

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Taught by Bruce Bickel

Session: August 3, 2012

Gracious God, we thank you for your mercy and your grace. Your mercy is beyond our comprehension, that you do not treat us as our sins deserve, that you've given us an east/west forgiveness—it has no end. Father, we humble ourselves before you this day. We pray that you'd cleanse us of all unrighteousness, those things that are offensive to you. Make us worthy vessels to sit at your feet, trusting that your Holy Spirit will open our eyes once again that we might behold you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Several years ago, back in 2005, 2006 and 2007, the Brave Men of Friday Mornings got involved with me in helping a Vietnamese friend of my who happened to be the son of the woman who is the executive director of the orphanage that we built in the city of Wei after the Tet Offensive. You helped us really save his life in one sense, taken him on a spiritual journey that was quite interesting. We got Tin in a new leg. He was wounded in Vietnam. Surgically, his leg was removed as a battlefield surgery where they cut off his leg to save his life with no anesthesia or blood transfusion. He survived. When I met him years later when I went back to look for the orphanage that I was involved in building, he had been on that wooden prosthesis that the U.S. Army gave him in 1969, and he'd been on that for 35 years. It was held together by bailing wire and duct tape. That's what you all helped us to do. Tom do you want to come up and join me? Tom was very instrumental in all of this. We had a wonderful reception when Tin came here to the United States to express his gratitude to you. Tom, you might want to tell them a little bit about what we did then.

Tom: There's a little flyer we handed out that will give you some of the graphics behind us. Tin came back...we had enough money to fly both he and his wife to the United States, and so we had a special, one time only, women can attend, Friday morning affair, where we just had a big banquet for Tin and his wife. This place was filled to the rafters. We welcomed him back. He was asked, "Tin, what would you like...we have your leg repaired and you're able to earn money now." He said, "Well, we need Bibles for our church and I would like a laptop." So one of our members gave him his laptop, and then we set about, as our group, we raised enough money, we bought about 238 Bibles in Vietnamese, and also 200 hymnals. We had them printed over then in Di Nang, sent down. There's a picture there. In fact, this middle picture shows the church where Tin attends and the orphanage that Bruce helped build is right next door to it. We've had a good relationship with him. Now, as you know, I've got a basket. We want to raise money. We're going to raise \$5,000 to get Tin down to Ho Chi Minh City, Saigon, where there's a medical doctor who is a Christian, that they can get a new prosthesis, do whatever surgery they need to make sure it all fits and everything, help him get trained. His wife will have to go with him, so a hotel room and accommodations for her and food and travel...it will all come to about \$5,000. I'm going to pass this around today. If you're not equipped, we're going to donate again next week. We want to help this man. He's a brother in Christ and it's just a real great pleasure to be part of effort.

Unfortunately, we cannot use the Servant's Fund because the Servant's Fund is restricted to U.S. agencies. What we would do is we would wire money to a bank in Vietnam. I've got the wiring instructions, and I know, and I've checked it with PNC and we can do it legally. I have his bank account number. We can just wire money from PNC. If you want to make a check, it would just have to be made out to me, and then I will just cash it and put it in and then we'll wire it from PNC. I've got everything all set up. If this is something that you would like to participate in, we can do this next week...today and next Friday. Make checks out to me and then I'll just put that into the fund, put it into the checking account and we'll send the whole thing over to Tin. I've talked to this Christian doctor in Saigon, in Ho Chi Minh City, who's going to be supervising the whole thing, and we've worked it out where...we're wiring through the bank of PNC directly to his account, we can make sure it gets there and there's no interception. If you'd like to help us, we'd like to do that. We just appreciate your involvement. This is,

from my point of view, you know, we started something and we need to finish what we started. This is just another opportunity for us to be involved in the body of Christ, so we do appreciate your consideration very much. Thank you.

Turn in your Bibles please, to Matthew 5. We're looking at the Beatitudes, these wonderful attitudes that Christ teaches us about kingdom living. It's the character of the nature of the person who's entered the kingdom of God and the characteristics of the conduct of a person who is a characteristic of the kingdom of God person. He's teaching his staff how to enter into the kingdom and how to live as a kingdom citizen. We now come to the last of these eight Beatitudes in verses 10 through 12, "¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

The interesting thing is that this is such a dichotomy compared to the standard of the system of this world, standard of living, because notice the contrast. Blessed when you're persecuted. The world's going to say how in the world is that possible? How is it that you can be persecuted, reviled, have people damage your reputation, and our response is we view ourselves as being blessed? That's essentially a summary statement of all of these other seven Beatitudes. It now comes into a culmination of he's saying, "This is the way that world's going to treat you because of the way that you're living, because of who you are."

