

The Beatitudes – Matthew 5:1-12

Trinity Baptist Church Discipleship Training
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Introduction:

The purpose of this study is to examine the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount known as the Beatitudes. The Sermon on the Mount is a picture of the Christian life; not live like this and you will become a Christian; rather, because you are a Christian, live like this. He is describing life in the Kingdom, a life that demands a new birth. As our Lord began the Sermon on the Mount He gave an exposition describing the nature of those who have entered into the Kingdom; those who have discovered true blessedness.

For the purpose of this study, we will focus primarily upon the Gospel of Matthew. There is a similar sermon in Luke 6, which is sometimes referred to as the Sermon on the Plain because of the difference in setting.

Matthew 5:1 NAU - "When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain"

Luke 6:17 NAS - "And He descended with them, and stood on a level place"

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Definitions:

What are the Beatitudes?

They are a description of the Christian, the new humanity. They clearly display the contrast between the believer and the unbeliever. The Beatitudes describe the nature of the people who are most blessed. There is a debate regarding the number of the Beatitudes – seven, eight, or nine. Settling on a particular number isn't of any significant importance, but for the purpose of this study we will examine it from the perspective of eight, grouping verses 10-12 as one beatitude.

What did our Lord mean by *blessed*? (μακάριος *makarios*)

The Greek lexicon defines it as "blessed" or "happy." The word happy doesn't adequately define it because of the connotation the word has today, where happy describes the way we feel. The word in the Beatitudes describe those favored by God, those whose lives have been transformed by the power of God and who now live in a manner that reflects this transformation.

- I. Verse 3 - "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
- A. The Christian has been made poor in spirit. This is not referring to material poverty.
1. Some try to contrast Luke 6:20 - "Blessed be ye poor."
 2. The Bible does not teach us that poverty is a virtue.
 3. It is true that the love of money is the root of all evil
The rich man and Lazarus, the Rich Young Ruler all point to the danger of placing our affections on our wealth
Jesus taught, "You cannot serve God and mammon"
 4. A poor man can be just as covetous as a rich man
 5. There have been many wealthy men who have done great Kingdom Work
 6. This is a poverty of spirit, poverty in the inward man. The Kingdom of heaven is not won by mighty feats of human effort but by humbling ourselves beneath the sovereign rule of God.
- B. Pre-conversion - self-reliance, self-righteousness
1. In his self-pride he will never see himself as being that bad
 - a. He compares himself to other men - condemns their actions and justifies his own. They accuse others for the very things they are guilty of
 - b. He doesn't see himself as bad enough to deserve God's condemnation
 - c. The lost man is deceived about himself
Jer. 17:9 - "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it."
 2. The mere religious man sees salvation as something to earn
 - a. In self-confidence and self-reliance he strives to make God a debtor. He thinks in his heart, "I've lived a good life. God owes me!"
 - b. Listen to men who cry, "Unfair!"
Matthew 25:44 NAU - "Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?'"
Matthew 7:22 NAU - "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'"
- C. Contrast this with the man who has met God
1. He is humbled and brought low.
 2. He has seen the holiness of God
1 John 1:5 - "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all"
 3. He acknowledges his rightful condemnation
 4. He recognizes that there is nothing at all he can do to remove this condemnation
He sees himself as spiritually bankrupt
In poverty of spirit he throws himself at the foot of the cross - "Have mercy on me a sinner"
- D. The promise: "theirs is the kingdom of heaven"
1. Those who mourn over their sin have found salvation
 2. This poverty in spirit is characteristic of all who come to Christ

II. Verse 4 - "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

- A. We are not talking about common mourning
1. There are sorrows in this life upon all men. There is no virtue in common sorrow.
 2. There are some people with a melancholy disposition. There is no virtue in being in a continued state of sadness.
 3. It is important that we have a proper perspective on this subject
 - a. On one hand we should guard against silliness. This life should be considered a serious affair. We have record that Jesus wept but none that He laughed. He was a man of sorrow.
 - b. On the other hand, God has given us rich things to enjoy.
1 Timothy 6:17 - "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy."
- B. This mourning is an intense sorrow due to our sin
1. The natural man will never know this sorrow
 The inhabitants of this world seek only happiness, pleasure especially our generation when it takes \$200 million to make a movie, athletes making millions.
Luke 6:25 NAS - "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep."
 2. Neither shall they ever know this comfort
 3. Their suffering in this life will only continue into eternity
- C. This sorrow accompanies true repentance.
 "To be sorry for sin, to hate and forsake it because it is displeasing to God."
1. This is the natural conclusion to being poor in spirit
 As we come face to face with the holiness of God we cry out, "Oh what have I done!"
 2. This sorrow continues as we struggle against our flesh
Romans 7:24 - "Oh wretched man that I am..."
2 Corinthians 5:2 NAU - "For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven,"
 3. We grieve, moan, and weep over this present flesh. We are not at home and we long to be rid of this body of sin.
- D. The Promise - They shall be comforted
1. They receive the comfort of the Gospel, the assurance that they have been forgiven; that they have been reconciled and are now His children.
Isaiah 61:1-2 NAU - "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners; ² To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,"
 2. With the assurance that He is sovereign - He is working out all things after the counsel of His own will - and for our good

