

# Sermon on the Mount: Blessedness and Persecution

by J. Glyn Owen

---

*This sermon explores the theme of blessedness in the context of persecution for righteousness, emphasizing the cost of true discipleship and the call to live righteously in a fallen world.*

**Duration:** 54:04

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:10

**Topics:** "Sermon on the Mount"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares stories of persecution and suffering endured by believers in the past, emphasizing that such experiences may still happen today. He mentions instances of torture and brutality faced by Christians, highlighting the extreme measures taken to suppress their faith. The speaker then shifts focus to the challenges believers may face in the present, such as being rejected by society for their moral values and righteous behavior. He concludes by emphasizing that true blessedness and fulfillment can only be found in recognizing one's spiritual bankruptcy and turning to God for salvation and empowerment.

---

## Transcript

I would explain to those of you who are new to Knox that it is our custom to take sometimes a book of scripture, sometimes a theme, and to try to expound it reasonably fully over a period of time. And if this is your first time here, you are coming in when we are on our way through the Sermon on the Mount. It's a little while ago since we began to look at the Beatitudes in Matthew 5, and that's where we're at at the moment.

We have come to verses 10-12 in Matthew 5, and the theme is blessedness and persecution. Rather a strange subject I might imagine for students coming back to college, or for people coming to the city for the first time, and yet it may be very relevant and very applicable, particularly if you're a Christian. Let me read to you then these words of our Lord, Matthew 5, verses 10-12.

Blessed, said Jesus, blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ certainly did not gain followers by false pretenses. That will become very evident from the first reading of this text of ours today. He did not, he did not cajole people, he did not make easy promises in order to gain their vote, or to secure their discipleship.

Far, far from it. He told them that following him involved being persecuted. And when once men and women have become so intimately bound up with him that they have to stand for righteousness, or stand for what he stands for, then he says it is going to be inevitable that in one way or another in a world such as ours, which is a fallen world, a sinful world, you too are going to have wounds, as I have already been wounded, and that the point of speaking was to be wounded much more sorely on the cross of Calvary.

The startling honesty and realism of our Lord concerning the costliness of discipleship is just something that stamps his message with the imprimatur of deity. He was sure that he would gain a following. He was confident that men and women would come to him out of every kindred and tribe and people and nation, but he did not, he did not attempt to win men by compromising truth, the truth that the Father had given him to declare to mankind.

Jesus said in another place, those that the Father has given me will come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. They will come, but they will come because I declare the truth. I am the truth, as I am the way and the life.

Now you will notice that Jesus began this series of Beatitudes with a terrifying picture, a picture that could very well have put people off right there. He pictured a man waking up to the sudden realisation that he was, or she was, spiritually bankrupt. I don't know whether you've had that experience, of suddenly waking up to the fact that in terms of providing what God requires of men and women you simply haven't got it.

I say that is a devastating experience. It's a traumatic moment in anybody's life to realise that what God requires of me I simply have not got, and I have to pledge spiritual bankruptcy. That's where Jesus began.

That's where these Beatitudes begin. That's really where the road to blessedness begins. Many of you may be seeking for joy, happiness, fulfilment, contentment, blessedness, call it whatever you like.

This is where it begins, says Jesus, by the discovery that in yourself and of yourself you haven't got it. But in the very discovery of it you turn away to the God who made you and who has come in his Son to save you, and he, your Maker God, is able to endow you with the riches that you need in order to please him and to serve him in this life and to enjoy him forever. Jesus now concludes the series of the Beatitudes with some further equally, if not more, solemn words.

He has moved away from the sense of spiritual penury and bankruptcy, and he says, all right, the road to blessedness goes on, and it goes along a very remarkable route. Blessed are those who are persecuted. Persecuted for righteousness' sake.

And then he applies it to the people in front of him, because this is what we have in the passage beginning with these words. Blessed are you, having given the principle, having enunciated the principle, now he applies it. Blessed are you, when men insult you, persecute you, falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven. For in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. The route to real blessedness, says Jesus, believe it or not, goes the way of persecution.

The way of persecution is persecution for the sake of righteousness, says Jesus, or for my sake. That kind of persecution is a signpost that marks the route to ultimate blessedness. And so you have our Lord Jesus Christ, you are turning the thoughts and the concepts and the philosophies of this world right upside down.

