

# OpenTheo

## Matthew 5:10 - 8th Beatitude



### Gospel of Matthew - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg explores the 8 Beatitudes outlined in Matthew 5 and explains how they encapsulate the values of the Kingdom of God. He emphasizes the importance of rejecting the values of the world and rejoicing in persecution for righteousness' sake, as it can be a positive force that drives one closer to God. Gregg also notes the distinction between being persecuted for one's faith and simply facing opposition for doing wickedness, and highlights the value of being counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus.

### Transcript

In the 8 Beatitudes that are found at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, we have Jesus encapsulating in 8 brief statements the values of the Kingdom of God, which are so different from the values that people normally pick up simply from living in this world and following the ways of the world and the way that we're taught and the way that we pick up by osmosis, as we see other people pursuing their ways of life. Jesus indicated that there are things that are valuable, which the world does not recognize as valuable, and there are things that are of no value, or even of negative value, that the world values. Or as Jesus put it in Luke chapter 16, 15, he said, the things that are highly esteemed among men are an abomination to God.

And so Jesus, in the 8 Beatitudes, basically acquaints his disciples with a new system of values. And that system of values is seen in the persons who are enviable. You see, most of us would see a rich, comfortable man who's never had a sick day in his life.

Everybody loves him. He's famous. He's got a happy marriage, and he's got all that he wants.

He's living in the lap of luxury and says, there's a fortunate man. I wish I could be like him. Well, if you think that way, you're not thinking like Jesus.

Jesus said, woe unto you rich, and blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Jesus said, blessed are you who are hungry and thirsty. And he said, blessed are you who weep and mourn, and so forth.

Now, not all of these Beatitudes provide such a stark contrast with the world's way of seeing things, but most of them essentially do. And what Jesus is saying to his disciples is, you've got to start, if you're going to be a disciple of mine, you've got to start out by rejecting the world's values. What the world has taught you to seek and to love and to value and to envy has got to be thrown out and replaced with God's way of seeing things.

Because if you don't see things from God's point of view, you'll never have the motivation or the stamina to pay the price of being a disciple. Now, among the things in the Beatitudes that are very different from the way the world thinks, we have the contents of this last Beatitude, the eighth one, which is found in Matthew chapter 10. And then in the two verses following, Jesus gives it a personal application.

The Beatitudes, generally speaking, are axiomatic, generic statements spoken of in the third person. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn.

Blessed are those who hunger. Blessed are the pure in heart, and so forth. Here also we have in verse 10, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

But Jesus does something here that he did not do with the other Beatitudes. He personalizes it. In verses 11 and 12 he says, And blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Now, Jesus indicated that persecution can be a positive thing, and one which makes a person enviable if he experiences it.

Now, we don't usually think of persecution as an enviable thing, and as I said, this is one area where we really need to have our thinking changed if we're going to come into line with what God said. Over in the parallel to this in Luke chapter 6, Jesus said, Blessed are you when all men hate you and revile you and cast out your name as evil. But he also said, Woe unto you when all men speak well of you.

Well, isn't that really what we all naturally want? Is everyone to speak well of us? Don't we want people to like us and to think highly of us and to want to be with us and to value our company and not to reject us? Of course, that's our natural inclination. And Jesus is not saying that it's wrong to have this natural inclination. But there is a time when the approval of man and the accolades of man can become an idol to the point where in order to avoid persecution and to retain the well-thinking or the well-speaking of the world about us, we compromise in what we know is right.

After all, the world is not on God's side. And the world is, in fact, running in rebellion against God, according to Scripture, according to Jesus. But if you turn around to follow

Jesus, you'll be going against the grain.

You'll be swimming upstream. You'll be hitting the world head on, and all its force will be seeking to drive you the other way. They'll even be offended that you've turned around at all because the fact that you're not running with them in the same direction is, in a way, even without a word, you condemn them by saying, the way they're going is wrong, else why wouldn't you be going with them? The very fact that you've chosen a different course means that you, whether you intend to do so or not, are condemning the course that you've reversed yourself from in favor of the one that you're now taking.

