

Matthew 5:10-12 Commentary

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Sermon on the Mount

MATTHEW CONTAINS 15 PARABLES 20 MIRACLES KEY VERSES: 1:1 "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." 2:2 "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."



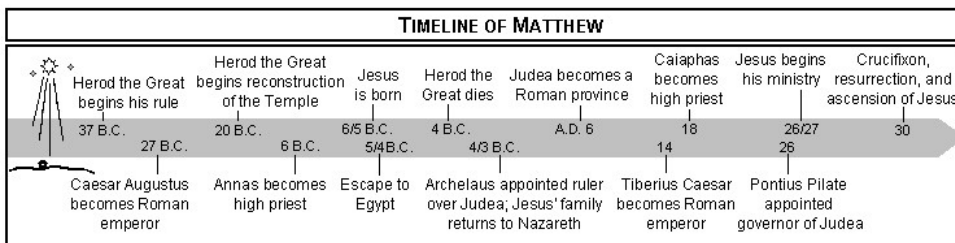
Click chart to enlarge
Charts from Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission
Another Chart from Charles Swindoll

THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY MATTHEW (shaded area)



Click chart to enlarge

Jesus Birth and Early Years
Leading up to the Sermon on the Mount
Matthew 1-7



Source: Ryrie Study Bible

Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: [makarioi oi dediogmenoi \(RPPMPN\) eneken dikaiosunes, hoti auton estin \(3SPA\) e basileiaton ouranon.](#)

Amplified: Blessed and happy and enviably fortunate and spiritually prosperous (in the state in which the born-again child of God enjoys and finds satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of his outward conditions) are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (for being and doing right), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven! ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

NLT: God blesses those who are persecuted because they live for God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. (NLT - Tyndale House)

Philips: "Happy are those who have suffered persecution for the cause of goodness, for the kingdom of Heaven is theirs! (New Testament in Modern English)

Wuest: Spiritually prosperous are those who have been persecuted on account of righteousness, because theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Young's Literal: 'Happy those persecuted for righteousness' sake -- because theirs is the reign of the heavens.

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN PERSECUTED FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS: makarioi hoi dediogmenoi (RPPMPN) eneken dikaiosunes:

- Mt 10:23; Ps 37:12; Mark 10:30; Luke 6:22; 21:12; John 15:20; Acts 5:40; Acts 8:1; Romans 8:35-39; 1 Cor 4:9-13; 2 Cor 4:8-12,17; Phil 1:28; 2 Ti 2:12; 3:11; James 1:2-5; 1 Per 3:13,14; 4:12-16; 1 Jn 3:12; Rev 2:10
- [Matthew 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Matthew 5:10-12 The Only Way to Happiness: Endure Hardship 1](#) - John MacArthur
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George F. MacLeod - "The greatest criticism of the church today is that no one wants to persecute it because there is nothing very much to persecute it about" ([Leadership](#))

Vance Havner quipped that "One of our biggest problems today is that most of our church people have never really made up their minds to follow Jesus Christ. They are like Mr. Looking-both-ways in Pilgrim's Progress, or like Lot's wife looking back toward Sodom. They are like the man in the Civil War who wore a blue coat and gray trousers, and was shot at from both sides. They are like a donkey between two bales of hay-undecided as to which to eat. They are like the son in our Lord's parable who said, I go, Sir" (Mt 22:30), and went not. They receive the word with joy, but have no root nor depth and soon fall away. They never really make up their minds, and are like the man who was asked, "Do you have trouble making decisions?" He replied, "Yes and no."

Now that we have described the character of the true believers, the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, we observe next the conflict that these citizens experience in this present world. At first glance, it may seem odd that peacemakers who are poor in spirit, who mourn, who are meek, etc, would be persecuted. What we must remember however, lest we be discouraged when conflict comes, is that we have been transferred from the kingdom of **darkness** to the kingdom of **light**. Paul explains it this way as he prays for believers to be...

joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in **light**. For He delivered us from the domain (right and might) of **darkness**, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (see **notes** Colossians 1:13; 1:14)

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT
An Outline

Chapter	Subject
Mt 5:3-9	Character
Mt 5:10-12	Conflict
Mt 5:13-7:27	Conduct

Charles Simeon - CHRISTIANITY, to one who is not acquainted with its real nature, must appear full of paradoxes. In the preceding verses, we are informed what practical religion is; and, in the parallel passage in St. Luke's Gospel, we have the same truths yet more plainly and explicitly declared (Lk 6:20-26). Had any uninspired person avowed such sentiments, we should have been ready to pronounce him mad: for there is scarcely any thing which we regard with dread, but a blessing is annexed to it; or any thing which we consider as desirable, but a woe is denounced against it: the poor, the hungry, the weeping, the despised, are congratulated; and the rich, the full, the laughing, and the honored, are represented as in a truly pitiable condition. But perhaps the greatest paradox of all is, that persons possessed of vital Christianity should be objects of persecution; that their piety should be the ground of that persecution; and that they should, on this very account, be esteemed happy. But so it is: and so it will appear (Read the entire sermon - [Matthew 5:10-12 Persecution for Righteousness' Sake](#))

Blessed (see **makarios**) spiritually prosperous, independent of one's circumstances, including even persecution! Talk about a paradox to the natural mind (cf 1Cor 2:14).

This is the blessing that we would rather not partake of. It 's the blessing no one really wants. But in some ways it is the most striking beatitude for it is the last, the longest, the only one associated with a command, the only one repeated by Jesus and the only one address directly to the reader (in Mt 5:11 He switches from the third person pronoun "those" to the second person pronoun "you").

Sinclair Ferguson has an interesting comment regarding persecution writing that

Is this the reverse of what we would expect? Men and women who are poor in spirit, mourn for their sin, live lives of gracious meekness, long for God's righteousness, show mercy to others, are pure in heart, and seek peace between God and man – would such people not be welcomed with open arms? After all, these are the very men and women the world needs! The world in which we live assumes that it will welcome Christians with open arms – until the first time it meets the genuine article. Until then, it is ignorant of its real response to the gospel. It assumes that it is well-disposed to Jesus Christ and to God. ([Ferguson, Sinclair: Sermon on the Mount :Banner of Truth](#))

When the beatitudes make up our character, the character of citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, we as true believers will be persecuted for walking the radical, "narrow way" that leads to life, in marked contrast to the broad way that leads to destruction. (cf notes Matthew 7:13; 7:14)

Alexander Maclaren notes that...

antagonism is inevitable between a true Christian and the world. Take the character as it is sketched in verses preceding. Point by point it is alien from the sympathies and habits of irreligious men. The principles are different, the practices are different.

A true Christian ought to be a standing rebuke to the world, an incarnate conscience.

There are but two ways of ending that antagonism: either by bringing the world up to Christian character, or letting Christian character down to the world...

As to practice — a righteous life will not make a man 'popular.' And as for 'opinions' — earnest religious opinions of any sort are distasteful. Not the profession of them, but the reality of them — especially those which seem in any way new or strange — make the average man angrily intolerant of an earnest Christianity which takes its creed seriously and insists on testing conventional life by it. Indolence, self-complacency, and inborn conservatism join forces in resenting the presence of such inconvenient enthusiasts, who upset everything and want to 'turn the world upside down...

The seeds of the persecuting temper are in human nature, and they germinate in the storms which Christianity brings with it. (Matthew 5:10 The Eighth Beatitude)

It is especially important for Christians who are newly born into the faith to grasp the reality of persecution early so that they do not become discouraged or disillusioned when they are unexpectedly "blind-sided" by harsh words, insults, rejection, etc. because they are being "radical" with this "Jesus religion".

Persecuted ([1377](#)) (**dioko** from **dío** = pursue, prosecute, persecute) means to follow or press hard after, literally to pursue as one

does a fleeing enemy. It means to chase, harass, vex and pressure and was used for **chasing down criminals**. Dioko speaks of an intensity of effort leading to a pursue with earnestness and diligence in order to lay hold of and oppress or harass the "blessed".

Persecuted (with repeated acts of enmity - thoughts, words, deeds) is in the **passive voice** which means that believers as the subject of the verb will receive the persecution from an external source. The **perfect tense** is used which indicates a **fixed attitude of the persecutors**. It won't ever change unless they are changed (from inside out, cf Acts 26:18, 2Cor 5:17). Persecutors of the "sons of God" is their **permanent condition**. Jesus explained the root problem in John 3 declaring "that the light is come into the world (cf Jesus = John 8:12, His disciples = see note Matthew 5:16), and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil for everyone who does evil **hates** the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed" (John 3:19-20)

Bruce commenting on Matthew's use of the **perfect tense** that it is saying "the **persecuted** are not merely men who have passed through a certain experience, but *men who bear abiding traces of it in their character*. They are marked men, and bear the stamp of trial on their faces. It arrests the notice of the passer-by: commands his respect, and prompts the question, Who and whence? They are veteran soldiers of righteousness with an unmistakable air of dignity, serenity, and buoyancy about them. ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

What does Jesus say light does to the deeds of men who love darkness? His light in you and through you dear citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven will **expose** the evil nature of their deeds! When His "righteousness" lights up your life...look out!...duck!...you will be persecuted by the "light haters". But **remember the truth** that you are blessed, even when you don't **feel** very blessed! Feelings can be and often are deceiving in the spiritual realm. Take your stand on the Truth of God's Word (see the passages below, especially if you are currently undergoing suffering for His Name's sake...if you're not now, you probably soon will be if you truly belong to Him!)

The **persecution** can be twofold involving on one hand a physical pursuing of the persecuted, and/or a personal attack with words as in the form of slander (insults, slander, hatred, spurn your name = cast it out, ostracism).

You might think well naturally the world will persecute me. I'm light. They are darkness (Eph 5:8-note) and therefore they hate me because the Light in me exposes their evil deeds (cf John 3:19, 20, 21). Of course, that is true but some are caught off guard when they are persecuted by others in the church. Not everyone in the church is a genuine believer (Mt 7:21, 22, 23-see **notes** Mt 7:21; 22; 23) but are professors. When they encounter a real, radical convert of Christ, they are taken aback and this sets the scene for persecution in one form or another. And although it can be very subtle by religious folk, it is still very painful. Think about who were the most persistent persecutors of our Lord...the religious community, those who knew a lot of Bible knowledge but did not know the Truth Himself. Times may have changed but have men's hearts? (Jer 17:9) Why are we so surprised that the most vicious attacks will come from those who are in the same church? Who were the first persecutors of the new born church in Jerusalem? Was it not the religious folk again. They are the very Jews who Jesus had presented Himself to as King but they would not have Him. I am not calling for you to be inappropriately judgmental but to be wise as serpents and as innocent as doves. One qualifying note is in order. If you are persecuted by the religious folks in your church, do a careful inventory of your heart, your methods and your motives to make sure that the persecution you are experiencing is for the sake of righteousness, for the sake of His Name.

Lloyd-Jones speaks to the persecution of genuine believers by others in the church noting...

How they (are) persecuted by nominal, religious people! That was also the story of the Puritan Fathers. This is the teaching of the Bible, and it has been substantiated by the history of the Church, that the persecution may come, not from the outside but from within. There are ideas of Christianity far removed from the New Testament which are held by many and which cause them to persecute those who are trying in sincerity and truth to follow the Lord Jesus Christ along the narrow way. You may well find it in your own personal experience. I have often been told by converts that they get much more opposition from supposedly Christian people than they do from the man of the world outside, who is often glad to see them changed and wants to know something about it. Formal Christianity is often the greatest enemy of the pure faith. (Lloyd-Jones, D. M. [Studies in the Sermon on the Mount](#))

Alexander Maclaren elaborates on the persecution manifest by...

The curled lip, the civil scorn, the alienation of some whose good opinion we would fain have, or, if we stand in some public position, slandere press, and the contumacious epithets, are trivial but very real tokens of dislike. We have the assassin's tongue instead of the assassin's dagger. But yet such things may call for as much heroism as braving a rack, and the spirit that shoots out the tongue may be as bad as the spirit that yelled, 'Christianos ad leones.' (Christians to the lions) (Matthew 5:10 The Eighth Beatitude)

For the sake of ([1752](#)) (**heneka**) is an adverb which means "on account of" or "because of". Why are the "sons of God" harassed,

etc? Because of "**righteousness**", which is ultimately God's **righteousness** shining forth in and through His "**children**". It is Christ in you the hope of glory (Col 1:27-note). It's like Cain killing Abel for the sake of his righteous sacrifice (Genesis 4). It is like David falsely accused and chased after by King Saul. Or Daniel being thrown in jail for praying to His Lord. And the list goes on and on. If it happened to them, it will happen to you.

It is not suffering for conscience' sake, for convictions' sake or because of the ordinary troubles of life, "for My sake." Note it does not say you will be persecuted because you are obnoxious, offensive, are inappropriately radical or overzealous, etc. Be careful not to bring unnecessary suffering upon yourselves, for this is not pleasing to your Father in heaven and receives no commendation.

Williams translates it "*for being and doing right*" (see also the Amplified Version above)

Jesus does not say because of rude, offensive, obnoxious, crude, law breaking or lazy (including that which sadly can be seen in Christians) behavior. Such behavior deserves the consequence of persecution. In short, this promised blessing does not apply to trouble one brings on themselves. It applies only if their righteous (right in sight of God and man) lifestyle and stand for Jesus generates opposition. To put it another way you might say that persecution is a sign your life is right in the eyes of (God and) the world.