Notice the word "blessed." Remember it's the Greek word makarios. It literally means happy in spite of circumstances. When you delve into the history of that word, it really has to do, in the Greek culture, it has to do with a mindset of prosperity. Not prosperity in wealth or in what you have, but in who you are. The Greeks viewed somebody who had the right state of mind as prosperous. Literally this idea of being blessed means this. It's a state of being that has the awareness of happiness. It's a state of being, in the person, that's aware of happiness.

Happiness, in the world's standard, is based upon happenings. Notice what Jesus says about the person who's blessed. He's saying you're blessed not because of what you have. He's saying you're blessed not because of what you have done. You see, that was the Pharisaic impression of righteousness. They viewed what I have done now means that I am blessed.

Notice how in our own vernacular in the Christian world we say, "God has blessed me today because I've been given a new job." We associate blessing with something that we have. We associate blessing with something that we have done. "I was involved in leading somebody to Christ," you might say. "The Lord really blessed me." Now those are true statements. I'm not knocking those. But that's not what Jesus is saying.

He says you're blessed because of your state of mind. You're blessed because of your state of being. You're blessed because of your character. You see, that's what he's describing. He's not saying you're blessed because you have something. He's not saying you are blessed because you have done something. He's saying you are blessed because you are something. It's not because of what you have. It's not because of what you've done. It's because of who are you. That's why you're blessed. That's the Greek understanding of the concept of makarios, which means this. You have a certain state of mind about yourself, and in having that state of mind, you are aware of what it means to be happy. Because the happiness is directly related to your state of being. It's not because of what you have that you're happy. It's not because of what you've done or that you are doing that you're happy. The thing that you recognize and are aware of happiness is because you recognize the state of being that you are as a believer.

Jesus says that's why you can be blessed in the midst of being persecuted. That's contrary to what the world would say. The world would say you're blessed because you've got something. You're blessed because you have a ministry that's doing something. Now those are true, but that's not what Jesus is emphasizing. He's saying you're blessed because you are something. That's what he's saying. It's a state of being that's aware of what it means to be happy in spite of circumstances.

You see, you can't be happy in spite of circumstances until you have this right state of being. That's what Jesus is saying. That's what he's telling his disciples at his very first staff meeting. He's saying that when you have this state of being, and that you're aware of what it means to be happy in spite of what's going on around you, the world's going to be against you because you really are a representative of me and the kingdom of God, which is the antithesis of the kingdom of the system of this world. He says blessed are you when the world turns its back against you.

Now let me just to have you a couple of examples. He mentions in verse 11 three types of suffering that we should expect. It doesn't mean that we go looking for it. It's a consequence of your state of being of who you are, not because of what you do or because of what you have. It's because of who you are in Christ as a kingdom citizen. He said the natural consequences are these things. Three things will be the result of how the world's going to come after you because you're different than the system of the world.

These acts of suffering that his disciples should expect to endure in this, what I would call, the line of duty of living a Christian life. We need to be reminded that we don't look for persecution to say, "Oh I need to go out and be persecuted so I feel better about myself." That's not what we're saying. All I'm saying is Jesus is saying is the consequence of the seven first Beatitudes will be this—that the world's going to be against you. You should expect that. The reason is because you are light because I'm light as I'll show you in a minute.

He goes through several different types of possibilities of suffering. The suffering is not limited to physical suffering or abuse. He lists three types of [UNCLEAR]. The first one is reviling. That is verbal abuse or accusation. Because you're a Christian, you're likely to be accused of being pig headed, of being biased, of being prejudiced, of all those types of things.

My pastor's son, who's a junior in high school, somebody approached him the other day and said, "What do you think of this gay marriage thing and the fact that there are some people who believe that marriage should be between a man and woman?" The young boy said, "I agree with what the biblical standard is." Kids then just harassed him immensely. They cussed him out. They swore at him. They did all sorts of things. Called him all kinds of names. That's reviling. You see, that's what he says. That's going to happen when you take a biblical stance, the world's not going to respond to that well.

Now you don't go looking for it. Understand that. You don't go out and try to seek it and make it happen. No. That's not what we're saying. All I'm saying is it's likely to happen, and when it does happen, you shouldn't be overwhelmed because that's natural when the system of this world comes after us.

