

J. May - Nov. 1, 70 P.M.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF PERSECUTION

Matt. 5:10-12

The Sermon on the Mount gives us a great deal of insight into character. Now we come to the Beatitude which deals with the conditions. The other Beatitudes have pointed up some of the great qualities of the Kingdom man.

This Beatitude speaks of his external relationship and tells a story of our Saviour's personal life.

It is quite a story - step by step - in the believer's heart when we consider these qualities of a poor spirit, of meekness, thirsting after righteousness, peace-making. All of these were found in the experience of our Saviour.

Now all of these things are true if we are Christians. And Jesus here predicts the effect which this will have upon the world.

He tells you about an inevitable persecution. It is impossible for you to be like this without generating a great deal of hate.

What a picture this is, of the true Disciple, in the world and what the world will do to him. And what his wages will be. This is exactly the way they treated Jesus.

The question may be in your mind - who wants to be persecuted. You know it is natural for us to want to be respectable, and have the good will of all people. It is really hard to see that there is a blessedness in being different in such a way as to create enemies.

Off hand it would seem that Christians would create admiration.
By their kindnesses, by their honesty, by their unselfish way of living.
No wonder we often are puzzled. We ask ourselves questions, as to why
is this. Why does this thing have to be this way. But the spiritual
law is unchangeable.

2 Tim. 3:12

✓ I. Two Ways Of Settling This.

We can either bring the world up and everyone become Christian characters.
Or second, we can let the Christian character down to the level of the world.
But it seems to me that he is pointing out here that we are persecuted because
of our habits and they are not liked by irreligious men. Our principles are
different. A true Christian is a standing rebuke to the sinful conscience of
the world.

✓ II. Why Are Christians Persecuted.

Those who practice the Christian life will not make men popular and it
will not give them a real good opinion in the world. It may do just the
opposite.

He does not say 7 blessed are those that are persecuted because they are
objectionable.

Because they lack wisdom.

Because they are a nuisance.

Because they bring this on themselves.

Peter said, let no man suffer as a murderer, thief, and evil doer.
Now there are lots of people who are in prison for political causes.

~~Turned the world upside down.~~
First, they turn the world up side down.

They were not popular in the eyes of the world and there is hate when there should be love. And there is quarrelling when they should be friendly. And they are fighting when they should be peaceable. I used to have a little magic bottle that would always flop upright. It was round on the bottom no matter what position you would put it in. Providing you had a little short metal piece to slip in the mouth of it. Then you could get it to lay down flat and do other tricks with it. But if you did not have that little metal piece - regardless of the position, it would always flip back. And so it is with men in an unregenerated state. They don't like to be upright and they always go back to their old position. And they think that the Disciples of Jesus have turned the world up-side-down. When Jesus was trying to get this world right side up.

We know that Christian's goodness is a rebuke to the godless - Christ's disciples immediately went out to preach and to teach. Acts. 17:6. "These that have turned the world up-side-down have come hither also." But as long as Satan is loose and dominates the hearts of men with evil passions, they will always look upon Christians as a peculiar people. I Peter 2:9, 11. Our life and our hope is not of this world.

Second, they say that Christians are (counterfeit.) This is another way of persecution. You are going to have a struggle and there is going to be suspicion. And you are going to have a battle against the powers and the rulers of darkness. So the darkness which hates -- and you can't help that because in your nature, your heart has been changed.

In the ^{3rd} ~~fourth~~ place, ~~it will be a cross~~ or a burden, that will prove to be persecution for you. He that takes up his cross and follows not after me, is not worthy of me, Jesus said. Matt. 10:38. Now a man does not put this on the lapel of his coat. He does not put a sign on it, a wooden cross over his shoulder. No, it means that a man is going to suffer reproach. Because of the cross of Christ. We are in Christ and people are going to persecute us because we are in Christ. And Paul says that the world is going to crucify and his life - Gal. 6:14.

^{4th} ~~Fifth~~, ~~because of your own fault~~. I think sometimes Christians may bring persecution upon themselves in an unnecessary way. They may have a bad disposition. They may be noted for their snag judgements or their poor manners. And he may think that he is being persecuted. But he is simply be opposed because of his lack of righteousness. Not for the sake of it. A person may behave offensively. Now this is not a credit to the Gospel. A shabby Christian is a poor advertisement,

for Christianity. We must trust in the living God. We ought to be careful
*When is your new car? ~~what a thing about her boyfriend~~ -
 that the thing we are being persecuted for is not the fault of our own
 They called it back to correct a defect in my bank account,
 temper or our own lack of character. Confused her date!*

^{5th} ~~Sixth~~, ~~persecuted (for righteousness sake)~~. Jesus said, this would come because we are servants of God. This is the distinction that makes it easy for us to suffer. For a cause, a just cause and for truth. For righteousness sake. This is simply wonderful.

The Scotch martyrs who died as they were putting the flame to them - felt this way. "I think they are casting roses before me". Another martyr died saying, "I was glad when they said to me, let us go into the

house of the Lord". For he knew that soon he would be with God.

Argyle, when put to death, the physician felt of his pulse as he layed his head upon the block. He could not detect a fluttering for a quiet steady beat. There was real peace.

When you turn down cocktails and your friends make fun of you - when you refuse to go to some questionable place - and they call you a sissy.

Daniel had confidence that what he was suffering was for righteousness sake.

Seventh, persecution for Jesus' sake. V. 11.

Like Jesus, the world hates. And blessed is the man who suffers for my sake. A Christlike life condemns the world. There is nothing the ungodly man so dislikes is a search light of Christ's life upon his heart. The influence of a Godly character upon the hearts of the sinful causes pain.