Ray Pritchard ([The Blessing No One Wants](#)) has an interesting quote...

Clarence Jordan observed that, "*It is difficult to be indifferent to a wide-awake Christian*"

You can hate them or love them, but you can't ignore them. Wide-awake Christians confront others with the reality of God. You can't be neutral in such cases. "*These people must be crowned or crucified, because they are either mighty right or mighty wrong.*"

Righteousness (1343) (**dikaosune** from **dikaos** = being proper or right in the sense of being fully justified being or in accordance with what God requires) is the quality of being upright. In its simplest sense **dikaosune** conveys the idea of conformity to a standard or norm. In this sense **righteousness** is the opposite of hamartia (sin), which is defined as missing of the mark set by God.

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Dikaosune is rightness of character before God and rightness of actions before men. Righteousness of God could be succinctly stated as all that God is, all that He commands, all that He demands, all that He approves, all that He provides through (Click here to read Pastor Ray Pritchard's interesting analysis of **righteousness** in the Gospel of Matthew).

"Because Kingdom citizens do what God requires," "because their lives are right before God," and "because they live as God wants people to", the lives of God's "children" convict (or should convict) those who are living in darkness, whether those people belong to no church or are members of a church in "good standing"!

Sinclair Ferguson - Christians are persecuted for the sake of righteousness because of their loyalty to Christ. Real loyalty to him creates friction in the hearts of those who pay him only lip service. Loyalty arouses their consciences, and leaves them with only two alternatives: follow Christ, or silence him. Often their only way of silencing Christ is by silencing his servants. Persecution, in subtle or less subtle forms, is the result. We have already seen that the gospel produces a lifestyle characterised by righteousness. In practice, that means absolute integrity, whether at home, in the work place, or even at play. But such integrity challenges the moral indifference of the world, not least in our own age. Not to do the things 'everybody does' stirs the world's sleepy conscience. More than that, it irritates it, and causes annoyance and even anger. You would not think that simple honesty could be a dangerous lifestyle, until you put it into practice on the shop floor! For the Christian who is employed by another person, righteousness demands that he give his employer the time and energy for which he is paid. It means moral integrity. But how angry other employees can be when such integrity is displayed! ([Ferguson, Sinclair: Sermon on the Mount: Banner of Truth](#))

Persecution although often surprising to the young saint (cf 1Peter 4:12-note), is to be expected by Kingdom citizens who don't really belong to this world and such persecution is amply testified to in the New Testament (passages are in **bold**)...

(Jesus warned) "**Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets.**" (Luke 6:26) (What does this warning signify? It means that if you have never, ever experienced suffering for the sake of righteousness or His Name's sake, then you need to examine your profession of faith [cf 2Cor 13:5]. If Christ is in you and His beatitudes are now your character, however imperfectly they may be manifest, then you **will** at some time and to some degree be persecuted for your righteous [not self righteous or judgmental] lifestyle in Christ which shines light on the dark deeds of the enemies of Christ, cf Ro 5:10-note, Col 1:21-note, Ro 8:7-note). (Beloved, persecution is the believers birthmark and is sure proof that you are part of the family of God.) Martyn Lloyd-Jones addresses this issue writing...

This Beatitude tests our ideas as to what the Christian is. The Christian is like his Lord, and this is what our Lord said about him. '*Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets*' (Luke 6:26). And yet is not our idea of what we call the perfect Christian nearly always that he is a nice, popular man who never offends anybody, and is so easy to get on with? But if this Beatitude is true, **that is not the real Christian**, because the real Christian is a man who is not praised by everybody. They did not praise our Lord, and they will never praise the man who is like Him. '*Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!*' That is what they did to the false prophets; they did not do that to Christ Himself. So I draw my next deduction. It concerns the natural, unregenerate man, and it is this. The natural mind, as Paul says, '*is enmity against God*. (Ro 8:7-note) Though he talks about God, he really hates God (Ro 5:10-note). And when the Son of God came on earth he hated and crucified Him (John 15:8, 9, 10). And that is the attitude of the world towards Him now. This leads to the last deduction, which is that the new birth is an absolute necessity before anybody can become a Christian. To be Christian, ultimately, is to be like Christ; and one can never be like Christ without being entirely changed. We must get rid of the old nature that hates Christ and hates righteousness; we need a new nature that will love these things and love Him and thus become like Him. **If you try to imitate Christ the world will praise you; if you become Christlike it will hate you.** (Lloyd-Jones, D. M. [Studies in the Sermon on the Mount](#)) (Bolding added)

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me. (Note that that the gift of faith in Christ Jesus and the gift of suffering come together. When you are persecuted, and you will be when you walk worthy of the gospel, remember... do not be alarmed - the Greek word pictures a frightened horse shying away on the battlefield. Don't be "startled"! In contrast when we are not startled by their opposition, it is a sure sign that we are saved! You realize that you have a home in heaven. So even if God permits them to take your life, He is simply saying, "It's time to come on Home, My child." This attitude will alarm your opponents, for when they see you standing firm without being startled, it is a sign they are doomed to eternal destruction. Why is this the case? Because if they were being faced with the very persecution or threats they are giving you, they would be "scarred stiff"! In short, you have given your opponents a profound, piercing testimony of the reality of your faith.) (Php 1:27, 28, 29, 30-see notes on Php 1:27-28, 1:29-30) (See discussion questions Lesson 5)

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave 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. (John 15:18-20)

And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2Ti 3:12-note) (Note how many will be persecuted. All. No exceptions. Note also the Source of such a persecuted life - in Christ Jesus, i.e., those who abide in the Vine for apart from Him we can do absolutely nothing, Jn 15:5. If we live what we think is "godly" in our own strength, we won't necessarily be persecuted, for Christ's enemies won't see Him and He is the One they hate and seek to denigrate and discredit)

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God (2Ti 1:8-note) (Note how it is one is enabled to not be ashamed and to suffer - the power of God)

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed (the "if" in Greek means "since" and speaks of a certainty not a possibility!) we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:16-18) (What is the mark of a child of God? Suffering with Christ. What is our motivation? future glory which far outweighs the present suffering, cf 2Cor 4:16, 17, 18. And so we see that present suffering has purpose in preparing us for future glory by removing the dross from our lives. 1Pe 1:6, 7-See **notes** 1 Peter 1:6,1:7).

For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example (*hupogrammos* = literally to "write under" was used of a copybook of letters the pupil would look at to write out or trace out their letters) for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. (1Pe 2:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25-see **notes** 1Pe 2:18; 2:19; 2:20;2:21; 2:22; 2:23; 2:24;2:25) (What happens when we "die to sin and live to righteousness" no longer "continually straying like sheep"? We will suffer unjustly (which is the kind of suffering which finds favor with God), especially by those with whom we once "strayed like sheep." What are we to do? Bear up, patiently endure, realize we were called to suffer unjustly, follow our Lord's example, don't revile in return, don't utter threats when suffering, refraining because we trust God's righteous judgment will one day be meted out to our persecutors).

But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. (see notes 1 Peter 3:14; 3:15; 3:16; 3:17)

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but 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. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God. For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER? Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. (see **notes** 1 Peter 4:12; 4:13; 4:14; 4:15;4:16; 4:17; 4:18; 4:19)

But you might be saying "I've never experienced persecution like these verses are describing"..**Alexander Maclaren** addresses this noting that...

The great reason why professing Christians now know so little about persecution is because there is so little real antagonism. 'If ye were of the world, the world would love his own.' The Church has leavened the world, but the world has also leavened the Church; and it seems agreed by common consent that there is to be no fanatical goodness of the early primitive pattern. Of course, then, there will be no persecution, where religion goes in silver slippers, and you find Christian men running neck and neck with others, and no man can tell which is which. Then, again, many escape by avoiding plain Christian duty, shutting themselves up in their own little coteries. (ibid)

Be aware of some who might try to diminish the import of Jesus' promise of persecution for Kingdom citizens in this present world. For example, the **Expositor's Bible Commentary** notes that...

Lachs (pp. 101-3) cannot believe Christians were ever persecuted because of righteousness; so he reprints an alleged underlying Hebrew text to read "because of the Righteous One"-a reference to Jesus. But he underestimates how offensive genuine righteousness, "proper conduct before God" (Przybylski, p. 99), really is (cf. Isa 51:7). ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary 6-Volume New Testament. Zondervan Publishing](#))

- Mt 5:3; 2 Th 1:4-7; James 1:12
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THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

For - quite a strategic **term of explanation!** Always ask at least the simple question "What is the Author (in this case the ultimate AUTHOR!) saying? Here Jesus is explaining the **good news** to all who suffer for the **Good News!** The best is yet to come!

Theirs is emphatic so it means theirs and theirs alone.

A B Bruce on theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven - The common refrain of all the Beatitudes is expressly repeated here to hint that theirs emphatically is the Kingdom of Heaven. It is the proper guerdon of the soldier of righteousness. It is his now, within him in the disciplined spirit and the heroic temper developed by trial. ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

Related Resource:

- Notes on the Kingdom of God (scroll down to notes on next verse also)

Spurgeon - They are often evil spoken of, they have sometimes to suffer the spoiling of their goods, many of them have laid down their lives for Christ's sake, but they are truly blessed, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Is is in the **present tense** which indicates that this is their continual possession. Kingdom citizens have already – here and now – entered into their Lord's Kingdom. Yes, it is a Kingdom that is yet to be consummated and to be revealed in its final glory. Indeed, we all wait expectantly for

the seventh angel (to sound); and there (to arise) loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever (see **note** [Revelation 11:15](#))

But to an extent in a very real sense, all the blessings that are expected in the future Kingdom are already being experienced now by citizens of the Kingdom. They will just be higher and purer and more glorious in the ages to come.

The Greek construction indicates once again (as in all of the beatitudes) that this Kingdom belongs to them and to them alone! No usurpers or counterfeits will infiltrate this Kingdom!

Sinclair Ferguson illustrates the point that Christians have the Kingdom of Heaven now, telling the story of Izaak Walton, writer (best known as the author of the seventeenth-century fishing manual, *The Compleat Angler*) who wrote the following description of one of his great Christian contemporaries, Richard Sibbes...

Of this blest man,
Let this just praise be given:
Heaven was in him
Before he was in heaven.

Observe also that the same blessing kingdom of heaven begins and ends the eight beatitudes and thus signals the beginning and the end of this section, a literary device known as "*inclusion*". The Beatitudes are a "package deal" so to speak. Clearly our King intends for the be attitudes to be understood as a unit and not as separate characteristics. In other words, all Kingdom citizens possess all these characteristics, albeit varying in the degree of development in each individual. These characteristics are not ancillary but mandatory. In other words, the eight Beatitudes are the attributes of the child of God, a character which inevitably bring a conflict. But the conflict becomes the very assurance that our salvation is genuine! And so we can rejoice now as well as later in heaven.

Kingdom ([932](#))([basileia](#) from **basileus** = a sovereign, king, monarch) denotes sovereignty, royal power, dominion and refers therefore to the territory or people over whom a king rules. The Kingdom of Heaven/God is the sphere in which God is acknowledged as King (In hearts that have bowed in faith in Christ and now give Him obedience albeit not perfectly in this world but perfect in the one to come). In this sense the Kingdom has a spiritual aspect, a present physical aspect, and a future eternal aspect

(beginning with the **millennium**, cf Mt 25:31,34), all of course depending on the context of the passage in which basileia is found. Paul is careful to remind us that the Kingdom of Heaven/God is not in observance of ordinances, external and material, but in the deeper matters of the heart, which are spiritual and essential (Ro 14:17-note)

The Kingdom is the rule or reign of God and Jesus the King and so is the expression of His gracious sovereign will. To belong to the Kingdom of Heaven is to belong to the King as subjects with others men and women among whom the reign of Christ has begun and who are eagerly awaiting His return and establishment of His literal earthly kingdom.

On a practical note, believers now live in the Kingdom of light, not the **Kingdom of this world** (Rev 11:15-note) and this is why the battle you are currently experiencing dear saint is far fiercer than anything you knew before you became a citizen of Christ's Kingdom (which is here and paradoxically is yet to come). How mistaken saints are when they assume that since they are now believers, everything should be simpler, easier, less demanding. How could that be when we have entered into a Kingdom that is alien to the world (cf 1Pe 1:1, 2:11-see notes 1 Peter 1:1, 2:11) in which we now temporarily reside and the life we used to live? If our King was tested, tempted, opposed, rejected and eventually crucified by the kingdom of this world, should it surprise us that belonging to His Kingdom of light would involve us in a struggle of titanic proportions? And not only the external forces are arrayed against us, but we also have to fight the continual battle within as well, as our own fallen flesh nature seeks to take us down and draw us back into the kingdom of darkness. You know full well what I am referring to! We all sadly carry into the new glorious Kingdom of Christ some of the baggage of habits and ways of thinking of the old kingdom life. And it can (and usually is) a monumental struggle for us to be rid of them.

