

The Beatitudes

"I've tried to do what I thought was right."

"You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me."

Matthew 5:11

The Message, by Eugene Peterson translates this beatitude *"Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer even!—for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble."* Matthew 5:10-12

What does he mean by "What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable?" Have you ever been in the company of someone and wanted to call him/her "Goody Two Shoes?" Why? Were they able to look at something in a light that made you feel uncomfortable? Or, did they want you to do something that wasn't correct because then they felt better about doing it?

I feel this is a problem that confronts our children and youth everyday just as much as it affects us in the workplace. If you do it too, then the other person can always say "Everybody else is doing it, so I just went along with the crowd."

It may be difficult for us to understand as we look back in hindsight that the disciples were hated, to the point that most of them were killed for their beliefs. Jesus did not guarantee popularity, in fact several times in Scripture he warns us about opposition. He doesn't say come to me and your troubles will be over. He does say, "Come— There are many temptation on this

COME TO ME ALL YOU WHO ARE WEARY AND BURDENED, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. I AM GENTLE AND HUMBLE IN HEART, AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOUL. MATTHEW 11:28-29

earth. The disciples and prophets, and many of those who have gone before us were willing to take a stand, to say and act in the proper way that they knew was right in their hearts even though it caused them personal grief for a while on this earth.

Yes, the apostles did get into trouble. They were killed for their beliefs many times. We are not asked to go near being a martyr for Christ. But, we are asked to stand for what we know is right even if we are tempted by others to do wrong. We aren't called to do anything to anyone else with this beatitude. This is a very private matter. It is



solely our responsibility to do what we know is right. Then, we will feel the blessings of God, and His strength will increase in us each time we do His will.

Sometimes we can know that we are doing God's will and we can be criticized. We can be accused falsely and this Beatitude addresses that. After prayer we can only forgive. So often we forget the second half of the sentence in The Lord's Prayer. "Forgive us our sins," is easy, but "As we forgive those who sin against us" is not always as easy. We are saying we want our sins forgiven by God AS we forgive others. Is that what we really want?

I don't think this Beatitude means that we are to go around looking for trouble by talking about our Lord. But, I do think it means we are to lead each day so that others will see that we have something they would like to have. We have a peace of mind, an assurance, a grace, that can only come through communication with God and those who have accepted Christ as their Savior and try to lead a life doing His will. No one ever said it would be easy.

I think this is a very difficult passage to understand. To just “take it” from others is not easy. But Christ continues to talk with the disciples if we read on after the Beatitudes. He tells the disciples they are the salt of the earth, the light of the world. He tells them to let their light shine, and if they do, that they will be like a town whose light cannot be hidden. That is an awesome wonder.

Sometimes I want to doubt what God seems to be leading me to do. But, the disciples followed and the kingdom of God has not been beaten down. It is as bright today, maybe even more so, than it was then. They trusted and they followed. We need to continue just as the disciples did. If that means being persecuted and having people say false statements about us, then we can be like those great leaders who by their teaching and its proclamation brought the word to our generation so that we too may have the love, grace, and forgiveness of God.

There is an old song, a traditional spiritual, that was made popular by Tennessee Ernie Ford in the 1950's. I think the disciples prayed something like this to their Lord. I wonder if we can pray it today. The message is as correct as it was then. It is entitled “Just a Closer Walk with Thee.” The writer of this song is unknown, but it has lasted through several generations to comfort us to help us to remember that others are just as weak as we are, but we can be strong if we talk and walk with Jesus. A quote I once heard says it all “*God is not an option, He is a Necessity.*” Sometimes I want to make Him an option, and then I realize I can't do it without Him.

Just a Closer Walk with Thee

*“Just a closer walk with Thee, Grant it,
Jesus, is my pleas,
Daily walking close to Thee, Let it be,
dear Lord, let it be*

*I am weak, but Thou art strong; Jesus,
keep me from all wrong;
I'll be satisfied as long as I walk, let me
walk close to Thee.*

*Through this world of toil and snares, If
I falter, Lord, who cares:
Who with me my burden shares? None
but Thee, dear Lord, none but Thee.*

*When my feeble life is o'er, Time for me
will be no more;
Guide me gently, safely o'er to Thy
Kingdom shore, to Thy shore.”*



Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to see beyond the minute we are involved in today and tomorrow. Help us to seek to love all people, not just some, and to love them as we find them or as they may become. Amen

1. When did people tell lies about the disciples or put them down?
2. Why are we tempted to go along with the crowd?
3. How are we strengthened each time we do what is right?
4. Can prayer be a great help at these times in our life?
5. When we are wronged, how should we react?

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*“You Are a
Child of God.
You Are
Blessed.”*

*“For me, in my
Christian belief,
prayer is not an
opportunity to
manipulate God into
doing what you
want him to. Prayer
is an opportunity to
have a conversation
with God to try to
get in tune with
what his will is.”
Francis Collins.*

*“By being
yourself, you
put something
wonderful in
the world that
was not
there before.”*

-Edwin Elliot