The first thing he says is the possibility of verbal accusation or verbal abuse. The second is persecution. Now this word really in its proper understanding means to pursue, which means, in this case, to harass, trouble or molest. They're pursuing to harass you, either physically or verbally. Sometimes this persecution may be verbal persecution just as much as physical persecution. It may include the sort of handling or hunting down that Saul of Tarsus went through. In other words, people are really taking a purposeful choice to go after you. They're pursuing you. That's literally what it means. It means they've taken a definite goal to go after you, because you're a believer. It means their intention is to pursue you.

First of all, you might be verbally harassed. But there are going to be people who will intentionally pursue you because you're in Christ, and to do damage to you however they can do that.

The third type he mentions would be this—defamation of character. He describes the defamation of character to which the saints will be subjected because of their style of life. This can really be difficult for those of us who have sensitive spirits. In other words, nobody likes to have your character assassinated. Nobody likes to have your character defamed. Nobody likes that. Now I'm not saying this is what we go look for. All I'm saying is Jesus says these are likely to be the consequences of where you and I live.

The Scripture says that we are to be in the world but not of the world. Now that means, you know, a ship is much more effective when it's at sea. A ship doesn't do two well when it's in dry dock. It's not designed to be in dry dock. You and I are not designed to be sitting on some bump of a log being away from the world. We are to be in the world, but not of the world. The idea in a ship is you want the ship in the water, but you don't want any water in the ship. The same thing...you and I need to be in the world, but you don't want the world in us. You see, that's what he's saying.

So yes, you're in the world. You and I will function by design, by mission mindedness, because we are called to be in the world. You and I can't go off in some nice little resort and hang off and play...cleaning our belly buttons and have naval operations. You see, we need to be in the world. But what he's saying is when you're in the world, don't let the world be in you, and when that happens, you're likely to be reviled, you're likely to be persecuted, and you're likely to have your character defamed.

How do we handle that? Let me take you to a couple of verses and show you, first of all, how Jesus handled this. Let's go to 1 Peter 2:18. Notice the context of this passage is in the workforce relationship between a master and his servant. That would be your employer and yourself. Beginning at verse 18 of chapter 2, "Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect." The word "subject" there is also translated submissive. The word "submissive" is a military term meaning coming under the order of for protection. In other words, there's a sovereign design in the chain of command. When the Scripture says to the women, "be submissive to your husbands," it doesn't mean to become a second-rate citizen. It means line yourself up under the order for protection's sake. You see, that's how we need to look at this.

We are told to line ourselves up under the authority for protection's sake because there's a divine order behind it. The real issue is this. Do I believe that God is bigger than my boss? Do I really believe that? If I really believe that, then that's going to form the basis of my responses which is to respond with all respect.

Notice what he says, "be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust." (1 Peter 2:18) The issue here is not how you're being treated; it's how you're being responsive. It's your and my response to this thing by being submissive to our boss. It doesn't mean you're a brown-noser. It doesn't mean that at all. I'll show you that in a moment.

Let's read on, "¹⁹For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. ²⁰For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ²¹For to this you have been called." (1 Peter 2:19-21) You see, we're to be in the world, but not of the world. We don't want the world in us, but we need to be in the world. The world's not going to respond to us necessarily the way that we would like because you're associated with the person and work of Jesus Christ.

"For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example." (1

Peter 2:21) Now here's where we understand how you and I respond to these things. ^{22b}so that you might follow in his steps. ²²He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³When he was reviled," the same word that we see here against us. You're likely to be reviled. "He did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly." (1 Peter 2:23) See that keyword entrust? Here's what Jesus did. There's a difference between being submissive and entrusting. Nowhere in the Scripture does it say that you and I are to entrust ourselves to our boss. Nowhere does it say in the Scripture that a woman is to entrust herself to her husband. It says she is to be submissive to her husband. That means to line up for the protection's sake of an order that has been sovereignly designed. She takes that act of lining up under the protective order of her husband and entrusts that to God to use her submissiveness in a way that only he can sovereignly do. That's what it means to entrust. She's never to entrust it to her husband. She entrusts that God. Christ never entrusted himself to mankind; he submitted to them, but he never entrusted himself to them. He entrusted himself to whom? To God. That's the example we have.

Notice what Peter says in 1 Peter 4. I read 1 Peter 2 because that's the example we have. The difference between submissive and entrusting. Now 1 Peter 4:12-14, ¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed." Happy in spite of circumstances.

