

HOW TO BE HAPPY THE BIBLE WAY

The Beatitudes

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

⁵ “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

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.**

Matthew 5:1-12 **ESV**

We are concluding our study of Matthew 5:1-12, which is commonly called the Beatitudes. To recap this series, the beatitudes basically describe the attitudes that every believer should have toward themselves and their sins, toward the Lord, and finally in verses 10 through 12, he shows us what we should expect from the world. Jesus says that we should expect and anticipate opposition and oppression. The final beatitude says 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.**

THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

The early Christians were forced to choose sides, and it was difficult for them to play both sides of the fence, because their allegiance to Christ was if not illegal, caused them to be in a position of a moral dilemma. For early believers their faith in Christ could cause to be fired, or force them to quit their jobs. If you were a stone mason would you build a temple to one of the pagan idols? If you were a tailor or seamstress, would make the vestments for pagan priests?

Even if their faith did not disrupt the business life, it would definitely disrupt their social life. In the ancient world, most feasts were held in the temple of some god. Could a Christian share in a feast held in the temple of a pagan god? Even an ordinary meal in an ordinary house began with a libation, a cup of wine, poured out in honor of the gods. It was like grace before a meal. Could a Christian become a sharer in a pagan act of worship like that?

Christianity was likely to disrupt home life. It happened again and again that one member of a family became a Christian while the others did not and immediately there was a split in the family. Often the door was shut forever in the face of the one who had accepted Christ. 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 your nearest and dearest affections and Jesus Christ.

Not only were there economic, social and family conflicts, there were legal and political penalties as well. In fact the biggest opposition to the church was the Roman government.

1. Following **God** will often put you on a **collision course** with those who are **opposed** to **God**.
2. **Commitment** to Christ **causes condemnation** from the **culture**.
3. **People** have to be **prepared** to be **lonely** in this world in order to be **Christians**.

PERSECUTION AS PROOF OF OUR SALVATION

The last beatitude is the result of the first seven. When you are a dedicated Christian, you are on a collision course with the culture that we live. Our society has no real regard for God, and thusly has no real regard for God's people. At best the world tolerates us as long as we are useful to them and their agendas, but the reality is that world is not your friend if you are a child of God. In fact James says that to be friends with the world puts you at odds with God. Whether we like it or not, there is conflict between the believer and the world because we are different from the world and we have different attitudes.

4. Jesus is letting us know up front that it won't be an **easy** thing to **follow** him as a **disciple**.
5. We should **expect** to be **persecuted** if we are living as God wants us to live.

The bible speaks to this time and time again.

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

That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. ⁴ For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4

*Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,²⁸ and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.²⁹ For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,³⁰ having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me. **Philippians 1:27-30 NKJV***

Enduring persecution is part of being a Christian. It was ordained. You knew it was given to you to suffer for the sake of Christ, and when they persecute you, it is an evident sign of our salvation and their damnation.

6. If we don't have any persecution in our lives, we'd better **examine** our **claim** to be **Christians**.
7. All of us, who live **righteously** in the world, at some time or **another**, are going to know the **rebuke** of the **Cross**.

PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE

The truth of the modern western church is that most of us have never really been forced to make any real sacrifice for Jesus Christ. John MacArthur says that "Maybe the reason is our Christianity is so tolerable in our society is because our standard is so low. We compromise all the time." However, real uncompromising faith will cause us to have some issues with the world. This is because Godly living will provoke ungodly people to become resentful. However, it really isn't us they resent; it's Christ that lives in us.

8. Jesus lists three ways that we are persecuted, the first is the Greek word **diōkō**, which means to **pursue**.
9. In the sense of the text it means to be or become **subject** to **systematic harassment** and **attack** due to one's **religious beliefs**.

10. Jesus is pronouncing the **blessing** of the **kingdom** of **heaven** on those who are **willing** to be **persecuted**.
11. We often confuse **persecution** with **prosecution**. **Persecution** is **voluntary** to a certain degree, **prosecution** is not.
12. Some **trials** we face are not because of our **dedication** to **Christ** but because of **disobedience** to **Christ**.
13. We must be **sure** that our **suffering** is not due to our own **foolishness** or **disobedience**.
14. Jesus **promises** the **kingdom** of **heaven** to those that **lack fear**, that **lack shame**, that are **bold** enough to say “for **God** I will **live**, and for **God** I will **die**”
15. The second type of persecution is the Greek word **oneidizō**, which means to harshly **criticize** or **insult**.
16. Oneidizō means to **find** real or **imagined faults** in a **harsh** or **demeaning manner**.
17. The third type of persecution is when people “**falsely** say all kinds of **evil** against **you**.”

People will on you say that said things that you didn’t say, and did things that you didn’t do. But that is what they did to Jesus.

REJOICING IN YOUR PERSECUTION

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

Jesus said to His disciples, in essence, that “if they killed me, they’ll kill you. And if they hate me, they’ll hate you. And if they persecuted me, they’ll persecute you as long as they know that you belong to me.” Jesus says that to suffer persecution is to walk the same road as the He, the prophets, and the martyrs have walked. It is an honor to be persecuted for righteousness and to

be reviled for Christ. However, it's not just an earthly honor, there is an eternal promise connected with it.

18. We have a **promise** of both **present** and **future glory**.
19. In the **present** those who would willingly stand up for Jesus Christ will know the **bliss** of **obedience** and the **blessedness** of being part of God's **eternal kingdom**.
20. But what we get in the here and now is the **contentment** and **satisfaction** and the **peace** that **surpasses understanding** when we are **cognizant** of our **position** in Christ.
21. The Beatitudes come to a triumphant conclusion with Jesus' **promise** to believers who are **persecuted** for their **faithfulness**: '**great** is your **reward** in **heaven**'.
22. Any **loss** here could never be **compared** with the **gain** in God's **kingdom**.

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. **Romans 8:18 NKJV***

23. No Christian **relishes opposition** or **persecution** of any kind,
24. The more we **understand** their true **significance** the more he will learn to **rejoice** in them.
25. You can **rejoice** and be **exceedingly** glad when you know the **end result**.

*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. **James 1:12 NKJV***

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

1 Peter 4:12-13 NKJV

Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

2 Timothy 4:8 NKJV