Peter points this out in 1 Peter 4. He says, What he means by that is the one who's suffering persecution is suffering because he stopped living a sinful life. And he explains it further in verse 2 and following, That means to please men. But for the will of God, that is to please God.

He's no longer living to please men, he's living to please God. Paul said in Galatians 1.10, he said, Peter continues in verse 3, In regard to these, Notice this. You are not running with them anymore.

You're running against the trend. You're going against the flow. And they think it's strange, and they think it threatening.

And now, let me tell you this. If you know that you're on the right path, yet somebody chooses a different path than yours, that doesn't make you insecure. That doesn't make you want to persecute them if you know you're on the right path.

If they're on a different path, you know they're going the wrong way and you might pity them, but you don't hate them. You're not threatened by them. But you see, the reason the world persecutes Christians is because the world is on the wrong path and they have no assurance that they're on the right one.

They may hope they are, or they may even know they aren't. But they have no assurance that they're on the right path because they aren't on the right path, and they can't know that they are. And when you turn around and start following Jesus and go the opposite way, you are essentially saying, the path that I was on, the path that the world is on, is not the right path, and I have now found the right path.

This is threatening to them, unless they want to turn around also. You see, many people don't want to turn around because the path they're on is the path of sinful self-indulgence, and they enjoy that. But they also don't want anyone telling them it's the wrong path.

And so, when you turn around and follow Jesus, there are some who will persecute you for that reason. And that's what Peter's talking about there. Now, Jesus personalizes this.

He doesn't just say, blessed are those who are persecuted. He then says, and blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you, and so forth. Now, let's clarify what we mean by persecution.

Not all suffering really qualifies as persecution, because persecution only occurs when somebody is hurting you or trying to hurt you, either verbally or physically, because of outright hostility toward you, because of something about you. In other words, if somebody swerves ahead of you in traffic and doesn't even know you were there, you might be angry, and you might consider it an inconsiderate act on their part, but they were not persecuting you. They didn't even know you were there.

There was no innate hostility there. If somebody robs you, jumps out of an alley and takes your money, or rapes you, or even kills you, but they didn't know you at all, it could have been anyone else, they just wanted a mark, a victim, well, they're not persecuting you either, in the same sense that Jesus is talking about. Persecution here is where somebody knows what you stand for and objects to it enough to criticize you or worse, maybe to attack you, to physically hurt you, even kill you, because Christians have been put to death many times throughout history, as Jesus himself was, and the apostles were, and as many Christians in some parts of the world do now.

This is called persecution. Now, Jesus indicates that persecution is a blessing in certain circumstances. You see, you could be persecuted for being a communist, and if you're a communist, and a bunch of right-wing rednecks take you out and beat you up, that's persecution.

If you're of a minority, and a bunch of white supremacists pick on you for that, that's persecution too. But that's not particularly a kind of persecution that's to be rejoiced in, or that's a blessing to you. Jesus said you're blessed in two cases.

In verse 10, he said, when you are persecuted for righteousness' sake, and in verse 11, he says, when you're persecuted, he says, for my sake, that is, for Christ's sake. Now, is there a difference between persecution for righteousness' sake and persecution for Christ's sake? Well, there is a difference, although they certainly overlap. On the one hand, of course, there are people who hate Jesus.

There are people for whom Jesus is someone that they have decided to take a stand against. It may be people who were, maybe they were raised in the church, and they saw nothing but a bunch of hypocrites there, or maybe they found their strict Christian upbringing oppressive, and they rebelled against this, and they've just decided that from now on they hate Christianity, and they hate Christians, and they hate Christ, and they don't ever want to hear that name again. There are people like that.

Or there are some people of other religions who see Christ and Christianity as specifically against them, and they are set against it. Many Jewish people believe that

they've been persecuted by Christians for centuries. Now, the fact of the matter is that Jews often have been persecuted by an organization calling itself the church and regarding itself as Christianity.

But we need to remember that Jesus referred to Christianity as discipleship. People who follow Jesus, follow his teachings, are real Christians. There's unfortunately many people who call themselves Christians who are not.