Now notice, you're blessed not because you have something, not because you've done something; you're blessed because you are something. You are something, "because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." (1 Peter 4:14b) That's who you are.

¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸And 'If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?'" (1 Peter 4:15-18)

Now notice this, ¹⁹Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will." (1 Peter 4:19) You want to know the God's will is? Not a job. It's not a house. Not a car. It might be...you see, one of the revealed things of God's will, it may be God's will that you and I suffer. How then do we respond if you know in the midst of God's will?

How many times have you heard somebody say, "I need to find another job. I'm praying that God will give me another job because I'm suffering at work"? It may be that suffering at work is God's will, because the Scripture says, one of God's six revealed wills for every believer is that you suffer. Saved, sanctified, spirit-led, submissive, saying thanks, suffering—those are the six things that everybody are in God's will. Your found in his will. Maybe you are in his will and you're found in it. You never find out his will until you're found in it. The real issue is am I found in his will. You don't go looking for it. You're not going to find it out because it's secret. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, "The secret things belong to God." The issue is not what job I have. You've got the freedom to take any job you want. The real issue is am I saved? Am I sanctified? Am I spirit-led? Am I submissive? Am I saying thanks? Am I suffering? Take the job. You see, it's not about the job; it's about who you are in the job. That's the issue.

Now notice what Peter says in 1 Peter 4:19, "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will." What's the next word? Entrust, "entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. There's the example you see in 1 Peter 2. Jesus was submissive but he entrusted. What is our action, the model that we follow that Christ gave us in the midst of living in a fallen world? We submit but we entrust. You take your act of submitting to your authority at work, whether they're good or unjust, and you take that

act and you give it to a sovereign God because you're entrusting that act of submissiveness to him, and saying, "God I know that you are bigger than they are, and I am entrusting this to you. I'm trusting my submissiveness to you." You don't entrust it to your boss.

A woman doesn't entrust it to her husband. She lines up under the order of her protection's sake and takes that activity, that state of being, that mindset, and says, "I'm going to entrust that to you, a sovereign God, who's going to rule the universe, because I know this—you are in control, you are sovereign, you have a right to rule." You see, that's where you and I then have a state of being that is radically different than the system of the world. You see, that's the state of being that's aware of happiness, because it's who you are.

Notice—the spirit of God and the glory of God rests upon you, Peter says. That's who you are in the midst of these situations.

Now I'm not saying that if you you're persecuted at work, you're more holy than somebody else. I'm not saying that. All I'm saying is don't try to bail out just when the fire warning light goes on. I mean, there might be some things that you can do to land the aircraft. You don't need to bail out at the first indication of trouble. You've got to find yourself am I in his will. What's the bigger picture? What's my state of being?

Let's take a look at the response that Jesus says we're to have. Back to Matthew 5. Let me give you some other insights on the Scripture about why this happens to us as believers. Notice the response, "Rejoice and be glad." (Matthew 5:12) Not only are these afflictions and persecutions that we receive because of our association with Christ, but they're to be received with a degree of gladness and rejoicing.

Why is it that you and I can rejoice when we're suffering? Notice, "Rejoice and be glad." (Matthew 5:12) That's our response to what we've just understood about suffering, reviling, character assassination and people directly pursuing us. Our response is not only to hang in there, because it may be God's will for us, but it's also this. There's one other thing we're to...we're to rejoice and be glad of that. You can't do that, brothers, unless you are in the right state of being, the state of your internal being. That's why I asked you the question a couple of weeks ago, "What do you think about when you have nothing to think about?" You see, blessed are the pure in heart. What are the things you think about when you have nothing else to think about? You see, that's your state of being.

One of the best ways you're going to understand your state of being is what Jesus says, "Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks." If you want an indication or barometer of your state of being, spiritually, listen to what comes out of your mouth. What do I talk about? You see, what you talk about is what you think about. What you think about is what you're going to act on. What you act on is going to become your habits. Those habits become your character. Your character defines your destiny.

You see, what you and I talk about, guys, is the very thing that we think about. You've got to take a look at that because that's an indication of your state of being, spiritually, is what comes out of my mouth, because it's a reflection of your heart. It's a reflection of really who I am. The heart is deceitful above all things. You can use all the Christology words you want to use, and these are great Christian words, but that may just be a smoke screen because it may not reveal your heart. You really have to ask yourself the question, "What do I think about when I have nothing to think about? Where does my mind go? Where does my mind go?" You see, that's all indications of my state of being that permits me to be aware of happiness in the midst of being persecuted.

