

AUGUST 22, 2021 | STUDY GUIDE|



CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM

THE BEATITUDES

PART 9

"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED"
- MATTHEW 5:10-12



Citizens of the Kingdom

by Frik Kruger

"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." - Matthew 5:10-12

I. The Cause of Persecution

Why are these people being persecuted in this Beatitude? Is it because of their own foolishness or sin? Is it for their pursuit of some religio-political cause or because they rave like wild-eyed fanatics? No, they are being persecuted because of righteousness

Jesus says that blessed are we if we are persecuted for His name. This is where we must be careful. It is easy to manipulate our own causes and say that it is "because of His name"



II. The Meaning of Persecution

In reference to the widespread, intense persecution that many followers of Jesus face today in the Majority World, David Curry notes:

“The numbers of God’s people who are suffering should mean the Church is dying—that Christians are keeping quiet, losing their faith, and turning away from one another, but that’s not what’s happening.

Instead, in living color, we see the words of God recorded in the prophet Isaiah: ‘I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert’” (Isa. 43:19)

– David Curry, CEO of Open Doors USA

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.”

– Matthew 5:11

See 1 Peter 4:12-16

“...this beatitude serves as a test for all the beatitudes. Just as people must be poor in spirit to enter the kingdom, so will they be persecuted because of righteousness if they are to enter the kingdom...for if disciples of Jesus never experience any persecution at all, it may be fairly asked where righteousness is being displayed in their lives. If there is no righteousness, no conformity to God’s will, how will they enter the kingdom?”

– D.A. Carson

In our context we will, in various ways, face insult, false accusation and prejudice when we publicly live out our commitment to Jesus and his righteousness (see Matt 6:33).

III. The Response to Persecution

So how are we as Christians supposed to respond to persecution?

Listen to what Jesus himself teaches later in this Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:38-44 38.



"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.

If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..."
- Matthew 5:38-44

Jesus is saying here that the way we respond to persecution is by **trusting**, **praying**, and **choosing not to retaliate**. Only God can enable this sort of response – a work of Divine grace in our lives.

IV. The Reward of the Persecuted

Now what does Jesus say in this Beatitude is the reward if we are persecuted for righteousness and His name's sake?

Matt 5:10 - Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Then he goes on – and Jesus reminds us of the world to come as motivation to endure hardship: "Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven..." (12a)

Jesus himself stressed the fact that we as His followers need the Holy Spirit.

We need the presence of the Holy God within us to be able to know who we really are in Him, and to be strengthened in persecution.

In John 16:7 we read;
"But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."

Jesus says that we will be better off with the Holy Spirit in us than with Jesus walking beside us.

Jesus continues in Matt 10:19-20 with these words;

"But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

Discussion and Reflection Questions:

1. What, according to Jesus, is legitimate persecution? What isn't?
2. Why ought believers to expect persecution?
3. Have you ever been persecuted? Why was that? What did that feel like? How did you cope with it? What did you learn from it?
4. Explain a time when you experienced God's provision and presence in difficult times, maybe particularly when you were mistreated because of your Christian faith.
5. How can we support each other during times of persecution? Look at examples mentioned in the message as to how Christians are persecuted.
6. In what ways might you need to draw on other believers, and God's help in responding to persecution, particularly based on Jesus' words later in his sermon (Matt 5:38-46)?

PRAYER: Take time to pray for Christians who are experiencing significant, even deadly persecution around the globe today. Our bulletin includes persecuted believers each week, and consider praying particularly for believers in Afghanistan and Mozambique who are experiencing increasingly hostile situations (*see links below for more info*). Pray also for one another; that we would courageously follow Jesus, not muting the distinctiveness of our lives as we live 'for righteousness sake'



PRAY FOR ...



Persecution in Afghanistan:

<https://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/latest-news/afghanistan-prayer/>



Persecution in Mozambique:

https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/august/mozambique-insurgency-attacks-cabo-delgado-pastors-minister.html?utm_medium=widgetsocial&fbclid=IwAR1f39GaorSd2MoMVW3mHnpGFZr7K2fD9PN_OQ_1vO-qxmMphGajZbKMrNo