3. With the assurance that Christ will return and take us away from this world of sorrow
1 Thessalonians 4:16-1 - "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words."
4. The ultimate comfort will come in glory
 No more sorrow, no more tears
Revelation 21:4 NAU - "and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

III. Verse 5 - "Blessed are the gentle (KJV: meek), for they shall inherit the earth."

- A. In each of the Beatitudes we find statements which are so foreign to the natural ear.
 1. The poor in spirit become heirs to the entire kingdom
 2. Those who weep are actually those who are happy.
 3. Now those who are the meek are those who gain the world.
 - a. The natural man believes the world must be seized. He sees only aggression, power, and strength.
 - b. God's people discover that the first will be last and the last first. They discover that the way to increase is to decrease. The Christian life is a life of humility.
- B. Again, we are not talking about a natural tendency
 1. There are people who are naturally easy going, nice, even withdrawn. This is not meekness.
 2. Nor is it a weakness or a spirit of compromise - peace at any cost
 3. Nor is it being self-conscious which is usually caused by pride
- C. This is talking about a life characterized by gentleness, meekness, mild
 1. It is an attitude that has a true view of one's self that expresses itself in our attitude and respect of others. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5
 2. This is why "poor in spirit" came first. A person will never display meekness and gentleness until he sees himself properly.
 3. In its highest demonstration, this man is no longer focused upon himself; always keeping an eye on himself. He isn't always pondering what others are thinking of him and how he might advance himself.
 4. The meek man is not quick to claim his "rights." See Luke 14:7-11
- D. The promise – this man will inherit the earth.
 1. Because his attention is no longer upon the things of this earth - since he rather seeks the things of God God richly provides. The things of this world seem infinitely small - They have all the riches of the universe
 2. In an eternal sense - we shall inherit the new heavens and the new earth - the rejuvenated universe in which every stain from sin shall be removed. It is the ultimate fulfillment of the Old Covenant promise of a land.

IV. Verse 6 - "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

- A. The nature of hungering & thirsting
1. Hunger represents that which is the great object of desire
 2. The body has a natural hunger and thirst
 3. Hunger cannot be artificially created
 - a. The nauseated man cannot be made to eat
 - b. The satisfied man cannot be made thirsty
 - c. This has great spiritual implications
- B. The natural man has a hunger and thirst
1. His desires are fleshly – much like the animals
The main difference is human beings are spiritual beings by nature. The lost man has a knowledge of God but he suppresses this knowledge. He hates God.
 2. He loves his sin
John 3:19 - "Men love darkness" Romans 2:30 - "haters of God"
 3. He loves the world - he cannot imagine the spiritual blessings lacking in these things
 4. His primary concern is to seek the happiness he he cannot find
"Men always do what they want to do."
- C. Many people acquire a religious feeling and hunger for the wrong thing
1. Some hunger for an experience - always looking for some great cataclysmic event to change their lives
 2. Some hunger for a "blessing" which is usually material - this makes them no different than the natural man
- D. The Christian has this intense longing for righteousness -- freedom from sin in all its forms and manifestations
1. He is unhappy about himself & his spiritual state
 2. He knows that sin hinders his fellowship with his Savior - 1 John 1:6
He sees sin as rebellion against God - he wants to walk with God
 3. He has an intense passion to be free from the power of sin
 - a. Its temptations, its draw - the power of the flesh
 - b. He mourns that he doesn't pray as he desires and doesn't study as he should.
- E. The promise: "He shall be filled"
1. He cannot fill himself - he must be filled
 - a. This is grace - it is entirely a gift from God
 - b. "Come ye sinners poor and needy" "all the fitness He requireth is to see your need of Him"
 2. First, we are filled with imputed righteousness – justification. The man who hungers for God will find Him. God creates a hunger and then He fills it
 3. Then we are filled with imparted righteousness - sanctification
We are delivered from the power of sin. This is the primary meaning here.
 4. We are filled with the benefits of redemption – adoption, a relationship with the Creator, the hope of eternity
- F. How do you know if you are hungering and thirsting after righteousness?
What are the signs of a spiritual appetite?
1. Have you come to see the worthlessness of your own righteousness?