Robert Stein on the **Kingdom of God** - The heart of Jesus' teachings centers around the theme of the kingdom of God. This expression is found in sixty-one separate sayings in the Synoptic Gospels. Counting parallels to these passages, the expression occurs over eighty-five times. It also occurs twice in John (3:3,5). It is found in such key places as the preaching of John the Baptist, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 3:2); Jesus' earliest announcement, "The time has come... The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15; cf. Matthew 4:17; Luke 4:42-43); the prayer Jesus taught his disciples, "your kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10); in the Beatitudes, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3,10); at the Last Supper, "I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25); and in many of Jesus' parables (Matthew 13:24,44 , 45,47; Mark 4:26,30; Luke 19:11). It was once popular in certain circles to argue that the expressions "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" referred to two different realities. It is now clear, however, that they are synonyms. This is evident for several reasons. For one, the two expressions are used in the same sayings of Jesus, but where Matthew uses "kingdom of heaven, " Mark or Luke or both use "kingdom of God." Second, Matthew himself uses these two expressions interchangeably in 19:23-24, "it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven ... for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Finally, we know that "heaven" was frequently used as a circumlocution for "God" by devout Jews. Due to respect for the third commandment ("You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God" [Exodus 20:7]), pious Jews used various circumlocutions for the sacred name of God (YHWH) in order to avoid the danger of breaking this commandment. One such circumlocution was the term "heaven." This is seen in the expression "kingdom of heaven" but also in such passages as Luke 15:18,21 ("Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you") and Mark 11:30 . Various Interpretations Despite the centrality of this expression in Jesus' teachings, there has been a great deal of debate over the years as to exactly what Jesus meant by it. One reason for this is that neither Jesus nor the Evangelists ever defined exactly what they meant by this expression. They simply assumed that their hearers/ readers would understand. ([Click for this lengthy article on the Kingdom of God - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#))

Alexander Maclaren - The **kingdom of heaven** is the rule of God through Christ. It is present wherever wills bow to Him. It is future, as to complete realisation, in the heaven from which it comes, and to which, like its King, it belongs even while on earth. Obviously, its subjects can only be those who feel their dependence, and in poverty of spirit have cast off self-will and self-reliance. 'Theirs is the kingdom' does not mean 'they shall rule,' but 'of them shall be its subjects.' True, they shall rule in the perfected form of it; but the first, and in a real sense the only, blessedness is to obey God; and that blessedness can only come when we have learned poverty of spirit, because we see ourselves as in need of all things. (entire sermon)

Click here to study over 100 uses of the **'Kingdom'** most of which refer to the Kingdom of Heaven/God.

Matt. 3:2; Matt. 4:17; Matt. 4:23; Matt. 5:3; Matt. 5:10; Matt. 5:19; Matt. 5:20; Matt. 6:10; Matt. 6:13; Matt. 6:33; Matt. 7:21; Matt. 8:11; Matt. 8:12; Matt. 9:35; Matt. 10:7; Matt. 11:11; Matt. 11:12; Matt. 12:25; Matt. 12:26; Matt. 12:28; Matt. 13:11; Matt. 13:19; Matt. 13:24; Matt. 13:31; Matt. 13:33; Matt. 13:38; Matt. 13:41; Matt. 13:43; Matt. 13:44; Matt. 13:45; Matt. 13:47; Matt. 13:52; Matt. 16:19; Matt. 16:28; Matt. 18:1; Matt. 18:3; Matt. 18:4; Matt. 18:23; Matt. 19:12; Matt. 19:14; Matt. 19:23; Matt. 19:24; Matt. 20:1; Matt. 20:21; Matt. 21:31; Matt. 21:43; Matt. 22:2; Matt. 23:13; Matt. 24:7; Matt. 24:14; Matt. 25:1; Matt. 25:34; Matt. 26:29; Mk. 1:15; Mk. 3:24; Mk. 4:11; Mk. 4:26; Mk. 4:30; Mk. 6:23; Mk. 9:1; Mk. 9:47; Mk. 10:14; Mk. 10:15; Mk. 10:23; Mk. 10:24; Mk. 10:25; Mk. 11:10; Mk. 12:34; Mk. 13:8; Mk. 14:25; Mk. 15:43; Lk. 1:33; Lk. 4:43; Lk. 6:20; Lk. 7:28;

Lk. 8:1; Lk. 8:10; Lk. 9:2; Lk. 9:11; Lk. 9:27; Lk. 9:60; Lk. 9:62; Lk. 10:9; Lk. 10:11; Lk. 11:2; Lk. 11:17; Lk. 11:18; Lk. 11:20; Lk. 12:31; Lk. 12:32; Lk. 13:18; Lk. 13:20; Lk. 13:28; Lk. 13:29; Lk. 14:15; Lk. 16:16; Lk. 17:20; Lk. 17:21; Lk. 18:16; Lk. 18:17; Lk. 18:24; Lk. 18:25; Lk. 18:29; Lk. 19:11; Lk. 19:12; Lk. 19:15; Lk. 21:10; Lk. 21:31; Lk. 22:16; Lk. 22:18; Lk. 22:29; Lk. 22:30; Lk. 23:42; Lk. 23:51; Jn. 3:3; Jn. 3:5; Jn. 18:36; Acts 1:3; Acts 1:6; Acts 8:12; Acts 14:22; Acts 19:8; Acts 20:25; Acts 28:23; Acts 28:31; Rom. 14:17; 1 Co. 4:20; 1 Co. 6:9; 1 Co. 6:10; 1 Co. 15:24; 1 Co. 15:50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Col. 1:13; Col. 4:11; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:5; 2 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 1:8; Heb. 12:28; Jas. 2:5; 2 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 1:6; Rev. 1:9; Rev. 5:10; Rev. 11:15; Rev. 12:10; Rev. 16:10; Rev. 17:12; Rev. 17:17

See also related discussion on **the Kingdom of Heaven**

Matt. 3:2; Matt. 4:17; Matt. 5:3; Matt. 5:10; Matt. 5:19; Matt. 5:20; Matt. 7:21; Matt. 8:11; Matt. 10:7; Matt. 11:11; Matt. 11:12; Matt. 13:11; Matt. 13:24; Matt. 13:31; Matt. 13:33; Matt. 13:44; Matt. 13:45; Matt. 13:47; Matt. 13:52; Matt. 16:19; Matt. 18:1; Matt. 18:3; Matt. 18:4; Matt. 18:23; Matt. 19:12; Matt. 19:14; Matt. 19:23; Matt. 20:1; Matt. 22:2; Matt. 23:13; Matt. 25:1

Heaven ([3772](#)) (**ouranos** from **oros** = hill and so the idea of elevation) is where God lives. The concept was that there were 3 heavens, the first heaven = the atmosphere, the second heaven = outer space and the third heaven = God's abode (cf 2 Co 12:2-4 - Click for more discussion of The Third Heaven). In the present context Jesus is not referring so much to the place (heaven) but the One Who is there and so the term is synonymous with "kingdom of God", a term which would be less acceptable to the Jewish listeners (and readers of Matthew's gospel) as the Jews strictly avoided pronouncing the name "God".

Maclaren speaks of the twofold fulfillment of the blessing of the **kingdom of heaven** writing that...

There is a present recompense. Persecution is the result of a character which brings Christians into the kingdom. Theirs is the kingdom — they are subjects. To them it is given to enter. Persecution makes the present consciousness of the possession of the kingdom more vivid and joyous. It brings the enforced sense of a vocation separate from the hostile world's. As Thomas Fuller puts it somewhere, in troublous times the Church builds high, just as the men do in cities where there is little room to expand on the ground level.

Persecution brightens and solidifies hope, and thus may become infinitely sweet and blessed. How often it has been given to the martyr, as it was given to Stephen, to see heaven opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, as if risen to His feet to uphold as well as to receive His servant. Paul and Silas made the prison walls ring with their praises, though their backs were livid with wales and stained with blood. And we, in our far smaller trials for Christ's sake, may have the same more conscious possession of the kingdom and brightened hope of yet fuller possession of it.

There is a future recompense in the perfect kingdom, where men are rewarded according to their capacities. And if the way in which we have met the world's evil has been right, then that will have made us fit for a fuller possession. In closing we recur to the thought of all these Beatitudes as a chain and the beginning of all as being penitence and faith. Many a poor man, or many a little child, may have a higher place in heaven than some who have died at the stake for their Lord, for not our history, but our character, determines our place there, and all the fulness of the kingdom belongs to every one who with penitent heart comes to God in Christ, and then by slow degrees from that root brings forth first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. (Matthew 5:10 The Eighth Beatitude)

The Blessing Of Persecution...Persecution, even martyrdom, has been the cost of discipleship for Christians down through the centuries. In many lands believers still suffer imprisonment and death for their uncompromising devotion to their Savior. Even in nations that have religious freedom, a person with a bold witness for the Lord may become the target of ridicule.

When we experience hardship because of our Christian commitment, no verse of Scripture is more comforting than the beatitude spoken by our Savior, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 5:10).

At one time in his life, British preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon was so intensely criticized that he became deeply depressed. So his wife printed that beatitude along with the other seven on a large sheet of paper and placed it above their bed. The first thing Spurgeon saw in the morning and the last thing he read at night was our Savior's glorious promise.

Are you discouraged because you are suffering for your Christian testimony? The antidote is this one sustaining promise: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake." --V C Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The consecrated cross I'll bear
Till death shall set me free,
And then go home, my crown to wear,
For there's a crown for me. --Shepherd

If you live for God,
you can expect trouble from the world.

William Barclay has an interesting discourse on Christian suffering in his comments on Mt 5:10-12 - One of the outstanding qualities of Jesus was his sheer honesty. He never left men in any doubt what would happen to them if they chose to follow him. He was clear that he had come "**not to make life easy, but to make men great.**" It is hard for us to realise what the first Christians had to suffer. Every department of their life was disrupted.

(i) Their Christianity might well disrupt their work. Suppose a man was a stone-mason. That seems a harmless enough occupation. But suppose his firm received a contract to build a temple to one of the heathen gods, what was that man to do? Suppose a man was a tailor, and suppose his firm was asked to produce robes for the heathen priests, what was that man to do? In a situation such as that in which the early Christians found themselves there was hardly any job in which a man might not find a conflict between his business interests and his loyalty to Jesus Christ.

The Church was in no doubt where a man's duty lay. More than a hundred years after this a man came to Tertullian with this very problem. He told of his business difficulties. He ended by saying, "What can I do? I must live!" "Must you?" said Tertullian. If it came to a choice between a loyalty and a living, the real Christian never hesitated to choose loyalty.

(ii) Their Christianity would certainly disrupt their social life. In the ancient world most feasts were held in the temple of some god. In very few sacrifices was the whole animal burned upon the altar. It might be that only a few hairs from the forehead of the beast were burned as a symbolic sacrifice. Part of the meat went to the priests as their perquisite; and part of the meat was returned to the worshipper. With his share he made a feast for his friends and his relations. One of the gods most commonly worshipped was Serapis. And when the invitations to the feast went out, they would read: "I invite you to dine with me at the table of our Lord Serapis."

Could a Christian share in a feast held in the temple of a heathen god? Even an ordinary meal in an ordinary house began with a libation, a cup of wine, poured out in honour of the gods. It was like grace before meat. Could a Christian become a sharer in a heathen act of worship like that? Again the Christian answer was clear. The Christian must cut himself off from his fellows rather than by his presence give approval to such a thing. A man had to be prepared to be lonely in order to be a Christian.

(iii) Worst of all, their Christianity was liable to disrupt their home life. It happened again and again that one member of a family became a Christian while the others did not. A wife might become a Christian while her husband did not. A son or a daughter might become a Christian while the rest of the family did not. Immediately there was a split in the family. Often the door was shut for ever in the face of the one who had accepted Christ.

Christianity often came to send, not peace, but a sword which divided families in two. It was literally true that a man might have to love Christ more than he loved father or mother, wife, or brother or sister. Christianity often involved in those days a choice between a man's nearest and dearest and Jesus Christ.

Still further, the penalties which a Christian had to suffer were terrible beyond description. All the world knows of the Christians who were flung to the lions or burned at the stake; but these were kindly deaths. Nero wrapped the Christians in pitch and set them alight, and used them as living torches to light his gardens. He sewed them in the skins of wild animals and set his hunting dogs upon them to tear them to death. They were tortured on the rack; they were scraped with pincers; molten lead was poured hissing upon them; red hot brass plates were affixed to the tenderest parts of their bodies; eyes were torn out; parts of their bodies were cut off and roasted before their eyes; their hands and feet were burned while cold water was poured over them to lengthen the agony. These things are not pleasant to think about, but these are the things a man had to be prepared for, if he took his stand with Christ.

We may well ask why the Romans persecuted the Christians. It seems an extraordinary thing that anyone living a Christian life should seem a fit victim for persecution and death. There were two reasons.

(i) There were certain slanders which were spread abroad about the Christians, slanders for which the Jews were in no small measure responsible. (a) The Christians were accused of cannibalism. The words of the Last Supper--"This is my body." "This cup is the New Testament in my blood"--were taken and twisted into a story that the Christians sacrificed a child and ate the flesh. (b) The Christians were accused of immoral practices, and their meetings were said to be orgies of lust. The Christian weekly meeting was called the Agape, the Love Feast; and the name was grossly misinterpreted. Christians greeted each other with the kiss of peace;

and the kiss of peace became a ground on which to build the slanderous accusations. (c) The Christians were accused of being incendiaries. It is true that they spoke of the coming end of the world, and they clothed their message in the apocalyptic pictures of the end of the world in flames. Their slanderers took these words and twisted them into threats of political and revolutionary incendiarism. (d) The Christians were accused of tampering with family relationships. Christianity did in fact split families as we have seen; and so Christianity was represented as something which divided man and wife, and disrupted the home. There were slanders enough waiting to be invented by malicious-minded men.

