

As we come to an end of the beatitudes...I want to spend a little time in review | CARD

- Christ over Conceit – **Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven**
- Authenticity over Appearance – **Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted**
- Lowliness over Loftiness – **‘Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth’**
- Righteousness over Resources – **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...satisfied**
- Compassion over Condemnation – **Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy**
- Holiness over Hypocrisy – **Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God’**
- Harmony over Hostility – **Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God**

Christ's Kingdom Transforms Who We Are – Christ's Kingdom Transforms How We Live

Big Idea: Christ's Kingdom Transforms What We Endure

Dietrich Bonhoeffer – 1906 Germany – Christian 14 – Doctorate Theology 21 – Ordained 25

In 1943 the German pastor made a choice that would eventually cost him his life

Could have remained safely in America, while the Nazi regime tightened its grip on Germany

He returned to his homeland because he believed the church could not remain silent

- **"Cheap grace":** forgiveness without repentance or transformed living
- **"Costly grace":** following Christ even when it demands sacrifice or suffering

Bonhoeffer eventually became part of the resistance against Hitler. Arrested & imprisoned

April 9, 1945, weeks before war ended, Bonhoeffer was executed | Cost of Discipleship

There are times that Christians will endure incredible persecution and it glorifies the Lord

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.** - Notice the tension in the opening statement.

- Jesus calls a person **"blessed"** who is being **persecuted**...that's backwards!
- The world says persecution is a sign that something has gone wrong
- Jesus says that persecution can be evidence that something has gone right

What should a Christian do when following Christ costs them something?

- Jesus does not promise that righteousness will always make our lives easier.

Standing truth brings rejection - Obedience brings opposition - Faithfulness brings suffering

Will we remain faithful when difficulty comes because of our commitment to Christ

Daniel lived in a culture constantly pressured him to compromise his commitment to God

Daniel 6 – Law – Pray to the King – Went home – Opened Windows – Prayed facing Jerusalem

He knew that continuing to pray could cost him his position, his reputation, and even his life

Daniel didn't suddenly become faithful when the lions' den appeared

Decided his commitment to God was greater than his fear of what men could do to him

1. **Choose Faithfulness Over Fear**

¹⁰ **"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

When persecution comes Christians demonstrate they belong to Christ & possess kingdom

Following Christ faithfully can bring opposition

a. **Expect Opposition Because of Righteousness**

"persecuted" = Being pursued, harassed, or mistreated because commitment to Christ

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake

- blessed are those who are persecuted because they are obnoxious – **Trans are Men**
- blessed are those who are persecuted...argumentative – **Pick a theological fight**
- blessed are those who are persecuted...hypocritical – **Called out on their sin**

I don't think many of us...or any of us...are going to lose our lives for faith | **5 Persecutions**

i. **Being mocked for your faith** - Being ridiculed because you believe the Bible

- Being called narrow-minded, intolerant, or ignorant for holding biblical convictions
 - Friends making Christianity the punchline because you take your faith seriously – **Pedo**
- ## ii. **Being excluded because of your beliefs** – Kept out of social circles won't participate
- Losing friendships because you refuse to compromise your convictions
 - Treated as an outsider because you openly identify as a Christian – **Poker Super Bowl**

iii. **Being pressured to compromise** – People will try to get you to compromise convictions

- Being pressured to remain silent about your faith – 'Keep religion to yourself' – **Kiss**

iv. **Being treated unfairly because you're a Christian** – Passed over opportunities

- Negative treatment from coworkers, classmates, or others because you won't conform
- Facing consequences refusing participate in something you believe is sinful – **Thumper**

v. **Being falsely labeled** - Accused of hatred when you're trying to speak truth with love

- Called judgmental simply because you believe God's Word has authority – **Hate People**
Persecution is what happens when your commitment to Christ becomes costly

b. **Anticipate the Kingdom** - **for theirs is the kingdom of heaven**

- Jesus gives persecuted believers a promise: The kingdom belongs to them
- The same promise Jesus gave in Matthew 5:3 – Begins and ends kingdom – why?

The kingdom is worth more than anything persecution can take away

You may lose: acceptance – comfort – opportunities – relationships – possessions – life

If you belong to Christ, you cannot lose the kingdom of heaven

World may take something from you temporarily, but it cannot take your eternal reward

Don't measure your life by what you lose for Christ; measure it by what you gain in Christ

2. **When Persecuted, Rejoice in Your Rejection**

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account."

