

Blessed Are the Persecuted

by Leonard Ravenhill

The Sermon on the Mount is a call to holiness, and it is not a fantasy, but a reality that requires us to be filled with the Spirit and cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Duration: 1:00:53

Scripture: Matthew 5:10

Topics: "Blessing", "Joy in Trials", "Persecution"

Description

Leonard Ravenhill emphasizes the significance of persecution in the life of a believer, drawing from Matthew 5:12, where Jesus encourages us to rejoice in the face of adversity, as it aligns us with the prophets who faced similar trials. He discusses the nature of holiness and righteousness, explaining that true character and conduct stem from a heart purified by God. Ravenhill reminds us that the Christian journey is fraught with challenges, yet it is through these trials that we can experience profound joy and fulfillment in our relationship with Christ. He urges believers to embrace their identity as the salt and light of the world, even when faced with rejection and misunderstanding. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper commitment to living out the teachings of Jesus, recognizing that our reward in heaven far outweighs earthly struggles.

Transcript

So I don't want to put a strain on you, but on the Lord. I often begin a discussion or a series of meetings by particularly reminding preachers that two men were arguing about the Bible, whether it was inspired or not. And one man said, well, I can prove that easily.

He said, okay, prove it. He said, it must be inspired, it survived so much bad preaching. Here begins the first lesson.

The scripture again is the 12th verse of Matthew 5. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. For so persecuted they, the prophets which were before you. Now I don't doubt that many of us would like to be prophets, but remember with prophets there's persecution.

I remember one day going into Mr. Chadwick's, pardon me, into Mr. Tozer's office and he said to me, Len, I'm sure I'm a prophet. Well, he never boasted. And I said, well, what's gone wrong with you? He said, I must be a prophet.

I'm always getting stoned. Every letter I get, somebody's hurling something at me, accusing me of something, misinterpreting something I said and bruising me in one way or another. So he said, this is the apostolic succession.

You know, we think apostolic succession is just miracles and signs. No, sir, there's the other side of the coin as well. There's persecution, even for the prophets.

Thinking again about this wonderful Sermon on the Mount. At one time, I would have said it was fantastic. But there's a fellow called Newman that speaks, I think, for the NBC and he's written a book on English language.

And recently he was questioned about it and he said, well, we misuse words, words of change completely from what they were meant to be. For instance, he said, you say about a thing that is fantastic. Well, he said, that's sheer nonsense because if you say it's fantastic, you say it's a fantasy.

It's unreal. It isn't quite, well, it's like, say, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. It's something somebody's concocted.

Well, the Sermon on the Mount certainly is not fantastic. I would have said it's fabulous, but that's very much the same kind of a word. But I wouldn't say it's stupendous.

Somebody has said, if you go see the Grand Canyon and look at it, day after day after day, you'll never see it's the same. It's never twice the same. The sunsets have been very wonderful this week, most of them anyhow.

And notice what variation there is. You know, there's no pattern in the clouds. There's no pattern in the Christian life in one sense.

And yet this sermon, again, is the foundation of the, if you want to use a big word there, philosophy of the Lord Jesus Christ. And there are three things you can do with it, and I think only three. One is totally reject it.

Read it and say it's the most beautiful thing you ever read, but it's just out of reach. I mean, you can't live as clean and correct in a world like this as the Sermon on the Mount demands that we should. You see, as we've already previously said, and the word says, it talks about righteousness.

And another word that we use, which is equally unpopular, is holiness. Now what's the difference between holiness and righteousness? Well, I think that holiness is rectitude of character, and righteousness is rectitude of conduct. Holiness is the root, righteousness is the fruit.

If the root is right, the fruit will be right. If the tree is good, the fruit will be good. If the tree is bad, the fruit will be bad.

Now, it talks about blessings of the pure in heart, and Peter, of all people, says later in his epistle, you have purified your hearts. It's not an unattainable ideal. So let's say you can throw it out and say, well, it's too lofty, it's a dream, it's a utopia, but it can never become real.

The second thing to me, it seems, the second way to interpret it, is to say it's a kind of a harness. It's something God puts on us to keep us under control with the unholy human tempers that we have. We're going down the road, and it isn't a paved road.

It's a road with a lot of potholes in it. And you young folk won't remember, but I remember going down roads, and Martha's father had a buggy, as you would say, they call them a trapping island, and we had a rather lively horse, and you couldn't always just keep it where you wanted, and you'd hit a pothole in the road, and whoops, you'd go this way, and the next one you'd hit it that way, and you got bruised a little. Well, you know, life is like that.

The road of life is not a flat top road, it isn't a black top road, it isn't a smoothed out road. It's a road full of potholes. And if it wasn't, the Lord had put them there to see we got jolted anyhow.

Because the last thing he wants us is to be smooth, and comfortable, and easy in our Christian pilgrimage. And so again, I say you can say, well this, I know I wouldn't throw it out, but I wouldn't say it's a kind of a harness. It's always, it's almost like the Ten Commandments of the New Testament.

It's very, very demanding. The third way is to say that, as I figure it, that God is a gardener, and he knows the weeds that are in the human heart. You know, it must have been very wonderful when Adam was first made, everything about him was perfect.

If the women, if the Lord had made a woman first, we'd have heard a lot more about that. But he made a man, and we don't shout too much about it, and he was very perfect, and very wonderful. And there was nothing in him of rebellion.

