

**Title:** Blessed are the Persecuted (Beatitude #8)

**Text:** Matthew 5:10-12

**Date:** Nov 8, 2020 at FBCW

## INTRO.

**First, some may feel persecuted, but it's not necessarily because of righteousness' sake.** We need to make an important distinction here.

Not all hardship in your life is because you are a Christian.

- Maybe you've made unwise, foolish decisions.
- Maybe you're a difficult person; you are obtuse.
- Maybe you have lacked self-awareness and you agitate people.

Jesus is NOT saying → "You are blessed by all arguments that you get into."

- No! That's not what Jesus said at all.

If your life seems "hard" – and it's because of a bad personal attitude...or poor money management...or you have anger issues...or you are impatient and compulsive...or you've surrounded yourself with ungodly people...or you've not taken care of your soul and body...

- You can't blame these decisions on Jesus or the Christian faith.

ILUS: My Dad's favorite John Wayne quote, "*Life is tough, and it's even tougher...*"

Keep in mind the previous Beatitude → "Blessed are the peacemakers."

- Rom 12:18, *If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

But in today's Beatitude (#8) – Jesus is acknowledging that in some situations, unfortunately, peace doesn't seem to be within reach, even though you've done everything in your power as a believer. This is who Jesus is speaking of:

- You have tried to love/serve your enemy.
- But you are still being opposed by that enemy.

**Second, Jesus is speaking in Matthew 5:10-12 of the adversity that comes into your life specifically because of your Christian conviction.**

Remember what Kingdom Character (Upside Down) is all about: *poverty of spirit, mourning our sin, meekness, hungering for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, and being a peacemaker.*

You are blessed if you do these things and are still persecuted/hated!

LESSON: Jesus Christ was totally perfect, and they crucified him on a cross!

- How should we expect the world to treat us any better?

*John 15:18-19, If the world hates you, understand that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of this world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of this world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you.*

Question: if we aren't persecuted on some level, we must ask:

- 1) Are we cozy with the world's values?
- 2) Do we not stand out, obviously, as true Christians?
- 3) Does the devil perceive us as no threat to his kingdom?
- 4) Are we in living with "cultural" Christianity, but not true Christianity?

To be clear: we don't look for a fight! We avoid all unnecessary battles!

- Peacemakers...Proverbs!

Though we don't look for a fight...we cannot and should not back away from God's truth!

**For example, here are a few "fights" in the present generation:**

#### **The sanctity of life.**

- CHRs: from the womb to the tomb.
- CHRs: we care about all of life – before birth, and after the birth.

#### **Sexual ethics.**

- Homosexuality...Cohabitation...Fornication...
- Gender confusion.
- Do we have compassion? YES! Do we give approval to any sexual sin? NO.

Jesus → One man, one woman, in monogamy, for a lifetime.

#### **Religious liberty and tolerance.**

- Anyone can say/believe anything...but not conservative Christians (so it appears).
- Be tolerant! (Where is the tolerance of Christianity?)
- By the way, who's building the hospitals and funding charities around the world?

#### **Gospel exclusivity.**

- Pluralism: "We all worship the same god...we're all taking different paths to the same place."
- But the clear message of the Bible: John 14:6; Acts 4:12.

#### **Here's another one that exists, but it isn't widely spoken of: Christian parenting!**

- How we educate our children...and raise our children.
- If you want your kids to be modest, holy, not constantly on electronics, and not skipping church over 50% of the year for travel sports or extra-curricular activities...WOW!
- Dressed modestly...actively participating...even serving, faithfully, in church! WOW!

### **Third, what does Jesus say the persecution will look like?**

**Reviling** (v 11). It means: to insult, to reproach, to criticize, to mock.

- They get their jollies off of hurting you.
- They have fun, and become popular, by putting you down.
- It means you're left on the outside looking in...you're the butt of the joke.
- ILLUS: Mike Pence rule about not being alone with a woman.

**Persecuting** (v 11). It means to physically assault. To harm.

- To put you away.
- To smack you.

**Slander** (v 11). "*Falsely say every kind of evil about you.*"

- It doesn't have to be true.
- They likely know it isn't true.
- But they say it to wound you...to puff themselves up.

**Slander** = Christians are so narrow minded...Christians hate gay people...Christians condone racism...Christians blow up abortion clinics...Christians are judgmental. "NO!"

I've seen examples of persecution; ILLUS:

- Teenage girl from Mormon family in Perry.
- My friend Danny and his troubled marriage.
- Young international girl Anthony Knight led to faith.

**Fourth, what should our response to Christian persecution be?** Let's look at history, let's look at today's text, and let's think practically.

#### **Old Testament.**

Isaiah was sawn in half.

Jeremiah was called the weeping prophet.

Daniel was thrown into a lion's den.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were tossed into a fire.

David was on the run, constantly, his entire adult life.

#### **New Testament.**

- Jesus promised persecution.
- Paul, 2 Tim 3:12, *Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

Peter – crucified upside down (at his own request).

James – beheaded with a sword.

John – thrown in boiling cauldron of oil (but didn't die).

Bartholomew – beaten, flayed, crucified head down.

Thomas – thrown into a fire.

James the Less – thrown down from top of temple, beaten with rods.

Stephen – the first Christian martyr (Acts 7) – but Jesus stands to welcome him to heaven.

**Oh my, Jeremy, what are you saying? Back to Jesus' words in Matthew 5:12 –**

**Rejoice** (v 12). *See it for what it is...know you're on the right track...think of it and be grateful!*

**Be exceedingly glad** (v 12). *To jump for joy. The more I think of it, the happier I become, to give a cheer.*

Heaven is going to be glorious!

Our hearts should ache for home! One day the tears will be wiped from our eyes.

Teenagers: your sobriety, your purity = a joke now, but it will be rewarded later.

Businessmen: putting your family first, not out with the boys = a joke now, will be rewarded later.

Singles: giving yourself with honor/character to God's mission = a joke now, will be rewarded later.

Mother/Grandma: up early, praying, serving your family behind the scenes = seems small now, will be rewarded later.

**Application:**

1. Let us **pray** for the persecuted church.
  - a. Solidarity...Advocacy...Sing louder.
2. Let us **prepare** for persecution in our lives.
  - a. 1 Peter 3:15, *always be ready to give an answer.*
3. As the days grow evil, and the return of the Lord is closer...let us be more committed, not less.
  - a. I want to give all my remaining days on earth – to the winning side.

**CONCL.** My friend's personal letter this past week to the anonymous family that lost their loved one...but that deceased loved one...provided the heart transplant to my friend's son.

- *Hardest letter I've ever written.*
- *How can you say "thank you" enough?*

Gospel: Jesus' heart/life were broken on the cross...so that I may live!