We think of course that if we have to suffer for something, well now everything's gone wrong. A number of people that we have speaking to us pastorally as a staff here, they're sick and they think something's gone wrong. They're persecuted.

Somebody slanders them, somebody says something terrible against them, and they think everything's gone wrong. No, says Jesus, if it's for righteousness' sake, that's an important qualification of course. Or if it's for my sake, that's exactly the way it should be.

And if you're suffering for righteousness' sake and for my sake, it only means, says Jesus, that you're walking in the way of the prophets, and you are sure of where you're going to, and when you get there this is what will happen. Blessed are you. Great is your reward in heaven.

You're members of the kingdom. That is indestructible and eternal. Now there are two or three things that I want to say about this great theme, in which you notice the central theme is righteousness.

Brothers and sisters, we are so concerned today about getting things for ourselves. We've become so obsessed, self-obsessed and have you noticed how all the politicians pander to that? They very rarely talk about principles of righteousness today. What do the people want? This group wants this, that group wants that, and we must pander to what the people want, not what is right of necessity.

And you see, we're going down a slide, and if we continue to go this way, we are moving towards moral chaos and social chaos. Jesus says, as far as his people are concerned, righteousness comes into the very center of their lives. And that's what a Christian man or a Christian woman is.

Not a person who takes his hat off or her hat off to righteousness and says, oh yes, everybody should have his due, but let me be first on the list. He or she is pledged to seek first of all the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And to pray, God, in the words of the prophet, that righteousness shall roll through the land like a river in respect, moving into every segment of the social order at the top and at the bottom and everywhere in between.

Righteousness. Three things about righteousness. One, righteousness and the rule it entails for members of the kingdom of heaven.

Oh, these are stirring words, and the more you ponder them, the more challenging they become. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake or because of righteousness. And then Jesus goes on, and he kind of pursues the Hebrew parallelism of saying something almost identically the same in a different way when he applies it.

Blessed are you when men, when people insult you, persecute you, falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Now, I want to focus on those two statements. Because of righteousness, one.

Two, because of me. Because of righteousness. As the portrait of the Christian is being completed, our Lord Jesus leaves the impression that a notable, if not the one outstanding feature of the Christian life is his devotion to righteousness.

His devotion to righteousness. The subject of heaven's kingdom is right with God. He stands for righteousness among men.

He sees righteousness for others. And he is prepared, as this beatitude inevitably implies, he is prepared and must be prepared to suffer for the sake of righteousness. It's not just a subject in his curriculum that he reads about every now and again in order to pass an examination.

He's pledged to it. He's given to it. He lives for it.

Righteousness is the girdle of his loins. Now, permit me to remind you that this is not a note that is peculiar to this gospel, or even to the beatitudes for that matter. It is not peculiar to the gospels even.

It's found everywhere in the Bible. And if time permitted, we could show how it is constantly recurring in the prophets, and in Moses, and in the Old Testament from beginning to end. But when you come to the New, you meet it everywhere.

This emphasis upon righteousness. The Christian is essentially concerned with righteousness. Righteousness is a must for the members of God's kingdom.

You're not in his realm. You're not under his rule, unless you have seen that righteousness demands your loyalty. And what governs your life, if you're a subject of his kingdom, is not first of all what you want to do, but what is right to do.

I tell you, says Jesus to his disciples in Matthew 5 and verse 20, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. The people of God must seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, Matthew 6, 33. Paul is entirely in line with this when writing to Titus, he says, the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

It teaches us, notice, the negative and the positive side of righteousness. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, positively, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age. The grace of God in Jesus Christ teaches us how to live.

There are certain things that we should not do. They're not right. They don't come into the category of that which is right.

And there are certain things that we should do. They come into the category of what God requires and commends. To the Romans, Paul explains that by our union with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection and ascension, we become slaves to righteousness, Romans 6, 18.

If by the Holy Spirit we have been baptized into him and become members of him, we are slaves to righteousness. And that by the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit, the righteousness of the law should be constantly being fulfilled in us, if we are Christian people, Romans 8, 4. Accordingly, the apostle constantly calls men to righteous living. Listen to him, listen to him writing to the Corinthians.