There was nothing in him of hatred, and animosity, and bitterness, and so forth. But just as in the Garden of Eden, the garden had no snares, and no tares, and no weeds, and no wild things, and no vermin, and no snakes. Nothing that could hurt.

The bees didn't have any sting, and the roses didn't have any thorns, and everything was just as idealistic as it could be. And then the curse came, and the ground was cursed. Everything was cursed.

Now just as you have an idyllic, a perfect picture of the Garden of Eden, so you have a perfect picture of the human heart. Adam was made perfect. There was no flaw in him.

I've often wondered what it was like for Adam at the end of the day to go down the garden, really singing, he walks with me, and he talks with me, and he tells me I am his own. He was the first one that sang that, in case you didn't know. But there it is, that he walked with God in the cool, in the garden, and pollution came.

And the heart of man is the most diabolical thing in the whole world. Just as Satan was once the most perfect being, if you read there in what, 28th of Isaiah, where it says every precious stone was his covering, and he walked in the Garden of Eden, and he walked in the midst of a fire, and he didn't get burned. He was a, he was a, just a fantastic personality.

But he fell, and look at his corruption, look how he's done sins. And by the same token, man, whether you say he inherited depravity, well we know he is depraved. He's corrupted, his mind is corrupted, his heart is corrupted, everything about him is corrupted.

And the tragedy of the day in which we live is this, that men are not in sin because they have to be, but because they want to be. They choose sin, they love sin, they buy sin, they sell sin, they invest their money in sin. And all because of that transgression of Adam.

Now, if in the heart of man you have rebellion, and you have pride, and you have a hatred, and you have venomous, and you have murder, and you have licentiousness, you have every unclean thing, the heart of man is like a cage of unclean birds. Now if you say to a man in that depravity, well look, God says you to be pure in heart. Then he begins to ask you some questions, how does it happen? I've said before, and say again, that this to me, this fifteen, pardon me, this fifth chapter of Matthew here, is a picture of a spirit filled life.

It is not possible to live the sermon on the mount unless one is filled with the spirit, and it should not be less than that that satisfies us, we are filled with the spirit. You see, we're living in a day of lopsided theology too. I don't deny gifts and fruits of the spirit, sure, but remember this, that God is always after character.

It's character that God is after. And I say holiness is a condition of, it's a character of the heart. Righteousness is the outflowing of that character.

Holiness is the fruit and righteousness holiness, pardon me, is the root and righteousness is the fruit. Now there's a verse in in Matthew 15 that I have never heard anybody preach on. Lots of verses haven't heard people preach on it and that's a fact.

And I'll have to live a long while if I'm going to preach on them, I don't think I'll make it. But pardon me, in Matthew 15 and verse 13 it says this, he answered and said every plant which my heavenly father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Now one of the pictures of God is that he is a husbandman.

He's a husbandman. I was reading a book, I bought a book recently in a sale where I buy most of my books, even at the bookstore, but I buy all the books I can on sale. And this was on roses, we have a few rose trees and some we borrowed and I like roses very much.

I was born in June, which I'll give you the date later, but June is the month when all the roses bloom in England, so I came along blooming with the roses. And I was amazed in reading that book about the different types of soil. And you know, you can buy plants, stick them in a hole here and then buy some and put them over there and then at the end of the year these didn't come up and those didn't prosper properly.

Why? Well the soil here was wrong for that kind of plant, the soil there was wrong for that kind of plant. These should have been put in the sunshine and you put them in the shade and those should have been in the shade and you put them in the sunshine. And these need sandy soil and those need heavy soil and you got your whole garden messed up, mixed up, and so it doesn't prosper.

Now God never does things like that. His ways are perfect. If God starts snipping here and your life, are you going to argue with him about it? He talks about persecution.

Well there are three things you can do with persecution. You can gripe about it, you can be fatalistic and said it was coming anyhow, or you can do as the word of God here says, rejoice in it. Just one of three, that's about the only way you can go.

Now why does he say every plant that my father hath not planted should be rooted up? For the simple reason that the Pharisees earlier in that chapter have been arguing about righteousness and holiness. You wash your hands. You don't wash them just before meals, you wash them between every course.

See how dirty most of you are? But anyhow, you're supposed to have one course and run and wash your hands, come and eat the other course, run and wash your hands. And they counted and they watched and if you didn't do it, somebody said, filthy preacher, you didn't wash your hands after that. And so they're laboring about external things.

And the words of Jesus did what they so often did. You see, Jesus didn't always talk smoothly. Sometimes he said, these are hard sayings.

Oh, they're hard to understand and they're hard to digest and they're hard to live out. No, no, it's not an easy road. I don't like that hymn too much.

It's a song, it cries on your shoulder a bit, but it's still true anyhow. And Jesus says to the disciples, well, don't get worrying about the Pharisees. I want to tell you something.

Every plant that my father hath not planted should be rooted up. And then one of them scratched his head, who do you think it was? Right, Peter, always there. You know, Peter taught more to Jesus, not only than any other disciple, but all the other disciples put together.

He was always ready there. And conversely, Jesus spoke to Peter more than he spoke, not only to any one disciple, but all the other disciples put together. And Peter says, Lord, this is, I'm pretty dumb, declare unto us this parable.

And Jesus says, are you without understanding? I wonder if he'd ask any of us, I don't suppose he would. Are you without understanding? Do you know what I'm trying to get at? Go down to verse 18 of that chapter. But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile a man.

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemy. These are the things which defile a man. But to eat with unwashed hands doesn't defile him.