(ii) But the great ground of persecution was in fact political. Let us think of the situation. The Roman Empire included almost the whole known world, from Britain to the Euphrates, and from Germany to North Africa. How could that vast amalgam of peoples be somehow welded into one? Where could a unifying principle be found? At first it was found in the worship of the goddess Roma, the spirit of Rome. This was a worship which the provincial peoples were happy to give, for Rome had brought them peace and good government, and civil order and justice. The roads were cleared of brigands and the seas of pirates; the despots and tyrants had been banished by impartial Roman justice. The provincial was very willing to sacrifice to the spirit of the Empire which had done so much for him.

But this worship of Roma took a further step. There was one man who personified the Empire, one man in whom Roma might be felt to be incarnated, and that was the Emperor; and so the Emperor came to be regarded as a god, and divine honors came to be paid to him, and temples were raised to his divinity. The Roman government did not begin this worship; at first, in fact, it did all it could to discourage it. Claudius, the Emperor, said that he deprecated divine honors being paid to any human being. But as the years went on the Roman government saw in this Emperor-worship the one thing which could unify the vast Empire of Rome; here was the one centre on which they all could come together. So, in the end, the worship of the Emperor became, not voluntary, but compulsory. Once a year a man had to go and burn a pinch of incense to the godhead of Caesar and say, "Caesar is Lord." And that is precisely what the Christians refused to do. For them Jesus Christ was the Lord, and to no man would they give that title which belonged to Christ.

It can be seen at once that Caesar-worship was far more a test of political loyalty than anything else. In actual fact when a man had burned his pinch of incense he received a certificate, a libellus, to say that he had done so, and then he could go and worship any god he liked, so long as his worship did not interfere with public order and decency. The Christians refused to conform. Confronted with the choice, "Caesar or Christ?" they uncompromisingly chose Christ. They utterly refused to compromise. The result was that, however good a man, however fine a citizen a Christian was, he was automatically an outlaw. In the vast Empire Rome could not afford pockets of disloyalty, and that is exactly what every Christian congregation appeared to the Roman authorities to be. A poet has spoken of "The panting, huddled flock whose crime was Christ." **The only crime of the Christian was that he set Christ above Caesar; and for that supreme loyalty the Christians died in their thousands, and faced torture for the sake of the lonely supremacy of Jesus Christ.**

The Bliss Of The Blood-stained Way (Matthew 5:10-12 Continued) - When we see how persecution arose, we are in a position to see the real glory of the martyr's way. It may seem an extraordinary thing to talk about the bliss of the persecuted; but for him who had eyes to see beyond the immediate present, and a mind to understand the greatness of the issues involved, there must have been a glory in that blood-stained way.

(i) To have to suffer persecution was an opportunity to show one's loyalty to Jesus Christ. One of the most famous of all the martyrs was Polycarp, the aged bishop of Smyrna. The mob dragged him to the tribunal of the Roman magistrate. He was given the inevitable choice--sacrifice to the godhead of Caesar or die. "Eighty and six years," came the immortal reply, "have I served Christ. and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" So they brought him to the stake, and he prayed his last prayer: "O Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy well-beloved and ever-blessed son, by whom we have received the knowledge of thee ... I thank thee that thou hast graciously thought me worthy of this day and of this hour." Here was the supreme opportunity to demonstrate his loyalty to Jesus Christ.

In the First World War Rupert Brooke, the poet, was one of those who died too young. Before he went out to the battle he wrote:

"Now God be thanked who has matched us with his hour."

There are so many of us who have never in our lives made anything like a real sacrifice for Jesus Christ. The moment when Christianity seems likely to cost us something is the moment when it is open to us to demonstrate our loyalty to Jesus Christ in a way that all the world can see.

(ii) To have to suffer persecution is, as Jesus himself said, the way to walk the same road as the prophets, and the saints, and the martyrs have walked. To suffer for the right is to gain a share in a great succession. The man who has to suffer something for his faith can throw back his head and say,

"Brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod."

(iii) To have to suffer persecution is to share in the great occasion. There is always something thrilling in even being present on the great occasion, in being there when something memorable and crucial is happening. There is an even greater thrill in having a share, however small, in the actual action. That is the feeling about which Shakespeare wrote so unforgettably in Henry the Fifth in the words he put into Henry's mouth before the battle of Agincourt:

"He that shall live this day and see old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his friends,
And say, 'Tomorrow is Saint Crispian':
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,
And say, 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'

.....

And gentlemen in England now abed
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap while any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day."

When a man is called on to suffer something for his Christianity that is always a crucial moment; it is the great occasion; it is the clash between the world and Christ; it is a moment in the drama of eternity. To have a share in such a moment is not a penalty but a glory. "Rejoice at such a moment," says Jesus, "and be glad." The word for be glad is from the verb *agallasthai* (Greek #21) which has been derived from two Greek words which mean to leap exceedingly. It is the joy which leaps for joy. As it has been put, it is the joy of the climber who has reached the summit, and who leaps for joy that the mountain path is conquered.

(iv) To suffer persecution is to make things easier for those who are to follow. Today we enjoy the blessing of liberty because men in the past were willing to buy it for us at the cost of blood, and sweat, and tears. They made it easier for us, and by a steadfast and immovable witness for Christ we may make it easier for others who are still to come.

In the great Boulder Dam scheme in America men lost their lives in that project which was to turn a dust-bowl into fertile land. When the scheme was completed, the names of those who had died were put on a tablet and the tablet was put into the great wall of the dam, and on it there was the inscription. "These died that the desert might rejoice and blossom as the rose."

The man who fights his battle for Christ will always make things easier for those who follow after. For them there will be one less struggle to be encountered on the way.

(v) Still further, no man ever suffers persecution alone; if a man is called upon to bear material loss, the failure of friends, slander, loneliness, even the death of love, for his principles, he will not be left alone. Christ will be nearer to him than at any other time. (Editorial comment - I think of Paul in the last chapter of the last letter, shortly before he was martyred- 2Ti 4:16 2Tim 4:16 At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. 17 *But* [a blessed term of contrast] *the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth. 18The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him [be] the glory forever and ever. Amen. - Remember that God does not keep us from life's storms—He walks with us through them!*)

The old story in Daniel tells how Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into the furnace heated seven times hot because of their refusal to move from their loyalty to God. The courtiers watched. "Did we not cast three men, bound, into the fire?" they asked. The reply was that it was indeed so. Then came the astonished answer, "But I see four men, loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods" (Daniel 3:19-25-commentary note).

As Browning had it in Christmas Eve and Easter Day:

"I was born sickly, poor and mean,
A slave; no misery could screen
The holders of the pearl of price
From Caesar's envy; therefore twice
I fought with beasts, and three times saw
My children suffer by his law;
At last my own release was earned;
I was some time in being burned,
But at the close a Hand came through

The fire above my head, and drew
My soul to Christ, whom now I see.
Sergius, a brother, writes for me
This testimony on the wall--
For me, I have forgot it all."

When a man has to suffer something for his faith, that is the way to the closest possible companionship with Christ.

There remains only one question to ask--why is this persecution so inevitable? It is inevitable because the Church, when it really is the Church, is bound to be the conscience of the nation and the conscience of society. Where there is good the Church must praise; where there is evil, the Church must condemn--and inevitably men will try to silence the troublesome voice of conscience. It is not the duty of the individual Christian habitually to find fault, to criticize, to condemn, but it may well be that his every action is a silent condemnation of the unchristian lives of others, and he will not escape their hatred.

It is not likely that death awaits us because of our loyalty--to the Christian faith. But insult awaits the man who insists on Christian honor. Mockery awaits the man who practices Christian love and Christian forgiveness. Actual persecution may well await the Christian in industry who insists on doing an honest day's work. Christ still needs his witnesses; he needs those who are prepared, not so much to die for him, as to live for him. The Christian struggle and the Christian glory still exist. ([William Barclay's Daily Study Bible - Matthew 5](#))

Matthew 5:11 "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: [makarioi este \(2PPAI\)](#) [hotan oneidisosin \(3PAAS\)](#) [humas kai](#) [diochosin \(3PAAS\)](#) [kai eiposin \(3PAAS\)](#) [pan poneron kath' humon\[pseudomenoi\] \(PMPMPN\)](#) [eneken emou;](#)

Amplified: Blessed (happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous—with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of your outward conditions) are you when people revile you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil things against you falsely on My account. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

NLT: "God blesses you when you are mocked and persecuted and lied about because you are my followers. (NLT - Tyndale House)

Philips: "And what happiness will be yours when people blame you and ill-treat you and say all kinds of slanderous things against you for my sake! (New Testament in Modern English)

Wuest: Spiritually prosperous are you whenever they shall revile you and persecute you and say every pernicious thing against you, speaking deliberate falsehoods on account of me.

Young's Literal: 'Happy are ye whenever they may reproach you, and may persecute, and may say any evil thing against you falsely for my sake--

BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN PEOPLE INSULT YOU, AND PERSECUTE YOU: makarioi este (2PPAI) hotan oneidisosin (3PAAS) humas:

- Mt 10:25; 27:39; Ps 35:11; Isaiah 66:5; Luke 7:33,34; John 9:28; 1Peter 2:23
- [Matthew 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Matthew 5:10-12 The Only Way to Happiness: Endure Hardship 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:10-12 The Only Way to Happiness: Endure Hardship 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:10-12: Happy are the Harassed 1 - Study Guide](#) - click dropdown - John MacArthur
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- [Matthew 5:10-12: Happy are the Harassed 2](#) - John MacArthur

THE BLESSEDNESS OF INSULTS

AND PERSECUTION

Is this passage not a paradox? Certainly the lost world would think that Jesus was a little "off His rocker" by saying good comes from bad! But when God is in control, this is exactly what can transpire!

Blessed (see **makarios**) spiritually prosperous, happy, independent of the insults and aspersions thrown at you. Why? Because this blissful state is bestowed by the Spirit of God in the hearts of believers. This is not a promise to non-believers, but only to genuine followers of Jesus.

In the face of persecution, Jesus' promise is stated as a reality here and now which explains His shift to the second person plural (all of you) pronoun **you**. **You, you** who are listening and **you** who are reading. **You** are persecuted but **you** are blessed.

When (3752) (**hotan**) refers to an indefinite point or points of time which may be roughly simultaneous to or overlap with another point of time and so means on those occasions, at those times when, whenever, or as often as. Distinguish between "when" and "if" -- If Christ is living in you and through you (Col 3:4, et al), then it is just a matter of time before you are denigrated for taking a stand for His Gospel! You can count on it! The corollary is that if you are NEVER insulted or persecuted for the Gospel, there are two possibilities - (1) You are living for self, not Savior and the lost can't even recognize you as saved! or (2) You are not saved. You are not flowing against the current, but you are flowing downstream with all of the other dead wood! (Pun intended!)

Guzik - Jesus brings insults and spoken malice into the sphere of persecution. We cannot limit our idea of persecution to only physical opposition or torture.

Insult (3679) (**oneidizo** from **óneidos** = disgrace, abuse, or object of disgrace or shame) means to assail with abusive words, upbraid (), slander, revile, falsely accuse or to speak disparagingly of a person in manner not justified, to find fault in a way that demeans the other, to mock, to heap insults upon as a way of shaming. The idea is to find fault in a way that demeans the one being reproached. It means to **upbraid**, which in turn means to criticize severely, find fault with, reproach severely or scold vehemently.

In the Psalms (see Lxx uses of **oneidizo** below) enemies revile God, Israel, the righteous, etc.

There is an use of **oneidizo** in which one justifiably lays a charge on someone else (see below - Jesus reproached cities, His own disciples)

Oneidizo "to cast into the teeth," as in "hurling an insult." It means that Christians can expect to be made the butt of public jokes and open ridicule.

Oneidizo refers to especially strong verbal abuse which is interesting because the Jewish culture at that time considered verbal abuse to be extremely vicious. The Jewish rabbis even considered reviling to be as evil as idolatry, fornication, and bloodshed all combined! Why so serious? Because by the defamation of one's character the victim would lose his or her place in the community and, according to the circumstance of that day, almost the possibility of continuing their life. The insulting word itself was believed to have a power of its own.

Oneidizo can be translated "say evil about", "say you are bad". In West Africa there is an idiom, "to spoil your name" which is very appropriate in this context.

Here are the 9 uses of **oneidizo** in the NT...

Matthew 5:11 "Blessed are you when men **cast insults** at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.

Matthew 11:20 Then He began to **reproach** the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent.

Matthew 27:44 And the robbers also who had been crucified with Him were **casting** the same **insult** at Him.

Mark 15:32 "Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" And those who were crucified with Him were **casting** the same **insult** at Him.

Mark 16:14 And afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He **reproached** them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen.

Luke 6:22 "Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and **cast insults** at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.

Romans 15:3 (note) For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who **reproached** Thee fell upon Me." (**Comment:** Paul is holding up Christ as the perfect model of unselfishness.)

James 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without **reproach**, and it will be given to him.

1 Peter 4:14 (note) If you are **reviled** for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

There are 40 uses in the OT, Septuagint (LXX)

Jdg. 5:18; 8:15; 1 Sam. 17:10, 36, 45; 2 Sam. 21:21; 23:9; 2 Ki. 19:4, 16, 22f; 1 Chr. 20:7; 2 Chr. 32:17; Neh. 6:13; Ps. 35:7; 42:10; 44:16; 55:12; 69:9; 74:10, 18; 79:12; 89:51; 102:8; 119:42; Prov. 20:4; 25:8, 10; Isa. 27:8; 37:4, 6, 17, 23f; 43:12; 54:4; 65:7; Jer. 15:9; Zeph. 2:8, 10).