Awake, he says, to righteousness, and sin not. You've been asleep, he says. You're drowsy to moral issues.

The real issues of the day are passing you by, and you're talking about speaking in tongues and healing and exercising your gifts, but to morality you're deadly silent, he says. You're asleep. You're in a dream.

Awake, awake to righteousness. Stop your sinning, he says. You're concerned about your own spiritual pleasure and enlarging your experience.

That may be all right within itself, but it must lead to righteousness or it's no good, says Paul. Wake up, men. Writing to Timothy, he says something very similar.

You man of God, having talked about the temptations of youth, he says, you man of God, flee from all this and follow righteousness. 1 Timothy 6, 11. And do you remember that the apostle John makes a blanket statement when he says in 1 John 3, 10, Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God.

Now I'm quoting these scriptures not because I've got nothing else to say, but because I believe this is what the Word of God says. And this is the summons of the Bible, and we must not tease ourselves that we are Christian men and women by simply saying, well, we go to church on a Sunday morning. We live for ourselves after that, but we come to church, we sing, we listen to what goes on, and we're very interested, and sometimes we put our hands in our pockets.

Men and women, in the name of God, I ask you, are you pledged to righteousness? Our God is holy and our God is righteous. And the man or the woman that comes under the rule of Jesus Christ is a man or a woman that is given to righteousness for Jesus' sake, because of righteousness. Persecuted for righteousness' sake.

This is the hallmark of the Christian man. From whatever angle you view him in the New Testament, he is given to righteousness. But now the second thing is this, because of me.

Blessed are you, he says, when people insult you, persecute you, falsely say all kinds of evil against you, because of me. Now I am personally very glad that Jesus added this word of explanation to the bold statement about a subject of his kingdom suffering for righteousness' sake. You see, had he left it at that, he might have created the impression that the Christian life is all about a cold principle.

Period. Now there are many principles involved in the Christian life, there's no question about that. The whole of the Sermon on the Mount has to deal with moral and ethical principles.

But fundamentally the Christian life is not a matter of principle. If we were simply to talk about our allegiance to principles, it might convey the notion of something cold, heartless. But Jesus moves on, you see, and he explains what it means to live and suffer for righteousness' sake by putting it in this way, because of me.

And you see what he does? He transposes the principle into a matter of personal allegiance to himself. And these are two sides of one and the same coin. The Christian life, living under the rule of Jesus Christ, being subject to the kingdom of God, means suffering and living for righteousness' sake.

Yes, but turn the coin over and this is what it means. It means being loyal to Jesus Christ. It means loyalty to a person.

Jesus would have us see, you see, that if we are involved in this matter, it's not simply a question of having ideas in our heads, but of having him in our hearts, ruling over us, reigning over us. And when we have to suffer persecution or a slight or whatever it may be, it is not just for the sake of an impersonal principle, but for the sake of our allegiance to the person, the Son of God. That's the first thing, righteousness and the rule it entails.

Can I pause then to ask the question? Would you say that you are in the kingdom of God? Would you say that you are blessed by this test? Now it's not mine, it's not mine. It comes from the Scriptures. And in accordance with your answer, the answer of your soul, I'll tell you whether or not you're on the way to blessedness.

For Jesus said, blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake or because of me. The second thing I want you to notice, following upon righteousness and the rule it entails, I'd like us to look at righteousness and the reaction that it excites in a fallen world. Let's underline these words.

Persecuted because of righteousness. People insult you, persecute you, falsely say all kinds of evil against you. You see what this means? It all brings out the kind of reaction that righteousness will elicit in a world such as ours.

And this is only another way of saying that the world in which we live is a world that does not honor righteousness. This world is off its kilter. This world is off being, it's a fallen world.

This is not the world as God meant it or as He created it. Something's gone wrong. And in consequence of that which has gone wrong, the world does not love righteousness.

And if you are going to represent righteousness in an evil, fallen world, you're going to be bruised. You're going to be hurt. And if you're not prepared to take the hurts, the best thing for you is to turn your back on Jesus Christ and walk in the other way.

And acknowledge what you're doing. Be honest about it. Be open about it.