Now, it's that context in which Jesus says, every plant that my father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Did God sow in the heart of man defilement? Did he sow lust there? Did he sow avarice there? Did he sow greed there? Did he put the seeds of murder there? Did he put the seeds of selfishness there? Did he put all those things that fill our jails and break up our homes and make a hell of the world in which we live? Did God put them there? No. Well then, every plant that my father hath not planted, he'll root it up.

If you let him do it, he says. So again, this isn't out of reach at all. It's not a harness merely which keeps us under control.

It's more than that. It's coming to a head that we may find cleansing, and we may find purging. Well, how are we made clean? Three ways.

One is by the blood. It says in Hebrews chapter 9, if the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctify for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience? The conscience was never purged, none of the old economy. I like a hymn we used to sing at every communion service in England, not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altar slain.

Can you think how many bullets and how many offerings were made? Burnt offerings and other offerings were made to cleanse men, but they were only ceremonially cleaned. Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altar slain could give one guilty conscience peace or wash away one's state, but Christ the heavenly Lamb takes all our sins away. One act, by one man's transgression sin came into the world, by one man's transgression all that sin can be cancelled.

But you see, there's more than forgiveness here. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? There's a word here in the fifth chapter of Ephesians, verse 26, which puts another aspect on this, that he might sanctify and cleanse it. What is he talking about? He's talking about the church.

How does he sanctify and cleanse it? With the washing of water by the word. The blood is there and the word is there. Remember in Psalm 119, somewhere around verse nine, wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.

Remember the prayer of Jesus? The only prayer recorded, full replayer, John 17. Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. Or two chapters back in chapter 15.

What does he say there? Well he says, now ye are clean through the word which I've spoken unto you. You see, there's the blood and then there's, there's the word. The word is a detergent.

That's why the psalmist says, thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee. He doesn't say it's impossible to sin, but he says immediately you come into a certain situation, the word will hit back, if you know that word. Jesus says the work of the Holy Spirit who is the third partner in this, the blood and the water and the word.

The Holy Spirit will bring to our remembrance all those things which ye have heard of me. You know, you may say well, well look, oh okay, this is, this is the most perfect thing in the world. The sermon on the mouth.

God expects everybody. I don't believe that God ever intended that the only way to identify his people was stick a steeple on a building. What good is that? Do you think when a man's in sorrow he goes photographing a steeple and says well I'd like that at the side of my bed.

It's a real comfort when I can see the church steeple. I don't think God ever intended buildings in that way. He intended fellowships.

Graham said not too long ago in a broadcast that he anticipated a day not too long when the church might be dissolved and we have to run for safety and hide holes in the earth almost. There's a great hostility against righteousness. And you may say well if this is, if this is so wonderful why doesn't the world embrace it? After all the only reason you're taxed up to your ears is to keep a devilish thing called war going.

I look at those boys playing with those toys all over my house and think there's a kid playing with a 14 million dollar thing. It could blow like that and he's gone and it's gone. No 14 million dollars.

Not much. Not, not the way they count it. Up in Washington.

But you see we, we pay up to our ears to keep police forces and armies and navies which are all trying to put down something and the more we put it down the more it comes up. Since about 1865 there have been 8,000 peace pledges made in the world. 8,000.

Billy Graham said the other week that at present I think he said there are about 42 countries that are armed to the teeth all ready to be aggressive against each other. Right now we're in a dilemma. What shall we do? Shall we go to Angola or shall we let them fight it out? If we go to Angola we'll have another Vietnam.

If we don't what's going to happen? I see another nation on the side there has put an army, its army on the, on its borderline because they're afraid Russia is going to go over. Somebody says this is the first step of aggression. Russia wants to get hold of Africa.

What? Because he wants to educate them? No, no, no because there's a lot of minerals there and potash and gold and all the things that countries like. Saying that to say this again, as I said last week, don't think that if you're going to live the holiest life possible you're going to be people knocking at your door to photograph you. Coming to the door and say does Saint Mary live here? Does Saint John, is this where Saint John lives? Or no they're not coming around taking pictures of us.

You know I, I, I sometimes I get staggered. I feel as though somebody hit me by two by four. I, I feel a text hit me like that and I just relax in my chair and ponder over it.

Why doesn't the world love purity? It's a hellhole anyhow. What are they fighting down in, in San Francisco? More and more nude shows night after night. They pay, they pay, sure they pay.

So let's open more of them. What are we fighting in Congress? We're, we're, we're fighting lawlessness. Well why doesn't the world admire us? Well if I were to give you an answer you might say it was a wrong one.

Sure it wouldn't be but anyhow. In case you think it was let, let me give you one from the book. And this one really sent me into a tailspin the other day.

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we right now should be called the sons of God. Now listen to it. The world knoweth us not because it knew him not.

Hmm? And you know what I saw? I saw myself at the judgment seat watching Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate and Alexander and those other people in the early, that persecuting Jesus, all coming and standing flabbergasted. I'll tell you a miniature of that. Some boys one day were asked to go in the room and when they got there, there was a man looked like an eastern potent egg.

He had a great crown on and gorgeous garments and everything else. And he said to his henchmen, go out, go out, take your axes and your spears, go out. And when they all got out he took off his garments and he said, I'm your long lost brother.

And they were terrified. Joseph's brethren said, what? And immediately I can imagine they could feel the blood running down their necks. He'll chop our heads off.

