

The Beatitudes

"I Know What I Believe."



Blessed are those
who are
persecuted for
righteousness' sake,
for theirs is
the kingdom
of heaven.

~ Matthew 5:10

At first reading, this beatitude doesn't sound like it comes from a loving God that is protecting us daily! The beatitudes are not easy to understand and accept. He wants us to be happy when someone is harassing us because someday we will know that we were right and then we will be blessed? Are we supposed to accept criticism and not reply? I don't think so, although I must admit that the initial glance causes one to wonder.

Even Christ got upset with the actions of people, but he didn't hurt the people. He may have stopped their actions and disrupted their practices, but he did nothing to physically hurt them. He disliked the sin, but he always loved the sinner.

I believe Christ is telling us that if we react in an aggressive or forceful way, we are not going to accomplish anything. If we react in love, we can do much more.

Sometimes the best thing to do is just "do nothing" and wait until we know what would be a good response. Or we can allow the person to see what is right for himself. Maybe if we allow the person a little time to think things through, he will see the positive side of the discussion. But we also are not allowed to always just sit back and do nothing if someone is attacking our faith.

Peterson translates it "You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom." Sometimes, we need to dig deeper and look at the person and not the sin. We need to make sure that we know the reason for the actions of the other person, and then react in love to help correct that attitude against us and our beliefs. Only then can we really feel the love of God working through us, and we will be blessed.

When should we be committed to God? There are many times things come up for discussion in a group of Christians, and there are differences of opinion that lead to separations into different

God is always faithful to answer.
Sometimes His answer is
a much desired "yes".
Sometimes His answer is
a merciful "no".
Sometimes His answer is
a faith-building "not yet".
And sometimes...sometimes,
when an answer cannot be found,
His answer is simply
"Trust me" ~♥

denominations and different churches. God doesn't say that we need to be Presbyterian, Methodist, Roman Catholic, or Lutheran. Yet we "fight" for these differences and sometimes they get so big they get in front of our real mission.

I have never been "put on the spot" for my religious beliefs. Many have. It was not limited to the days of Christ and the disciples, it is here today. Maybe you

haven't been persecuted, but Christians in the Middle East have had to hide their strong convictions until they were outside the country that would not accept their beliefs.

Not too many years ago, a female missionary was killed by ambush in Africa. These people are in danger for their lives because they want to tell others about Jesus Christ and his love. Today, in our churches we are sometimes not allowed to put a missionary's name on our church web site because these people are being hunted down.

We see fishing mentioned many times in the Bible. Jesus had given these beatitudes to His disciples, many who had been fisherman. But they didn't just sit on a shore and cast their line

For I am convinced
that neither death
nor life, neither angels
nor demons,
neither the present
nor the future,
nor any powers,
neither height nor
depth nor anything
else in all creation,
will be able to
separate us from the
love of God that
is in Christ Jesus
our Lord.
Romans 8:38-39

Come to Me,
all you who are
weary and burdened,
and I will give you
rest. Matthew 11:28

waiting for a fish to bite. They didn't put out fancy lures and try to trick the fish. They were not what we could call "line fisherman."

They were net fishermen. Their fishing was very labor-intensive. Sometimes they got no results and sometimes they had a "big catch." The same is true in evangelism. We need to be persistent and dedicated. Sometimes we will have great results. Sometime we will be criticized for our beliefs. They had the same tenacity as Disciples for Christ.

We can go back to the Disciples and know through research that most of them were killed by people who were upset with the message they were giving about salvation. It was something to help them. Without those early Christians who were willing to sacrifice their lives to spread God's love, we would not know of it today. And even in modern times, many people have sacrificed their lives to tell the love of Christ. I believe, as this Beatitude says they are with Christ now. Theirs is the "Kingdom of Heaven."

Christ told us "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer everyone." What does salt do to our speech? I know that it tenderizes meat, does it mean it should tenderize our speech. I have known some people that were what we call "Sacchariny." They are always sweet, but it is artificial; it

doesn't mean anything. Saccharin is unstable. Are we sometimes unstable in our faith? Do we sometimes need to "tender" our speech when talking with others? Or, we also know that salt brings out the flavor. Do we need to make sure that our speech has the correct message of love? I have known other people that are always happy because they have a peace with God that cannot be explained. We may think we are persecuted but if it will help someone else come to know Christ as their personal Savior, then that is what we are suppose to do.

God didn't promise days without pain, sun without rain, but He did promise strength for the day and light for the way.

There is a song often sung in church that says "They'll know we are Christians by our love." I often dislike that song because I don't think I always show the love we have been given. We have to show it not only to those people who are "nice" to us, but to the unlovely, the down and out, the one who mistreats us, and all mankind. We need to dare to reach out. Sometimes it may not be a pleasant experience for either one, and we definitely

God's plan is always the best. Sometimes the process is painful and hard. But don't forget when God is silent, He is busy working things out for your good.

need to talk with people and pray with them. God will be there. It won't be a lonely experience! He will not leave your side. I promise.

Prayer: Amazing God, You can see so much more than we can see. Sometimes, we want to do things our way. We want to retaliate for the person that disagrees with us. Help us to be like You as much as possible, to seek to do Your will to the lovely and the unlovely alike, and then give us the courage and strength to act in a way that You would have us act each day. Amen.

1. How can our commitment to God provoke persecution?
2. What can help us re-act in a positive way to criticism from others?
3. How can we let them know we are Christians just by our love?
4. Is your God an amazing God? How?
5. When we are persecuted by fellow Christians how should we react?
6. Why should we be thankful for the beatitudes and their message?

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"God is always faithful to His promises, but He often surprises us in the way He fulfills them."
Pope Benedict XVI

There's no storm that God won't carry you through. No bridge that God won't help you cross. No battle that God won't help you win. No heartache that God won't help you let go of. He is SO much bigger than anything you will face today. Leave everything in His hands and embrace this day confidently knowing that He WILL take care of you. ♥