



August 10, 2025

PART NINE

Your Reward in Heaven

Matthew 5:11; Galatians 5:23

Synopsis: *The physical laws of actions and reactions ring true in spiritual matters as well. Whenever truth is bent, a tension is created, a pressure that grows until the error is corrected. The Scriptures assure that all errors will eventually be corrected. The pressure of correction catapults the truth into an even more glorious visibility than if the truth were not maligned in the first place.*

The Beatitudes Twist

Instead of recommended postures with rewards, these are suffering states (cf. **Luke 6:20-23**)

Overlaying the 9 fruits of the Spirit with the 9 Beatitudes: today *being maligned* pairs with *self-control*

Verbal Persecution

Matthew's elevated concern for the persecution of his audience: the additional beatitude

The broadest and most common kind of persecution: the weapon of words

The myth that words are "only words": the power of the tongue: see **Matthew 5:22; James 2:5**

Your Reward in Heaven is Great

Reward as return: good (**1 Corinthians 3:14**), bad (**2 Peter 2:13**), wages (**Matthew 20:8**)

Often thought of as an award for meritorious service at the end of time upon our arrival in heaven

Today we are broadening out the possibilities: *current kingdom returns from heaven to earth*

Reward as "Vindication of the Better Opinion"

In the likeness of God: to be misunderstood without controlling the narrative

The sweetness of solidarity and the vindication of the better opinion

The One Who Matters sees and knows and says "well done": **Matthew 25:21**

Reward as "Vindication & the Catapult of Glory"

The nature of truth suppressed: the beachball, the conscience, and the science of pressure: **Matt 10:26, Gal 6:7**

Vindication serves to launch what is true with more momentum than if it was never put under siege

The fruit of the Spirit of self-control maximizes vindication velocity!

Where is self-control more evident than with what we say? **James 3:2**

The common arc of the prophets: **Matt 5:11 & 10:41**

The quintessential story of Jesus: **John 12:27-32, Philippians 2:6-11**

My "great reward": heaven arranges a momentum of Jesus' glory in my surrendered vindication

Background

Athanasius (c. 296–373) was the bishop of Alexandria and one of the fiercest defenders of Nicene orthodoxy against the Arian movement, which denied the full divinity of Christ. His steadfastness made him powerful allies, but also many bitter enemies — especially among political and ecclesiastical leaders who favored Arianism.

The Slander Campaign

Athanasius's opponents, unable to defeat him in theological debate, turned to *character assassination*. They accused him of:

- **Murder** — claiming he had killed a rival bishop named Arsenius and used his severed hand for sorcery.
- **Violence and treason** — alleging that he plotted to block Egyptian grain shipments to Constantinople.
- **Immorality and abuse of power** — inventing false moral scandals to discredit him.

These accusations were brought before councils and the emperor himself. Many were completely fabricated, but the political climate was hostile enough that Athanasius was exiled **five separate times** from his city — spending nearly **17 of his 45 years as bishop** in banishment.

The Dramatic Vindication

One famous turning point came with the “**hand of Arsenius**” incident. At a council convened to judge Athanasius, his enemies presented a human hand as proof he had murdered Arsenius. In response, Athanasius had *Arsenius himself* brought into the room — very much alive — and dramatically pulled back his cloak to reveal **both hands intact**. The false witnesses were humiliated before the assembly.

Over the years, political tides shifted. Emperors changed, Arian influence waned, and the truth of Athanasius's integrity became undeniable. By the end of his life, he was restored to his see permanently and revered as a hero of the faith. His enemies' campaigns had failed, and their names largely faded from history, while Athanasius became honored as *Athanasius Contra Mundum* (“Athanasius against the world”).

Why It Stands Out

- The accusations were **specific, repeated, and public**, not vague rumors.
- Vindication came not instantly, but over decades of persistence.

- His enemies were caught in **blatant, provable lies**.
 - The eventual outcome was **public humiliation** for his accusers and lasting honor for Athanasius.
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If you'd like, I can also share a **modern** example — such as the case of Richard Wurmbrand in Communist Romania — which shows the same pattern of slander, exile, and eventual public vindication. That one has some remarkable twists.

Do you want me to tell you that modern story too?

Ask ChatGPT

You said:

yes

ChatGPT said:

Alright — here's the **Richard Wurmbrand** story, which has a similar arc of slander, long endurance, and ultimate vindication.

Background

Richard Wurmbrand (1909–2001) was a Romanian pastor of Jewish heritage who converted to Christianity in his 20s. During WWII, he ministered both to Romanians and to occupying German soldiers. After the war, when the Soviets took control of Romania, Wurmbrand became an outspoken critic of Communism's anti-Christian stance.

In 1945, at a state-organized “Congress of Cults” — a meeting where religious leaders were expected to praise the Communist regime — Wurmbrand instead stood up and **publicly declared allegiance to Christ alone**, refusing to submit the church to the state.

The Slander Campaign

The Communist authorities knew outright execution could turn him into a martyr, so they first tried **character assassination**:

- They spread *false accusations* that he was a spy for Western powers.
- They circulated rumors that he was sexually immoral and financially corrupt.
- Government-controlled press painted him as a “traitor” working to undermine Romanian unity.

- They even forged documents to “prove” he had Nazi sympathies — an especially cruel slander for a man who had sheltered Jews from the Nazis.

This smear campaign was designed to make his arrest look like legitimate justice, not persecution.