What's going to happen to us? The world knew him not. Smart Pontius Pilate. All he could see was a little guy trying to start a religious concern.

Somebody else saw Jesus as one of the zealots because there's always somebody rising up going to overthrow the Roman kingdom. And it didn't cost them that to dismiss Jesus. I think he's a good man.

I mean nobody ever heard of him doing anything wrong. He never said anything wrong. He's never done anything wrong.

He's never legislated. They say he's a king but I mean after all he clowns it up doesn't he? You know what he did the other day? Went on the back of a donkey and a lot of screaming women. Some took off their turbans and other snatched branches from the trees and they were saying hail king, king.

I mean come on now. A man on a donkey is no threat to Rome is he? And to Caesar? And a bit later they see him in some other situation. And to them it's a burlesque.

Well you're the son of God huh? You do miracles all right. I'll tell you what to do right now. We're going to blindfold you and six of us standing here one of them's going to hit you in the mouth.

Now do you mind telling us which which hit you in the mouth? Can't do it. He could but he wouldn't. They didn't have any trouble with Jesus.

Got rid of him. He's just a smart man and I guess he did do some miracles. There was a fella called Lazarus running around town that was dead and there's a few other people being blessed but we don't have to take him seriously.

Can you imagine Caiaphas kneeling before Jesus with a thousand billion people looking on? The world didn't know him. So what did he do? Tease him like anybody else. And if the world knew him not and the others didn't know him, religious men didn't diagnose him.

Mark you they had no excuse. They knew the law and the prophets. They knew where he was going to be born and he was born.

They knew a virgin should bring forth a child and she'd done it. They were without excuse. Wasn't it Paul that said standing before a king, a king of gripper, believest thou the scriptures? And before he could open, I know that thou believest, he said.

Why? Because a gripper was the last Jewish king. He'd been trained like all infant children of the Jews in the history of Israel. The first king of Israel was a fool, Saul, made havoc of his job.

The last one was there, a deputy receiving a big wage for acting as a Roman soldier and a Roman ruler. And Paul says understand this thou, I know that thou understandest. He took the words out of his mouth.

You imagine Caiaphas one day is going to have to explain how it was he initiated every man he ordained into the ministry and every high priest and other other person because he knew the scriptures and when he met the Son of God himself he didn't know him. And John says don't you be surprised if they just pass you up like that or they ridicule you or they despise you. You ought to be happy about it because that's exactly what they did with Jesus Christ the Son of God.

The world knew him not, the world knows us not. After all men are scratching their heads and saying well it's going to make no difference who gets in power because they're all a bunch of hypocrites They all forget us when they get up there. What did they do this year? They put their own salaries up and dropped everybody else's and said do this.

So what there's no sincerity. And here is the answer to the whole problem. Because a man can have a pure heart, a woman can have a pure heart.

Pure in this sense that the blood cleanses them and they're kept clean as they abide under the Word and they kept clean as they obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit. They're not perfect, they're not infallible, they'll make mistakes but their motives can be pure. And as best they know how they can live in total submission and obedience to God.

It's not easy. Who said it was easy? Jesus didn't say it was easy. He said it's hard.

You may stand at the side of the road and watch me take my cross but he said I'll tell you something else. If you're going to be my disciple you've got a cross to take. Somebody wanted to carry his cross.

No he took it up again. Nobody could carry his cross. You can't carry his cross.

I can't carry his cross. The cross you have is sufficient for you. There's an old song the cross that he gave may be heavy but it never awaits his grace.

And the verse the chorus says the cross is not greater than his grace. The storm cannot hide his blessed face. I'm satisfied to know that with Jesus here below I can conquer everything.

Isn't it, wasn't it Mrs um the lady that wrote Streams in the Desert, Mrs Cowman that said one day there was a sale and it was open only to Christians. A lot of lovely things, a lot of bargains. People went along and they noticed that everything was in the shape of a cross.

Wooden crosses, iron crosses, golden crosses, crosses with flowers, crosses, crosses, crosses. And one person came along and said well oh I don't like my cross. Mine's a big heavy stone cross.

I'd like that one. All right you can have it. Wait a minute.

What about your cross? Oh I don't like mine. Mine's solid gold but gold is heavier than lead and gold is heavier than stone and my cross is getting me down. I'd like that one.

Well wait a minute. I went right down but everybody wanted that cross. It was beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, beautiful roses and everybody hmm it's so fragrant.

Oh I'd like it. All right you turn around and lifted the big cross up and put it on the back and as soon as they got on they oh everybody jolted. Why? Because all the thorns were sticking through.

Look nice on one side, thorns on the other side. Do you know what they want? Everybody wanted to go back to his own cross. Much better than the other cross.

Hmm. Oh I could carry your cross. If you carried mine what would it be like? But the cross is not greater than his grace.

He will with the temptation make a way of escape. Now it's talking here about those who have come through the eye of the needle you know blessed are the poor in spirit and then they've climbed another rung in the ladder. Blessed are the meek and blessed are the merciful and blessed are they who hunger and thirst and blessed are the pure in heart.

And you think now boy it's going to be wonderful. You see there's so much in this chapter when you read it that says what? They shall, they shall, they shall. You say Lord I wish you'd give us a bit right now.

They shall. Says that five times over. They shall.

Now some people say this sermon on the mount is just an explanation of the life we're going to live in the millennium. Oh come on don't be ridiculous. Nobody's going to have to be the salt of the earth in the millennium.

