

Blessed Are the Persecuted

Jesus eighth and final beatitude is this:

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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

The Sermon on the Mount, and particularly the Beatitudes, teach us how to live in the presence of our Father who is almighty, all-wise, all-loving, and always with us. Trusting such a God turns our usual way of living upside-down. Giving now makes sense, not grasping...meekness, not pride...hungering and thirsting after holiness rather than glory and gold. We mourn what others consider normal or even good.

But here, as we suffer persecution and injustice, the opposite happens. In a situation where others mourn, we rejoice. Consider these verses:

When people insult you and persecute you...rejoice and be glad. (Matthew 5:11-12, NASB)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials. (James 1:2, NIV)

Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering...rejoice. (1 Peter 4:12-13, NIV)

Why should we rejoice when life is painfully unjust? Why should suffering that is unfair and even life-threatening become a compelling reason for joy? God's Word gives us these reasons:

1. If we suffer for doing the right thing, we are blessed by Sovereign God. He has decreed our eternal well-being. That is reason to celebrate! (Matthew 5:10-12; 1 Peter 3:14; 4:14)
2. In exchange for temporary suffering, we gain a reward that is infinitely greater and more lasting. It will be the best exchange you ever make! (Matthew 5:10-12; Mark 10:29-30; Romans 8:17-18; 1 Peter 1:3-7; Revelation 2:9-10; 7:13-17)
3. Suffering for doing good puts us in great company. The saints of all the ages, the prophets, and Jesus Christ Himself went through such suffering and are now enjoying their rich reward. They are like an entire stadium full of encouragers, watching as we run our race, cheering us on. (Hebrews 11:1 – 12:3)

4. Suffering is extremely fruitful. When we are willing to suffer for Christ and for what is right, others take notice. Christ considered His suffering to be His best chance to glorify His Father. It is our best chance as well. As we suffer, we are planting seeds that will grow an abundant, eternal harvest. (John 12:23-28a; Philippians 1:12-14; 2 Timothy 2:8-10)
5. Suffering tests and refines our faith, which is our vital connection with the unseen God. Suffering builds priceless character traits that can't be developed any other way. (Romans 5:1-5; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-14)
6. Most importantly, as we suffer *for* Christ, we are suffering *with* Christ. We are united with Him more deeply. In a very tangible way that goes beyond words, we are embracing His faith in the Father, His commitment to the salvation of the world, and His eternal destiny. We are throwing in our lot completely with Him. We are bound to Him, not just by our promises, but by pain and sacrifice. (Philippians 3:7-11; Colossians 1:24; 2 Timothy 2:11-12)

When Jesus listed the qualities that God blesses most richly, the qualities that are the keys to true and eternal success, the climax of His list was suffering for Christ.

Father, when I have to suffer for following Christ, help me not to be surprised, discouraged, angry, or afraid. You offer each believer a unique opportunity to share in His sufferings in some small way. When my opportunity comes, help me to accept it for what it is: a precious and personal gift from You.

Hymn: [Captives of Eternal Love](#)

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