

The Foundations of a Better Culture: *Blessed are the Persecuted*

Matthew 5:10-12 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in Heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

The culture of a church changes when the word of God truly dwells within the heart of the members. Significant changes take place. No longer is gossip tolerated. Evil speaking, bitterness and unforgiveness no longer fills the air. A "good old boys" club atmosphere dies. Everyone is loved. Everyone is accepted. The spirit of doing the best that you can propels more effort, diligence and heart into the worship of the Lord. A shift takes place where more about the Lord and less about ourselves is emphasized. Thinking about our connections with one another becomes stronger and better. And, out of this, a wonderful, delightful, and strong spiritual experience takes place. It becomes a joy to be a Christian.

A. In this final class of this quarter, we look at the eighth and final beatitude. The beatitudes began with an internal look at ourselves (poor in spirit—mourn) and end with how others see us (persecuted).

- This is the longest of the beatitudes
- The "blessed" in vs 10 and 11 make this seem to be two beatitudes, but actually it's one with further explanation
- The spiritual blessing, "for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven" (this was the same blessing in the first beatitude—v. 3)

B. Three Major Observations Are Built Around This Beatitude

1. Who it is that is persecuted

- there are mean people in the world who pick on the innocent to take advantage of them
- specifically, the text says, "for the sake of righteousness" (10) and "_____ of Me" (11)
- there can be persecution that is motivated by politics, prejudice, and hatred
- Jesus is identifying a hatred of Him

Jesus was kind. He went about doing good. He helped people. Why was there such a strong hatred toward the Lord?

(a) Historically, God's people have always been persecuted. Give some O.T. examples

(b) Jesus told His people that this is the way it would be

- Mt 10:21-22; 24:9; 2 Tim 3:12
- 1 Cor 4:11-13
- Rev 2:13; Acts 26:11

(c) _____ you, say things that are not _____, speak _____ against you



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2. Why do they persecute?

John 3:19-20

John 15:18-25

Jesus is seen as a threat to the world. Why?

3. Our Response to Resistance

- understand that you are not the _____ ("they persecuted the prophets who were before you")
- there is the temptation to make Christianity more _____ to the world
Compromising and selling your convictions to save your life is not a price to pay
- Rejoice and be glad (1 Pet 4:12-16)
Not s _____...Keep _____...You are blessed...G _____ God
- _____ the example of Christ (1 Pet 2:21-23)

Some lessons for us:

1. The _____ of something does not mean it is good or right
2. We can _____ persecution by being obnoxious and provoking trouble
3. Many will look at you and see how you _____ being the center of jokes and ridicule
4. There are times when it is best to be _____ (Ecc 3:7b ; Prov 26:4-5)
5. Rejection from family can _____ our feelings and heart. Find comfort among brethren

Ps 23:5 Why does God have us sit at the table with our enemies?

6. Jesus returns in Matthew 5 to persecution. He wants us to love our enemies and _____ for our persecutors.
7. The Romans were told to overcome evil with _____ (Rom 12:13)

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

