

Series: Sermon on the Mount

Lesson: #9

Title: The Persecuted

Scripture: Matthew 5: 10-12

Date: 7-12-2009

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Princeton, NJ

Matthew 5: 10: Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11: Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12: Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Whatever pretence persecutors have, it is Christ and his righteousness that they hate and why they persecute. Christ Jesus the Lord was reviled, persecuted and had all manner of evil spoken against him falsely for no other reason than he was righteous. The carnal heart hates God because sinful man hates that which is right.

Psalm 69: 9:...the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.

The believer has been made the righteousness of God in Christ. In Christ, through the Spirit of Christ, the believer has been created a new in righteousness and true holiness. Why would one so loved of the Father, so loved by the Son, and so created of the Holy Spirit be persecuted? For the same reason sinful man persecuted every prophet who came before—for righteousness sake, for Christ's sake.

Romans 8: 36: As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Matthew 5: 3: Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The believer confesses before God and men the utter sin he is in the flesh. Those who think they possess some good or some strength or are deserving of God's favor consider themselves rich and in need of nothing from God. These two spirits are totally opposite and contrary to the other. They shall never have any union. The unbelieving shall persecute the righteous for Christ's sake.

Matthew 5: 4: Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

The believer mourns his sin and finds all his comfort only in Christ Jesus the Lord. The unbeliever considers sin to be merely in his members and not what he is. So the believer's testimony is an aggravation and he lashes out.

Matthew 5: 5: Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

The believer has been made meek toward God. His bent is to no more speak so exceedingly proud, to force his hand, to attempt to have his own way by his own strength, to make excuses for his rebellion. He knows that all things are his in Christ Jesus and the tenor of his disposition is gentleness toward those who oppose themselves. The persecutor is consumed with nothing else but to have his own way. To the persecutor meekness is merely an outward show he produces himself—when the preacher is around, when he in the church house, when he having a fit of guilt. But his overall tenor in the home and in private is one of upbraiding, of persecuting, of speaking evil even thought it is false. He pushes the meek man because he would really like to prove the believer to be a liar.

Matthew 5: 6: Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

The believer has been given a hunger and a thirst after the LORD our Righteousness and that which rightly honors Christ. Those who persecute hunger and thirst after self, after that which is contrary to Christ and to all righteousness—the bottom line is “number one”—self.

Matthew 5: 7: Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

The believer has tasted the Lord's grace and rejoices to show mercy because he depends upon God to keep him in mercy. Those who persecute want mercy shown to them when it is convenient but when the truth crosses their way, they become harsh judges in order to have the way they crave.

Matthew 5: 8: Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

The believer is pure in heart by the work of the Spirit. He sees God in Christ, in his word, in providence and hopes to see Christ face to face. That which most honors Christ is his chief desire. Even in his most mundane decisions in life the pure in heart desire to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. The persecutor has a heart which is confused and divisive, a heart full of guile and hypocrisy. He wants to appear righteous before men but his heart is set only on personal gain. If self is benefited, the defiled will overturn the pure in heart to have his own way.

Matthew 5: 9: Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

The believer has been made a peacemaker because God has given him faith to trust Christ to make peace. The persecutor may speak of peace but it is the generic peace made by men. It goes no further than the flesh. In his spirit the persecutor is never at peace, not with God and not with men, especially not with the child of God.

Matthew 5: 10: Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11: Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Here are four reasons the persecuted are blessed:

1. It is a blessing from God if you so stand for Christ that the world counts you worthy to suffer shame because your worthiness is in Christ.

2. It is a blessing from God because he gives you the grace—to suffer it

2 Corinthians 1:5: For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

Daniel 3:25: He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

3. Notice: **10: Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** Now look back up to **Matthew 5: 3: Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** There is a connection between persecution and poorness of spirit. Persecution is a blessing because through persecution Christ makes us to continually see what we are in ourselves and what we have been saved from. So persecution does not make us proud but beholding our weakness it makes us rejoice in the power of God's grace.

2 Corinthians 12: 9: And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10: Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Matthew 5: 12: Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

4. For great is your reward in heaven. It is interesting that the Lord mentions the “prophets. The prophets were witnesses of Christ Jesus the Lord. Their witness was not of what men must do but of what Christ the Just One would and has done.

Acts 7:52: Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

But the Spirit of God tells us that the reward they received was the reward for which they looked—Christ Jesus in the kingdom of heaven. We have Hebrews 11 to testify to us that they entered into glory with Christ Jesus the Lord. So the Lord tells those who endure persecution that likewise great is your reward in heaven. This is the joy set before you, even as the glory of God and the Lord’s people were the joy set before him.

Application:

1 Peter 4:12: Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. 14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. 15: But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. 16: Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Matthew Henry--it is not the suffering, but the cause, that makes the martyr.