

## THE BLESSEDNESS OF PERSECUTION

Text: Matthew 5:10-12

INTRO: Jesus begins & ends His beatitudes in the sermon on the mount by promising “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” One of the most paradoxical of His teachings is the doctrine that one should be happy in the midst of persecution. It is this teaching that we will examine in this lesson.

### I. JESUS’ GENERAL STATEMENT, vs. 10.

A. Blessed = pronounced blessed by God.

B. For righteousness’ sake.

1. Not those who are put to flight because they deserve it. There are no blessings for such.

1 Peter 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. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

2. Not those whose “persecution” is brought on by their own self-will or a desire to be pitied and exalted by others.

Matt 6:16, "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

C. Theirs is the kingdom (reign) of God. It is in the hearts of those whose convictions are strong enough to endure persecution that God really reigns. The kingship of God is for their benefit.

II. JESUS' APPLICATION OF THE GENERAL STATEMENT TO HIS SPECIFIC AUDIENCE, vs. 11-12.

A. Blessed are **you**. This blessedness is not limited to others. It is yours if you qualify.

B. **When** (not if) they revile, slander & otherwise persecute you.

2 Tim 3:12, All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

1. Revile = reproach, upbraid, scold, abuse
2. Persecute = put to flight, pursue, chase
3. Slander
4. They do these things because they hate you. But why would anyone hate someone who is meek, merciful & peaceful?

- a. The actions of the righteous reprove unrighteousness & pass judgment on ungodliness.

John 3:19, And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world & men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

- b. The message of the righteous is one that makes folks uncomfortable in their sins.

1 Kings 22:8, [Ahab] said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

5. For My sake = because you belong to Me.

C. We see the wisdom of Jesus in foreseeing this persecution & His honesty in foretelling it.

III. THE CHRISTIAN'S REACTION TO PERSECUTION, vs 12.

A. Rejoice—in that day.

Luke 6:22-23, Blessed are you when men hate you, & when they exclude you, & revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day & leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.

1. Because of your confidence of future reward.
2. Because of the good company it puts you in.

Acts 5:41-42, So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

2 Tim 2:11-12, This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.

3. Because such suffering helps us to develop patience that is needed in other aspects of life as well.

James 1:2-3, My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

B. Jesus' footnote: Luke 6:26, Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

1. Jews of old spoke well of the false prophets because they said what the people wanted to hear. The same is true of many people today.
2. Some folks want to hear the truth, Acts 10:33. They will speak well of & value those who teach it. Others want only to hear their own theories & prejudices confirmed & these will hate all who shed new light on any subject. Woe to the man who has the praise of all, for he is obviously inconsistent & hypocritical.

CONCLUSION: 1 Peter 2:19-24, [It] is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.

La Porte, TX, January 13, 1979

Exton, PA, October 8, 1989

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, September 6, 1992

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, February 27, 2005