

The Beatitudes
Matthew 5:1-16

The Character and Witness of the Citizens of the Kingdom

I. Ministry – Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven (5:10)

A. Notice that the blessings is restricted to those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, not from stupidity or because they are objectionable or because of politics.

1. Persecution can take many forms; it is not limited to the physical
2. One may be ostracized by family, ridiculed by relatives or co-workers, or chastised by friends for being “too holy”
3. This beatitude is a test for all the other beatitudes
4. Just as a person must be poor in spirit to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (5:3), so will he be persecuted for righteousness if he is to enter the Kingdom
5. This final beatitude becomes one of the most searching of all of them and binds up the rest.
6. If the followers of Jesus never experience any persecution at all, it may fairly be asked if righteousness is being displayed in the person’s life

B. We, as Christians, live in a sinful world

1. Therefore, if we exhibit genuine, transparent righteousness, many will reject us.
2. Genuine righteousness condemns people by implication; small wonder that many people lash out at us
3. We are told this is “normal Christian living”
4. Phil. 1:29 – normal to suffer for Him
5. 2 Tim. 3:12 – a result of living a Godly life
6. 1 Thess. 3:3 – don’t be unsettled by it

C. Jesus expands on this beatitude in verse 11 by giving us three important insights about the eighth beatitude

1. Persecution is explicitly broadened to include insults and spoken malice; it is not limited to physical torture
2. “Because of righteousness” (v.10) is linked to “because of me” (v.11)

3. Thus, the righteousness of one's life is an imitation of the life of Jesus; thus, there is no place for professed allegiance that is not full of righteousness
4. There is a command to rejoice and be glad when suffering the many types of persecution
5. Acts 5:41 – counted worthy because of His name
6. 1 Peter 1:6-7 – increases one's purity
7. Dan. 3:24 – the divine Presence revealed
8. Only one reason needed to rejoice – our reward is great in heaven (v.11)
9. We must determine our value from an eternal perspective, not a temporal one – 2 Cor. 4: 17

D. Progression of Scripture

1. John 3:16-21 – Jesus exposes filth of this world because He is light
2. Eph. 5:7-14 – those who respond to Christ become what He is – light
3. Phil. 2:14-15 – becoming as He is we appear as Light
4. John 15:18-16:3 – the world will hate us because we are no longer part of their system
5. 1 Peter 4:12-13 – called to share in the sufferings of Christ
6. Col.1: 24 – fulfilling the sufferings of Christ
7. Phil.1: 12-14 – not a victim
8. Phil 4: 21-22 – overwhelming triumph of God
9. Romans 8:31-39 – no separation because of intercession (v. 34)

Summary

God has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation; we are now co-workers with Him in the ministry of bringing people to Himself through His Son. In fulfilling this ministry, because we are salt and light in this world, people will respond to us as they did to Christ; either desiring ministry or hating the light. As we share Christ's ministry we also share His sufferings, which God uses as a vehicle of sharing His life with those around us. We also share God's triumph in His Son over the forces of darkness – in time and in eternity.