

Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia

Bible Study - March 30, 2023

Prepared & Presented by: Pastor James G. Austin, Jr., Ph.D., D.Min.

Title: The Sermon on The Mount - Part IX

The Beatitudes - Part VIII

Scripture Reference: Matthew 5:10-12

**"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."**

## I. Introduction

A. Of all the beatitudes, this last one seems the most contrary to human thinking and experience.

B. The world does not associate happiness with humility, mourning over sin, gentleness, righteousness, mercy, purity of heart, or peacemaking holiness. Even less does it associate happiness with persecution.

C. Those who live righteously will inevitably be persecuted for it. Godliness generates hostility and antagonism from the world.

**Comment:** Kingdom people are rejected people. Holy people are singularly blessed, but they pay a price for it.

D. The last beatitude is really two in one; a single beatitude repeated and expanded. **Blessed** is mentioned twice (vv 10, 11), but only one characteristic (**persecuted**) is given, although it is

mentioned three times, and only one result (**for theirs is the kingdom of heaven**) is promised.

E. Blessed is apparently repeated to emphasize the generous blessing given by God to those who are persecuted.

**Comment:** Jesus seems to be saying, "Double-blessed are those who are persecuted."

F. Three distinct aspects of kingdom faithfulness are spoken of in this beatitude: the persecuted, the promise, and the posture.

## **II. Exposition [Part I] - The Persecuted**

A. Those who have been persecuted are the citizens of the kingdom, those who live out the previous seven beatitudes. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3:12).

B. Before writing these words, Paul had just mentioned some of his own, saying - "persecutions, and afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra" (v 11).

C. As one who lived the kingdom life, Paul had been persecuted, and all others who live the kingdom life can expect similar treatment.

D. What was true in ancient Israel is true today and will remain true until the Lord returns. "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born of the Spirit, even so it is now." (Gal. 4:29).

E. Picture this: A man accepted a new job and he had to work with especially profane people. At the end of the first day, his wife asked him how things went; he said, "Great! They never guessed I was a Christian."

F. As long as people have no reason to believe that we are Christians, at least obedient and righteous Christians, we need not worry about persecution.

G. But, as we manifest the standards of Christ, we will share the reproach of Christ.

**Point:** Those born only of the flesh will persecute those born of the Spirit.

H. To live for Christ is to live in opposition to Satan in this world and in his system. Christlikeness in us will produce the same results as Christlikeness did in the apostles, in the rest of the early Church, and believers throughout history.

I. Righteousness is confrontational, and even when it is not preached in so many words, it confronts wickedness by its very contrast.

Consider this:

- 1) Abel did not preach to Cain, but Abel's righteous life typified by his proper sacrifice to the Lord, was a constant rebuke to his wicked brother - who in a rage finally slew him.
- 2) When Moses chose to identify with his own despised Hebrew people rather than compromise himself in the pleasures of pagan Egyptian society, he paid a great price. But he considered "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Heb. 11:26).

J. Persecution is one of the surest and most tangible evidences of salvation.

**Point:** Persecution is not incidental to faithful Christian living, but it is certain evidence of it.

K. Paul encouraged the Thessalonians by sending them Timothy, so "That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know." (1 Thess. 3:3-4).

L. Suffering persecution is part of the normal Christian life (cf. Rom. 8:16-17), and if we never experience ridicule, criticism, or rejection because of our faith, we have reason to examine the genuineness of it. "For unto you, it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me." (Phil. 1:29-30).

**Point:** Persecution for Christ's sake is a sign of our own salvation just as it is a sign of damnation for those who do the persecuting (Phil. 1:28).

M. Whenever and however affliction comes to the child of God, we can be sure that our heavenly Father will be there to encourage and bless us.

N. Our responsibility is not to seek out persecution, but to be willing to endure whatever trouble our faithfulness to Jesus Christ may bring, and to see it as a confirmation of true salvation.

O. The way to avoid persecution is obvious and easy. To live like the world, or at least to "live and let live," will cost you nothing. To go along with the world, to laugh at its jokes, to enjoy its entertainment, to smile when it mocks God and takes His name in vain, and to be ashamed to take a stand for Christ, will not bring persecution. Those are the habits of sham Christians!