2. Do you see your absolute need of Christ - Has He become of infinite value to you? Do you want to be near Him? Do you want to know Him more?
3. Do you have an intense desire to be like Him? To please Him? To honor Him? To worship Him
4. Obviously, someone who has an intense hunger for righteousness will avoid anything that might hinder obtaining it.
He WILL find the time to do the things he ought to do.
People find the time to do the things they want (hunger) to do.
5. This Beatitude brings great comfort to the struggling believer under attack with many doubts and fears. If he truly hungers and thirsts after righteousness Christ declares him blessed.

V. Verse 7 - "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

This Beatitude and the next two describe the inner character of the Christian: mercy, purity of heart, peacemakers.

A. What is mercy?

1. In terms of God's mercy it is God *not giving* us what we deserve. In contrast, grace is God *giving* us what we do not deserve.
2. With regards to our relationship with our fellow man, mercy involves having in your power the ability to bring judgment upon another person that has harmed you but instead giving up your right.
3. Mercy involves pity - example of the Good Samaritan
 - a. He makes the condition of another his own and is grieved by it
 - b. The merciful man regards the physical estate of another and comes to his aid.

1 John 3:17 NAU - "But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?"

B. Mercy never perverts justice - but never places justice in the hands of the wrong party.

1. The civil authorities hold the sword - they have the right to carry out justice.
2. The ultimate justice is in the hands of God
"Vengeance is mine saith the Lord"
3. The command unto us is to forgive
Matthew 18:21-22 NAU - "Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

C. If we have been converted our attitude about other men has changed

1. We have seen ourselves and no longer feel anyone can say anything bad enough to describe us or do anything worse than we deserve.
 - a. The man who has found mercy is merciful unto others
 - b. The man who has been forgiven is forgiving of others
2. We see other men as poor victims of sin and Satan - we pity them - but for the grace of God we would be just like them

3. Examples:
 - Stephen - "Father, lay not this sin to their charge"
 - Abraham - after being wronged by Lot still sought for his deliverance
 - Joseph - after being sold by his brothers was merciful
 - Our highest example: Christ - "Father forgive them..."
- D. The promise – “for they shall obtain mercy”
 1. The caution against misunderstanding
 - a. Many see the grounds for obtaining mercy is that we be merciful
 - b. Also see the grounds for our forgiveness that we forgive
 - c. If this were so not one of us would be saved because none of us are perfectly merciful or forgiving.
 - d. If this were true grace would be removed from the gospel
 2. On the other hand, only the merciful have found mercy. I know I have found mercy because I am merciful.
Likewise, only the forgiving have found forgiveness. I know I have been forgiven because I am forgiving.
Matthew 5:43-45 - "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous."

VI. Verse 8 - "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

- A. Man's problem is a heart problem
 1. His actions are perverted because his heart is perverted
 2. Even though he may become religious (all men are religious) he cannot live a holy life. His heart prevents him from living a holy life
Jer. 17:9 - "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"
Proverbs 23:7 - "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."
Matthew 12:35 - "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."
Luke 12:34 - "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
 3. This is the essence of the first two Beatitudes. We came to the knowledge that our hearts were perverted and mourned not only because our actions were evil but because we continually desired the evil.
 4. True religion lies in the change of a man's heart.
Titus 3:5 - "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."
- B. What is this purity of heart?
 1. It means to be changed in our mind, conscience, affections, will
 2. It means to be free from hypocrisy - it means consistency
We are prone to inconsistency - because we justify our actions

