

Matthew 5:10-12

The Persecuted Church

Introduction:

Martin Luther states that persecution is the very definition of a Christian. Luke tells us in Acts that the church “must go through much tribulation to enter the Kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22) Thomas Watson states plainly in his great work on the Beatitudes: “Though Christ died to take away the curse from us, yet not to take away the cross from us. Those stones which are cut out for a building are first under the saw and hammer to be hewed and squared. The godly are called living stones.” (I Pet. 2:5) Solomon tells us the church is described as “a lily among thorns.” (Song of Sol. 2:2). The church father Eusebius relates that the Roman Emperor charged his officers to put none to death but governors and pastors of the church.

I. Persecuted Not For Righteousness Sake

A. Persecuted like Jesus was – John 15:20

1. The church grew through persecution – Acts 8:1

B. Illegitimate kinds of persecution:

1. Obnoxious Christians
2. Fanatics – Matt. 10:16
3. Busybodies – II Thess. 3:11,12; I Pet. 4:15
4. Mixing Christianity with politics – Act 4:19-22; 5:28-32

II. Persecuted For Righteousness Sake – v. 10-11

A. What exactly did Jesus mean regarding persecution for righteousness sake?

1. It means to be like Jesus – Turn To: John 15:18-25
2. It means to live a Godly life – II Tim. 3:12

B. Biblical examples:

1. Abel, Moses, David, Elijah – (I Kings 19:2)
2. Jesus, the supreme example – John 15:25; Psa. 35:19; 69:4

C. Not all men will speak well of us – Luke 6:26

III. Persecution’s Reward – v.12

A. Our thoughts and emotions

1. The heroes of faith in Hebrew 11,
2. Looking for a better city and dwelling – Heb. 11:16

B. How should a Christian face persecution?

Negatively:

1. We must not retaliate – (Thomas Watson)
2. We must not feel resentment – I Pet. 2:23
3. We must not become depressed.

Positively: We must ‘rejoice and be glad’

Why Rejoice?

1. We rejoice because it is proof that we are a Christian – (C. H. Spurgeon) II Tim. 2:3,9
2. We rejoice because it is proof that you are going to heaven – II Cor. 4:17,18; Heb. 12:2; I Cor. 15:33
3. Illustration: Overpayment! More than a meager Trillion dollars! Eph. 3:2