It's going to be purified. Ye are the light of the world. Nor neither the light in the millennium.

He's the light. You suddenly think you're going to outshine him. You better think again.

No no no this is not a millennial state. It's talking about now what does he say? He says he sets us down in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. That's right where we live now.

And he says you're going to shine as lights in the darkness. You can't light the whole world. You can only light the corner where you are.

Lighten the place where you live. Illuminate that situation which is dark to everybody else. And somebody says you know I don't understand this.

He never gets under the weather. I don't understand him. He he never seems to crack up and get furious and mad like we do.

Why? Because God has pulled out the plants that were there. We used to have an old man in England by the name of John Thatcher. He was the most ridiculous man I ever met.

He's a Nazarene. Wasn't ridiculous because he's a Nazarene. He's ridiculous because he had more joy than any other man I ever knew.

And I didn't mind him getting blessed in prayer meetings. He could lift a prayer meeting whoo 200 degrees when he got the joy of the Lord. And a testimony meeting he could set it on fire.

But you know that old guy he had a in a street car. I don't think that's the place to get blessed. I mean let's do everything decently and in order.

And in any case he could have got blessed when I wasn't there. Because you see everybody on the street car knew me. It happened to be going home in the direction.

Everybody knew me and nobody knew him. I thought every time I get on this street car after this I say oh that's right oh he had that an old nut with him. That crazy old guy.

You know he'd sit in a street car and clap his hands and say hallelujah I got a blood red snow white sky blue experience. I'm as happy as a lark and as free as an eagle and it's sunshine and smiles and strawberries and cream. God is my father.

Jesus is my savior. The holy ghost my comforter and the devil's no relation at all. Well would you like to sit at the side of someone in a bus like that that came out with that torrent of stuff.

As much victory as you've got and you're full of the holy ghost. Well I'll tell you that finds out where you live you see. People in street cars reading newspapers going.

As much as you think he'll explode again I'm sure enough. You just give him about 10 minutes to cool down. Oh he blew his top like a volcano again.

Because he'd been lifted out of a horrible pit. You know what the psalmist said? He said yeah he he says he lifted me up. Well that's not very far.

You know what he says? He put me on a rock. So then he set me up. He put a song in my mouth and he must have tuned me up.

He lifted me up. He set me up. He tuned me up.

Even praise unto my God. All right. Then we come into the present tense.

Not they shall be. They shall. Blessed are the pure in heart.

They shall see God. Blessed are those hunger and thirst after that. They shall be filled.

But right now he comes right down into the present tense and he says ye are the salt of the earth and ye are the light of the world. But let's step back a minute. Rejoice and be exceeding glad.

For what? For persecution? No. No no no not for persecution. For trial? No.

For hardship? No. For things that blast all your plans? Not necessarily. What does it say? Well read what it says.

It says blessed are what? Rejoice and be exceeding glad. For great is your reward in heaven. You see you've got to keep your eye on that distant goal.

Looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith. Listen to Paul. He's writing to the Philippians.

He's writing from a lousy prison cell. He's possibly half starved. He's possibly half clothed.

He's possibly living in a thing that's swimming with water and rats and dirt and everything. And he's writing to some people sitting at home comfortably. Not in the pews.

They didn't have them. Sitting in a house like this maybe. And what does he say? I hope you're praying a little extra for me because it's rough here.

My faith beginning to shake and the rocks trembling under me and I I oh it's not an easy road. I really feel like giving up. He doesn't say a word about himself.

You know what he says? He says finally my brethren. And notice when he writes 44 verses after that. So if I say finally don't argue with me because I've gone a bit longer.

Because I got an apostolic success before me you see. Finally my brethren. Rejoice in the Lord.

Rejoice what? In circumstances? Do you rejoice in your paid degree? No because he shatters that just to in verse five. I was circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin of the seed of Abraham. A Pharisee of the Pharisees.

Listen there's nowhere to go after that when you get as far as there. That's that's pure pedigree. That's the highest thing earth affords for a for a for a Jew.

Of the tribe of Benjamin. Circumcised on the eighth day. That's the right thing to do.

So was Jesus. Of the stock of Israel. Well you say Jesus was.

Of the tribe of Benjamin. A Hebrew of the Hebrew. And a Pharisee of the Pharisees.

They were the elite of the elite of the elite who had a little holy club. And they watched it their night that no mongrels came in spiritually. And he says I'm sitting on.

You want me to bow? Well I want to tell you just before I die. I'm in a lousy prison cell. But I'm rejoicing.

I'm of the tribe of Benjamin and the seed of Abraham. And the purest stock. And the most spiritual man on earth.

Didn't say that at all. What does he say? He says find me my brethren. Rejoice in the Lord.

If they rejoice in circumcision. Look at verse three. For we are the circumcision.

Which worship God in the spirit. Theirs is in the flesh. And then go over to the fourth chapter.

In which he says in verse four. Rejoice in the And again I say rejoice. And then he gives you a formula that will take you right through life.

If you want a good formula. In verse six of this fourth chapter in the Philippians. He says be careful for nothing.

In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Let your requests be made unto the Lord. You know I'm going to write that out on a piece of paper.

I'm going to put it on a little track kind of thing. What does it say? It says be careful for nothing. Be thankful for anything.

And be prayerful in everything. Now that just about covers it all doesn't it? Be prayerful in everything. Be thankful for anything.

And be careful for nothing. That should do you ladies more good than the oil of the lake. Should get all the creases out of you.