We can remain joyful when following Jesus brings rejection, ridicule, and persecution

- Jesus does something peculiar...blessed is the person who is mistreated
- Notice that Jesus does not say *if* persecution comes. He says **"when"** it comes
"Will following Jesus cost me something?" | "Will I remain faithful to Jesus when it does?"

a. **Expect the Rejection** - **"Blessed are you when others revile you..."**

- To revile means to insult, mock, criticize, or verbally abuse someone | **Jim Jones**
- If you have been Christian for any amount of time...you have been reviled for your faith
Not everyone will appreciate your commitment to Christ – Golf Course Sales Pitch – Pat

- Sometimes your biblical convictions will make people uncomfortable – **Stench of death**
- Sometimes your refusal to participate in sin will make you unpopular
- Sometimes your commitment to truth will cost you relationships – **Strained family**

Faithfulness to Christ does not guarantee acceptance by the world

b. **Endure the Persecution** - **"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute**

- **"persecute"** pursuing someone with the intent of causing harm or suffering

Open Doors World Watch List – Puts together a list of the top 50 countries – Worst

- **Violence: private, family, community, national, and church life | N Korea – Som – Yemen**
- **388 million Christians worldwide experience high levels of persecution – 1 in 7 Worldwide**
- Can we celebrate that the United States is not on that map?
- Can we celebrate the Christians who are on that map? They are Blessed by God | Why?

⇒ **Persecution Tests the Reality of Our Faith** - Easy to say we're committed comfortable

Peter...we always remember his failure in faith – What about his death...tested his faith pass

⇒ **Persecution Requires Endurance** - Jesus doesn't tell followers to retaliate – **Tempting**

- He doesn't tell them to abandon their convictions – Grow Bitter – Become Fearful
Remain faithful - “I will continue obeying Christ even when obedience becomes difficult.”

c. **Embrace the Reproach** - “...and utter all kinds of evil against you **falsely on my account.**”

Willingly accept the criticism, rejection, shame, or hardship because you identify with Christ

- ‘Falsely’ – You don’t get to claim persecution if it comes bc you’re acting moron – **Cheat**
If you are walking in righteousness and the world persecutes you...rejoice...you are blessed

⇒ **Accept the rejection** — don’t be surprised when the world disagrees with your faith

⇒ **Endure the criticism** — remain gracious when others mock or criticize your convictions

⇒ **Stay faithful** — don’t compromise biblical truth simply to gain acceptance

⇒ **Value Christ above approval** — choose faithfulness over praise of people | **5 Questions**

- Am I willing to be misunderstood for standing for Jesus?
- Am I willing to lose popularity for biblical truth?
- Am I willing to be different from the culture around me?
- Am I willing to endure criticism without becoming bitter?
- Am I willing to be rejected by the world to be faithful to Christ?

3. **When Persecuted, Rejoice in Your Reward**

¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Because faithfulness to Christ brings eternal reward, believers can rejoice despite circumstances

Acts 16, where Paul and Silas were beaten, thrown into prison, and fastened in stocks

16:25 “about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God”

Not based in circumstances - Joy was rooted Christ and eternal reward that awaited them

a. **Remember Your Reward** - “For your reward is great in heaven...”

- Jesus is teaching us to look beyond the present moment – **Look to the Heavens in trials**
World may say: You are losing - missing out - Being foolish - Why not compromise?

Jesus says, Look beyond what you are experiencing right now

⇒ *Your suffering is temporary* - Persecution belongs to this present age...not final chapter

⇒ *Your reward is great* - Jesus doesn't say your reward is insignificant – so so – **AUNT BILL**

b. **Remember Your Predecessors** - “For so they persecuted prophets were before you.”

- Jesus reminds His disciples they are not first people to suffer for faithfulness to God
 - Jeremiah abandoned – Elijah opposed – Isaiah rejected – Daniel fed to lions

You are not walking a road that God's faithful people have never walked

⇒ Faithfulness has always been costly - Sometimes faithfulness produces opposition

⇒ Persecution identifies you with God's people – **Standing in a line of faithfulness**

⇒ Don't let opposition convince you that you're doing something wrong...doing right

c. **Remain Faithful till the End** - “Rejoice and be glad.” – **Why?**

Because the world cannot take away what Christ has promised you

Persecutions and hardships are going to try to take you off the path of righteousness

You need to decide...today...that I will follow Jesus no matter what comes my way...end

Challenge isn't ‘Would I die Jesus’ – ‘Will I live Jesus even when it costs me somethings’

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a. **When Persecuted, Rejoice in Your Rejection**

b. **When Persecuted, Rejoice in Your Reward**