

The Beatitudes: The Persecuted

October 16, 2016

Matthew 5:1-10 NASB

- 1 When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.
- 2 He opened His mouth and began to teach 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 **gentle**, 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 have been **PERSECUTED FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.**
- 11 **Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.**
- 12 **Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

'PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS IS ON THE RISE, AMERICANS SAY'

"A poll finds that, in just two years, the number of Americans who think Christians are facing growing intolerance in the U.S. has drastically increased.

Sixty-three percent of respondents in the LifeWay Research survey said they agree or strongly agree that Christians are facing growing levels of persecution, up from 50 percent in 2013. The bulk of that surge comes from respondents who said they "strongly agree" with the statement, a number that increased from 28 percent to 38 percent.

A similar number, 60 percent, said religious liberty is on the decline in America, up from 54 percent in 2013." The Washington Times, April 5, 2016

'FRANKLIN GRAHAM WARNS CHRISTIANS IN AMERICA: PERSECUTION IS COMING'

"I believe we're going to see persecution in this country," Graham said during an interview on "Fox and Friends Weekend" on Sunday. "We've already seen many laws that have been passed that restrict our freedom as Christians. I believe it's going to get worse, and we see no question gaining influence in Washington by those that represent the Islamic faith. We do have a problem in this country and we are losing our religious freedom and we're losing it a little bit day by day." Franklin Graham, March 9, 2015

'BILLY GRAHAM WARNS CHRISTIANS TO PREPARE FOR PERSECUTION IN AMERICA'

"Billy Graham is warning American Christians to prepare themselves for unprecedented persecution. It has been possible in the United States to profess Christianity without paying much of a price for that profession. Such freedom is unusual, both in the broader world and throughout history. That veil of protection around the American church is about to lift, according to Graham. From The Christian Post:

'As a whole, our nation does not know what privation is. We do not know what sacrifice is. We do not know what suffering is. Suppose persecution were to come to the church in America, as it has come in other countries," wrote Graham.

"Since we have experienced little religious persecution in this country, it is likely that under pressure many would deny Christ. Those who shout the loudest about their faith may surrender soonest."
Walter Hudson, PJ Media, November 2, 2015

'CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION HAS COME TO AMERICA'

"As Kim Davis was dragged out of a federal courtroom to a local jail cell for refusing to violate her religious beliefs about sexuality and marriage, a group of LGBT activists chanted out their response.

Seeing Davis sent to jail for an ideological crime, in a capricious decision that ignores the First Amendment, they shouted: "Love won! Love won!"

With that, the first hints of twilight gathered over America's religious liberty as a dark day of Christian persecution dawns in our nation." Charisma News, September 6, 2016

"PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS IN AMERICA: IT'S NOT JUST 'OVER THERE'"

"As Chris Matthews recently suggested, Christians, particularly conservative evangelical Christians, have no place in American politics. "If you're a politician and believe in God first, that's all good. Just don't run for government office, run for church office," he tweeted. Not to be outdone, Mike Dickinson, a Virginia Democrat running for a House seat, tweeted, "Said it proudly! Want to decimate the Tea Party, The NRA, bible thumpers and Fox News zombies? Vote for me!" By Fay Voshell, American Thinker, May 10, 2015

'HILLARY TELLS CHRISTIANS THEY HAVE TO CHANGE THEIR BELIEF OVER ABORTION'

"Hillary Clinton, who recently stated at the Sixth annual Women in the World Summit that 'deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed' for the sake of giving women access to 'reproductive health care and safe childbirth.'"
Dave Hodges, "The Common Sense Show"

Matthew 5:10 NASB

10 Blessed are those who have been **PERSECUTED** (*diōkō* - drive away, put to flight, make to flee, harass, trouble, mistreat, molest, hostility) **FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.**

1 PETER - THE CHRISTIAN'S GUIDEBOOK TO SUFFERING

- Written by Peter
- Written to Saints in Asia Minor, modern Turkey
- Written around A.D. 60-64
- Written at the start of or during Nero's persecution of Christians (Paul and Peter martyred, Christians were burned alive, crucified, tortured, blamed for the Great Fire of Rome of A.D. 64, "What a showman the world is losing in me!")

