

Matthew 5:11-16. Christ Prepares His Disciples for Persecution.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

Jesus teaches that Christians must be prepared to face persecution, including slander, and that they should openly acknowledge him and lead holy lives to glorify God.

Topics: "Persecution", "Christian Witness"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches on the astonishment caused by Jesus' sermon on the Mount, highlighting the unexpected blessing of rejoicing in persecution, particularly the pain of being reviled and slandered for His sake. The martyr's portion includes the loss of a good name before facing death, as seen in the persecution of early Christians. Christians are compared to salt and light, emphasizing the importance of openly acknowledging and living out their faith to bring glory to God, even in the face of persecution and slander.

Transcript

The sermon which the Lord Jesus preached on the Mount astonished those that heard it. Who would have thought that the persecuted could rejoice? Yet Jesus said, "Blessed are you when men shall revile you." There are a great many different kinds of persecution; but only one of them is mentioned in this place. It is a kind that some might not think very difficult to bear--the persecution of the tongue. "Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." But those who have endured this kind of persecution, know that it is very painful to the natural feelings. Yet all who follow Jesus must suffer it; for "if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" (Matthew 10:25.)

Slander is a part of the martyr's portion. No man was ever yet put to death as a good man. His enemies take away his good name before they venture to murder him. Thus they did to Jesus. They said that he was a rebel and a blasphemer, before they crucified him. The most dreadful calumnies were spread abroad respecting the early Christians. The first persecution was set on foot by the emperor Nero, on the ground that the Christians had set fire to the city of Rome, though it is supposed he himself had committed the crime. When warriors expire on the field of battle, they know that their names will be honored by their countrymen; but martyrs often die amid the curses and insults of the multitude.

Many Christians have tried to escape persecution by concealing their religion. But the Lord Jesus does not approve such conduct. He has compared his people to two things, salt and light. Why has he compared them to salt? Because if salt has lost its savor, it is utterly useless. Thus, a Christian who hides his religion, or who disgraces it by his conduct, is useless. Light also is a great blessing; but if it is concealed, it is no blessing at all. There have been Christians, in countries where persecution was violent, who have concealed their sentiments even from their own children. In Bohemia, some fathers, when going to die, acknowledged that all their lives they had been Protestants in heart, but had not had courage to avow it. While they lived, they often retired into a shed to read the Bible, which they hid in the ground. But did these men give light unto all that were in the house? Were their children brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

The prophet Daniel acted in a very different manner, when, in spite of the king's decree, his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. There are two things which Christians must do if they would glorify God; they must lead holy lives, and openly acknowledge the Savior, in whom they believe. If they do not openly acknowledge him, how can they do him honor by their lives? And if they do not lead holy lives, they disgrace the cause by making an open profession of his name.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." We must expect that they will now speak evil of us; but afterwards, when they are in affliction, they may be led to turn to our God; according to the words of the apostle Peter, "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Peter 2:12.)

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