

A DIFFERENT KIND OF LIFE

Persecution and Promise

TEXT: Mt. 5:10-12 ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

INTRODUCTION: Last Sunday we observed that there is only one thing that can make this work; that can make persecution a blessing:

God is in control.

Today I want us to return to this final beatitude of Jesus and ask four questions:

1. **Why persecution?**
2. **Why not persecution?**
3. **How might persecution come?**
4. **What is the promise to the persecuted?**

I. WHY PERSECUTION?

A. For righteousness' sake

Gen. 3 tells us there will be enmity between satan's seed and woman's seed, Who is Christ. And indeed, it has always been that way: Sinful Cain murdered righteous Abel in Gen. 4

Gal. 4:29 But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him *who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now.*

As with Ismael and Isaac, so it is today.

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

And so it has been:

Christians have fellowship meals – accused of orgies

Ate the Lord's Supper – cannibalism

Quote 2 Pet. 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. – accused of burning Rome

Persecuted not for crime or sin but for righteousness.

Put on rock, skin scraped off, molten lead poured upon them, limbs cut off and roasted, eyes torn out

Godly living provokes ungodly men. As you grow in the beatitudes you will see.

B. For My sake

Because they boldly carried and shared the name of Christ.

John 15:18, 20b “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

Phil. 1:29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

They hated Him because He perfectly revealed God’s Holiness and God’s exclusive way of salvation.

They will hate you for it.

Years ago a pastor who now is an evangelist named Bailey Smith was asked how Jews can get to heaven. Bailey said, “There is only One way – thru faith in Jesus Christ.” He was accused of bigotry and lambasted in the media for exclusiveness and narrow mindedness.

1 Thess. 3:3-4 ³ that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. ⁴ For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.

When a person bears the name of Christ and lives the righteousness of Christ, persecution will inevitably come.

11 of the 12 apostles died martyrs and 1, John, died in exile on the lonely island of Patmos.

II. WHY NOT PERSECUTION?

Why aren’t Christians in America being persecuted today? Some are of course, but I mean why is it not as predominant here as it is in other places of the world and as it was in Biblical times?

1. Some would say because the government is more tolerant.

2. Some would say that the attitude of the world has changed; standards are more Christian.

No – that’s not it: the secret is not government policy or world standards.

- A. **Christians as a whole** or even as a substantially sized group **are not confronting our world with the person and message of Christ.** As the body of Christ, we are not uplifting the righteousness of God.

“Confront?” – No, I am a peacemaker. Remember a peacemaker makes real peace by the blood of the cross, not truce.

Mark 3:6 Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.

Jesus was hated early because of confrontation of His message.

Jesus was a peacemaker – “Prince of Peace” in the ultimate sense, making peace by the blood of the cross.

Jesus was a troublemaker – “Bring not peace but a sword” cleansing the temple, addressing hypocrisy of the Pharisees. “whitewashed tombs”

- B. There is often not a perceptible difference between individual Christians’ standards and those accepted by the world.

We won’t be persecuted if we will just play by the world’s rules.

approve the world’s standards, fit right in,
 accept the world’s morals – dress like them and do what they do
 laugh at its dirty jokes
 smile when it mocks God
 don’t be disturbed when God’s name is taken in vain
 don’t tell folks they are sinners
 don’t tell folks they are lost
 don’t tell folks they are doomed
 and for pete’s sake, don’t ever mention hell.

One of the main reasons we don’t experience persecution is that we follow rules pretty well. But we better remember

Luke 6:26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Friend, if you’re popular with everyone, especially the lost of the world, all the time, either you’re not a Christian or you’re hiding it well.

Jesus was persecuted, and the more we are like Him the more we will be persecuted also.

III. WHAT IS THE PROSPECT OF PERSECUTION?

A. Increasing in years to come

1. Laws and regulations over education will increasingly enforce standards that call evil good and good evil, and persecuting those who dare to disagree.
2. The IRS will increase its intimidation of pastors and active supporters of churches preaching Biblical doctrine.
3. Opposition to the homosexual lifestyle and to gay marriage will not be tolerated, and persecution including imprisonment of those who dare repeat the words of God and call this practice an abomination. Yes, those who would do these things overplayed their hand in Houston, but this battle rages on. Already Christian business owners have had to close their businesses and endure harsh treatment by government and individuals for refusing to help in the performance of gay weddings.
4. Insurance is now being used as the battleground and government is trying to force Christians to pay for the murder of unborn children by requiring the funding of abortion.

IV. THE PROMISE TO THE PERSECUTED

“Theirs is the kingdom of heaven” and “Great is their reward in heaven.”

A. The Promise Now

Ps. 23 – thru the valley, you are with me

2 Tim. 3:11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.

That does not mean no loss or death; but only greater results because of it.

Illustration: McArthur, Kingdom Living
Stan Dale – Indonesia Yali Tribe (163-5)

But the end – Yali tribe converted to Christ. Stan’s fifth child, a baby when Stan died was saved, reading in a book the account of his father’s sacrifice.

Only, that’s not the end.

To tell that we would have to leave this earth and go to Stan’s home that Jesus prepared for him.

And we would need to travel in time to go to a time when Christ's kingdom has been set up on earth and see Stan rule and reign with the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

But even that would not yet be the end of the story.

We would have to go beyond the thousand years to see a day in eternity in the New Jerusalem and watch Stan walking on streets of gold and standing in the shade of the tree of life. For the promise is also

B. Future

2 Tim. 4:8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Rom. 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

1 Cor. 2:9 But as it is written:

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,

Nor have entered into the heart of man

The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”