What have you got now? That covers the whole thing. Height, length, depth and breadth. You know sometimes you see an announcement.

Catholic people when they bury folk they put R.I.P. Put it on tombstones as well. I don't know altogether what it means. It has a Latin meaning.

And some simplify it and say it means resting in purgatory. I've heard others say it means rotting there. But anyhow.

Do you know there's an R.I.P. in the bible that I like very much. I'm going to put this in a little form too. In the first chapter of the first letter of Paul to the Thessalonians.

He says in verse 16. R. Rejoice evermore. In verse 18.

In everything give thanks. And in verse 17. Pray without ceasing.

R.I.P. Rejoice evermore. In everything give thanks. Pray without ceasing.

R.I.P. Rejoice evermore. In everything give thanks. Rejoice.

Do you know what that means? What does rejoice mean? You see when you when you've dealt with all that we said this afternoon in one sense is almost negative. Except of course being filled with the spirit of God. But but the apostle, pardon me, that Jesus here says rejoice and be exceeding glad.

Well that's exactly what it means. It's beyond gladness. It's a joy that overflows.

It's a joy that's exhilarating. It's a joy that's inexpressive. And he says rejoice and be exceeding glad for so persecuted the prophets which were before you.

You know it's one of the great phrases of the apostle Paul as we've read there in the Philippian epistle. Rejoice. Rejoice.

You can't rejoice in some things. You can rejoice in a number of things. Do you remember some men came breathless to Jesus.

Well let me let me talk first. Jesus we had a marvelous campaign. We had a wonderful crusade.

You did yeah. We opened the eyes of the blind. Oh lord we did better than that.

We cast demons out of people. And Jesus says sit down and take a breath of fresh air. What are you getting excited about that for? You want to be really rejoiced? Well he says rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

And you know I don't care if circumstances kick you around or the devil's kicked you around or you're reaping the result of some foolish thing you did or I did or something else when it's all said and done. There's not much too much to rejoice in looking outside or inside but you rejoice in this. Your name is written in the book of life.

There's nothing greater. After all there are elite clubs in this country. There's one way you can only go if you're a millionaire.

Nobody can join except they're a millionaire. There are other groups you can only enter if you have a certain IQ. There are others that honor you know the world honors its own.

And yet Jesus says you rejoice. Look right through the cloud to the end of the tunnel. Rejoice that your names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Well that's nice isn't it? You remember what happened was it in the third of Acts when they uh oh boy they had a real hallelujah time. They had a whale of a time rejoicing. Do you know why? Because they had their skin torn off their backs that's why.

And they said they went home and they said well isn't that great we're worthy to have the skin off our backs like he had off his back. They rejoiced because they were worthy to suffer for his namesake. I don't

see many of you nodding your heads this time and saying amen that's great brother.

No no you shouldn't have at the first. You wanted your names in the book of life. What about some skin off your back? The world says that's no skin off your nose.

What about some skin off your back? Maybe get some off your knees with praying might help anyhow. But you see it's the balance all the time. The one side of the coin is ecstasy and joy and rejoicing.

But the other side of the coin is persecution and trial and tribulation which are guaranteed to us. In the world ye shall have tribulation. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy.

I can see them sitting down and saying you know brother I never thought we'd get the chance to be identified with him. I've often thanked him for writing my name in heaven and saying lord it's going to be great when I sit down up there. Do you know what? I feel I've been initiated now.

I I feel that I know something about the fellowship of his suffering as well as a joy that's unspeakable. It doesn't mean you have to be tied to a whipping force. Remember Paul Paul says well I've been persecuted.

Yeah I've been tied to a whipping force that gave me 40 stripes save one. I think it's in the 25th of Deuteronomy where it says you can't lash a man 40 times only 39 by Jewish law. And it was the Jews that lashed him.

It wasn't the Romans that lashed him. It was his own people. Boy it hurts more when it's one of your own doesn't it? You know somebody you have fellowship with for years and then suddenly they go sour and they tear you to bits.

Those nice teeth that they showed you they brushed every day and then they use them to bite you. They talked about tongues and you found they got tongues about four yards long and they mocked the countryside up with gossip. Did you sit down and rejoice and say well hallelujah it's the way the master went should not the servant credit still? Why do you expect a better deal than he got? They didn't know him in the world.

Do you think they should know us in the world? They didn't respect him. Should they respect us? They didn't honor him. Should they honor us? When I see evangelists lovers getting honored and somebody puts a plaque on the wall and says he was born here I think boy you you've got more than Jesus ever got.

I don't expect much from this world. I don't expect too much from Christians. I expect a lot from you but the others I don't expect too much from.

I mean I've taught you so much you should be wiser anyhow. But but coming right down to the nitty-gritty don't expect too much because you see for man still has roots of selfishness and pride and other things in his heart. He's giving way to the devil there.

There's territory that satan can work on. But if the Lord uproots them and he cleanses them satan's gonna fight to get back. Sure he is.

He's gonna try and distort the picture. He's gonna tell you God isn't kind or Christians aren't loving or some other thing. Well you've got to remember what Jesus said again.

He's a liar from the beginning and you know he hasn't learned any better. They say you have to practice to make perfect. Boy he's just about perfect at it.

He's had about six thousand years and he can foul anything up from a national situation in Washington from the White House to God's house. He's a master at it. And yet Jesus says to these disciples and remember before long he's going to take the protecting wall of his presence from them.