Study the following sampling of the LXX uses of **oneidizo** and note who received the reproaches.

Judges 5:18 "Zebulun was a people who **despised** (Hebrew = charaph = to reproach, taunt; Lxx = oneidizo) their lives even to death, And Naphtali also, on the high places of the field.

1 Samuel 17:10 Again the Philistine (Goliath) said, "I **defy** (Hebrew = charaph = to reproach, taunt; Lxx = oneidizo) the ranks of Israel this day; give me a man that we may fight together."

1 Samuel 17:36 "Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has **taunted** (Hebrew = charaph = to reproach, taunt; Lxx = oneidizo) the armies of the living God."

Nehemiah 6:13 He (Shemaiah the son of Delaiah) was hired (Nehemiah's mortal enemies Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him) for this reason, that I might become frightened and act accordingly and sin, so that they might have an evil report in order that they could **reproach** (Hebrew = charaph = to reproach, taunt; Lxx = oneidizo) me.

Psalms 42:10 As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries **revile** (Hebrew = charaph = to reproach, taunt; Lxx = oneidizo) me, While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

Spurgeon's note = Cruel mockeries cut deeper than the flesh, they reach the soul as though a rapier were introduced between the ribs to prick the heart. If reproaches kill not, yet they are killing, the pain caused is excruciating. The tongue cuts to the bone, and its wounds are hard to cure. While they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? This is the most unkind cut of all, reflecting as it does both upon the Lord's faithfulness and His servant's character. Such was the malice of David's foes, that having thought of the cruel question, they said it, said it daily, repeated it to him, and that for a length, of time; surely the continual yapping of these curs at his heel was enough to madden him, and perhaps would have done so had he not resorted to prayer and made the persecutions of his enemies a plea with his Lord.)

Psalms 69:9 For zeal for Thy house has consumed me (quoted by Jesus in John 2:14, by Paul in Romans 15:3), And the **reproaches** (Lxx = noun = oneidismos related to verb oneidizo = unjustifiable verbal abuse and/or insults) of those who **reproach** (Hebrew = charaph = to reproach, taunt; Lxx = oneidizo in the present tense = continually) Thee have fallen on me.

Spurgeon's note - Those who habitually blaspheme God now curse me instead. I have become the butt for arrows intended for the Lord Himself. Thus the Great Mediator [THE MESSIAH] was, in this respect, a Substitute for God as well as for man, He bore the reproaches aimed at the one, as well as the sins committed by the other.)

Psalms 74:10 How long, O God, will the adversary **revile** (Hebrew = charaph = to reproach, taunt; Lxx = oneidizo), And the enemy spurn Thy name forever?

Spurgeon's note = O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? Though we know not how long yet thou dost. The times and seasons are with thee. When God is reproached, there is hope for us, for it may be He will hearken and avenge His dishonoured name. Wickedness has great license allowed it, and justice lingers on the road; God has His reasons for delay, and His seasons for action, and in the end it shall be seen that He is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness.)

Psalms 74:18 Remember this, O LORD, that the enemy has **reviled** (Hebrew = charaph = to reproach, taunt; Lxx = oneidizo); And a foolish person has spurned Thy name.

Spurgeon's note = Against thee, the ever glorious Maker of all things, have they spoken, Thine honour have they assailed, and defied even Thee. This is forcible pleading indeed, and reminds us of Moses and Hezekiah in their intercessions: "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?" "It may be that the Lord thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, who hath reproached the living God." Jehovah is a jealous God, and will surely glorify His own Name; here our hope finds foothold.)

Psalm 102:8 My enemies have **reproached** (Hebrew = charaph = to reproach, taunt; Lxx = oneidizo), me all day long; Those who deride me have used my name as a curse.

Spurgeon's note = Their rage was unrelenting and unceasing, and vented itself in taunts and insults, the Psalmist's patriotism and his griefs were both made the subjects of their sport. Pointing to the sad estate of his people they would ask him, "Where is your God?" and exult over him because their false gods were in the ascendant. Reproach cuts like a razor, and when it is continued from hour to hour, and repeated all the day and every day, it makes life itself undesirable. They were so furious that they bound themselves by oath to destroy him, and used his name as their usual execration, a word to curse by, the synonym of abhorrence and contempt. What with inward sorrows and outward persecutions he was in as ill a plight as may well be conceived.)

Psalm 119:42 So I shall have an answer for him who **reproaches** (Hebrew = charaph = to reproach, taunt; Lxx = oneidizo in the present tense = continually) me, For I trust (Hebrew = batach = have confidence in; Lxx = elpizo = to hope, in the sense of counting on!) in Thy word.

Comment: A Scriptural antidote you can "pick up" like a shield to defend your mind from the fiery missiles of the evil one.

Spurgeon's note = So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me. This is an unanswerable answer. When God, by granting us salvation, gives to our prayers an answer of peace, we are ready at once to answer the objections of the infidel, the quibbles of the skeptical, and the sneers of the contemptuous. It is most desirable that revilers should be answered, and hence we may expect the Lord to save his people in order that a weapon may be put into their hands with which to rout his adversaries. When those who reproach us are also reproaching God, we may ask him to help us to silence them by sure proofs of his mercy and faithfulness.

For I trust in thy word. His faith was seen by his being trustful while under trial, and he pleads it as a reason why he should be helped to beat back reproaches by a happy experience. Faith is our argument when we seek mercies and salvation; faith in the Lord who has spoken to us in his word. "I trust in thy word" is a declaration more worth the making than any other; for he who can truly make it has received power to become a child of God, and so to be the heir of unnumbered mercies. God hath more respect to a man's trust than to all else that is in him; for the Lord hath chosen faith to be the hand into which he will place his mercies and his salvation. If any reproach us for trusting in God, we reply to them with arguments the most conclusive when we show that God has kept his promises, heard our prayers, and supplied our needs. Even the most sceptical are forced to bow before the logic of facts.

In this second verse of this eight the Psalmist makes a confession of faith, and a declaration of his belief and experience. Note that he does the same in the corresponding verses of the sections which follow. See notes on the following psalms Psalms 119:50, "Thy word hath quickened me"; Ps 119:58, "I entreated thy favour"; Psalms 119:66, "I have believed thy commandments"; Ps 119:74, "I have hoped in thy word." A wise preacher might find in these a series of experimental discourses.

Persecute (1377) (**dioko** from **dío** = pursue, prosecute, persecute) means to follow or press hard after. **Dioko** speaks of an intensity of effort leading to a pursue with earnestness and diligence in order to lay hold of and oppress or harass the "blessed". The picture of this word is like the ferocious hunting dogs after the poor little red fox.

Lloyd-Jones emphasizes why citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven are persecuted writing that it is "Because he is fundamentally different, and the non-Christian recognizes this. The Christian is not just like everybody else with a slight difference. He is essentially different; he has a different nature and he is a different man. (Lloyd-Jones, D. M. [Studies in the Sermon on the Mount](#))

Persecuted, tortured for Christ's sake...it congers up images of holy men tied to stakes with flames arising all around them, of men tied to poles and dunked beneath the water to be drowned, of men brought out to fight and die at the hands of hungry lions before blood thirsty Roman crowds, of men forced to starved and literally forced to eat refuge unless they deny Christ, of men thrown into prison for years and years in China simply for preaching the gospel...and the beat goes on. What about today, surely nothing like these things is happening is it? Unquestionably and it may be worse than we can imagine. If you don't believe it go to the following

link [The Voice of the Martyrs](#). Or go to Google and type in the words *voice of the martyrs news* (don't put it in quotes) and click some of the links that you retrieve to read about imprisonments, beatings, and murder of men and women who are willing to live and die for the sake of Christ and His righteousness. We often hear Christian leaders warn that these events are not that far away from us in post-Christian America.

What happened to the early church leaders? Some are recorded in Scripture but most of the following are from extra-biblical sources...

- James--Beheaded
- Phillip--Crucified
- Matthew--Slain by the sword
- James the Less--Stoned to death
- Matthias--Stoned, then beheaded
- Andrew--Crucified, left hanging on the cross for three days
- Peter--Crucified upside down
- Paul--Beheaded by Nero in Rome
- Jude--Crucified
- Bartholomew--Beaten to death with clubs
- Thomas--Speared to death
- Simon the Zealot--Crucified
- John--Exiled to Patmos; died a prisoner

Whether the specific details are accurate does not detract from the real and present reality of persecution for as Jesus stated...

"These things (John 14-16) I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have **tribulation** (originally crushing beneath a weight) but take courage; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

I like (maybe that's not the right word) what **C H Spurgeon** said "You set your heart aflame with the Word of God and man shall come and watch you burn."

The famous German martyr **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** wrote the following from his Flossenberg prison cell in 1937 "Suffering... is the badge of the true Christian. The disciple is not above his master.... Luther reckoned suffering among the marks of the true church, and one of the memoranda drawn up in preparation for the Augsburg Confession similarly defines the church as the community of those "who are persecuted and martyred for the gospel's sake."... Discipleship means allegiance to the suffering Christ, and it is therefore not at all surprising that Christians should be called upon to suffer. ([Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship](#) Touchstone, 1995) **(As an aside, Eric Metaxas' bio on Bonhoeffer is outstanding -- it's long and gets a bit technical in parts, but you will finish it feeling like you personally know this great martyr -- [Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy](#))**

In a parallel passage in Luke, Jesus adds **hatred**, **ostracism** and **spurning** declaring ""Blessed are you when men **hate** (dislike you strongly with the implication of aversion and hostility and usually implying active ill will in words and conduct) you, and **ostracize** (literally mark off or set off by a boundary and so remove one from association, exclude) you, and **cast insults** (**oneidizo** = same word in Mt 5:11) at you, and **spurn your name** (literally cast out or throw out your name) as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. (Luke 6:22)

AND FALSELY SAY ALL KINDS OF EVIL AGAINST YOU: kai diochosin (3PAAS) kai eiposin (3PAAS) pan poneron kath' humon [pseudomenoi] (PMPMPN) eneken hemou:

- 1 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.
- [Matthew 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Matthew 5:10-12 The Only Way to Happiness: Endure Hardship 1](#) - John MacArthur
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- [Matthew 5:10-12: Happy are the Harassed 2](#) - John MacArthur

They curl their lip and with disdainfully call you a...

- "Bible thumping bigot"
- "narrow-minded extremist"
- "right-wing fundamentalist"
- "fanatical Jesus freak"

I'm sure if you've walked worthy of the gospel of Christ for any length of time, you could add to the list of evil things opponents of Christ have hurled at your character. We probably couldn't even print many of them for they are so evil. By the way, as emphasized elsewhere in this discussion, although Jesus is calling us to be radical, He is not calling for us to be fanatical to the point of being obnoxious, bizarre, weird or repulsive. He is calling on us to manifest the seven "**be attitudes**" and that is guaranteed to bring trouble and all kinds of insulting names.

Spurgeon qualifies this beatitude writing that "it must be said falsely, and it must be for Christ's sake, if you are to be blessed; but there is no blessing in having evil spoken of you truthfully, or in having it spoken of you falsely because of some bitterness in your own spirit.

Evil (4190) (**poneros** from **pónos** = sorrow, pain) refers to evil in active opposition to good and which is actively harmful or hurtful. Not surprisingly Satan is referred to as the "*ho poneros*" which is literally "*the evil one*".

All kinds of evil means that unbelievers will tell deliberate lies about us. It also means there is no limit on the kinds of slander and falsehood we will have to endure. We live in an age where the ridicule of blacks is forbidden (rightly so), where anti-Semitism is punishable by political death (rightly so), but where Christian-bashing is a popular indoor sport; and films mocking Jesus Christ are considered avant-garde! After all who controls Hollywood and the film industry!

Falsely (5574) (**pseudomai** related to **pseudo** = to cheat, defraud, falsify) means to utter an untruth, to attempt to deceive by falsehood, to lie or to speak falsely or deceitfully.

Note that some manuscripts do not have **pseudomai**, as they feel it was a scribal addition. Irregardless, it does explain the true meaning of the text and is retained by many trustworthy translations such as NAS, KJV, NIV, NET, et al

Oswald Chambers - When you begin to deport yourself amongst men as a saint, they will leave you absolutely alone, you will be reviled and persecuted. No man can stand that unless he is in love with Jesus Christ; he cannot do it for a conviction or a creed, but he can do it for a Being Whom he loves. Devotion to a Person is the only thing that tells; devotion to death to a Person, not devotion to a creed or a doctrine. (Chambers, O. Studies in the sermon on the mount. Hants UK: Marshall, Morgan & Scott)

ON ACCOUNT OF ME: **heneken emou**:

- Mt 10:18,22,39; 19:29; 24:9; Ps 44:22; Mark 4:17; 8:35; 13:9,13; Luke 6:22; 9:24; 21:12,17; John 15:21; Acts 9:16; Ro 8:36; 1Cor 4:10; 2 Cor 4:11; Revelation 2:3
- [Matthew 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Matthew 5:10-12 The Only Way to Happiness: Endure Hardship 1](#) - John MacArthur
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On account of (because of Me)(1752) (**heneka**) is an adverb in the previous verse translated in the NAS "for the sake" explaining why evil, injurious, hateful things are being said of the "sons of God". This confirms that the **righteousness** of life that causes the persecution in Mt 5:10 is synonymous with the Christ life or a righteous lifestyle in conformity to that of Christ and empowered by His Spirit.