Say, I don't want to pay the price, I go my own way. Okay, there are thousands who are doing that. But don't be a hypocrite.

Don't say, my friend, that you're following the Christ of Calvary and then whimper at every difficulty on the road. That's not consistent. If any man will come after me, says Jesus, let him take up his cross.

Notice Luke says in one place, daily. Daily. And follow me.

Righteousness and the reaction it excites. What is the price of loyalty? Well, the prophecy of Jesus as here embodied is very clear. He is telling those who are dedicated to serve him as Lord, those who mean to stand for righteousness in this world, that it will necessarily mean sorrow, suffering, persecution, and so forth.

If someone is unwilling to face that kind of trouble, therefore the best thing is to keep your distance from him. And this is a very challenging thought. And particularly, you see, when you see these Beatitudes as a cluster of truths, the one leading into the other, because that is what happens here.

There is a progression of thought in these Beatitudes, starting with poverty of spirit and then mourning and becoming meek and so forth. The thought moves on and one Beatitude moves on into the other. There is a sense in which all the Beatitudes are one.

They form one whole. Now that means this, you see. Those who are being persecuted, to go back to where we were last Lord's Day morning, though we didn't really finish that, those who are being persecuted are peacemakers.

Peacemakers persecuted? Peacemakers persecuted? Peacemakers stand in the breach between warring parties and try to see what is right for both sides, not for one against the other, but for both sides and tries to bring them together and is a kind of mediator, you see? Oh yes, but in a world such as this, when you try to do that, when you try to douse the conflagration and stop it, you'll get into trouble. Have you ever tried to stop a quarrel on the basis of righteousness? Oh boy. Peacemakers, listen, I'll tell you something which is even more startling.

You go back beyond that and you will find that the very people who are being persecuted by the world are those who are pure in heart. Pure in heart. See, we go under the strange notion that if we are really pure, if we are really good, if we are really godly, then everybody will speak well of us.

Beware, says Jesus, when everybody speaks well of you. Well, how come? For this reason, brothers and sisters, we live in a fallen world. We live in a fallen world.

And this fallen, crazy world doesn't like holiness and purity. And if you're going to take purity into your job, purity into your office, purity into your college, you're going to suffer for it. This is up-to-date stuff, this.

No arguing about that. This is absolutely right on ball. And some of you know it as I know it.

It doesn't really matter where you go, whether you have the purest motives, and you may go as a peacemaker wanting the right for both sides, probably both sides are going to slap you on the face. How can something worse than that? This is the price of loyalty to righteousness and to Jesus Christ. See, in this world, there's hardly any party that is ever innocent of everything.

That may sound terrible. But we've all sinned and come short of the glory of God, whether you're a conservative or a liberal or an NDP, whether you're rich or whether you're poor, whether you're on the staff of the university or whether you're a humble scholar or whether you left school years ago and knew very little about intellectual disciplines. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

And we don't like righteousness. And, of course, the remarkable thing about it is this. And you will not only discover this from the world, but sometimes you will get this even in a more vicious way from within the ecclesiastical setup, from the church.

Read your history books and you will see that the church has invariably been, in one way or another, a persecuting agent. And it's not all on one side. It's not all Catholic or all Protestant.

Now, I wish I could say that, but I can't say it. I cannot honestly say that all the persecution has been on one side. Brethren and sisters, our hands are dyed with the blood of men and women that our fathers have murdered in the name of the church or of God.

You and I have to be careful how we read our history books. We need honesty. Where did our Lord Jesus Christ find his fiercest critics and opposition and persecution? With the profligates and the sinners? No, no, no.

But where then? They were scribes and Pharisees and teachers of the law. Where did Paul find his most bitter enemies? Out in the world. Yes, he did actually get into trouble in Rome and in Ephesus and in various places.

And yet, fundamentally, if you follow his three missionary journeys especially, you will find that the first people to persecute him, invariably, were Jewish leaders. Very religious, very ecclesiastical. In the verses immediately following our text, Jesus proceeds to describe the righteous and the righteousness of the righteous in these terms.

We shall be coming to this later on. He says, you are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.

You are different from the world. If you are a member of my kingdom, if you are dedicated to righteousness and to my person, then, he says, that means that you are a changed person. You are transformed.

