

SOTM 8 – Blessed When Persecuted For Righteousness

Mat 5:10-12 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.

Some people separate these verses into two Beatitudes because the word "Blessed" is used twice. Some prefer to keep them as one Beatitude because the subject matter does not change ... The attitude we are to have when we suffer persecution for holding fast to Jesus and being doers of His doctrine. I wouldn't argue either way, but in this teaching let us consider these three verses as being the eighth Beatitude.

Let us be precise ... the word "persecution" in this passage is talking about being persecuted by people. It is not talking about attacks of sickness, shipwrecks due to bad weather, financial distress due to market swings, famine, or anything like that. This is persecution coming through people against you. Of course it is demonic at its source and there are other forms of demonic resistance. But Jesus is speaking of this one, particular kind of persecution in this passage. It is people coming against your righteous stand for TRUTH as revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some might say, "*I'm a Christian and I'm not suffering any persecution.*" That is a problem because the bible clearly says:

2 Timothy 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Say "All." "All" means ALL. "Shall" means "for sure." Our tendency is to fear persecution, but Jesus said our "be attitude" is to know we are "blessed" when we are persecuted for righteousness.

If you are not suffering persecution at all, perhaps you are keeping your "light" too hidden from the world under a bushel of flesh or because of fear of persecution. Remember from the 1st John series, "The world hates you the same way Cain hated Able." To be a friend of the world is to be the enemy of God.

James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

If you are a "doer" of the gospel of Christ, you are walking the path of righteousness instead of the path of sin. You are no longer walking in darkness because you are walking according to the "light of life" within you. [John 8:12] Without you saying a word, the world should notice right away the difference between the walk of a born again child of God and themselves. Peter described it his way;

1 Peter 4:3-4 For the time past of *our* life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: (4) Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:

1 Peter 4:14-16 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.

1 Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Peter would have been a very unpopular preacher in America today. "*Suffering? God doesn't want me to suffer! God is interested in 'my best life now.'* Gary, don't you know we live in different times now? We don't need to suffer for the gospel anymore. We don't need to suffer persecution for righteousness."

Listen, light is still light. Darkness is still darkness. The kingdom of God is righteousness and the whole world lieth in wickedness. Darkness hated the light then. Darkness hates the light now. Jesus said,

John 15:18-20 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. (19) If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. (20) Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

In fact, Jesus went so far as to say:

Luke 6:26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Do all men speak well of you? Maybe more flesh needs to die so your light can shine brighter. In the very next passage Jesus talks about us being the light of the world, and not to hide our light under a bushel.

It is no coincidence that this Beatitude follows "Blessed are the peacemakers." Remember the previous lesson. Jesus is talking about us sharing the good news of the gospel so those who believe can be at peace with God. Part of that good news is "repent" and believe the gospel. When we let our true light shine like that, some will love the light and will come to the light and be saved. Others will hate the light because it exposes their darkness ... and they love the darkness ... and want to remain in it.