D A Carson brings pointedly adds that this Christ like lifestyle "so identifies the disciple of Jesus with the practice of Jesus' righteousness that there is no place for professed allegiance to Jesus that is not full of righteousness" (Carson, Sermon on the Mount, p. 28). ([Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7: 1982, Baker Pub Group](#))

I love how **Alexander Maclaren** challenges all Kingdom citizens declaring that "A true Christian ought to be a standing rebuke to the world, an incarnate conscience."

So what are we to do as citizens of the Kingdom of heaven? We must live out the Christ life in the real world manifesting the

seven character qualities Jesus has outlined (poor in spirit, mourning, meek, hungry for righteous living, merciful, pure in heart, peacemaking). This will present an indelible mark that you are a follower of Christ. Everyone will know. Not everyone will like it, but no one will be able to deny this mark. Don't worry about seeking persecution. It will seek you! And you won't have to "stir up trouble" to incite persecution. Living like Jesus will give you all the persecution you can handle and then some! There will be times when you as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, you are called to stand up for what is right in opposition to that which is evil. Martin Luther put it this way...

If I declare with loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of God's truth except that one little bit which the world and the devil are at the moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ no matter how boldly I may be professing Christ. For the soldier to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that single point.

When they use the name above all names as a curse word or in a joke, it's time to (poor in spirit, in meekness and mercy) speak up or maybe to make your statement by turning and walking away. Why? Because if you don't speak up in gentleness and reverence, who will?

Chrysostom in his homily on Matthew 5 writes that...

Then, lest thou shouldest imagine peace in all cases a blessing (Mt 5:9), He hath added, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake"... "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad."

As if He said, "Though they should call you sorcerers, deceivers, pestilent persons, or whatever else, blessed are ye": so He speaks. What could be newer than these injunctions? wherein the very things which all others avoid, these He declares to be desirable; I mean, being poor, mourning, persecution, evil report. But yet He both affirmed this, and convinced not two, nor ten, nor twenty, nor an hundred, nor a thousand men, but the whole world. And hearing things so grievous and galling, so contrary to the accustomed ways of men, the multitudes "were astonished." So great was the power of Him who spake.

However, lest thou shouldest think that the mere fact of being evil spoken of makes men blessed, He hath set two limitations; when it is for His sake, and when the things that are said are false: for without these, he who is evil spoken of, so far from being blessed, is miserable.

Then see the prize again: "Because your reward is great in heaven." But thou, though thou hear not of a kingdom given in each one of the blessings, be not discouraged. For although He give different names to the rewards, yet He brings all into His kingdom. Thus, both when He saith, "they that mourn shall be comforted;" and, "they that show mercy shall obtain mercy;" and, "the pure in heart shall see God;" and, the peacemakers "shall be called the children of God;" nothing else but the Kingdom doth He shadow out by all these sayings. For such as enjoy these, shall surely attain unto that. Think not therefore that this reward is for the poor in spirit only, but for those also who hunger after righteousness, for the meek, and for all the rest without exception.

Since on this account He hath set His blessing on them all, that thou mightest not look for anything sensible: for that man cannot be blessed, who is crowned with such things as come to an end with this present life, and hurry by quicker than a shadow. ([Homilies of the Gospel of Saint Matthew - Scroll down](#))

Can You Take Criticism?...How good are you at making enemies? No, I didn't ask how good you are at making friends. That's easy. Just be a good Joe, an easy spender, a tolerant sort of fellow who never offends anybody.

But how good are you at making enemies? If you are a child of God and you can move among wicked, ungodly, cursing men and women today, and not be different enough to incur their disfavor or reviling words, you certainly are not much of a testimony. Do you avoid discussing spiritual issues because you're afraid of criticism for your faith in Christ? Are you ashamed to talk to others about Him for fear of losing friends?

In the thousands of letters that we receive each week in response to our broadcasts and literature, we read comments of appreciation and of criticism. I can honestly say that I appreciate the critical letters as much as any others, for they confirm the gospel I preach. The Word of God is like a two-edged sword that cuts both ways. For believers it offers instructions on how to live a godly life (2Ti 3:16-note; 2Ti 3:12-note), and it brings conviction to the minds of unbelievers (Heb 4:12-note).

If you're willing to make enemies for Jesus' sake, rejoice, "for great is your reward in heaven" (Mt. 5:12). --M. R. De Haan, M.D. (founder of RBC Ministries) ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Jesus, and shall it ever be,
A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee, whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine through endless days?
--Grigg

A sure sign of spiritual growth
is the ability to take criticism.

The Blessing Of Persecution By Vernon C. Grounds -Persecution, even martyrdom, has been the cost of discipleship for Christians down through the centuries. In many lands believers still suffer imprisonment and death for their uncompromising devotion to their Savior. Even in nations that have religious freedom, a person with a bold witness for the Lord may become the target of ridicule. When we experience hardship because of our Christian commitment, no verse of Scripture is more comforting than the beatitude spoken by our Savior, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 5:10). At one time in his life, British preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon was so intensely criticized that he became deeply depressed. So his wife printed that beatitude along with the other seven on a large sheet of paper and placed it above their bed. The first thing Spurgeon saw in the morning and the last thing he read at night was our Savior's glorious promise. Are you discouraged because you are suffering for your Christian testimony? The antidote is this one sustaining promise: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake." ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The consecrated cross I'll bear
Till death shall set me free,
And then go home, my crown to wear,
For there's a crown for me.
—Shepherd

If you live for God,
you can expect trouble from the world.

The Others By Cindy Hess Kasper - When I was growing up, I often spent a week each summer with my grandparents. Many afternoons I would lie in the backyard hammock and read books I found in Grandpa's bookcase. One was Foxe's Book of Martyrs. It was heavy reading for a young girl, but I was absorbed by the detailed accounts of Christian martyrs, believers who were told to deny their faith in Christ but refused—thus suffering horrific deaths.

Hebrews 11 tells similar stories. After listing the familiar names of those who demonstrated immense faith in God, the chapter tells of the torture and death of people referred to simply as "others" (Heb 11:35-36). While their names are not mentioned, Heb 11:38 pays them this tribute: "The world was not worthy" of them. They died boldly for their faith in Jesus.

Today, we hear of persecuted Christians around the world, yet many of us have not been tested to that extent. When I examine my own faith, I wonder how I would respond to the prospect of martyrdom. I hope I would have the attitude of Paul, who said that although "chains and tribulations" awaited him (Acts 20:23), he looked forward to finishing life's race "with joy" (Acts 20:24). Are we facing life with that kind of trusting attitude? ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When pressures mount because we walk
The path of truth and right,
We can rejoice to know that we
Are pleasing in God's sight.
—D. De Haan

**The way to have joy in persecution
is to find your joy in Jesus.**

Matthew 5:12 "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the [same way](#) they persecuted the prophets who were before you. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [chairete \(2PPAM\)](#) kai [agalliasithe, \(2PPMM\)](#) [hoti o misthos humon polus en tois ouranois; houtos gar ediochan \(3PAAI\)](#) [tousprophetas tous pro humon.](#)

Amplified: Be glad and supremely joyful, for your reward in heaven is great (strong and intense), for in this same way people persecuted the prophets who were before you. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

who are the salt of the earth

NLT: Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted, too. (NLT - Tyndale House)

Philips: Be glad then, yes, be tremendously glad - for your reward in Heaven is magnificent. They persecuted the prophets before your time in exactly the same way. (New Testament in Modern English)

Wuest: Be rejoicing and exult exceedingly, because your reward is great in heaven. For in this manner they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Wuest: Expanded Translation: Eerdmans)

Young's Literal: rejoice ye and be glad, because your reward is great in the heavens, for thus did they persecute the prophets who were before you.

REJOICE, AND BE GLAD: chairete (2PPAM) kai agalliasithe, (2PPMM):

- Luke 6:23; Acts 5:41; 16:25; Romans 5:3; 2Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:17; Colossians 1:24; James 1:2; 1Peter 4:13
- [Matthew 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Matthew 5:10-12 The Only Way to Happiness: Endure Hardship 1](#) - John MacArthur
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Williams translates it "Keep on rejoicing and leaping for ecstasy".

Rejoice (5463) (**chairo**) means to be cheerful (cheer "full"), to be calmly happy or well-off or to enjoy a state of happiness and well-being. "Rejoice" is use to describe a little lamb skipping around for joy. It describes a physical change in one's countenance and is not something one can fake. It is a physical expression of joy that radiates to others (cf Mt 5:16). You can walk around and say that you are rejoicing but if it's not seen then you are not rejoicing!

Both **rejoice** and **be glad** are **commands** to carry out these attitudes and actions at all times (**present imperative**), especially when you are being persecuted for the sake of God's righteousness (not self-righteousness) and the Name of your Lord and King, Christ Jesus. We can all naturally rejoice when we are prosperous, but we can only supernaturally rejoice when we are persecuted! The joy commanded here, as elsewhere in Scripture (esp. Jas 1:2-note), is **not an emotion but an attitude** (and a fruit of the Spirit - Gal 5:22, 23-see **notes** Gal 5:22; 23). Without meaning to sound harsh, one aspect is that if we don't rejoice when we suffer for our King's sake, it amounts to disobedience and is a reflection of our failure to really believe His promises. The world can take away every possession we own but it cannot disown us from Jesus and the joy He gives. Not only that, the worst the world can do to us is only temporary. Keep in mind that God's commandments always include His enablements! And truth be told, the only way we can rejoice and jump for joy (also a command), is by relying on supernatural power, by jettisoning self-reliance, and relying solely on the Spirit Who indwells us. This reliance begins with being filled with (controlled by) Him (Eph 5:18). Do you rise in the morning and give the day to God, acknowledging that you can't live the supernatural life unless the Spirit of Christ lives it through you? You can begin tomorrow. Present yourself to God as a living and holy sacrifice. You can be sure you will have some "tests" which will determine on whose power you are depending, self or Savior! And if you fail (like yours truly), don't give up in frustration. Keep coming back to God each morning begging for Him to live His life through you so that He gets great glory! This surely is a prayer in the vein, so to speak, of 1John 5:14-15!

We also need to remember that because we are in covenant with our Lord, when the world persecutes us, they are in effect persecuting Him and He is ultimately our Avenger. (see Acts 9:3, 4, 5, cf Gal 6:17, Col 1:24-note). (See Covenant: The Exchange of Armor and Belts)

Matthew first used **chairo** of the wise men recording that "when they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy." (Mt 2:10)

Be glad (21) (**agalliao** from **agan** = much + **hallomai** = jump; gush, leap, spring up) means literally "jump for joy" or experience a state of great joy and gladness. As you might surmise, **agalliao** often is accompanied by verbal expression and appropriate body movements. The idea is to be extremely joyful and to express it. You really can't fake this joy. **Agalliao** expresses extreme joy, especially as it is used in the **Septuagint (LXX)** (see uses in Isa 12.6; 25.9; 29.19; 35.1, 2; 41.17; 49.13; 61.10; 65.14, 19).

A B Bruce notes that "**agalliao** is a strong word of Hellenistic coinage, from **agan** and **hallomai**, to leap much, signifying irrepressible demonstrative gladness. This joy is inseparable from the heroic temper. It is the joy of the Alpine climber standing on the top of a snow clad mountain. But the Teacher gives two reasons to help inexperienced disciples to rise to that moral elevation. For evil treatment on earth there is a compensating **reward** in heaven. This hope, weak now, **was strong in primitive Christianity**, and greatly helped martyrs and confessors. ([The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

Be glad is in the **middle voice** which is reflexive meaning the subject initiates the action and participates in the effect or result. "Be glad **yourself!**"

Someone has well said of the Christian like that "Faith **makes** a Christian. Life **proves** a Christian. Trial **confirms** a Christian. Death **crowns** a Christian." **Hallelujah!!!**

Another anonymous writer phrased it "The Christian life doesn't get easier; it gets better."

Spurgeon notes that "You are in the true prophetic succession, if you cheerfully bear reproach of this kind for Christ's sake, you prove that you have the stamp and seal of those who are in the service of God.

Richard Wurmbrand (Voice of the Martyrs) described this kind of joy. How was he persecuted? Probably not like any of us will ever be called upon to endure. While in a Romanian prison, Wurmbrand's torturers ripped chunks of flesh out of his body as his scars dramatically testified. He endured the horror of solitary confinement, so that for weeks to months no one would speak to him in his tiny cell. Amazingly, despite such inhumane treatment Wurmbrand experienced times when he was overcome with sheer joy, sometimes to the point of actually weakly rising to his feet and dancing around his cell confident that the angels were dancing with him. When Wurmbrand was unexpectedly released from prison, he left the looking like a scarecrow including his rotting teeth. Along the road he met a peasant who offered him a strawberry from the basket she was carrying, to which he replied "No thank you. I am going to fast!" He went home to his wife, and they prayed and fasted as a memorial to the joy he had experienced while undergoing the horrors of persecution for the cause of Christ while in prison, asking God for the same joy outside of his prison cell. Wurmbrand believed Jesus' promise in this beatitude. Do we?

Pastor Ray Pritchard offers some interesting insights on this beatitude noting that...