Let me give you a couple of reasons why we can rejoice.

Don: I wonder if we, in America, can really identify with persecution with what Jesus is saying. I mean, yes, we had the Chick-fil-A incident, and people, mayors in different cities not wanting Chick-fil-A and everything like that. That's persecution. [UNCLEAR]...what you went through, persecution, too, but I wonder if we really...we don't have the kind of persecution that people in Islamic countries have, for example.

Absolutely correct.

Don: Yet, for them to rejoice, for them to do what Jesus says that they're to do, that [UNCLEAR] something that we're capable of. That's something that Jesus has to...the Holy Spirit has to do in us, because, wow, to rejoice whenever you're beaten and suffer and your possessions are taken away. I just wonder if...persecution like that may come someday to us, but I wonder if we can really identify with the kind of persecution that Peter went through in the days that he wrote his epistle or that people like Islamic countries go through.

I think you're absolutely right, Don, We have no concept of persecution in our country. I would say what we go through is irritation. We're just irritated. We're not persecuted; we're just irritated. We have no idea what that's like. So Don's absolutely correct. I mean, even what Tin has gone through in Vietnam in the church when I visited them. The stuff they've gone through we have no concept of.

Several years ago, I had the privilege of teaching at the Reformed Seminary in China. I taught a course on Christ in the Old Testament. There were several pastors from home churches and from mainland China who came over to Taiwan, and they were funded by some missionaries to bring them over to get some theological training. There were probably about 50 pastors and about 23 to 24 of them were in home churches in inland China.

In the time I got to know them, it was a wonderful experience for me. A couple of things, insights, that really helped me and humbled me a great deal. I had to speak through a translator. Bishop Rogers, you've probably done this, too, and know how difficult that is. You would say, "Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 5. Let's look at the Beatitudes." Now from my perspective, that is really boring. I mean, I thought when I finished, how could anything positive come out of that because there was no passion on my part, there was no smooth delivery, there weren't all the things that I work so hard to do to be an excellent teacher and preacher. None of those things were there, and I just had to speak in five-word sentences."

The beautiful thing was this. It wasn't the messenger. It was the message. Once again, I realized, "Bruce, you're insignificant. It's really not your mouth; it's really what comes out of your mouth. Don't worry about the delivery; worry about the content. It's really the Holy Spirit's job to be the teacher. You're just the vessel who is expounding truth by plagiarizing the Scripture and just repeating a message that's already been given." That's good preaching is plagiarism. You just take a message that's already there and you give it. Great lesson for me. It wasn't me; it was really the message, because their response was just overwhelming. I mean, these brothers were just so grateful to have been exposed to the truth.

As I got to know them and had some fellowship with them over time, we began to talk, Don, about what you just brought up about do we really understand in America what it means to be persecuted. I listened to some of the things that they were going through. In their country, if your wife had a second child, automatic abortion. By law, you can only have one baby. They were telling me how they had to...their wife got pregnant with a second baby, and they had to hide her for nine months in a cave because the government would come after them because the government said you can only have one or two children,

whatever the number was. If you had more than that, they came after you, and you could be persecuted, and even put to death. We have no idea about what it means to live in a culture like that.

I asked them, “What is the one thing that has been most helpful to you in seeing the development of the body of Christ in your country?” And do you know what they said? Communism. They said, “Now that we look back, the thing that produced more growth in the church than anything else was Communism because we were persecuted, and it really sifted the sheep from the goats, and the wheat from the tares. The real members of the body of Christ, the kingdom of God, came to the surface, and we bonded together. If we could pray for anything in America, in the church of America, we’ve never been there, but we just hear about it, the thing that we pray for more than anything else is that the church in America will be persecuted, because that’s when it really comes to the surface.” The cream rises to the top. I was just overwhelmed that they’re saying what we need in America is the church to be persecuted. Well that may be.

So Don, you’re absolutely right. We have no concept. And yet, we have the audacity to gripe and so, “Oh my boss treated me poorly today. Aren’t I bad? I think I’ll get another job because God’s will is that I be happy.” Do you see how tritely we treat this stuff? You see, we’re associated with the King of kings, the Lord of lords. We’re associated with a whole different style of life.