You are not quite like the world which is not under my dominion. And when you go out into the world, and even when you go into a religious society that only professes something that knows nothing of reality, you know what will happen? When they will taste the saline properties of your moral life, they want to spit you out. And when the light of your character and behavior will cast its beam into the chaotic darkness and shadiness and illegal and unrighteous things that men and women are doing, they'll want to hound you.

The thrice of loyalty. How vividly do these words illustrate the startling truth, you see, that the Christian must inevitably be hated. And be hated because of his very character as salt and light, or as being righteous.

Not because he's an oddity. Now I must say, no one is persecuting me as far as I know. I've known very little of this.

Perhaps that reflects on the fact that I'm not sufficiently loyal to the Lord. But those people who from time to time do pull me up, they're not invariably pulling me up because of some oddity in me. And I've done something which was a despise to the gospel.

And the fault has been in me. Not in my character. Some quirk in my personality.

Some roughness, some sharpness, some something or other. Now Jesus is not talking of that. Many of us think that we're persecuted for righteousness' sake, when as a matter of fact we're not persecuted for righteousness' sake, but we're persecuted because we're queer, and we're oddities, and we're thoughtless, and we're sometimes cranky.

That's not what Jesus is talking about. For righteousness' sake, for my sake. I mustn't stay longer with this.

But this is the record of history. And this is one thing I want to get across this morning, ere I turn to my last main point. It is this, my friends.

You simply cannot objectively read history without seeing that this is true. That righteous men and women, men and women devoted to righteousness, that is, and to the person of Jesus Christ, have always suffered. The eleven loyal disciples had to suffer.

And whether it is absolutely foolproof or not, the testimony of history would appear to say that they were all martyred for their Lord's name's sake. Each one of them. We have to take up our cross daily.

You know when those spirit-filled disciples went out from Jerusalem, and they were filled with love as well as with grace and power and courage, when they went out into those Jerusalem streets and then moved from Jerusalem out into the surrounding countryside, how were they received? Oh, follow the story, will

you? Follow the story. And it's a story of bloodshed and persecution all down the way. Now, when I read history books of the Christian church, I am a little bit suspicious until I know something about the writer.

I would advise you to be the same. And I know many people who are good historians in one way, but they're looking at history through tinted glasses, you know. Have you ever done that? You can read the newspaper through tinted glasses, and everything's colored by your own perspective.

It's a great thing to have historians whom you believe are dedicated to the truth as it is. William Barclay mentions one of these. Now, there are many of them, but I just want to choose one.

One of them, and I have proved for myself that H. B. Workman, who wrote a famous book some years ago called *Persecution in the Early Church*, he certainly was one of the outstanding historians dedicated to objectivity as he found it. And I want to read you a few words. Now, you won't like it, so some of you may want to put your fingers in your ears.

Well, carry on for a moment. I'll wake you up when we come to the end. Now, this is H. B. Workman.

If we confine ourselves to strictly historical cases, the savagery, though to a large extent part of the judicial process of the age, is appalling. Some, suffering the punishment of parasites, were shot up in a sack with snakes and thrown into the sea. Others were tied to huge stones and thrown into a river.

For Christians, the cross itself was not deemed sufficient agony or ignominy. Hanging on trees, they were beaten with rods until their bowels gushed out, while vinegar and salt were rubbed into their wounds. In the Thebaeus, during the persecution of Diocletian, Christians were tied to catapults and so wrenched limb from limb.

Some, like Ignatius, were thrown to the beasts, others tied to their horns. Women were stripped and closed in nets and exposed to the attacks of furious bulls let loose in the arena. Many were made to lie on sharp shelves and tortured with scrapers, claws and pincers before being delivered to the mercy of the flames.

Not a few were broken on the wheel or torn in pieces by wild horses. Of some, the feet were slowly burned away, cold water being poured over them, the while lest the victims should expire too rapidly. Peter, one of the servants of Diocletian, was scourged to the bone.

The then placed near a gridiron that he might witness the roasting of pieces of flesh torn from his own body. One other small short paragraph. At Lyon, they tried to overcome the obstinacy of Sanctus of Vienne by fixing red-hot plates to the more delicate parts of his body.