Our text promises a blessing to believers who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness. Let me show you in a simple diagram how this works:

1. I am righteous
2. The world persecutes me
3. God blesses me
4. I rejoice

Now note something important. All four things happen at the same time. As I am righteous, the world persecutes me. As a result, God blesses me, which causes me to rejoice. That joy encourages me to continue my righteous lifestyle, which prompts the world to persecute and God to bless, which leads to more joy and increased desire for righteousness. On and on the process goes with righteousness, persecution, blessing and joy coming on top of each other. How many of those things are positive and how many are negative?

Positive = Righteousness, Blessing, Rejoicing

Negative = Persecution

Three out of four are positive in every sense; only persecution is negative. Think of it this way: Persecution is the trigger that causes God to pour out his blessings on your life. And that enables you to rejoice. If you focus only on the persecution, you're going to miss 75% of the fun of the Christian life! ([The Blessing No One Wants](#))

DON'T BE RESIGNED! - As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. 2 Corinthians 6:10

To rejoice in sorrow, to be happy when we are persecuted, and to give thanks in everything, takes grace. Yet, this is the Lord's command to each of His tested children. If the Savior is leading, and we recognize Him as the tender Good Shepherd who never makes any mistakes, then we should not let distresses unnerve us, or sorrow break our spirit.

Many years ago someone handed me a tract on which were printed these instructive words from an anonymous author:

It is better to rejoice than to, be resigned. The word `resigned' is not found in the Bible, but `rejoice' runs through the Scriptures like a great carillon of music. There is danger of self-pity in resignation — and self-pity is deadly poison. There is no danger, however, that we will be pitying ourselves while rejoicing `with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' (1Pe 1:8-note) Resignation often means a certain mock piety — perhaps unconsciously so, but nevertheless real. Joy, however, is `the fruit of the Spirit' (Gal 5:22-note); not a counterfeit, but real with supernatural and divine power. The Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples that hard times were coming for them, and that these difficulties meant blessing (Luke 6:22). And how did the Lord say the disciples should take those experiences when they came? With resignation? God forbid! He said, `Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven!'"

Yes, we must avoid self-pity and its sorrow-faced counter-part of "mere resignation." Both are unworthy reactions to God's leading. Don't be "resigned"; it is a form of unholy fatalism, and, as such, is never mentioned in the Bible. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

So bless the travail of gloom-filled hours,
For joy is oft wrought with pain
And what if the day be dark? Thank God
That the sun will shine again!
—MacLennan

True victory is to rejoice in what God sends,
and never to long for what He sees fit to deny!

FOR YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN IS GREAT: hoti o misthos humon polus en tois ouranois

- Mt 6:1,2,4,5,16; 10:41,42; 16:27; Ge 15:1; Ru 2:12; Ps 19:11; 58:11; Pr 11:18; Isa 3:10; Luke 6:23,35; 1 Cor 3:8; Col 3:24; Heb 11:6,26
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THE REWARD FOR BEING PERSECUTED FOR JESUS' SAKE

For - Praise God for this strategic **term of explanation!** This is pie in the sky bye and bye! This is the non-lying God, giving us His sure word of promise, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God." (2Cor 1:20KJV) Practice pondering the "for's" in Scripture and you will be wonderfully rewarded with rich insights on the passage!

Reward (3408) (**misthos**) means pay for service, wages or reward. The main idea is that of a compensation which is valuable and special. (See Lu 6:23 Mk 9:41 Mt 10:42, Heb 11:26 Mt 5:46 Lu 6:35, 2Jn 1:8, 1Co 3:10-15, cf. Mt 25:35, 40; Heb 6:10)

If it bothers you to think of "rewards" you need to realize that it is a reward of God's grace, and is not something earned in the strict sense. In other words, the reward is that which God wills to give to those who serve Him faithfully. It is not a compensation for work done, but rather a gift which far exceeds services rendered. In fact rewards are one of the motives that God Himself gives for service that glorifies Him. Clearly our highest motive for service is our love for Him. The concept of rewards is neither selfish nor unspiritual.

Notice that heaven is forever which dramatically contrasts with our short time on earth, James reminding us...

"You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." (James 4:14, cf Job 7:17, 14:1-2, Psalms 39:5 [[Spurgeon's note](#)], Ps 90:5-6 [See Spurgeon's notes on [Verse 5](#) ; [Verse 6](#)], see note 1 Peter 1:24)

Great ([4183](#)) (**polus**) means many, much of number, quantity or amount. So not only are our rewards eternal but they are great. And so whatever we do for the Lord now (as we abide in the Vine, John 15:5), especially suffering for His Name, will reap great eternal dividends that neither moth nor rust can destroy and thieves cannot steal.

Nothing is lost that is done for the Lord,
Let it be ever so small;
The smile of the Savior approveth the deed,
As though 'twere greatest of all.
—A. M.

Expositor's Bible Commentary has this explanatory note on "rewards" - "C. S. Lewis (They Asked For a Paper [London: Geoffrey Bles, 1962], p. 198; cited in Stott, pp. 131-32) rightly distinguishes various kinds of rewards. A man who marries a woman for her money is "rewarded" by her money, but he is rightly judged mercenary because the reward is not naturally linked with love. On the other hand, marriage is the proper reward of an honest and true lover; and he is not mercenary for desiring it because love and marriage are naturally linked. "The proper rewards are not simply tacked on to the activity for which they are given, but are the activity itself in consummation" (ibid.). The rewards of the NT belong largely to this second category. Life lived under kingdom norms is naturally linked with the bliss of life in the consummated kingdom. Talk of "merit" or of "earning" the reward betrays lack of understanding of Jesus' meaning (cf. further on Mt 11:25; 19:16-26; 20:1-16; 25:31-46). ([Expositor's Bible Commentary](#)) (Bolding added)

O the things of this world are a will-o'-the-wisp,
Having values that tarnish and fade;
But true treasures of joy with abundant reward,
Are the ones which in Heaven are laid!
—G.W.

He weighs things well, and makes decisions wise,
Who keeps eternity before his eyes!
—Bosch

FOR IN THE SAME WAY THEY PERSECUTED THE PROPHETS WHO WERE BEFORE YOU: houtos gar ediochan (3PAAI) tous prophetas tous pro humon

- Mt 21:34-38; Mt 10:16-42 23:31-37; 1Ki 18:4,13; 19:2,10-14; 21:20; 22:8,26,27; 2Ki 1:9; 2Chr 16:10; 24:20-22; 36:16; Neh 9:26; Jer 2:30; 26:8,21, 22, 23; Luke 6:23; 11:47-51; 13:34; Acts 7:51; 1Th 2:15
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For - Another encouraging and motivating occurrence of this strategic term of explanation!

A B Bruce - If we take the **for** (gar) as giving a reason for the previous statement the sense will be: you cannot doubt that the prophets who suffered likewise have received an eternal reward (so Bengel, Fritzsche, Schanz, Meyer, Weiss). But we may take it as giving a co-ordinate reason for joy = ye are in good company. There is inspiration in the "goodly fellowship of the prophets," quite as much as in thought of their posthumous reward. It is to be noted that the prophets themselves did not get much comfort from such thoughts, and more generally that they did not rise to the joyous mood commended to His disciples by Jesus; but were desponding and querulous. On that side, therefore, there was no inspiration to be got from thinking of them. But they were thoroughly loyal to righteousness at all hazards, and reflection on their noble career was fitted to *infect* disciples with their spirit. Were before you are words skillfully chosen to raise the spirit. Before you not only in time but in vocation and destiny. Your predecessors in function and suffering; take up the prophetic succession and along with it, cheerfully, its tribulations. ([The](#)

[Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

Persecuted (1377) (**dioko** from *dío* = pursue, prosecute, persecute) means to follow or press hard after. "Persecuted" is clearly a **key word** Jesus does not want His audience (or us) to miss!

Note carefully that Jesus is neither encouraging Kingdom citizens to seek persecution nor is He advocating retreating, sulking or retaliation.

Guzik - Why will the world persecute them? Because the values and character expressed in these Beatitudes are so opposite to the world's manner of thinking. Our persecution may not be much compared to others, but if *no one* speaks evil of you, are these Beatitudes traits of your life? ([Commentary](#))

Prophets (4396) (**prophetes** from **pró** = before or forth + **phemí** = tell) refers in the present context to those persons in the OT who spoke under divine influence and inspiration foretelling future events or exhorting, reproving, and admonishing individuals or nations as the ambassador of God and the interpreter of His will to men. Hence the prophets spoke not their own thought but what they received from God, retaining, however, their own consciousness and self-possession (cf 2Peter 1:21)

Before (4253) (**pro**) in this context refers not to place but time and thus those who were prior or before you in time. (See 2 Chr 24:21; Neh 9:26; Jer 20:2; cf. Matt 21:35; 23:32-37; Acts 7:52; 1Th 2:15-note).

Who does this bring to mind in Genesis? Remember righteous Abel murdered for the sake of his righteous sacrifice! And he was just the beginning of the list of godly believers in every era that followed...Noah ...Abraham ...Moses ...Samuel ...David (by Saul) ...Isaiah ...Jeremiah ...Daniel ...Peter ...Paul ...John ...the rest of the apostles ...and of course Jesus Himself. Genuine citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven (and light, see note Colossians 1:13) have never been very popular with those who belong to the kingdom of darkness of this world.

The Old Testament prophets were regarded as heroes to the Jews (cf 2Chr 36:16; Mt 23:29-36; Acts 7:51, 52, 53; James 5:10).

Pritchard emphasizes again what most of us are already too painfully aware of "True believers have never been popular with the people of the world. Our righteousness intimidates them, our boldness annoys them, our refusal to participate in their sin infuriates them, and our love for God mystifies them. Because they don't understand us, they hate us. Because they hate us, they oppose us. We seem like subversives, dangerous enemies who must be hunted down and destroyed. In the words of John Calvin, "We cannot be Christ's soldiers on any condition but this, that the world will muchly rise up against us and pursue us even until death." (ibid)

The fact that the world persecuted the prophets should also motivate us to endure to the end. We are members of an elite corps. We have joined the ranks of godly men and women who counted it a privilege to lay down their lives for their God. And when we suffer for Christ's sake, we can know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we belong to Him.

One of the best commentaries on the persecution of the prophetes is found in the "hall of faith" chapter of Hebrews, chapter 11, where we read that "others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two (tradition holds that this was the manner in which Isaiah entered into glory), they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us (is this not a clear motive for endurance in present persecution!), so that apart from us they should not be made perfect. (Heb 11:36-40- see notes Hebrews 11:36; 11:37; 11:38;11:39; 11:40)

In summary, why will the world persecute citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven? Because they truly manifest the values and character expressed in the Beatitudes, traits that are so radically counter to the world's way of thinking and doing. Your persecution may not be much compared to others (you may not be stoned to death, just slandered), but if no one ever speaks evil of you, then you have to ask "Are Jesus' Beatitudes genuinely present in my life?" If not, you may not be a member of the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is interesting that in Jesus' stern warning at the end of His sermon, He does not state that it is those who have been persecuted for His Name who must depart from Him but those who prophesied in His name, cast out demons and performed miracles but failed to do the will of His Father. (Mt 7:21, 22, 23-see notes Mt 7:21; 22; 23)

So here in this last beatitude our King alerts his loyal subjects that they would face trials but He comforted them with the assurance of a great reward. F. B. Meyer speaks of one of the other advantages of persecution for the sake of Christ writing that

"If I am told that I am to take a journey that is a dangerous trip, every jolt along the way will remind me that I am on the right road."

Many saints down through the ages have counted the cost and were willing to pay the price of the "jolts of persecution", among

them men like John Chrysostom, whose name means "golden mouthed" and who was an eloquent, uncompromising voice for the cause of Christ. But His rhetoric against sin offended the Empress Eudoxia (an oxymoron for her name means something like "good glory"! Not!). When Chrysostom was summoned before Emperor Arcadius, and was threatened with banishment unless he ceased his Bible centered preaching, he replied as one who knew Who Whom he had believed and was confident that his King could guard and keep safe that which he had entrusted to Him. And so he answered

"Sire, you cannot banish me, for the world is my Father's house."

"Then I will slay you," Arcadius said.

"Nay, but you cannot, for my life is hid with Christ in God," said Chrysostom

"Your treasures will be confiscated" the Emperor threatened again.

"Sire, that cannot be, either. My treasures are in heaven, where none can break through and steal." said John.

"Then I will drive you from man, and you will have no friends left!" was the final, frustrated threat to which John replied...

"That you cannot do, either "for I have a Friend in heaven Who has said, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.'"

Chrysostom was banished for taking a firm stand for righteousness, first to Armenia and then died on his way to a farther place of exile on the Black Sea, passing immediately from his momentary light affliction into his eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. But neither his banishment nor his death disproved or diminished his claims. The things that he valued most highly not even an emperor could take from him.

You may have heard their names before, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley and Thomas Cranmer. We will meet them someday soon so it behooves us to know their story and be encouraged by their willingness to suffer for Christ's sake.

Nicholas Ridley had been raised Catholic but converted to Protestantism. Hugh Latimer became a great preacher and Ridley helped author the Book of Common Prayer. During the Protestant persecution by Queen Mary ("Bloody Mary") of 1553-55, both men were arrested and condemned to be burned at the stake. As the flames were being lit, Latimer cried out to his fellow-martyr,

Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as shall never be put out.

