

Persecuted... Blessed!

The Beatitudes – 9

November 2, 2025

The eighth Beatitude teaches that persecution for righteousness is a blessing, though it challenges our comfort-seeking nature. But as Pastor Paul points out, the path of blessing isn't always the path of least resistance. Sometimes God's greatest work in our lives happens not despite our difficulties, but through them.

Rather than accommodating (blending in) or isolating (hiding) ourselves, as believers we are encouraged to view rejection and ridicule as a good thing: it demonstrates God's work in our lives and offers an opportunity to make a difference in the world.

While persecution is inevitable for those who live godly lives, we can prepare our hearts to face it beforehand: by trusting God's knowledge, relying on daily grace, pursuing spiritual depth, and staying in Christian community.

Ice Breaker

Have you ever played a memorable practical joke on someone, or had one played on you? If so, share the details!

Discussion Questions

1. Comment on the following: *“Not all persecution is because of righteousness, but all Kingdom righteousness invites persecution.”*

- As the late Wayne Smith put it, *“If you’re carrying the ball, you’re going to get tackled.”* As we live out our faith we can expect persecution. “Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).

2. **Read Matthew 5:10-12.** Share an example of how you’ve been “treated badly” for doing right or because of your commitment to God. Were you surprised in any way—either by its intensity or the direction from which it came?

- Persecution can be physical or verbal in nature. Notice the ways in which Jesus describes persecution in verse 11: insults, slander, falsehoods. We can “feel the heat” in more indirect ways as well: being snubbed by neighbors, left out of extended family gatherings, overlooked for promotions at work, etc.
- Persecution occasionally comes from those closest to us (consider the implications of the “they” in verse 12).

3. When you were younger, how did you typically react when maligned or ridiculed by others? How has the way in which you respond to hurt changed over the years?

- There are many ways to respond to persecution: anger, shock, disbelief, sadness, stoic resignation, etc. However, Jesus says that we are blessed when persecuted for His sake—and understanding this spiritual truth enables us to respond with “exceeding joy” and gladness of heart, no matter how difficult the situation might be.

4. How could experiencing ridicule or rejection—even from those we know and love—be considered a good thing?

- Suffering for Jesus’ sake is clarifying, both for ourselves and others. It reveals where our true loyalties lie. When facing persecution, the important question doesn’t concern its fairness, but rather—*How will you respond?* Suffering is an invitation into a deeper walk with the Lord. As in everything, Jesus is our example (1 Peter 2:21-23).
- Pastor Paul posed a useful question to consider whenever facing difficulties, “*What if the path of blessing comes directly through a path we are trying to avoid?*”
- Persecution is also an opportunity. The way in which we respond to ridicule and rejection—our attitudes, words, and behavior—are occasions to exemplify Christ and be on mission.

5. What’s one specific relationship or situation in your life right now where God might be using the suffering you are experiencing for His greater purposes and glory? *What is one “takeaway” from Jesus’ teaching that would strengthen you in this situation to follow Jesus, regardless?*

- It takes courage to make a difference in the world. To make a difference, you must be willing to be different.

Prayer

- As a group, pray for one another about the demanding situation in which you find yourself right now. Be sure to also pray for your enemies (Matthew 5:43-47). Ask the Lord for courage to step into Jesus’ particular way of living (the Beatitudes).
- “Lord, I don’t ask to avoid those who cause me pain. But I do ask you to give me... courage—to be obedient and willing to be different; wisdom to discern how my difficult situation might serve to advance the gospel; and strength—to react in Christlike ways even when I’m hurting.”

- Ask God to give you the joy and gratitude that comes from an eternal perspective that trusts Him (notice Mark 10:29-30; also, 2 Corinthians 4:17).