The life of Jesus hurts the pride of men and women. For men and women like admiration. They like to feel that they are right all of the time. In all of their decisions and that all of their friends are the right kind. But a man who is paying the price to live for Jesus will do away with envy and jealousy.

He is just in all of his ways. Now I don't think that Jesus meant for us to give a negative influence. It should be a positive effort. So the real source of hatred is deeper than on the surface. The hatred exists between Satan and the Lord Jesus Christ.

✓ III. ^{Thir} What Is Persecution

Now when we consider what persecution is, and the forms it takes, we know that it takes on the form of words. There is the hiss of the serpent.

VIII ^{1st} Revile - Kingdom Man Suspised
Yes, we will suffer from the words, unkind words that are said about us.
Sometimes the stories are passed around as others seek to bring harm to us.

V. 11. Slander - False lies
2 Second, they will take the form of (acts and deeds.) During the reign of Charles II, men suffered. 800 Quakers suffered for their religion and their faith. 100,000 pounds was extracted from the group in payment for fines for conscience sake.

3-Third, it will be taking the form of (imputation of evil.) I do not think that we should shrink from it. If we live close to Jesus Christ, men will impute to us all manner of evil. They do so by questioning our motives. They misrepresent our actions. They circulate malicious stories about us. The nearer that you live to Jesus Christ, the more certain that this is to be true.

If men called Jesus, Beelzebub, think of what they will call you. They will call you the same.

I think the only time that we need to defend our character is when there is some injury to the cause of Christ. Otherwise we can be content to loose our character, respect - for these reports have circulated, these stories and unkind words. We can immediately turn to our master and tell him that we are content to suffer with him and for him.

Now persecution may not be in the same form in every generation. Different times in history there have been different kinds of persecution.

For example, there was a time when Christians were put in arena with lions and wild beasts.)

There was a time when they were burned at the stake.

At other times, by slander and poison words by the press. Sometimes by the public.

*Walter Papper - Not give them space
today, yes, post their story
now of the ch. activities
pay for space - etc -*

Why do Christians suffer very little today. Now here is another question for you to ponder. I will not go into detail about this, but I read a story about a soldier following his salvation, some of his buddies began to ridicule him. And they poured some hot soup on him one day. The whole company stood in silence, expecting to see the offender receive a beating. After the converted prize fighter took off his clothes, wiped off the hot soup he said, this is what I expected when I became a Christian.

It may be that the reason Christians today know very little about persecution is because they know very little about living the Christians life.

Fifth, the promised blessings. We next take up the blessedness. That a Christian man's blessedness does not depend on the accident or on somebody else's behavior. It does not depend upon the fact that others have died at the stake. Here is a two-fold fulfillment because it seems to say, this persecution as a result of character will bring Christians assurance of the Kingdom of God. Here is joy that will be there throughout the world.

Thomas Fuller said that churches during days of persecution seemed to

build high. Men are blessed when they are flying high.

The real blessing to their hearts and lives will come.

First, promise satisfactory (assurance) This is evidence in the sincerity of our religious faith.

Second, the (consolation) that we are following Christ, when persecution comes is a promised blessing.

Third, we share the (sympathies) of God's people. We are in a great group because we have joined with the prophets of God.

Fourth, we will have great rewards in Heaven because of this. That is righteousness sake - the reason why we suffer. Rom. 5:3, James 1:2. For the sake of Jesus we are doing this suffering. When we take our place beside Jeremiah and Daniel, we are associated with some of the greats - Stephen, Silas, Acts 52:2.

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IV. What Does This Persecution Do For Us

V. 12 Rejoice

V. 12
First, it forms a (back drop) for a radiant Christian life. Did you ever go into a (jewelry) store and asked the man to show you a diamond. He will pull out a little black clothe and use that as a back-drop. And usually jewels are displayed with some back-drop. They did not just put them out over clear glass. They use a back-drop to show you something of the beauty and the sparkle.

We think of Paul and Silas in prison. They sang. That was the back-drop.

Fanny Crosby, whose spirit was a glow even without eyes to see.

Thornton Wilder said, without your wounds, there would be no power. The very angels of Heaven could not persuade the wretched blundering men of this earth to live a righteous life.

Saunders the martyr said, welcome the cross of Christ. I feel no pain in the fire. Than if I were on a bed of down.

Another great martyr kissed the stake, I would not relive my life but change it for better.

Rewards

Second, it identifies us with Christ. Now this is tangible proof in the world that you are on the right side. When men shall hate you and forsake you.

Paul said, I reckon the sufferings of this present time are not worthy compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Romans 8:18, 19. If we suffer all of our lives, it will be just a short time in comparison with eternity. You shall be heirs of a great estate.

Think of the three Hebrew children who identified themselves with God. Walked through a firey furnace. Daniel 3:25. And the Son of God was walking with them. In your suffering and time of persecution - do you not feel his great presence.

Third, being processed for Heaven. I think it is very much like growing children. Suffering the pain, the persecution that a Christian goes through. This is the great secret of heroes of faith. Abraham looked at a city. Now the Christian does not think only of today. The non-Christian thinks of the world and today. He is not interested in Heaven or Hell.

The Christian thinks of the end. Moses could look to the future beyond - when his body would be changed. And there would be no sorrow nor tears. How often do you think of Heaven. Does it cause you any rejoicing.

Prophets - you have Examples - Bepe you -

The Christian does not resent these things. There was a man who lost his wife, his job, his fortune during the Depression. One day he walked by a church that was being built. He watched the group. One man was chistling on a triangle piece of stone. He asked, what is that for. He says, you see, that place way up on top of the church - well, I am shaping this down here so it will fit up there. Tears filled his eyes. He walked off. God had spoken to him through that workman's words. That explains my suffering. God was saying to him, I am shaping you down here so you will fit in up there. God is going to make him perfect.

Congratulations. Because of persecution.