And no true disciple of Jesus ever persecuted anybody because Jesus taught against doing such things. Unfortunately, people who claim to be Christians have indeed persecuted Jews and other people over the years, and sadly the Jews believe that Christians have persecuted them, and therefore many of them think of Christ as the enemy of Judaism, or as the enemy of Jewish people. In fact, in many cases, if a Jewish person converts to Christianity, his family regards him as dead to the family, or persecutes him for it.

Same thing may be true of a Muslim family. They see Christianity as a political religion that belongs to certain countries of the world, just like Islam is a political religion that belongs to certain countries of the world, and these nations have been at war with each other historically, in the Crusades and so forth, and therefore there's long-standing hostility between these religions. And therefore Muslims often hate Christians, or hate Christianity for that reason.

In other words, there are people who simply don't like Jesus, or don't like what they perceive Jesus to be, or what they think stands for Jesus. And as soon as you associate with Him and say, I'm a Christian, I'm a follower of Jesus, these people will hate you for no other reason than they hate Him. They don't hate you because of anything you've done to them, they hate you because they hate Jesus, and now that you're associated with Him, they hate you too.

Now this is being persecuted for His name's sake, this is being persecuted for Jesus' sake. Now there's also this other thing he talks about, being persecuted for righteousness' sake. Now this overlaps, because of course if you're persecuted for Jesus' sake, you are persecuted for doing what's right, that is becoming a Christian and becoming a follower of His.

But there may be people who, it's not an issue to them whether you're a Christian or not, they don't care whether you follow Jesus or not, they might not even know what it means to be a Christian, but they don't like you because you stand for what's right, and they are doing what's wrong. If you're working in an office where everybody routinely cheats the employer by petty theft or by cheating on their time cards, and you don't do that, then they may think you're some kind of a goody two-shoes, and of course by contrast to you, they look bad, and they don't like the way that makes them feel, so they want to make you feel bad or become bad, they might want to corrupt you or just drive you out of

there. If everyone else is telling dirty jokes and blaspheming God and you won't do that, it might make them feel uncomfortable because you're doing what's right.

You see, if everybody does what's wrong, then everybody feels comfortable doing what's wrong. But if everyone does what's wrong except for one person, and that person does what's right, then everyone who's doing what's wrong looks wrong. It's like if everybody was flunking a test, and one person got a straight A on the test.

That person breaks the curve. It makes everyone else look bad. If everyone got an F, one might argue that the test was unfair.

But if one student gets an A and everyone else gets Fs, that one A makes those who flunked it look like the losers and failures that they are. Therefore, if everyone is doing wickedness, then they might argue that whatever standards of morality they're violating are unrealistic standards. But as soon as someone comes along and meets those standards and lives a righteous life in front of them and doesn't compromise, then they feel threatened.

Then they realize that it can be done and that they are not doing it, and therefore they are culpable. It makes people feel guilty to be wicked in the presence of a righteous person. And for that reason, many times wicked people will persecute righteous people, not because of Jesus per se, but because they simply don't love righteousness.

They love their sin. Joseph never preached Jesus, never even knew the name of Jesus in the Old Testament, but his brothers hated him. You know why? Because they were wicked men, and Joseph would report their wickedness to their father, to whom they were accountable.

And they hated Joseph for that, and they plotted to kill him. Eventually, they sold him into slavery. This is persecution for righteousness' sake.

You may be persecuted simply because you take a stand for righteousness, or you may be persecuted because you take a stand for Christ. In either case, of course, you're taking a stand on God's side, and those who hate God are not likely to congratulate you for that. They're more likely to persecute you for it, and Jesus knew that well enough because he himself was persecuted by the wicked, and he was put to death.

He said his disciples would expect the same treatment. Jesus told his disciples in the upper room, If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you. And here he tells them, Actually, in the parallel account in Luke 6, he says, Now why should it be such an ecstatic experience to be persecuted? Do we love pain? No, no one loves pain, except people who are mentally ill.