Thomas Cranmer watched them die in agony. At one time he had been the Archbishop of Canterbury. Later under great pressure he recanted his evangelical faith. But watching his two friends die seemed to give strength to his soul and a few months later he was condemned to die at the stake. As they lit the flames, he placed his right hand into the fire to show his tormentors that he was not afraid to die (cf "*a sign of destruction for them!*" Php 1:28-note). (For more detail see [Hugh Latimer, Bishop and Martyr](#))

As the Romans attempted to obliterate Christianity, one of the early church fathers, Tertullian noted that every time the church was persecuted, it seemed to grow faster and thus he concluded with a famous quote...

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church"

History has proved the truth of his words. Whenever dictators have tried to destroy the church, Christ has used the blood of his followers to water the seed of the gospel. Just look at the evangelical growth in China that followed Mao's attempts to abolish Christianity and replace it with Communism.

Joseph Tson, a Romanian pastor who stood up to the brutal dictator Ceausescu's repressions of Christianity, wrote

This union with Christ is the most beautiful subject in the Christian life. It means that I am not a lone fighter here: I am an extension of Jesus Christ. When I was beaten in Romania, He suffered in my body. It is not my suffering: I only had the honor to share His sufferings. (cf Acts 5:41) (A Theology of Martyrdom)

If you have time and want further encouragement (especially if you are currently undergoing persecution) you might consider reading some of the accounts of "*a noble army, men and boys, the matron and the maid,*" "*climbed the steep ascent of heaven, 'mid peril, toil, and pain*" as recorded in the classic work [Fox's Book of Martyrs](#). It has been said that

"After the Bible itself, no book so profoundly influenced early Protestant sentiment as the [Book of Martyrs](#). Even in our time it is still a living force. It is more than a record of persecution. It is an arsenal of controversy, a storehouse of romance, as well as a source of edification."

[Am I a soldier of the cross](#)

*a follower of the Lamb,
And shall I fear to own His cause,
or blush to speak His name?*

*Must I be carried to the skies
on flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
and sailed thro' bloody seas?*

*Are there no foes for me to face?
Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend to grace,
to help me on to God?*

*Sure I must fight if I would reign;
increase my courage, Lord;
I will bear the toil, endure the pain,
supported by Thy Word.*

[\(play\)](#) (Isaac Watts)

THOUGHT - When was the last time you were persecuted for the sake of the Name above all names? What have done in the last month that has caused anyone to challenge your faith? When have you risked speaking out in favor of righteousness? How have you defended the cause of Christ and the purity of the gospel?

F. B. Meyer in his book Blessed Are Ye writes...

MARTYRS AND PROPHETS

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness" sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," etc.--Matt. 5:10-12.

THIS beatitude completes the octave, but there is no special reason why our Lord should not have finished with the seventh, because the eighth is altogether so different to the foregoing. They rather deal with character, this with condition; they with the internal quality of the Christian soul, this with its external relation. So far as we understand the first seven, they might be developed in the spirit, apart from all the world beside, immured in some secluded not to apart from the world; but this indicates that our Lord's conception for His Church was that it would be constantly in the midst of the world; not of it, but in it; and therefore in perpetual collision and antagonism with its evil.

He seems to have been sketching His own life. These beatitudes tell the story of our Saviour's personal life, as, indeed, it is the story of His life as developed step by step in the believer's heart. They are therefore objectively and subjectively historical. They are objectively historical, for we know that our Lord Jesus was poor in spirit, emptied Himself, mourned and wept for the sin of man; was meek; hungered and thirsted for righteousness; was merciful and pure in heart; and that He came to make peace. All these qualities in our Saviour's experience brought Him to the Cross--brought Him into collision with the evil of the world, and in three years to Calvary. Thus the beatitudes afford a true history of the progress of our Saviour's life from the emptying of the incarnation to the laying down of His life for men.

They are also true of each one of us. We begin by being poor in spirit, broken in heart, and lowly in mind. We pass through phase after phase of added knowledge of God and of His truth; and as we do so we approximate always more and more to the climax of the Cross, and just in proportion as we are like Christ in the attainment of these lovely qualities, we become like Him also in our suffering and sorrow even to death.

How clearly our Lord Jesus Christ predicts the effect which these qualities will have upon the world. It is as if He said, "It is impossible for you to be thus and thus without incurring a very avalanche of hate, but in the midst of it all, you may retain the blessed placidity and rest which I have promised. There is no need that the benedictions which I have already uttered to those who are merciful and meek and pure in heart, should forsake you when you stand at the stake or are nailed to the Cross, for the blessed life is altogether independent of outward circumstances; it may be deeply seated and rooted in the soul when all without is in turmoil and war."

One of the Scotch martyrs, when they were putting the faggots at his feet, said, "Methinks they are casting roses before me." Another of the martyrs, when he was about to die, said, "I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

And it is said of the great Argyle, that when his physician felt his pulse, as he laid his head upon the block, he could detect no fluttering, but the quiet steady beat of health and peace. Since, then, the qualities our Saviour characterized in the beatitudes were inevitably driving Him and all His followers into collision with the world, it was very delightful and beautiful of Him to say, " In the midst of all this you may be blessed; yea, you may rejoice, your heart may leap and bound with exceeding joy." And the more we think about it, the more sure it seems that all those who died for the faith had some special grace given which enabled them to be more than conquerors, and it will come still to those who are accounted worthy to suffer for Christ amongst men.

Let us notice, first, why we are persecuted; secondly, the manner of the persecution; thirdly, the blessedness which is possible amidst it all.

I. THE CAUSE OF PERSECUTION

It is twofold. First we are " Persecuted for righteousness' sake," and then He says, " And shall persecute you for My sake." Evidently men must feel that His cause was righteousness; that He was the righteous Servant of God, and that righteousness was no longer an abstraction or sentiment, because He had embodied it. This is a great distinction, and makes it so much easier to suffer for Him. It is well enough to suffer for a cause, the cause of justice, truth, and righteousness, but how much better to think of suffering for Him! It is an inspiration to realize that righteousness is Christ, and that whenever men suffer for righteousness they do really suffer for Him who is the Prince of Righteousness and the King of Truth? Wherever there is right in the world for which men suffer, the cause of Jesus Christ is somehow implicated in it. But how wonderful that Jesus, at the very beginning of His ministry, a Nazarene peasant, standing amid a number of peasants on the Mount of Beatitudes, should identify the cause of righteousness with Himself in this marvellous combination. " For My sake," He said.

Now why is it that the world hates and persecutes us for His sake? There are just these reasons. First, that the more there is of Christ in us, the more we condemn the world, and there is nothing the ungodly man so dislikes as to have the search-light of unsullied purity flashed in upon the workings of his heart and life. Jesus Christ is to the ungodly what the sun at noontide is to the diseased eye; what the bounding joyousness of the child is to the weakened nerve. And hence it is in proportion as we are living in the power of Jesus Christ, and are bringing to bear the influence of our character and life upon other men that they wince beneath the impinging ray; they shrink from it; it causes them pain, and they turn naturally in indignant hatred on those who have thus inflicted upon them suffering.

Secondly, the more there is of Christ in us, the more we offend the pride of men and women around, who desire to have the admiration which we have, or which true godliness has, but which they are not able to win, through their inability to pay the price for it. Hence jealousy and envy immediately begin to work. Remember how Aristides was hated, because he was always called " The Just." Men who were notoriously unjust envied him the love of his fellow-citizens. And so there will always be a great jealousy on the part of the ungodly toward those who love Christ.

Thirdly, the Christ-spirit in any one of us is always aggressive, and compels us to attack the vested interests of wrong-doing. The Lord Jesus never contemplated that His children should go quietly through the world exerting only a negative influence. He expected that there would be a constant positive effect proceeding from His Church, that, like salt, it would sting. But when the craft is in danger, when the receipts fall off, we naturally rouse the indignation of those who suffer in consequence. The search-light brought to bear upon the diseased conscience, the constant feeling that the Christian possesses a character which the ungodly cannot emulate, and which wins an admiration they cannot receive, together with the fear that worldly position and possessions are threatened by the progress of the Christ-spirit--all these things tend to make men.

And yet the source of hatred really lies deeper than all this. It seems as if there is a malignancy of hatred in evil against the good which cannot be perfectly explained by any of these reasons, and which must be attributed to that eternal war and hatred which exist between Satan and all his legions, and Jesus Christ and the armies of heaven. There is a great war in the universe, a fire raging beyond the range of our sight, and we may be pretty sure the signs of it will break out whenever we manifest on earth something of the purity and beauty of Jesus Christ our Lord. These are the causes of persecution.

II. THE FORMS WHICH THIS PERSECUTION TAKES

Our Lord characterizes it in three distinct ways --first, in word; secondly, in act; and thirdly, in imputation of evil. In word men reproach us; in act they persecute us; in imputation of evil they " say all manner of evil against us falsely for His sake." We need hardly dwell upon this. We know something of the hiss of the serpent. We have all suffered more or less from the unkind word. We know what it is for stories to pass round and round, for we ourselves have been only too prone to take them upon our lips and pass them forward. The word and the act, how many have suffered, how many are suffering? Think of the eight hundred Quakers--to take one of the smallest religious sects--who in the reign of Charles II. suffered for their religion, and the one million pounds exacted from that body in payment of fines for conscience' sake, and of all the countless numbers who have suffered for the cause of Christ.

And then as to the imputation of evil. I do not think any of us should shrink from it. We are very anxious about our character, but if we

live close to Christ, men will impute to us all manner of evil. They will impugn our motives, misrepresent our actions, and circulate malicious stories about us. The nearer we live to Christ the more certain it is it will be so; that if they called Him Beelzebub they will call us the same. My belief is that we should be very careless about these things, and that the only time when we should defend our character should be when aspersions on it may injure the cause of Christ; that as far as we are concerned we should be content to lose our character and be counted the offscouring of all things.

When these reports are circulating, and these stories being told, and these unkind words being hurled from lip to lip, we should immediately turn to our Master and tell Him we are content to suffer with and for Him. Ask Him to intercede for and to vindicate us, if it is His will we should be vindicated, and if not, to give us grace to suffer patiently and wait. We are so eager to stand well; we are so sorry if the least thing is said against us; we are so irritated if we are misunderstood and misrepresented; we are so anxious to write the explanatory letter to the paper or the private individual. It is a profound mistake. We should be content to trust God with the aspersion, to leave to Him our vindication, and meanwhile to plod on, doing our work quietly day by day, as in His sight, only being more tender and thoughtful and careful of those who have done us wrong. That is the true Christian spirit.

III. THE BEATITUDE

Why is it that we are blessed, and how does the blessedness come? The Master says that they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake have the kingdom, and that was the very promise with which He commenced this series of Beatitudes, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." It would almost seem, therefore, as if we had come back to where we started, but it is not quite so. It is quite true that the poor in spirit have the kingdom, and that those who are persecuted have the kingdom, but we must remember that just as steps in the spiral staircase always come back upon their starting-point, but upon a higher level, so we come back to the kingdom, but upon a higher level than we were when we started with the poor in spirit, and it may be that this series is constantly repeating itself in higher rounds. It may be that we shall begin to-day, by poverty of spirit, to climb up the spiral staircase toward this eighth beatitude, and then starting again from this eighth beatitude we shall pass, so to speak, through a higher series, passing through the same notes but in another key. We shall never get away from mourning, only we shall mourn for deeper reasons. We shall never cease to be learning the lesson of meekness, but it will be a deeper down meekness than ever before, one that dyes our very heart fibre. We shall always be seeking purity, but we shall have new conceptions of purity, and as we know these things in a more perfect degree we shall be persecuted more, and so every time we will come back and back and back to where we started, but higher up. Persecuted for righteousness' sake and yet possessing the kingdom.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was looking over the wall of time; there were patent to Him things which none but He knew of. In the tenth verse He speaks in the past tense, but in the present tense in the eleventh verse. "Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," as if at that moment He saw all the spiritual witnesses to the truth of God who had suffered from the time of Abel, and He says, "I see them, and they have already entered upon the royalties of the eternal world, and sit on thrones and judge;" and then turning to His disciples He said, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you: for your reward is great in heaven." In future, when we are persecuted, I think it will help us if we seek to look into the future, as Jesus did, and realize the greatness of our reward, for every reward that we receive in heaven will carry with it greater opportunity of blessing in the ages that are yet to be. That was why the Lord spoke about thrones. The thrones on which we are to sit imply that we shall be able more widely to help those needing help; to serve God more efficiently; to minister before Him, and carry His blessed gospel, perhaps to regions of the universe where it has never been heard. We shall indeed be blessed if the persecution of this world shall make us more fit to serve and minister in the next.

Notice how the Lord Jesus puts the martyr upon the same footing as the prophet. He said, "So persecuted they the prophets," as if the martyr were a prophet. It is a profound thought, but a very true and deep one. The prophet stood among his fellows witnessing to the unseen and eternal; the martyr or the sufferer does the same. So that the fagots on which the martyrs of Christ have been burnt have lighted up the souls of men almost as much as the words of prophets have done, and have cast a glow upon the centuries. Prophets witness to the unseen and eternal by their words, sufferers do it by their agonies. If we, day by day, are willing to suffer for Christ in the workshop or in the home, we are drawing aside the veil of the unseen and eternal, through our fiery trials people are catching a glimpse of the faith and heroism and strength of Christianity, and we are witnessing to the reality of things unseen by ordinary vision, but which animate us to endure.

To Thee, my God, I flee, to hide from the rebuke and hate of men, who daily pursues, oppresses, and wrest my words; hide me in the secret of thy pavilion, I entreat Thee, from the strife of tongues. F. B. Meyer. Blessed Are Ye