GUARD YOUR HOPE AND MAKE YOUR DECISIONS BASED ON THE ETERNAL, NOT THIS PRESENT WORLD

1 Peter 1:1-4 NASB

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen

2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **WHO ACCORDING TO HIS GREAT MERCY HAS CAUSED US TO BE BORN AGAIN TO A LIVING HOPE THROUGH THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD,**
4 **TO OBTAIN AN INHERITANCE WHICH IS IMPERISHABLE AND UNDEFILED AND WILL NOT FADE AWAY, RESERVED IN HEAVEN FOR YOU.**

YOU WILL BE PROTECTED BY GOD IN ALL PERSECUTION

1 Peter 1:5 NASB

5 WHO ARE PROTECTED BY THE POWER OF GOD THROUGH FAITH FOR A SALVATION READY TO BE REVEALED IN THE LAST TIME.

Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and the Fiery Furnace

Daniel 3:25 NASB

25 He said, "Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!"

Daniel in the Lion's Den

Daniel 6:22 NASB

22 "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime."

Stoning of Stephen

Acts 7:55 NASB

55 But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;

Paul Stoned and Left for Dead

Acts 14:20 NASB

20 But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe.

PERSECUTION TESTS THE VALIDITY AND THE STRENGTH OF YOUR FAITH, TO BE REWARDED ON THAT DAY

1 Peter 1:6-9 NASB

6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,
7 **SO THAT THE PROOF OF YOUR FAITH, BEING MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD WHICH IS PERISHABLE, EVEN THOUGH TESTED BY FIRE, MAY BE FOUND TO RESULT IN PRAISE AND GLORY AND HONOR AT THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST;**
8 and **THOUGH YOU HAVE NOT SEEN HIM, YOU LOVE HIM, AND THOUGH YOU DO NOT SEE HIM NOW, BUT BELIEVE IN HIM,** you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,
9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 4:12-13 NASB

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, **WHICH COMES UPON YOU FOR YOUR TESTING,** as though some strange thing were happening to you;

13 **BUT TO THE DEGREE THAT YOU SHARE THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, KEEP ON REJOICING, SO THAT ALSO AT THE REVELATION OF HIS GLORY YOU MAY REJOICE WITH EXULTATION.**

Matthew 10:32-33 NASB

32 "Therefore **EVERYONE WHO CONFESSES ME BEFORE MEN, I WILL ALSO CONFESS HIM BEFORE MY FATHER** who is in heaven.

33 "But **WHOEVER DENIES ME BEFORE MEN, I WILL ALSO DENY HIM BEFORE MY FATHER** who is in heaven.

GIVE THIS WORLD NOTHING BUT YOUR FAITH TO ATTACK

1 Peter 2:11-12 NASB

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

12 KEEP YOUR BEHAVIOR EXCELLENT AMONG THE GENTILES, SO THAT IN THE THING IN WHICH THEY SLANDER YOU AS EVILDOERS, THEY MAY BECAUSE OF YOUR GOOD DEEDS, AS THEY OBSERVE THEM, GLORIFY GOD IN THE DAY OF VISITATION.

1 Peter 3:16-17 NASB

16 AND KEEP A GOOD CONSCIENCE SO THAT IN THE THING IN WHICH YOU ARE SLANDERED, THOSE WHO REVILE YOUR GOOD BEHAVIOR IN CHRIST WILL BE PUT TO SHAME.

17 For it is better, if God should will it so, THAT YOU SUFFER FOR DOING WHAT IS RIGHT RATHER THAN FOR DOING WHAT IS WRONG.

1 Peter 4:15-16 NASB

15 MAKE SURE THAT NONE OF YOU SUFFERS AS A MURDERER, OR THIEF, OR EVILDOER, OR A TROUBLESOME MEDDLER;
16 BUT IF ANYONE SUFFERS AS A CHRISTIAN, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

DO NOT REBEL AGAINST GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY, EVEN WHEN THEY INITIATE OR ALLOW PERSECUTION

1 Peter 2:13-15 NASB

13 SUBMIT YOURSELVES FOR THE LORD'S SAKE TO EVERY HUMAN INSTITUTION, whether to a king as the one in authority,
14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

15 FOR SUCH IS THE WILL OF GOD THAT BY DOING RIGHT YOU MAY SILENCE THE IGNORANCE OF FOOLISH MEN.

SUFFERING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS FINDS FAVOR WITH GOD

1 Peter 2:19-21 NASB

19 FOR THIS FINDS FAVOR, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, THIS FINDS FAVOR WITH GOD.

21 FOR YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED FOR THIS PURPOSE, since Christ also suffered for you, LEAVING YOU AN EXAMPLE FOR YOU TO FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS.