- a. To say we don't have time for Bible study but we have time to watch TV
- b. To say we can't afford to tithe and then buy a new car
- c. To say we can't come to church for a multitude of reasons, yet we go work right on schedule the next day
- 3. To one degree or another we are all guilty of this inconsistency
The Christian, however, is continually correcting inconsistencies - he has a single goal of pleasing God
- 4. The lost man's problem is a divided heart. He claims to love God but in reality he desires something else. Purity of heart is singleness of heart
- C. Purity of heart is consistent holiness
 - 1. The Christian's life is characterized by holiness & obedience
The glory of God is supreme in his life. He hates sin and flees from it
 - 2. HE LOVES HOLINESS!
The Bible makes it clear that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.
 - 3. The Christian desires to labor for God and continually seeks ways to serve Him
 - 4. The wonderful thing is the freedom this person has. The things that condemn the lost man because of his hypocrisy, the pure of heart are allowed.
Titus 1:15 NAU - "To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled."
- D. The promise: "they shall see God"
 - 1. What does it mean to see God?
 - 2. First, it speaks of spiritual truths
 - a. We have seen Him by faith -
John 20:29 - "Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."
 - b. We see in the sense of understanding. We have seen God like no one else. We can see God in nature - they cannot
We can see God in providence - they cannot
We can understand His Word - they cannot
 - 3. But we shall someday see him with our eyes
 - a. In one sense we shall never see the fulness of God.
He is infinite
 - b. Yet, we shall see Christ, the fulness of the Godhead
He is God!
Jesus said, (Jn. 14:9) - "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father"
1 John 3:2 - "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doeth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

- E. All of this is glorious - but is impossible with man. We cannot cleanse and purify our own heart.
1. Illustration - the rich young ruler... "who then can be saved" "With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible"
 2. But this does not mean we can remain passive! Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling – for it is God who is at work in you.
James 4:8 - "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."
- VII. Verse 9 - "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."
- A. First, and most importantly we are at peace with God
1. The lost man is at war with God
Romans 8:7 NAU - "the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God"
James 4:4 NAU - "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."
 2. Satan has blinded the minds of the world that they would hate and distrust God
 3. Salvation brings us to peace with God
 - a. God opens our mind to the warfare - we see our offense!
 - b. We lay down our weapons against God and become a part of His army
 - c. This is the whole nature of reconciliation
- B. Second, we enter into peace with our fellow man
1. Sin has brought a terrible hatred and enmity into this world
 - a. Look at the wars. Jesus described the condition of this world
Matthew 24:6 – “And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but *that* is not yet the end.”
“but that is not yet the end” –
The end of time is not yet. Wars and strife are to be expected until the end of time – as long as lost men rule upon the earth there will be wars and strife
 - b. Look at the crimes, man on man - murder, theft, drug trafficking (taking advantage of another's weakness)
This world is filled with all manner of hatred.
 - c. Look at the attitudes of people driving their cars, shopping, working. Look at the way our politicians behave. Look at the strife everywhere.
 - d. Paul stated that this was exactly the condition of our hearts before God saved us.
Titus 3:3 – “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.”

2. In contrast, the Kingdom of Christ is a Kingdom of peace
 - a. Jesus is the Prince of peace
KJV **Isaiah 9:6** – “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”
 - b. Peace flows forth from Christ
John 14:27 – “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”
 3. Those who are of Christ’s Kingdom are to be peace makers
 - a. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit – “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . .”
 - b. Jesus described this characteristic:
Matthew 5:9 – “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”
 4. In contrast, one of the distinguishing marks of a lost person is he is quick to enter into dispute. It is characteristic of the works of the flesh - Gal. 5:19-21
Galatians 5:19-20 – “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”
- C. Unfortunately, God’s people often have to be reminded of this great duty to be peacemakers.
1. Sometimes Christians haven’t behaved in a manner consistent with our new heart.
 - a. Churches are often guilty of great conflict – of course, this is often due to unregenerate members. But sometimes even God’s people enter into conflict.
 - b. Many new churches have formed as the result of church splits. Often the self-righteous convince themselves they are justified in the division when the truth is they were just as guilty of having a wicked contentious heart.
 - c. Sometimes Christian couples begin to fight with one another
 2. We are members of the Kingdom of Christ – a kingdom of peace. We need to be continually reminded of what we are.
 3. Paul reminded the church of Ephesus
Ephesians 5:8 – “for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light”
Ephesians 4:31-32 – “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

4. We must never forget what God thinks of those who sow discord – those who disrupt peace
Proverbs 6:16-19 – “There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: ¹⁷ Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, ¹⁹ A false witness *who* utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers.”

D. There are some restrictions placed upon our ability to be peacemakers
 Paul said: **Romans 12:18** - "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."