Let me show you how this worked. First of all, let me give you a couple of things of why we should rejoice. These afflictions come upon us for Christ’s sake, and since he suffered so much for us, for our redemption, we ought to rejoice greatly when we are called to suffer a little bit for him. In other words, the number one reason we should rejoice is because he suffered so much for us, we are now suffering for him because his body is still suffering. He has a body and who is it? It’s us. His body is still suffering. Because he suffered so much for our redemption, we ought to rejoice because we have the privilege of suffering for him.

Secondly, these trials bring us into fellowship with a noble company of martyrs, for to meet the afflictions associated with the holy prophets and the apostles. You’re in good company, and you realize that I’m going through maybe a much lesser degree than what they went through, but in my culture, I’m going through the same thing, and I’m in good company. You see, one of the great things of leadership is you’re only as good as the people you surround yourself with. You see, when you and I suffer for the sake of Christ, we’re associating ourselves with pretty good people. Read Hebrews 11 and you’ll just see those who suffered righteously for Christ’s sake.

Thirdly, we who suffer persecution for Christ’s sake because we’re associated with his sinless perfection and perfect obedience are promised a great reward in heaven. A great reward in heaven. One of the I enjoyed about the Puritans—when I was reading and studying at Oxford, read those 3,000 Puritan sermons—one of the great things I noticed about them is they had such a wonderful view about heaven. They really looked forward to it. That was such a comfort for them, such a motivation for them, such a development of their perseverance in the midst of their persecution is they understood the great reward that they had. You see, we don’t think enough about heaven. I’m not saying that you and I are so heavenly minded that we’re no earthly good. I’m not saying that. All I’m saying is when you think about nothing, because you have nothing to think about, just think about heaven. The great reward that is there because you’re a child of the King, you’ve been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, you’re in the world, but not of the world. Yes, you might be reviled. You might be sought after and persecuted. And you might have your character assassinated. If the Lord is pleased to have us suffer more that, that we would do it with sense of rejoicing because we know this—that he suffered for us, am I not willing to suffer for him.

Secondly, we’re associated with a great, great group of company, the martyrs. And thirdly, there’s a

great reward that awaits us in heaven. So we rejoice in the midst of that. The world won't understand. And probably more than anything else, you and I, when we do not give them what they stimulate within us, that reveals more the character of Christ than anything else. That is not weakness, brothers. Remember we studied the Beatitude blessed are the meek? Meekness is power under control.

I was talking to an athletic director of a high school the other day who asked me to come in and talk with him. He said, "If you were a coach here, how would you want your players to play?" I said, "I would want them to play with meekness." "What!?!?" I said, "I would want them to play with meekness." He said, "What do you mean by that? They'll be doormats. You've got to win games." I said, "Do you understand what meekness is?" He says, "Yeah! It's a mamby-pamby pushover and you get stepped on." I said, "No. I would want my players to play with power under control. I would want them to have tremendous power, tremendous strength, tremendous passion, but I would want them to control that power. I would want my players to play with meekness. I would want them to be meekest team on the field because my players would be powerful. They'd be strong. They would be men of endurance. But they would control it." That's what you don't see in sport today. You don't see the control because they're not meek. They've got this idea that meekness is weakness.

If you think meekness is weakness, try to be meek the next time and see how difficult that is. Meekness is power under control. That's what Jesus is saying, is when you have that in your life, that state of being, when you're persecuted, you're reviled, persecuted or character assassination, you're going to be in a state of being, a state of mind, that says, "I'm aware of the happiness that I have because I'm really blessed. Not because of what I have, or because of what I do, but I'm blessed, happy in spite of circumstances, because of who I am, and I'm associated with the person and work of Christ." Rejoice and be glad. Let your light shine before men so that the world will see that all of your deeds are from God the Father. Amen?

Audience Members: Amen!

Let's pray. Father, this is so contrary to what the world teaches us, but that's to be expected. You told Nicodemus, who thought he was blessed because of all his external righteousness, how he thought that he could add to his sanctification and his justification. His justification was because of what I do. We now realize, Father, that our justification is by faith alone. You declare us righteous because of the completed work of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Father help us realize that we cannot add to our justification. We just need to enjoy it and just live it out and have a state of being that says blessed are we not because of what we have or what we do, but because of who we are, and that's directly related to the fact that Jesus said it is completed. You accomplished our salvation, didn't make it possible. You accomplished it for us, and in that, we rejoice. May we rejoice in being persecuted for your sake. All God's Brave Men said...Amen!!