P. Jesus does not take faithlessness lightly. "For whosoever shall

be ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." (Luke 9:26).

Q. If we are ashamed of Christ, He will be ashamed of us. Christ also warned, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets." (Luke 6:26).

**Point:** To be popular with everyone is either to have compromised the faith or not to have true faith at all!

R. Our Lord made it clear from His earliest teachings, and His opponents made it clear from their earliest reactions, that following Him was costly. Those who entered His kingdom would suffer for Him before they would reign with Him.

S. That is the hard honesty that every preacher, evangelist, and witness of Christ should exemplify. We do the Lord no honor and those to whom we witness no benefit by hiding or minimizing the cost of following Christ.

**Comment:** To be prepared for kingdom life is to be prepared for loneliness, misunderstanding, ridicule, rejection, and unfair treatment of every sort.

T. In resentment against the gospel the Romans invented charges against Christians, such as accusing them of being cannibals because in the Lord's Supper they spoke of eating Jesus' body and drinking His blood.

U. They branded believers as revolutionaries because they called Jesus Lord and King and spoke of God's destroying the earth by fire.

V. By the end of the first century, Rome had expanded almost to

the outer limits of the known world, and unity became more and more of a problem. The Caesars of Rome came to be deified and their worship was demanded as a unifying and cohesive influence.

W. It became compulsory to give a verbal oath of allegiance to Caesar once a year, for which a person would be given a verifying certificate called a **libellus**. After publicly proclaiming "Caesar is Lord," the person was free to worship any other gods he chose.

X. Because faithful Christians refused to declare such an allegiance to anyone but Christ, they were considered traitors - for which they suffered confiscation of their property, loss of work, imprisonment, and often death.

Y. In the last beatitude Jesus speaks of three specific types of affliction endured for Christ's sake: physical persecution, verbal insults, and false accusation.

### 1. Physical Persecution

- a. First, Jesus says, we can expect physical persecution.
- b. Blessed are they which are **persecuted** (v10), **persecute** (v11), and **persecuted** (v12). Each of these are from the Greek word **dioko**, which has the basic meaning of chasing, driving away, or pursuing.

(1) From that meaning developed the connotations of physical persecution, harassment, abuse, and other unjust treatment.

- c. All of the other beatitudes have to do with inner qualities, attitudes, and spiritual character. The eight beatitude speaks of external things that happen to believers, but the teaching behind these results also has to do with attitude.

- d. The believer who has the qualities required in the previous beatitudes will also have the quality of willingness to face persecution for the sake of righteousness.

## 2. Verbal Insults

- a. Second, Jesus promises that kingdom citizens are blessed. When men shall revile (i.e., cast insults) at you.
- b. The Greek word **Oneidizo** carries the idea of reviling, upbraiding, or seriously insulting, and it literally means to cast in one's teeth.
- c. To cast insults (i.e., revile) is to throw abusive words in the face of an opponent, to mock viciously.
- d. As Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin after His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, He was spit upon, beaten, and taunted - "Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?" (Matthew 26:68).
- e. As He was being sentenced to crucifixion by Pilate, Jesus was again beaten, spit upon, and mocked, this time by the Roman soldiers (Mark 15:19-20).
- f. Faithfulness to Christ may even cause friends and loved ones to say things that cut and hurt deeply. Never-the-less, we must remain faithful.

## 3. False Accusations

- a. Third, faithfulness to Christ will bring enemies of the gospel to say all manner of evil against you falsely.

**Comment:** Whereas insults are abusive words said to our faces, these evil things are primarily abusive words said behind our backs.

- b. Jesus' critics said of Him, "Behold a man gluttonous,

and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." (Matthew 11:19b).

