

Matthew 5:10-12 - Kingdom Character – The Persecuted

Scriptures:

2 Corinthians 2:14-16a - Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. 15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life.

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

John 3:19-20 - And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

1 Peter 2:13-14 - And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." (Quote is from Isaiah 8:12)

Romans 8:7 - Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for

G1377 - to systematically oppress and harass. – "to be persecuted v. – to be or become subject to systematic harassment and attack due to one's religious beliefs."

righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom

G1343 - what is right, justice.

G2076 – verb present active indicative

of heaven.

"The carnal mind is enmity against God (Rom. 8:7), and the more His children are conformed to His image the more they will bring down upon themselves the spite of His foes."

The verse does not say that all persecution is blessed by God. For example, it does not say that you will be blessed if you are persecuted for being a jerk. It doesn't say we will be blessed if we are persecuted for wearing a t-shirt that says, 'You are all going to hell!' The blessing comes when we are persecuted for doing what is right. And that is not your definition of right but God's definition of right and righteousness.

Notes:

The Christian life is a study in paradoxes. The dictionary defines a paradox as: a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true. As believers, we would remove the word 'perhaps' from that definition.

In the last beatitude we are called to be peacemakers. That means we seek to help others make peace with God. Even though we seek their good they will interpret it as a judgment of their lives (which it is). Paul talked about how our light is perceived by those walking in darkness (2 Cor. 2:14-16a).

The smell of death is unmistakable. In the animal kingdom, some animals are repulsed by the smell of death and others are attracted to it. As Christ-followers, we carry the life-giving fragrance of Christ everywhere we go. To those walking in darkness, that life-giving fragrance of Christ smells like the death they will experience for all eternity if they do not repent.

"Being a peacemaker by practicing justice and love and living by kingdom standards is initiating a confrontation with society which can be taken as a judgment." (Augsburger, 1982)

Anyone who chooses to live according to God's will is going to conflict with those who are living according to their own will. Paul said this is inevitable (2 Tim. 3:21).

If we live like Christ and manifest these Kingdom character traits, the world may respond negatively to us. Living and walking in the light will cause the light to shine out of us. The world does like the light, it prefers the darkness of sin, evil, and wickedness (John 3:19-20). Those who are 'practicing evil' hate the light of your good works and Kingdom character traits. Their hatred may manifest in persecution.

If you live to please God, your life will be an offence to those who choose to live to please themselves.

As followers of Christ, we should be determined to be good and to do good in the name of Christ. We might think that doing good would result in people, whether they are believers or not, appreciating what we are doing. Sadly, that is not the case. Those who have determined to do evil will be offended by your good works and may respond with persecution (1 Pet. 2:13-14).

Scriptures:

Luke 6:22 - Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake.

1 Peter 4:14-16 - If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

John 15:18-20 - If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet 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 keep yours also.

1 Peter 2:19-20 - For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

11 "Blessed are you when they revile and

G3679 – insult, denounce. – “to harshly criticize v. — to find fault with real or merely perceived faults in a harsh and demeaning manner.”

persecute you, and say all kinds of evil

G1377 – v10

G4190 – “slander n. — abusive words falsely spoken that damage a person's reputation.”

against you falsely for My sake.

G5574 - lie

Notes:

Luke chapter 6 includes another list of beatitudes. There is some overlap like with this one (Luke 6:22).

No one likes the idea of having other people say evil things about us. This is especially true when what they are saying is false. Peter tells us that God approves of us when it happens because of our faith in Christ (1 Pet. 4:14-16).

'for My sake' – If we are persecuted it should be because of our relationship to Christ and His truth. There is no blessing if we are persecuted because we did something wrong or unloving or sinful.

'for My sake' – they persecuted Jesus, the perfectly righteous One. He only did what the Father wanted. He only did what was right. If you seek to live like Christ, the world may seek to treat you like they did Christ.

Persecution of God's people by the wicked in this world began with Cain killing Abel. It will continue until Christ comes and establishes His kingdom. All through the Bible are examples of the wicked persecuting the righteous. The most heinous of those persecutions was the execution of Christ – the perfect, sinless Savior of the world.

There should be no expectation on the part of a Christ-follower that they will escape persecution (John 15:19-20). We should fearlessly carry the light into the darkness without regard to the possible consequences (1 Pet. 2:19-20).

God is sovereign – He will choose who will have to endure persecution. And by His grace, He will help them to endure it. We don't need to be afraid; we only need to be faithful to God and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. God's will cannot lead us someplace His grace cannot protect us.

Scriptures:

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 - Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Acts 5:41-42 - So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

2 Chronicles 36:15-16 - And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. 16 But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy.

Philippians 3:10 - that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great

G5463 – be glad, be delighted.

G21 – be extremely joyful.

G4183 – ‘polys’ - many

Notes:

Paul alludes to this reward when he tells us to compare our current affliction with our future reward (2 Cor. 4:17-18).

In Acts 5, some of the apostles were thrown into prison for working miracles and preaching in Christ’s name. An angel opened the prison doors and let them out. The religious leaders then demanded that they stop doing it. Peter and the apostles replied by saying that if they had to choose between obeying them or obeying God, they would obey God and continue to preach in Christ’s name. The religious leaders then had them beaten and released. Their response is how we should respond when we are treated unfairly because of Christ (Acts 5:41-42).

Being faithful to God will expose you to persecution from those who do not love God. This will come from the world but it can also come from people who claim to worship God (2 Chron. 36:15-16).

Our response to persecution because we live for Christ should be to rejoice. It means we have the unspeakable privilege of having fellowship in Christ’s sufferings (Phil. 3:10). Christ suffered for us, so that we could be saved. We should rejoice when we are given the opportunity to suffer for His sake.

We should also rejoice when we suffer persecution in Christ’s name because our reward in heaven will be great.

We should also rejoice because suffering in the name of Christ puts us into the company of the great women and women of the Bible and history who suffered because of the faith in Christ.

This is not a command to enjoy persecution. It would be perverse to enjoy pain and suffering. Persecution is neither something to be enjoyed nor sought after.

is your reward in heaven, for so

G3408 – recompense, what is paid back.

they persecuted the prophets who were

G1377 – v10

G4396 – “prophetas” – “prophet n. – someone who speaks on behalf of and interprets the will of a supernatural being, often rebuking or predicting events; can be used of poets who were said to be inspired by the gods.

before you.

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