**Persecution Leads to Ownership**

We come now to the last of the Beatitudes. While all the previous blessings speak of what Christians look like and how they act in relation to God and others, these final Beatitudes deal with how the Christian will be treated by others in this life. These final Beatitudes deal with what will happen to the Christian, rather than the way he or she lives

Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted **for righteousness' sake**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11**“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely **on my account**. **12**Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you

It is because the Christian is everything we have mentioned before that they will face persecution. It is because the Christian is poor in spirit, humble, sorrowful over sin, a peacemaker, merciful, and hungry for righteousness that they are persecuted. It is because a Christian is everything that Jesus has described before that they will face attacks

It is important to recognize that Jesus specifically says that those who are blessed are those who are persecuted FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS’ SAKE and ON HIS ACCOUNT. There are a great many people that think they are being persecuted rightly, when in reality they are simply being persecuted and spoken against because they are not acting righteously.

Many have been persecuted for a cause; only the faithful have been persecuted for their righteousness

Many take these verses as license to go out and treat the world outside the church as cruelly as possible. They justify this behavior by saying that people SHOULD be persecuting us. They feel validated in their hatred, cruelty and obnoxious behavior because they are persecuted for it. They are being persecuted for their own behavior’s sake, not for righteousness’ sake. Jesus did not call us to go out and seek persecution. He simply told us we would be persecuted as His followers. Persecution will naturally come to those that live righteously. They don’t have to try and be persecuted. The world generally praises and admires good, noble people, but it simply does not like righteous people. It will naturally persecute them

To be righteous is simply to be like Jesus. This means when we are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, we are persecuted for being like Jesus. Jesus was the only perfect person to walk the earth. He was holy and righteous. He was kind, gentle and a peacemaker. He was everything that He described in the previous Beatitudes and yet He faced awful persecution. The only perfect person to ever walk the earth faced persecution unto death

Righteous Christians are persecuted because they are different. To be like the Lord Jesus is to be different from the world. Something about who Jesus was, something about the way He lived condemned the unrighteous people of the world. His very presence, gentleness, kindness, love, grace, compassion, mercy, holiness all revealed that the so-called righteousness of the Pharisees was simply surface level. Simply put: LIGHT EXPOSES DARKNESS

To be like Jesus means to be a light in the darkness. To be like Jesus means to be different from the world. A total transformation of person has to happen. There are plenty of noble, kind people in the world, but it takes a transformation of God to be righteous.

2 Timothy 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted

While much persecution will be endured from those outside the church, sadly much of the persecution a true righteous Christian will face will come from within their own church. It was the religious people that persecuted Jesus the most. It was the people that should have known better, but they were blind to what the Word of God truly said. Some people even twist the Bible to persecute other believers.

*“All you have to do is get in a closer walk with God and you'll find your enemies are in your own church” – Leonard Ravenhill*

Jesus flips this whole thing on its head and instead of just asking Christians to expect persecution, He actually commands that we rejoice when we face it. Jesus does not tell us to retaliate against persecution. He does not tell us to build up resentment towards those persecuting us. He instead tells us to rejoice in our persecution. This goes against every natural instinct we have as humans. We want to fight back; we want to harbor bitterness and resentment towards those who hurt us. But instead we are called to rejoice. Why would Jesus suggest something so outlandish? (By the way, He suggests a lot of outlandish things)

We rejoice in persecution because it is a mark of being a true believer. There are many things that reveal to us that we are a true believer. Those things include the Witness of the Holy Spirit in our life, a personal devotion to Jesus Christ based on repentance of sins and faith in Jesus, a holy life and so on. But yet another sure proof is found in being persecuted for living like Jesus. If we are truly being persecuted because we are living righteously and because of Jesus, then we know we are His.

This is because we know the devil is not fighting against unbelievers—he has no reason to get them down—but it is the believers who are a threat to him, therefore he will do everything he can to bring them down. People that have no interest in God are no threat to the kingdom of Satan—the kingdom of darkness—but those who love the Lord and live for His purposes are used by God to thwart the enemy’s plans.

But remember well that being persecuted in and of itself is not proof of being a true believe in Chris. It is suffering persecution FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS’ SAKE—suffering persecution because of being like Jesus—that is a sure sign we are on the right path and a part of God’s kingdom.

In a sense persecution must still upset us. We ought to be upset and sorrowful over the fact that sin so controls people they are led to persecute us. But we are not to feel sorry for ourselves. We are instead to be happy for ourselves in the midst of persecution for righteousness’ sake—for the name of Jesus—because it is a sure sign we are truly a believer. They say attitude is everything—let our attitude towards persecution be one of rejoicing

Finally, Christ makes it clear that if we belong to Him, we know we have a home and reward awaiting us in heaven. We don’t have a reward in heaven for being persecuted, but for being HIS!