

# The Gospel of Matthew

Title: Blessed Are Harassed

Text: Matthew 5:10-12

**Introduction:** For most of us today, we can't grasp the physical, visible, open persecution of Christians in closed countries. The persecution we see in the NT and early church history through historical data, shows a vile, hatred for the truth. For context, here are the ways the early church was persecuted and what Jesus was promising they would be persecuted for.

- For righteousness sake
- Most, if not all, would come from the religious leaders (persecute means to drive away, to follow)
- Insulted
- Falsely say all kinds of evil

**Introduction 1A** - Two times we see the promise, "**For theirs is the kingdom of heaven**" (vs. 10), "**For your reward in heaven is great**" (vs. 12). Thus the reason for our hope is not in what happens on earth, but in what God has promised. This remains the great hope of the believer.

## Point 1 - The Persecution

Persecuted (mentioned twice) insulted, falsely accused, all kinds of evil against you. Imagine today at the culturally sensitive churches who don't like to talk about hell, sin, wrath, how this message would be received? Being a Christian isn't about saying you want to be persecuted, ridiculed or harassed? That will come if your a believer and promoter of truth. The reason for persecution in the times Jesus was speaking?

- Because of me (vs. 11)
- Jesus is truth, not a source of truth, and the truth is always the enemy - we are in a time where Paul was in Galatians 4:16 "**So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?**"

**1A** - Those who live righteously will inevitable be harassed. 2 Timothy 3:12 "**Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.**" And the point being is a believer will be a firm promoter of truth, and the world hates the truth. Thomas Watson said "*Though they may be never so meek, merciful, pure in heart, their piety will not shield them from sufferings. They must hand their harp on the willows and take the cross. The way to heaven is by the way of thorns and blood. If you follow Christ you will see the swords and staves.*" Cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4; Romans 8:16-17; Philippians 1:19-20

**Application:** We aren't asking for persecution, it will come as you stand for the truth. Many are ridiculed today for their positions on marriage, family, sexuality and biblical views of the world. There are countries today where the Bible is outlawed by a totalitarian regime. Even in the west, through the excuses of the Covid virus, some governments have restricted Christians from gathering.

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**1B** - Too many professing Christians are popular and praised by the world. It's not that the world has raised its standards, but that Christians have lowered theirs. If a pastor is popular with liberal TV reporters and papers, then he likely is preaching something the world likes. James (4:4) makes it clear concerning this "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." Cf. 1 John 2:15-17

**1C** - When (vs. 11) trials comes not if. The word "when" indicates the idea of whenever. It does not mean Christians are in a constant state of affliction, persecution. But trials will come. 1 Peter 4:12 "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal (trial) among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you."

## Point 2 - Types Of Persecution

Physical assaults, verbal, emotional, slander, lies and false accusations. The phrase "blessed are those who have been persecuted" is a passive perfect participle, and could be translated "allow themselves to be persecuted" and the perfect form indicates "continuous" in this case allowing a willingness to be persecuted for godly living. Cf. 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, it was A.W. Pink who said "We have no clearer evidence of the Lord's blessings than to be cursed for His sake." Cf. 1 Peter 3:13-18

## Point 3 - The Hope And Response

Rejoice and be glad because you have a reward eternal in heaven. We are not specifically told to be glad and rejoice in the trial or suffering themselves, but the reward is great, eternal heaven. We know that heaven is eternal, our present life is passing away, even as we speak. James 4:14 "Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." In Matthew 6:19-20 Jesus deals with the anxiousness that many find themselves in, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal."

The world cannot rob us of our eternal hope and joy. Many who have suffered have longed for the moment their eyes see the glories of heaven. No believer is looking down on earth, there's nothing to see here. The suffering and trials you encounter are not new. We know they come because you believe the truth. Cf. Hebrews 11:36-38; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5