They couldn't understand it. I remember Samuel Chadwick saying that love in tears is petulant. Lord you're not going away.

Yeah I'm going but somebody greater. Oh no no you're fooling us. You're not even telling the truth.

There's nobody greater than you. To say somebody greater is coming. Well he is greater.

Well I'm sorry can't believe it. You can't believe it no. But I'm telling you I'm truth.

I'm telling you somebody greater. Well but you know master how can it be. I mean we can see you.

We can touch you. We can hear your snow when you're sleeping. You can hear us and we've lived with you and eaten with you and you're going away and and somebody else greater is coming.

And he says yes because you see well it's like this John if you go down the road there to Emmaus and Peter's going this way to Joppa I can't go with both of you at the same time. When I go there'll be one who can go both ways at the same time. Now that's hard to understand but he's going to do it.

The comfort of the Holy Ghost whom I will give you and he's going to abide with you forever. Now there's the third power. One is the blood of Jesus Christ to keep us clean.

The second is the word of God that washes us. It talks about the washing of the word. And you know that word not only washes inside.

But I think everything that comes to your life and mine you need to wash it by the word these days. There's an awful lot of stuff strutting around this truth which is error. You see what a lot of people do.

They get an idea in their heads and then they get scripture to support it. And it makes you think that Mr. what was his name Shakespeare was right that you make scripture say anything if you want to. Okay the classic case then.

Jesus says and remember he never asks anything of us he didn't do himself. He says rejoice and be boundless in your gladness. Exhilarating gladness.

Thrilling gladness. Why? Well because you're privileged to get what the prophets got for one thing. And then it says of Jesus himself who for the joy that was set before him.

What did he do? Endure the cross. Joy? You mean that that you see we're pretty modest. No we're the most immodest age that's ever lived I think.

So we picked a Jesus on the cross. We put a little rag over the middle of Jesus. I don't believe Jesus any covering that was part of his humiliation and shame.

He was naked there on a cross. Is it a joy to hang in the baking sun and somebody spits on you and somebody else catcalling and somebody saying well come on pull the greatest thing of all off get down off the cross if you're the son of God. Why don't you breathe fire and destroy these people.

You curse the victory. Curse everybody. And Jesus like a lamb is there before the sheep.

A lamb like before a shearer's his dummy up and not his mouth. Didn't say a thing. And yet it says for the joy that was set before him.

He enjoyed the cross. No he didn't. He endured it.

He had all the humiliation that any man or decent man or person would have. And yet right through it all if you could have seen the heart of Jesus while his body was bleeding and suffering inside there was divine excitement. I believe Jesus was thrilled to death on the cross.

Not, not with emotional thrills. Not with intellectual thrills. But right deep down in his spirit he says this is the reason.

He's the only man that ever came into the world with the intention of dying. Everybody else comes to live. He came to die.

He planned his death. And when they said you better watch your step here because I'll take your life. Jesus says sir I want to tell you something.

No man takes my life from me. I have power to lay it down. And I have power to take it up again.

And yet he let them put him to death. Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross. Despising the shame they set down.

So Jesus had joy. What was his joy? I believe the joy of was this. He always did the will of his father.

He never questioned it. He never questioned it. Can, can God impose on me anything that he wants? Do, do I question him? Oh I, I guess many times he questions what I do.

Do I question what he does? Do I hear his voice and if it's contrary to the flesh and everybody else's opinion. I say well Lord I'll do it. I'll do it.

We used to have an evangelist in England. A very wonderful man. He'd been a bad character.

Got marvelously saved. Got a beautiful voice. And he was courting a young lady.

She was, she was just gorgeous. She's too fat but apart from that she was lovely looking. She'd rosy cheeks.

Big heavysset girl. And, and, and he'd saved his money. And they were going to get married.

He'd already got all the furniture. Beautiful furniture stacked up. And they were in a meeting one night.

And they sang a hymn. And in the hymn it said that, I've forgotten the exact quotation but it said something like this. Oh here I give my all to thee.

You know it? Friends and time and earthly store. Soul and body thine to be only thine forevermore. And as soon as he sang the verse.

Here I give myself to thee. Friends the Lord said she's at the side of you. Time that's your wedding day.

Earthly store it's all the furniture I've stacked up in the house. Cancel your wedding and go to Bible school. He stopped singing.

His girlfriend said. Are you alright? You look pale. Yeah, yeah I'm alright.

And you know what somebody usually does at that time? Strike the verse up again. So he went through the misery again. Here I give myself to thee.

Friends and time and earthly store. Soul and body thine to be only thine forevermore. The preacher prayed and they went out.

And she said. I think something happened to you in that meeting. He said yes.

We're not getting married. What? What happened? Well yeah yeah yeah. I'm sorry.

Yes we're going to get married. But I'm going to college first. Yeah the Lord called me tonight while we were singing.

And he asked me if I meant it. I've sung it before but I never thought of it. Here I give myself.

So I had to give myself. My desires, my interests. Here I give myself to thee.

My wealth and my time and my earthly store. My friends and my time and my earthly store. My friends that meant you.

My time that meant between here and when I finished college. My earthly store means I. Well I think I'll have to sell all the furniture anyhow to pay my way through college. What do you think about it? Oh well.

She said I don't think I can question that. You're a man of God and I love you. I'd certainly set my mind on a certain day for the wedding.

And my we spent a lot of hours choosing furniture and everything. And if that's what God says. Now remember he went to college.