If that's even a true category. But the point here is, you rejoice not because you're suffering, but because you're suffering on the right side. Jesus said that they also

persecuted the prophets who were before you.

That is to say, you're in the right company. If you are suffering for doing what's right, what company are you in? Well, you're in the company of the prophets. You're in the company of Abel, who was persecuted and killed by his brother Cain because he did right and Cain was evil.

You're in the company of people like Joseph and David, who suffered for their relationship with God from people who hated them and hated God. But these are good company to be in, but even more wonderful is to be in the company of Christ himself. Because Christ suffered, and if Christ suffered, then we should be prepared to suffer with him and bear his reproach.

You know, if people hate Jesus, but they like me all right, to me that's kind of an insult. It's an insult to my Christianity. Because it means that whatever they hate about Jesus, they don't see in me.

And that means I'm not very much like him. I actually hope that if people hate Jesus, they will hate me too. Not because I like to be hated, but because I desire to be like Jesus.

And certainly if people hate Jesus, it is because of something they don't like about him. And if they don't see that same thing in me, enough to hate me as well, then I'm not as much like Jesus as I hope to be. It is actually a flattery to be persecuted by some.

You know, there's some people whose insults really fall like flatteries because of who they are, considering the source. To have their approval would be an insult, would put you in the wrong camp. To be on the side of the prophets and the holy men of God and Jesus himself and the apostles and the saints and the martyrs throughout history is a flattery.

It's a flattery to be counted worthy of that. You know, it says in the fourth chapter of Acts that the disciples Peter and John were whipped by the supreme court of Israel, the Sanhedrin, for their testimony of Jesus. And when they left, it says they went away from the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus.

That's what Jesus said to do when they persecute you, rejoice. He said, well, they did. They went away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus.

Why? Because it's a flattery. If people who hate Jesus think you're enough like him to bother them in the same way that Jesus bothers them, then they're equating you with him to a certain degree. And that is indeed a commendation of a backhanded sort.

Now, why is it a blessing? Because Jesus said, yours is the kingdom of heaven and great is your treasure in heaven, great is your reward in heaven. He said that in verse 12. He said, rejoice and be exceedingly glad for great is your reward in heaven.

Would you rather have a life always approved of by all men and then rejected by God? Or would you rather be hated by all men and be accepted by God? Would you rather have a life of comfort and freedom from persecution for your lifetime and then be lost for all eternity? Or would you rather be loyal to God, suffer whatever persecution comes as a result of that in this lifetime and have eternal rewards in heaven? Well, to me the answer is quite simple. I don't know about you, but I would much rather have rewards in heaven for the simple reason that they last forever. And whatever rewards the earth may give, not only do they not last forever, but they're of little value.

What is the value of somebody saying good things about you or liking you? After you've been dead five minutes, they'll have forgotten you probably, or at least after they've left the funeral and the memorial's been read and so forth and they walk off and they'll live the rest of their life as if you'd never lived. What a wonderful thing it is to get their approval in your lifetime. It's worth nothing in the long run.

But to have a reward in heaven, to have God say, Well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful in little things. I will now make you rule over great things, is certainly a reward which not everyone has.

Not everyone will receive. Jesus said such rewards will be for those who are faithful in persecution, for righteousness' sake, and blessed are those who are. You know, Jesus said in Revelation chapter 2 and verse 10 to the church of Smyrna, He said, Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Well, the crown of life is simply eternal life, which you'll be rewarded with if you're faithful to Jesus unto death. That death may be caused by human beings who hate you. It may be the result of persecution, or it may simply be a natural death after a life of being faithful to God.

Which life will experience persecution? Because Paul said all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. He also said in Acts chapter 14, It is through much tribulation that we enter the kingdom of God. You have to decide what matters more to you, the rewards of this world or the rewards of the kingdom of God.

What is the kingdom of God that the persecuted for righteousness will inherit? Paul said it in Romans 14, 17. The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, that is the kingdom of God.

That is the reward of those who are faithful in persecution for righteousness' sake. Well, we've run out of time for this one again, and we'll continue our study in the Sermon on



the Mount. Next time, please join us if you can.