The Long Ordeal

In 1948, Wurmbrand was arrested by the secret police. He spent **14 years in prison**, much of it in solitary confinement, often beaten, tortured, and starved. His wife, Sabina, was also imprisoned for three years.

Meanwhile, state propaganda continued to slander his name so that, even among some Christians, doubts were sown about his character.

Public Vindication

The political climate began shifting in the 1960s. In 1964, the Norwegian Mission to the Jews paid the Communist regime **\$10,000 in ransom** for Wurmbrand’s release.

When he arrived in the West, the Romanian propaganda machine tried to discredit him internationally — calling him a liar who fabricated prison stories for money. But then... witnesses, documents, and even defectors from the regime began confirming his account.

In 1966, Wurmbrand testified **before the U.S. Senate’s Internal Security Subcommittee**, removing his shirt to show deep scars from torture. This moment, broadcast around the world, silenced many of his critics and humiliated his Communist accusers.

He went on to found *The Voice of the Martyrs*, which became a major advocate for persecuted Christians worldwide. By the time of his death, he was widely honored, while the regime that slandered him had collapsed — and its officials were either disgraced or forgotten.

Why This Story Matters

- The lies were detailed and backed by the full power of a hostile state.
- Vindication came through **public evidence** and **personal testimony**.
- His enemies ended up exposed as oppressors, while he gained international respect.
- It’s a modern parallel to Athanasius’s endurance and final honor.

If you like, I can also give you a **list of other Christian figures across history** who went through this “slandered → long endurance → public vindication” pattern, so you have multiple examples to draw from. Would you like me to prepare that?

You said:

Yes

ChatGPT said:

Here’s a **list of Christian figures** across history who fit the pattern of being *publicly slandered*, enduring for a long period, and then *publicly vindicated while their enemies were discredited*.

1. Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296–373) – *Early Church*

- **Accusations:** Murder, sorcery, treason, immorality (all fabricated by Arian opponents).
 - **Endurance:** Five exiles over decades.
 - **Vindication:** Dramatically exposed the “murdered” man alive at trial; eventually restored permanently and celebrated as a defender of orthodoxy.
 - **Outcome:** His name became famous; accusers forgotten.
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2. John Chrysostom (c. 347–407) – *Church Father & Archbishop of Constantinople*

- **Accusations:** Treason against the emperor, arrogance, heresy, financial misconduct.
 - **Endurance:** Exiled twice; suffered severe hardships.
 - **Vindication:** After his death, public opinion turned; Emperor Theodosius II brought his relics back to Constantinople in a state ceremony of repentance.
 - **Outcome:** Canonized as a saint; enemies’ reputations tarnished.
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3. Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556) – *English Reformation*

- **Accusations:** Treason, doctrinal heresy, personal corruption.
- **Endurance:** Years of political intrigue and imprisonment under Mary I.

- **Vindication:** While executed for faith, later generations in England celebrated him as a martyr of conscience. His accusers' persecution became infamous, leading to their disgrace in Protestant history.
 - **Outcome:** His writings and reforms shaped the Church of England.
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4. William Tyndale (c. 1494–1536) – *Bible Translator*

- **Accusations:** Heresy, sedition, moral corruption.
 - **Endurance:** Years in hiding, hunted by agents of King Henry VIII.
 - **Vindication:** Strangled and burned, but within four years his translation formed the basis of the official English Bible. Even King Henry authorized it.
 - **Outcome:** Revered; enemies remembered mainly for their cruelty.
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5. Richard Wurmbrand (1909–2001) – *Modern Persecution in Romania*

- **Accusations:** Western spy, Nazi collaborator, immoral.
 - **Endurance:** 14 years in Communist prison, tortured, smeared publicly.
 - **Vindication:** International testimony, visible torture scars, verified by defectors and records; founded *Voice of the Martyrs*.
 - **Outcome:** Global respect; Communist regime collapsed.
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6. Watchman Nee (1903–1972) – *Chinese House Church Leader*

- **Accusations:** Counterrevolutionary, capitalist spy, immoral lifestyle (all false).
 - **Endurance:** 20 years in prison under Mao's regime.
 - **Vindication:** Decades later, both Chinese Christians and even some officials quietly acknowledged the injustice; he became a symbol of steadfast faith.
 - **Outcome:** His writings now influence Christians worldwide.
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7. Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1809–1891) – *First African Anglican Bishop*

- **Accusations:** Incompetence, financial mismanagement, cultural betrayal.
 - **Endurance:** Years of being undermined by racist colonial missionaries who forced his resignation.
 - **Vindication:** Modern historians and the Anglican Communion have honored him as a pioneer and hero; the missionaries who opposed him are now criticized for prejudice.
 - **Outcome:** Legacy restored; enemies' names largely obscure.
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8. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) – *German Pastor & Anti-Nazi Dissident*

- **Accusations:** Treason, undermining the war effort, moral hypocrisy.
 - **Endurance:** Imprisoned and executed by Nazis.
 - **Vindication:** After the war, his resistance to Hitler was celebrated internationally; Nazi accusations were utterly discredited.
 - **Outcome:** Regarded as a moral giant; enemies' ideology disgraced.
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If you want, I can make you a **side-by-side table** comparing the length of their endurance, type of slander, and form of vindication, so you can see patterns in how these situations unfold. That would make the parallels much clearer. Would you like me to do that?