1. There are times when peace is impossible. The behavior of other people may make peace impossible. Jesus made this clear
Matthew 10:34-36 – “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ "For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶ and a man's enemies will be the members of his household.”
Luke 12:51 "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; ⁵² for from now on five *members* in one household will be divided, three against two, and two against three. ⁵³ "They will be divided, father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against mother; mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."
 - a. We must never compromise our obedience to Christ for the sake of peace. We must never forsake His Law for the sake of peace.
 - b. We must never forsake doctrine for the sake of peace. There are too many today who are willing to forsake truth for the sake of harmony.
James 3:17 – “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.”
 - c. We must never be at peace with sin and error. We must never compromise God’s commands or God’s truth. In this case peace must be sacrificed.
 - d. Calvin – “It is not possible that there should be perpetual peace between the soldiers of Christ, and the sinful world whose prince is Satan.”
2. What does a Godly wife married to a lost man do when he tells her to quit honoring the Lord’s Day? She wants to be submissive. What does she do? What did the Apostles do when the authorities told them to cease preaching Christ? They wanted to be submissive to the authorities.
Acts 5:27-29 – “And when they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men.”

3. Being a peacemaker does not rule out fighting wars. Remember, these duties are to individuals, not governments. We'll see their duty in the next chapter. You cannot use this passage to defend conscientious objection
 4. This verse does not rule out the seeking of justice

If someone breaks into your home and steals your TV being a peacemaker does not forbid you from seeking his arrest and prosecution.

This verse does not teach absolute passivism.

 - a. The principle of Matthew 18 teaches us it is proper to challenge the wrong, and punish the offender.
 - b. If someone strikes you on the face it doesn't forbid you from speaking out against his wickedness

Acts 23:1-3 – “And Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day." ² And the high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth. ³ Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! And do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?"
 - c. Even Jesus spoke out against the injustice of His tormentors

John 18:22-23 – “And when He had said this, one of the officers standing by gave Jesus a blow, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?" ²³ Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?"
- E. As peacemakers we are to labor at reconciling others to God
1. By lifting up holy prayers asking God to withhold His wrath

"Are we the cause of God's enduring with the U.S.?
Because of our prayer? Because of our righteousness?
Genesis 18:26 NAU - "So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account."
 2. By warning them to lay down their weapons against God

We are the ambassadors of Christ - II Cor. 5:18-20
- F. The promise: "for they shall be called sons of God"
1. The mark of regeneration - His image stamped upon us
 2. We are simply bearing the image of our Father

Matthew 5:44-45 NAU - "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous."
 3. Can you see it stamped upon you? Are you a peacemaker?

VIII. Verses 10-12 - "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

- A. First, we need to see the particular nature of this suffering. It is not speaking of all types of suffering but suffering of a particular sort.
 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness" - V.10; "because of Me" - verse 11
1. It is not suffering because of wrong doing
 1 Peter 4:14-15 - "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters."
 2. It is not suffering for religion sake -
 - a. Some people feel that God is honored by our suffering
 Illustration - my instruction growing up: that all suffering could be offered up to God for sin and thus should be desired
 - b. Some people bring persecution upon themselves by their antagonistic attitude and then think they are being persecuted for serving Christ
 - c. Some people bring persecution by being unbiblically fanatical
 3. This is a particular suffering for the sake of Christ. It is suffering for being like Christ. It is living for Christ in spite of the consequences.
- B. Who are those who do the persecuting?
1. It is often religious people
 - a. Who were Christ's chief persecutors?
 - b. I have heard many Pastors say that they have suffered most at the hands of those they are called to shepherd
 - c. There are churches today that are filled with wolves in sheep's clothing
 2. We may suffer at the hands of family. The effect of Christianity is to make a division - See Matt. 10:32-37
 3. We suffer at the hands of the world in general
 - a. The world loves righteousness as it respects them - they love justice, honesty, peace loving people. A man wants to marry a virtuous woman. A woman wants to marry a good man. They want good neighbors.
 - b. They hate righteousness as it pertains to God - They hate God, they hate His law, they hate His day - and they will hate those who tell them of God's demands.
 - c. If we would be content to be good people and cease walking with God the world would applaud.
 But we must live for the glory of Christ - He is our reason for holiness. And herein lies the problem
 2 Tim. 3:12 - "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ

- C. How are we to respond to these persecutions?
1. We must not retaliate - this is most difficult
Christ did not - we must not - this is to be like the natural man who is bringing the persecution
 2. We must not harbor resentment - again most difficult
 - a. We must not dwell on it, we must not become depressed over it
 - b. Christ says, "rejoice and be exceeding glad"
 3. We must not seek persecution. But we are persecuted for righteousness sake; if they speak against us falsely - rejoice and be exceeding glad:
 - a. Rejoice because it is evidence that your faith is genuine. It mirrors the faith of the martyrs who walked before us.
Matthew 5:12 - "for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."
 - b. Rejoice because Christian character is matured through suffering.
James 1:2-3 - "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance."
 - c. Rejoice because persecution is followed by great reward in heaven.
Matthew 5:12 - "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great"