



Beatitudes XXXXII: Persecute VI

¹⁰ Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹² "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12).

This really will be the last newsletter on the Beatitudes. In this article we want to look at the blessings promised for those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness. Our text has something different going on between verses 10 and 11. Verse 10 tells us this: "Blessed are those who have been persecuted" speaking of things that happened in the past. Verse 11, however, speaks of things that happen in the future: Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you." This ties the persecution of the believer and his or her blessings with those who have gone on before. In fact, we are told that our reward in heaven is great. Notice from verse 10 that those who have been persecuted in the past are blessed while "theirs is the kingdom of heaven" is in the present. Verse 11 then tells us that the believer is blessed when s/he is persecuted and insulted because the "reward in heaven is great." Again, that is present. Then the next section tells us that "in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." The text is connecting the blessings of being persecuted with the blessings of the prophets because both the believer and the prophets were persecuted in much the same way.

True believers are blessed. The persecutions, insults and lies don't bring actual harm, but blessing. In reality God is working all things for good (Rom 8:28-30) to those who love Him. The view that faith gives at this point is that the persecutions, insults and lies are actually bringing a blessing to the person who is going those things in the name of Christ and for His sake. On the one hand it seems as if the blessing is something that will happen in heaven, but the text says that we are blessed "when" these things happen. Let us list the specific blessings listed in the text:

1. You are blessed because yours is the kingdom of heaven.
2. You are blessed when these things (persecutions and insults) are happening.
3. You are blessed when these things happen because of Christ.
4. You are blessed because you are going to rejoice.
5. You are blessed because your reward in heaven is great. You are blessed in being like the prophets in being persecuted.

As noted in much earlier newsletters, the word "blessed" has the

idea of inward joy and the idea of being in a state of blessing and so the joy is from God Himself. We must not try to separate blessing from the life of God in the soul. In fact, true joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit and a blessing of God Himself in working His joy in the human soul. John 15:11 is instructive in this: "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full." The context of this teaching is that of the Father pruning the branches so that they would bear more fruit. Jesus was the vine and the branches are told to abide in the vine. We are told, therefore, to abide in Christ and the love of the Father and they would abide in us. It is in this way that the Father is glorified by the fruit that is born from His people abiding in Him and it is that which flows from Him that comes out in them.

It is in light of fruit that is being born by the branches that Jesus tells us that He spoke these things to them "so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full." We can pass over this text so easily and miss what it is really saying. Remember that the context is that believers are the branches and He is the vine. In another sense believers are in Him and He is in them. Jesus did not say that they were to have joy because of things that happened to them. He did not say that they were to have His joy because they would have joy in the same things He had joy in. But instead He tells them that He spoke these things to them so that His joy would be in them. The very joy of Christ was to be their joy. It is only then that their joy would be made full as it is the fruit of the vine.

(continued on page 2)

Associational News & Prayer Requests

If you would like to submit prayer requests or information for the weekly update, please email it to trinity@wamego.net.

C.H. Spurgeon

"Griffiths says that travelers in Turkey carry with them lozenges of opium, on which is stamped *mash Allah*, the gift of God. Too many sermons are just such lozenges. Grace is preached but duty denied. Divine predestination is cried up but human responsibility is rejected. Such teaching ought to be shunned as poisonous, but those who by reason of use have grown accustomed to the sedative, condemn all other preaching, and cry up their opium lozenges of high doctrine as *the truth*, the precious gift of God. It is to be feared that this poppy-juice doctrine has sent many souls to sleep who will wake up in hell."



Beatitudes (Continued)

(Continued from page 1)

Gal 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. Col 1:27, "to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" and Colossians 3:4 have much the same idea: "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." These passages show that Christ lives in His people and is their very life. Therefore, we must understand the blessings from our text in light of these verses. The only true hope that people have is Christ in them who is their life. Blessing 1 is that of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus taught us that the kingdom was in our midst: ²⁰ Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; ²¹ nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst" (Luke 17). The kingdom of God is the arena of His reign and rule. God's kingdom is now set up, not in a geographical area like Israel was, but in the hearts of His people. The ramifications are enormous.

The blessings of the life of Christ in a person can be seen in light of the six points above:

1. Because Christ is in the person and living His life in them, a person being persecuted for His sake is a blessed person because Christ is in that person. That is the true meaning of having the kingdom of heaven and of God.
2. The person being persecuted is blessed when the persecutions and insults are happening because Christ is being revealed in that person. The analogy to this is when Stephen was being stoned he looked and saw Christ at the right hand of the Father. So now we see the glory of Christ shining through us and we have joy at the sight of Christ. The blessing is to see Christ and to see self as an instrument of His glory.
3. We are blessed when these things happen because of Christ. Paul spoke of wanting to "know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:10). Sufferings like this are the way we are conformed to Christ and He is in us working in us that we would be like Him and that is a blessing.
4. Suffering persecution for Christ while Christ is in us makes us like Christ and so we have His joy. The persecutions are to cause us to joy. Hebrews 12:2 has some shocking words: "2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right

hand of the throne of God." It was for the joy set before Him that Christ endured the cross and despised the shame. It is that same Christ that lives in us who works His joy in us so that our joy may be full and that during time of persecution as well. I Peter 4:13 tells us that to "the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation." That is true blessedness.

5. We are told that even a cup of cold water given to one of His little ones will not lose its reward (Mat 10:42). We are told that to die for His sake is to find life itself. It should not be anything but joy in the heart of the believer to rejoice because of the persecutions that come. No matter what happens the believer should be able to rejoice though this may take some time. The believer is building up a treasure in heaven and all love for Christ adds to that treasure. That is a blessing.
6. The prophets were truly blessed in that they were men of God and the Spirit was upon them and strengthened them to stand firm for God. I Peter 4:14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Luke 6:23: "Be glad in that day and leap *for joy*, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets." The prophets were abused and mistreated but they were treated like their Lord who was to come. 36 and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. Hebrews 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated 38 (*men* of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.39 And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

As we look at this Beatitude in light of them all, we see that we will mourn and yet must be meek. We will be pure in heart and seek to be peacemakers, but we will be persecuted. When the life of Christ shines through us, those who hate Him will hate us as well. That will be true of religious people without Christ as well. We should not be surprised are ashamed when we suffer, but instead glorify Him (I Peter 4:16). A person that has the life of Christ will in some way be living the life of the Beatitudes because that is a description of the blessed life and Christ is most blessed. When the life of Christ shines through His people in that way, persecution and insults will come. We should have sorrow for those that treat us that way and pray for them to have our joy while we rejoice inwardly.

Richard Smith