

Blessed are the Persecuted

Jeff Rogers / Lamplighter Bible Study

Matthew 5:10-12

The Beatitudes, when considered as a whole, distill for us a picture of a Christian man. Each Beatitude shows a portion of Christian character and his transformed nature that results from the new birth. Additionally, there exists connections within the Beatitudes. For instance, poverty of spirit and being merciful; mourning for sin and being pure in heart; meekness and peacemaking; hungering for righteousness and being persecuted for righteousness' sake.

We are reminded that it is impossible to live this life as given by our Lord without becoming a new man in Christ.

- **Are we empty?** (Matthew 5:3) – **Isaiah 66:2**, “. . . *But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.*” Contrite – crippled, broken, remorseful. Recognizing our own spiritual emptiness.
- **Are we mournful, saddened, and broken over our sin** (Matthew 5:4) – **Psalms 34:18**, *The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.*
- **Are we humble in our daily walk with Christ?** (meekness) (Matthew 5:5) – **Psalms 149:4**, *For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation.*
- **Do we hunger and thirst for sanctification (righteousness)?** (Matthew 5:6) – Realizing we do not have righteousness; we desire and hunger for it. **Philippians 3:10**, *That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,*
- **Are we merciful?** (Matthew 5:7) **1 Peter 2:23**, *When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.*
- **Are we pure in heart?** (Matthew 5:8) **Proverbs 4:23**, *Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.*
- **Are we peacemakers?** (Matthew 5:9) **Romans 12:19–21**, *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” 20 To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Matthew 5:10, *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

I. An Overview of the Beatitude

- A. Consider persecution in the positive:
 1. Persecution comes to a Christian living out his life for Christ.
 2. Persecution comes with a promise, *“theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*
 3. Persecution comes for *“righteousness’ sake.”*
- B. Consider persecution in the negative:
 1. Persecution is not caused by our being objectionable, difficult, or foolish.
 2. Persecution is not caused by our being busy bodies. (**1 Peter 4:15**, *But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler* [busybody – meddling in the affairs of others].)
 3. Persecution is not caused by our “religion,” politics, or “just doing good.”

II. What does the Beatitude mean?

- A. Practicing righteousness is being like the Lord Jesus Christ and living in opposition to the world.
 1. **John 15:18–20**, *“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.*
 2. **2 Timothy 3:12–13**, *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*
 - (1) The Example of Abel (Genesis 4:1-8; **Genesis 4:8**, *Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.* **1 John**

3:12, *We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.*)

(2) The Example of Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 37 & 38**)

(e) Jeremiah 38:1-7

(3) The Example of John (**Revelation 1:9**, *I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.*).

B. Persecution is tangible evidence of salvation.

1. **It is certain.** **1 Thessalonians 3:2–4**, *And we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, **3** that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. **4** For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.*

2. **It is normal** **Romans 8:16–17**, *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, **17** and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

3. **It is expected** **Philippians 1:29–30**, *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, **30** engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.*

C. It causes us to examine our relationship with the world

1. **James 4:4**, *You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

2. **1 John 2:15–17**, *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. **17** And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

D. Persecution reveals unbelief. **Matthew 13:20–21**, *As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, **21** yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.*

III. The Outcome of Persecution

Matthew 5:11–12, *“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

A. Types of persecution (John 15:21)

1. Revile – harsh, over-the-top criticism, demeaning words.

2. Persecute – action taken to cause suffering, physical or emotional distress.

3. Evil words – damaging a person's reputation; blasphemy

B. Reactions to persecution (Matthew 5:12)

1. Rejoice – Happiness, joy, be merry

2. Be Glad – *agalliaō* – to exult, exceeding glad, overjoyed.

C. Rewards associated with persecution (Matthew 5:12, Mark 10:29-30)

The second-century Christian leader Tertullian was once approached by a man who said, “I have come to Christ, but I don’t know what to do. I have a job that I don’t think is consistent with what Scripture teaches. What can I do? I must live.” To that Tertullian replied, “Must you?”

Loyalty to Christ is the Christian’s only true choice. To be prepared for kingdom life is to be prepared for *loneliness, misunderstanding, ridicule, rejection, and unfair treatment of every sort.*

John Chrysostom, a godly leader in the fourth-century church preached so strongly against sin that he offended the unscrupulous Empress Eudoxia as well as many church officials. When summoned before Emperor Arcadius, Chrysostom was threatened with banishment if he did not cease his uncompromising preaching. His response was, “Sire, you cannot banish me, for the world is my Father’s house.” “Then I will slay you,” Arcadius said. “Nay, but you cannot, for my life is hid with Christ in God,” came the answer. “Your treasures will be confiscated” was the next threat, to which John replied, “Sire, that cannot be, either. My treasures are in heaven, where none can break through and steal.” “Then I will drive you from man, and you will have no friends left!” was the final, desperate warning. “That you cannot do, either,” answered John, “for I have a Friend in heaven who has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’ ” Chrysostom was indeed banished, first to Armenia and then farther away to Pityus on the Black Sea, to which he never arrived because he died on the way. But neither his banishment nor his death disproved or diminished his claims. The things that he valued most highly not even an emperor could take from him.