

The Beatitudes the Eighth Beatitude

by A.W. Pink

Christians who are persecuted for their devotion to Him and commitment to living a life of righteousness are blessed and will receive a great reward in heaven.

Scripture: Matthew 5:10

Topics: "Persecution", "Joy in Suffering"

Description

A.W. Pink emphasizes the paradox of the Christian experience, where believers are blessed even in persecution for righteousness' sake. He explains that true followers of Christ will face reviling and false accusations, yet they are called to rejoice because their reward in heaven is great. Pink highlights that this suffering is a testament to their faithfulness and a means of fellowship with Christ's own sufferings. He encourages Christians to endure persecution with joy, drawing strength from the promise of eternal reward and the example of past prophets and martyrs. Ultimately, he reassures believers that their trials are not signs of God's disapproval but opportunities for spiritual growth and deeper connection with Christ.

Transcript

THE BEATITUDES

THE EIGHTH BEATITUDE

"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"

Matthew 5:10-12

Christian life is full of strange paradoxes that are quite insoluble to human reason, but that are easily understood by the spiritual mind. God's saints rejoice with joy unspeakable, yet they also mourn with a lamentation to which the worldling is an utter stranger. The believer in Christ has been brought into contact with a source of vital satisfaction that is capable of meeting every longing, yet he pants with a yearning like that of a thirsty heart (Ps. 42:1). He sings and makes melody in his heart to the Lord, yet he groans deeply and daily.

His experience is often painful and perplexing, yet he would not part with it for all the gold in the world. These puzzling paradoxes are among the evidences he possesses that he is indeed blessed of God. Such are the thoughts evoked by our present text. Who, by mere reasoning, would ever conclude that the reviled, the persecuted, the defamed, are blessed? It is a strong proof of human depravity that men's curses and Christ's blessings should meet on the same persons. Who would have thought that a man could be persecuted and reviled, and have all manner of evil said of him, for righteousness' sake?

And do wicked men really hate justice and love those who defraud and wrong their neighbours? No; they do not dislike righteousness as it respects themselves: it is only that species of it which respects God and religion that excites their hatred. If Christians were content with doing justly and loving mercy, and would cease walking humbly with God [Micah 6:8], they might go through the world, not only in peace, but with applause; but he that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

Such a life reproves the ungodliness of men and provokes their resentment (Andrew Fuller). Verses 10-12 plainly go together and form the eighth and last Beatitude of this series. It pronounces a double blessing upon a double line of conduct. This at once suggests that it is to be looked at in a twofold way. What we have in verse 10 is to be regarded as an appendix to the whole series, describing the experience that will surely be met with by those whose character Christ has described in the previous verses.

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. Being "persecuted for righteousness' sake" means being opposed because of right living. Those who perform their Christian duty condemn those who live to please self, and therefore evoke their hatred. This persecution assumes various forms, from annoying and taunting to oppressing and tormenting. Verses 10-12 contain a supplementary word to the seventh Beatitude.

That which arouses the anger of Satan and most stirs up his children are the efforts of Christians to be peacemakers. The Lord here prepares us to expect that loyalty to Him and His Gospel will result in our own peace being disturbed, introducing us to the prospect of strife and warfare. Proof of this is found when He says, "For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." It is service for God that calls forth the fiercest opposition. Necessarily so, for we are living in a world that is hostile to Christ, as His cross has once and for all demonstrated.

Our Lord mentions, in verse 11, three sorts of suffering that His disciples should expect to endure in the line of duty. The first is reviling, that is, verbal abuse or vituperation. The second is persecution. This word is a proper rendering of a Greek word meaning "to pursue, which means, in this case, "to harass, trouble, or molest" (either physically or verbally). It may include the sort of handling or hunting down to which Saul of Tarsus subjected the Church before he was apprehended by Christ (Acts 8, 9).

Christ sets forth the third type of suffering as follows: "Blessed are ye, when men. . . shall say all manner of evil against you falsely. . . ." Thus He describes the defamation of character to which His saints must be subjected. This last is doubly painful to sensitive temperaments, finding its realization in the countless calumnies that the Devil is never weary of inventing in order to intensify the sufferings of the children of God. The words "persecuted for righteousness' sake" and "for My sake" caution us to see to it that we are opposed and hated solely because we are the followers of the Lord Jesus, and not on account of our own misconduct or injudicious behavior (see 1 Pet. 2:19-24).

Persecution has ever been the lot of God's people. Cain slew Abel. "And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3:12). Joseph was persecuted by his brethren, and down in Egypt he was cast into prison for righteousness' sake (Gen. 37, 39). Moses was reviled again and again (see Ex. 5:21; 14:11; 16:2; 17:2; etc.). Samuel was rejected (1 Sam. 8:5). Elijah was despised (1 Kings 18:17) and persecuted (1 Kings 19:2). Micaiah was hated (1 Kings 22:8).

Nehemiah was oppressed and defamed (Neh. 4). The Savior Himself, the faithful Witness of God, was put to death by the people to whom He ministered. Stephen was stoned, Peter and John cast into prison, James beheaded, while the entire course of the Apostle Paul's Christian life and ministry was one long series of bitter and relentless persecutions. It is true that the persecution of the saints today is in a much milder form than it assumed in other ages. Nevertheless, it is just as real.

Through the goodness of God we have long been protected from legal persecution, but the enmity of Satan finds other ways and means of expressing itself. Let persecuted Christians remember this comforting truth: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:29). The words of Christ in John 15:19, 20, have never been repealed: If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also. The world's hatred manifests itself in derision, reproach, slander, and ostracism. May Divine grace enable us to heed this word: "But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, yet take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Pet. 2:20). The Lord Jesus here pronounced blessed or happy those who, through devotion to Him, would be called upon to suffer.

They are blessed because such are given the unspeakable privilege of having fellowship in the sufferings of the Savior (Phil. 3:10). They are blessed because such "tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed" (Rom. 5:3-5). They are blessed because they shall be fully recompensed in the great Day to come. Here is rich comfort indeed. Let not the soldier of the cross be dismayed because the fiery darts of the wicked one are hurled against him.

Rather let him gird on more firmly the Divinely provided armor. Let not the child of God become discouraged because his efforts to please Christ make some of those who call themselves Christians speak evil of him. Let not the Christian imagine that fiery trials are an evidence of God's disapproval. "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad." Not only are the afflictions that faithfulness to Christ involves to be patiently endured, but they are to be received with joy and gladness. This we should do for three reasons. (1) These afflictions come upon us for Christ's sake; and since He suffered so much for our redemption, we ought to rejoice greatly when we are called upon to suffer a little for Him. (2) These trials bring us into fellowship with a noble company of martyrs, for to meet with afflictions associates us with the holy prophets and apostles.

In such company, reproach becomes praise and dishonor turns to glory. (3) We who suffer persecution for Christ's sake are promised a great reward in heaven. Verily, we may rejoice, however fierce the present conflict may be. Having deliberately chosen to suffer with Christ rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11:25), we shall also reign with Him, according to His own sure promise (Rom. 8:17). Remember Peter and John, who "departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were

counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41).

So, too, Paul and Silas, in the Philippian dungeon and with backs bleeding, "sang praises unto God" (Acts 16:25). We are told that others "took joyfully the spoiling of [their] goods," knowing in themselves that they had "in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Heb. 10:34). May Divine grace enable all maligned, misunderstood, and oppressed saints of God to draw from these precious words of Christ that comfort and strength that they need.

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