Oh a lot of very fine guys at college. But this man had been born in a prayer meeting. And he couldn't pray.

One night he woke up and he thought there's not much breath of God in this college. Now it's only one o'clock in the morning. I'd love to see this college just blaze open with fire and prayer.

And the Lord said well blaze it open. Well it's a college there are no girls at all anyway. He went down from his bedroom.

He went down into what I happen to go to that college later what we call the third lecture hall. And he got down there in his pajamas and started crying to the Lord. Within half an hour every man in the college was there.

The place was jammed to the doors. Before long the professors came. What happened? There's a fire in the third lecture hall.

It's packed with praying men. Never saw it like this in their lives. Here they are all with their hands up seeking God.

Crying to God for revival. And revival came. Why? Because one little guy standing in a town called Manchester one night.

Nobody else seemed to get moved in that meeting. You know often when I look at a meeting and I say to myself you know what. And I've said this many times in many parts of the world.

I believe God would take me around the world to preach to ten people a hundred people. I've preached a thousand some nights. And yet God only wanted to reach one person in that meeting.

Read the 22nd 24th chapter I guess in the Acts of the Apostles. Paul's giving his testimony. And he says there shone round about me and them that journeyed with me a light from heaven.

I heard a voice. They all saw the light. He heard the voice.

And he obeyed. And you know there is no joy in the whole world like the joy of obedience. Rejoice in the Lord.

Why? Because you can look back and say well Lord that's where you call me. That's what I'm doing. A result of that man's one-yieldedness to God he went out over England and had some of the most tremendous moves.

Round about the 1930s. 27, 28, 29, 30. Moves of the Spirit of God.

We're not suggesting it's an easy road. For some strange reason I felt a bit lonely this week. I said to Martha so many times I'd just love to see one of the boys.

I know you love yours to get out of the house sometimes. But they get under your feet. You know I was thinking you know.

I remember laying Paul on a bed that David Livingstone used to sleep in. And giving him to the Lord. And saying Lord take him and make him another pioneer missionary.

Which he's doing right now in South America. But I didn't figure at the time I wouldn't see him only a few days in 10 years. And then he'd go off again.

And say daddy I don't know if I'll be back. Maybe I'll never make it before Jesus comes. And the other boy we haven't seen for five years or more.

And the other one has just come back as you know. He'd been away two years. He's gone back now.

I'm not saying that in any heroic sense. But you know I'll tell you what. We happen to be human.

And at a time when you think boy it'd be nice just to. If you could even call them. If they're in New York or somewhere else.

But be glad of your life like that. I know it's the greatest joy in the world. I think sometimes.

And I finished here. And I mean this. I think sometimes we forget the loneliness of God.

Hmm. Do you think we do? Have you ever thought of Abraham going up that mountainside. And the boy didn't know a thing what was going on.

Because when he got to the top of the mountain he said that what he was going to do. And Abraham for three days had been eating his heart out. I'll make a guess he hasn't slept.

He possibly hasn't eaten. Every time he saw the dagger in his belt he felt boy I'm going to have to put that food up boy. That's terrible.

The boy turned over in his sleep on the tent maybe. And he says that poor boy I'm going to have to. Oh my dear God.

What do you ask for? From the moment he knew he had to put his son as an offering up there. Three days journey. Every step must have been agony.

Well when Jesus left glory there was nobody to fill the place. He was the only begotten son. And for 30 years God was lonely.

We forget the loneliness of God. And when I sing the hymn all for a thousand tongues to sing. Sometimes I'd like to write another stanza down.

All for a thousand lives to give. Who was it in this country? Patrick Henry that said. Or was it said he'd only one life he'd give it.

If he'd only another life son. Or Hale. Nathaniel Hale.

Nathan. Nathan. Right Nathan.

Nathan Hale in English. Nathan in American. Okay.

But he said he'd give it. If he'd only another life to give. And I'm convinced that the more we get lost in Jesus Christ.

The things of earth grow strange with him. The more you feel your debt to him every day. The more you realize that there's no such thing as one grand deposit that you received a Calvary or the upper room.

And from here you're going to coast into eternity. If I'm filled with the Spirit if you're filled with the Spirit. God has more right to make demands on me than anybody else around town.

He's more right to ask me to carry a heavy burden. Or to make a greater sacrifice if there is such thing as sacrifice in the life of Calvary. And when he does it and somebody else gets by.

You don't sigh and say I wonder why. You say rejoice rejoice that you can't be worthy to do it. You know why? Because one day you'll get the reward they were going to have.

That's what John says. Hold fast to that which thou hast. Let no man take thy crown.

Not a demon take it. Not God take it. You didn't do the job God asked you.

Somebody else will wear your crown. Right through eternity. Not for a day.

Not for a year. But forever and ever and ever you'll see a crown on somebody's head. Somebody's head God intended you to wear.

So let's not miss it. Let's give him praise. Let's rejoice that we're counted worthy to see what the world never sees.

Understand what not the wisest man outside of God understand. Share what nobody can share except they've been redeemed. Feel in our spirits what nobody in the wide world feels as we go through intellectuals or rich or famous.

You know we're the most people in the world really. To live for him. To live with him.

To bear burdens he gives us. And in the midst of all of it though it's crushing at times there's no question about it. And yet in the midst of it to rejoice and be exceedingly glad.

Because our names are written in heaven because we're counted worthy to suffer. And one day we're going to reign with him forever and ever.

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