BY COMMITTING YOURSELF TO THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, NEVER SEEK RETALIATION WHEN PERSECUTED

1 Peter 2:23 NASB

23 AND WHILE BEING REVILED, HE DID NOT REVILE IN RETURN; WHILE SUFFERING, HE UTTERED NO THREATS, BUT KEPT ENTRUSTING HIMSELF TO HIM WHO JUDGES RIGHTEOUSLY.

1 Peter 3:8-9 NASB

8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;

9 NOT RETURNING EVIL FOR EVIL OR INSULT FOR INSULT, BUT GIVING A BLESSING INSTEAD; FOR YOU WERE CALLED FOR THE VERY PURPOSE THAT YOU MIGHT INHERIT A BLESSING.

1 Peter 4:19 NASB

19 Therefore, THOSE ALSO WHO SUFFER ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD SHALL ENTRUST THEIR SOULS TO A FAITHFUL CREATOR IN DOING WHAT IS RIGHT.

FEAR GOD - DO NOT FEAR WHAT MAN CAN DO TO YOU

1 Peter 3:12-15 NASB

12 "FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."

13 **WHO IS THERE TO HARM YOU IF YOU PROVE ZEALOUS FOR WHAT IS GOOD?**

14 **BUT EVEN IF YOU SHOULD SUFFER FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, YOU ARE BLESSED. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED.**

15 **BUT SANCTIFY CHRIST AS LORD IN YOUR HEARTS, ALWAYS BEING READY TO MAKE A DEFENSE TO EVERYONE WHO ASKS YOU TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT FOR THE HOPE THAT IS IN YOU, YET WITH GENTLENESS AND REVERENCE.**

Acts 5:40-42 NASB

40 They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them.

41 So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, THEY KEPT RIGHT ON TEACHING AND PREACHING JESUS AS THE CHRIST.

KNOW THAT SUFFERING PERSECUTION PRODUCES A PURITY, STABILITY AND STRENGTH OF HEART AND LIFE

1 Peter 4:1-2 NASB

1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, **ARM YOURSELVES ALSO WITH THE SAME PURPOSE, BECAUSE HE WHO HAS SUFFERED IN THE FLESH HAS CEASED FROM SIN,**

2 **SO AS TO LIVE THE REST OF THE TIME IN THE FLESH NO LONGER FOR THE LUSTS OF MEN, BUT FOR THE WILL OF GOD.**

1 Peter 5:10 NASB

10 AFTER YOU HAVE SUFFERED FOR A LITTLE WHILE, THE GOD OF ALL GRACE, WHO CALLED YOU TO HIS ETERNAL GLORY IN CHRIST, WILL HIMSELF PERFECT, CONFIRM, STRENGTHEN AND ESTABLISH YOU.

DON'T BE SURPRISED OR OFFENDED THAT CHRISTIANS SUFFER UNDER PERSECUTION, BUT RATHER REJOICE THAT YOU ARE COUNTED WORTHY TO SUFFER

1 Peter 4:12-14 NASB

12 Beloved, DO NOT BE SURPRISED AT THE FIERY ORDEAL AMONG YOU, which comes upon you for your testing, AS THOUGH SOME STRANGE THING WERE HAPPENING TO YOU;

13 BUT TO THE DEGREE THAT YOU SHARE THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, KEEP ON REJOICING, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

14 IF YOU ARE REVILED FOR THE NAME OF CHRIST, YOU ARE BLESSED, BECAUSE THE SPIRIT OF GLORY AND OF GOD RESTS ON YOU.

15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;

16 BUT IF ANYONE SUFFERS AS A CHRISTIAN, HE IS NOT TO BE ASHAMED, BUT IS TO GLORIFY GOD IN THIS NAME.

Acts 5:40-41 NASB

40 after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them.

41 So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, REJOICING THAT THEY HAD BEEN CONSIDERED WORTHY TO SUFFER SHAME FOR HIS NAME.