Down the backs of others melted lead, hissing and bubbling was poured, while a few, by the clemency of the emperor, escaped with the searing out of their eyes or the tearing off of their legs. Why am I reading that? I just want you to get the feeling that this has happened. And it's happening today.

A friend and a brother of mine stood in the hall behind us here in just two years ago and told us of a group of men being taken to Siberia. And because they had no drink and no food, one of them dared to lick some of the ice in the cattle truck in which they were taken. And his lips froze to the side.

And as his lips, so his face and ultimately his body. And I won't say any more. You couldn't take it.

Generally, of course, this may not be your lot and mine. It may be today the assassin's pen more than his pistol. Will you forgive me for saying something? I hope it is clear to the congregation here that I am not taking sides in political matters.

But I'll tell you one thing which has really challenged me this week. And I'm not talking about the man's philosophy or politics, but I'm talking about a principle. The one man, the one leader of the three parties who has been most decimated by the press and by the media is also, as it happens to be, the one man concerning whom the reporters said that every morning he came to them from his Bible.

And who told his leaders in Ottawa before the beginning of this campaign that however many faults were found in his life, he looked upon this kind of leadership as second only in importance to the ministry of the Word of God and of the priest in the church. Now, I'm not taking any side on politics, but I am on issues. And I'm telling you, the world hates anybody that is pledged to righteousness.

If you get so near to it that you're associated with righteousness, you too will have to suffer, and so will I. The refusal to toe the popular line even in church today, in ecclesiastical settings. To join on the bandwagon of theological and moral departure from God and His Word means this. Your preferments are lost.

You'll lose that key job that you were after. And if you wanted to be a professor in the college, you'll not get it. Now I'm not talking about ideas in the sky that I can't vouch for.

They're here. It's happening, for Jesus' sake. I close.

Some of you visitors will have given me up by this time. Will you bear with me one moment? Righteousness and the reaction it excites. I must say something about righteousness and the reward it secures.

Blessed are those for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you.

Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven. For in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. I cannot deal with this as it deserves.

Let me throw out two or three thoughts as we conclude. This very pathway, rough and rugged though it may be, can, may, will yield something to the child of God that is positively to his credit and advantage. Not that there is any blessedness in persecution as such.

Anybody who loves persecution per se is psychologically abnormal. Nevertheless, there is the possibility of the turning of the valley of Acre into the door of hope, as Hosea puts it. There is the possibility of finding that in the furnace that is so hot or in the lion's den there is a presence there that I never knew before and a knowledge of God that hitherto was beyond my range.

As a principle here, observe that Jesus puts this first of all in terms of a principle. He says, theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Now this is precisely the sentence by which the blessedness of the poor in spirit were described at the beginning of the Beatitudes.

That's what Jesus said about them. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Now he says, when you come to the end and you're persecuted, blessed are you when you're persecuted, yours or theirs is the kingdom of heaven. You say, isn't there any extra? Isn't there anything different? Isn't

there anything bigger for someone who bears persecution for Jesus' sake? The answer is yes and no. I'll put it to you like this.

Tell a child that he is to be heir of a kingdom, the prince of the realm, and what will he want? Well, a few extra candies, a few extra balls to play with or what, depends whether it's a girl or a boy. You know, in your kiddie state and somebody tells you you're heir to the whole vast realm, the poor kiddie doesn't know enough about it to know what to ask or what to appreciate. But when once you've grown up to maturity and you're told yours is the realm, you begin to realize what unsearchable privileges are yours.

And you'll begin to call upon and to expect things commensurate with your principles and with your knowledge and your maturity. That's what Jesus has in mind here. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven, not just in prospect, not just in name like a child underage, but now you're enjoying it.

You're experiencing it. You're drawing upon the power of the kingdom and the grace of the kingdom and the fatherly care of the king and of God. You're living it.

You're living it. Now something of that kind is involved in our Lord's promise, I believe. He is now speaking to someone of such maturity that he envisages them living on the benefits of the kingdom.