- c. If the world said those things of the sinless Christ, What things can His followers expect to be called and accused of?
- d. Slander behind our backs is harder to take, partly because it is harder to defend against than direct accusation(s). It has the opportunity to spread and be believed before we have a chance to correct it.
- e. We cannot help regretting slander, but we should not grieve about it. We should count ourselves blessed, because our Lord assures us that we will be blessed when the slander is "**for my sake.**"
- f. When Jesus said "**for my sake,**" He is not speaking of every hardship, problem, or conflict believers may face, but those that the world brings on us because of our faithfulness to the Lord.

### III. Exposition [Part II] - The Promise

- A. Each beatitude begins with blessed and, as already suggested, Jesus pronounces a double blessing on those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, which is for His own sake.
- B. The specific blessing promised to those who are so persecuted is that **theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
- C. The blessings of the kingdom are threefold: **present**, **millennial**, and **eternal**.
- D. First, we are promised blessings here and now. However, not every believer is rewarded in this life with the things of this life. But every believer is rewarded in this life with the comfort,



strength, and joy of the indwelling Lord. The believer is also blessed with the assurance that no service or sacrifice for the Lord will be in vain.

E. There is also a millennial aspect to the kingdom blessing. When Christ establishes His one-thousand-year reign on earth, we will be co-regents with Him over that wonderful, renewed earth (Rev. 20:4).

F. Finally, there is the reward of the eternal kingdom, the blessing of all blessings of living forever in our Lord's kingdom, enjoying His very presence. The ultimate fruit of kingdom life is eternal life.

#### **IV. Exposition [Part III] - The Posture**

"Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matt. 5:12).

A. The believer's response to persecution and affliction should not be to retreat and hide. Because we belong to Christ, we are no longer of this world, but He has sent us into this world to serve just as He Himself came into this world to serve (John 17:14-18).

B. As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are "the salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (Matt. 5:13-14). For our salt to flavor the earth and our light to lighten the world, we must be active in the world.

C. The gospel is not given to be hidden but to enlighten. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:16).

D. When we become Christ's salt and His light, our salt will sting

the world's open wounds of sin and our light will irritate its eyes that are used to darkness.

E. However, even when our salt and light are resented, rejected, and thrown back in our face, we should rejoice, and be exceeding glad. The literal meaning of be exceeding glad is to skip and jump with happy excitement.

F. Jesus gives two reasons for our rejoicing and being glad when we are persecuted for His sake. First, He says, **for great is your reward in heaven.**

G. Our present life is no more than "a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (James 4:14); but heaven is forever.

H. Second, we are to rejoice because the world persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

**Comment:** When we suffer for Christ's sake, we are in the best possible company.

-----

It is once again interactive time. Please complete the biblical passages that follow by filling in the blank spaces. All passages have been taken from the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible.

"For I \_\_\_\_\_ that the \_\_\_\_\_ of this present time are not \_\_\_\_\_ to be \_\_\_\_\_ with the glory which shall be \_\_\_\_\_ in us."

**[Romans 8:18]**

"For our light \_\_\_\_\_, which is but for a \_\_\_\_\_, worketh for us a far more \_\_\_\_\_ and eternal weight of \_\_\_\_\_; While we look not at the things which are \_\_\_\_\_, but at the things which are not \_\_\_\_\_: for the things which are seen are \_\_\_\_\_, but the things which are not seen are \_\_\_\_\_."

**[2 Corinthians 4:17-18]**

"There hath no \_\_\_\_\_ taken you but such as is \_\_\_\_\_ to man: but God is \_\_\_\_\_, who will not suffer you to be \_\_\_\_\_ above that ye are able; but will with the \_\_\_\_\_ also make a way of \_\_\_\_\_, that ye may be able to \_\_\_\_\_ it."

**[1 Corinthians 10:13]**

"Therefore my \_\_\_\_\_ brethren, be ye \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, always \_\_\_\_\_ in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your \_\_\_\_\_ is not in \_\_\_\_\_ in the Lord."

**[1 Corinthians 15:58]**

"Thou will show me the \_\_\_\_\_ of life: in thy \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ of joy; at thy \_\_\_\_\_ hand there are \_\_\_\_\_ for evermore."

**[Psalm 16:11]**

In the Master's Service

Pastor Austin