiritual emptiness and need
- So we hunger for what we need

✦ Last Three:

- We are filled with what we are lacking
- Then we are persecuted for it

The Cause of Persecution

- ✦ Righteousness, living for the things of God
 - In *2 Timothy 3:12-13* ¹² *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,* ¹³ *while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*
- ✦ The world is not more tolerant today to make these verses outdated
- ✦ Righteousness is the cause, but what does this righteousness look like?

Righteousness brings Persecution

- ✦ The Preceding Beatitudes: mercy, purity, peacemaking
 - Righteousness is living for the things of God
- ✦ Peacemakers get involved where they “don’t belong”
- ✦ Godly Righteousness is at odds with what the world embraces
 - Chastity vs. Free Sex
 - Marriage vs. Cohabitation
 - Simplicity vs. Materialism or Luxury
 - Humility vs. Pride

Righteousness brings Persecution

- ✦ Righteousness through a Relationship with Jesus Christ
 - Not just about doing the right things
- ✦ “Blessed are you when you are persecuted on my [Jesus] account.”
- ✦ Living ‘righteously’ without a relationship with Jesus Christ does not count
- ✦ There is no such thing as being a Christian without verbally/publically affirming and embracing a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- ✦ It is not just about doing the right thing, but the right things flowing out of your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Present Day Example

- ✦ Tim Tebow
- ✦ You either love him or hate him
- ✦ Unbelievers – Keep it to your self
- ✦ Believers – stop making us feel guilty



Persecution because of Jesus

- ✦ This is persecution that comes from being a Christian.
- ✦ This is not general persecution from doing the right thing or bad things happening because we mess up
- ✦ Persecution happens when we live at odds with the world and the world takes notice and action against us

What if I am not persecuted?

- ✦ You are not really a Christian
- ✦ You are a Christian and living disobediently
- ✦ You are hiding your faith under a bushel
- ✦ The people around you are either moving closer to persecuting you or are moving closer to conversion

What does persecution look like?

✦ Vs. 11

- Reviling, saying nasty things
- Being lied about

✦ Death

✦ Beatings

✦ Imprisonment

✦ Rejection

✦ Marginalization

What is our Response?

- ✦ Stockpile ammunition for a revolution?
- ✦ Whine?
- ✦ Complain?
- ✦ Letters to the Editor?
- ✦ Collapse in on ourselves like a dying star and thus create a black hole of depression that sucks everyone in who comes close to us?
- ✦ How about Rejoice and Be Glad?!

Why Rejoice and Be Glad?

✦ Follow in the footsteps of Peter and the Apostles:

– *Acts 5:41* ⁴¹ *Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.*

✦ John Stott:

– *"We are not to retaliate like an unbeliever, nor to sulk like a child, nor to lick our wounds in self-pity like a dog, nor just to grin and bear it like a Stoic, still less to pretend we enjoy it like a masochist. Instead we are to 'Rejoice and be glad'!"*

Future Reward!

- ✦ God does not ignore the suffering of His people:
 - *ESV 1 Peter 4:14* *If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*
- ✦ The reward may not come in this life, but will come in the kingdom.
- ✦ We need to expect persecution:
 - *ESV John 15:20* *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 also keep yours.*

Future Reward!

- ✦ We suffer a little now, but we will receive blessing and joy for eternity in the kingdom of heaven.
- ✦ Also, we rejoice because we are included in a long line of faithful prophets and people of God. (Read Hebrews 11, some faithful people were tortured and murdered)
- ✦ To Persecute a Christian is to Persecute Jesus Himself
- ✦ Things may be bad now, but there is an everlasting joy in heaven.
- ✦ Be careful of Prosperity, Word of Faith and the Power of Positive thinking gospels