Indeed, if I may be so bold as to say it, I believe that there is something in persecution and suffering generally, there is something in persecution and in suffering which is necessary in the providence of God to communicate to fallen men the full blessedness of his kingdom. Paul says so categorically in 2 Corinthians 4, 17 when he says that our light affliction, he calls it light, his wasn't light if you read the context, but he calls it light, our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us, is working for us, is achieving something for us, even a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory than all the pressures upon us. You see what he's saying? Everything that a Christian is allowed to suffer works for his good.

How can everything that a Christian suffers work for his good? Because his God is Lord, he's sovereign, he's supreme, and he makes all things work together for good to them that love him. And that's our God. And you see sometimes we are too proud to turn to God in all honesty and receive of his grace and receive of his justisms and receive of his teaching until we suffer.

Sometimes it is pain in the body, sometimes it is persecution. I have seen it over and over again. And if somebody were to ask me today the question, who are the most blessed people I've known? Who are those who have had most of heaven in their souls upon earth that I have known? I would have to say that invariably they are those who have suffered most for Jesus' sake.

One last thing. That was the principle, here are the particulars. Having described the reward of righteousness in terms of a general principle, Jesus now proceeds to break this down into its two constituent elements, the ultimate and the immediate.

As to the ultimate blessedness of those who are persecuted falsely for righteousness' sake, Jesus adds simply, Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven. Now notice this. There's no question, says Jesus, about where you're going to.

You may know where you're going to if you're suffering for my sake and for righteousness' sake. No question. And there is no question about what will happen when you get there.

You will be blessed. You will be rewarded. I have no time to talk about the doctrine of assurance or the doctrine of reward.

I just want you to notice how Jesus brings it in as something that is laid down as a foundational truth or foundational truths in the superstructure of the divine revelation. It is all here, says Jesus. Blessed are you, your reward will be great in heaven.

You see, the Christian man lives for this world and the world which is to come. He's a man, she's a woman. The believer is a person who lives in two worlds and envisages the whole.

An unbeliever only lives like a mole underground in this world. He can't see beyond. And he lives only for the darkness and the misery of the present.

But a man of God, the subject of the kingdom, takes eternity into consideration. And there is something that awaits him there, the ultimate. But not only is there an ultimate, says Jesus, there is something else.

Don't trouble, he will suffer like this. Remember this. That's exactly what they did to the prophets which were before you.

Well, you say, what's the value of that to me? If I'm suffering persecution, if I'm having to have a very hard time because of my relationship to Jesus Christ, what comfort is there in the fact that other people have gone through? Oh, this Jesus is what Jesus wants us to know. The prophets suffered that way. And you're walking in the ways of the prophets, not profligates.

You're walking in the way of the saints. You're walking in the route of the people of God. You're walking the right road.

You're on the right way. Men and women, if you're suffering for Jesus' sake this morning, take it as a word of his, you're on the right road. Carry on.

And if some of you have never become sufficiently associated with Jesus Christ as he is revealed in the scriptures and with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, as he's revealed in his Son and in his Word, that you've never suffered anything for him, I bid you this morning, despite the pain, despite the cross, despite the shame, despite the sarcasm of your fellows, come to him. This is the way of blessedness. It's life through death.

It's resurrection from the grave. It is glory through the ignominy. And it is in this context that I want to ask you to choose Christ by his grace.

Come to him. Not because he holds you prize and will give you more than somebody else. Say, if you elect me, then I'll give you so many things.

Brothers and sisters, come on. Because he is the Son of God and is loyal and true. Trust him.

Whatever it costs. For in so doing, you'll move into the blessedness that ever deepens and widens and lasts forever and ever. Let us pray.

O Lord, our God and Father, we pray that it might please you to write this, your Word, upon our hearts. We have need of it. Those of us who have perhaps been walking this road for some time are oftentimes tempted to pass it up and turn around and go back.

And in the words of Jesus, having put our hands to the plow, we look back and hanker for the things behind. Forgive us, we pray. For any among us this morning who have never taken the first step, really to acknowledge Jesus as Savior and Lord and Director of life and living to such an extent that they are pledged to him for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, and death will never part them.

O grant such grace today to take that first step. May this be a day when the angels in heaven rejoice, seeing a returning sinner submitting to Jesus Christ as Lord. Hear our prayer in his holy name.

Amen.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/4/SID4578.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-glyn-owen/sermon-on-the-mount-blessedness-and-persecution/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**