

Blessed to Be a Blessing – January 30, 2011

Blessed Are You!

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Matthew 5:10-12 NKJV

The Gospel Lesson for today comes from the Sermon on the Mount recorded in the Gospel of Matthew and has come to be known as the Beatitudes. In these words Jesus teaches His disciples and us about what it means to be in the world but not of the world. He details for us the fact that those who seem to get ahead in this life cannot be equated with those who are possessors of eternal blessings, but for the sake of the Gospel often the exact opposite is true.

Each one of us can most likely detail the woes of our personal experiences as we have traveled through this world. We have to confess that some troubles we have in life are messes of our own making, the ultimate conclusion and consequence of our sinful behavior. In other cases we truly have become the targets of ridicule, persecution, and suffering because we are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and witnesses to Him in the midst of a world dying in sin.

Sharing the Good News with others in word and deed about Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is our privilege and Christian duty. We are those who know firsthand what a joy it is to have a gracious and merciful Savior and just how much it cost Him to save us from our sins. We have heard the story of the Cross and have come to realize how much it cost Him to pay for our sins. We are those who have received the grace of God through Christ our Savior that we may proclaim that grace to others. Our sins have been forgiven that we may share the love of God with others.

Satan, the world, and our sinful flesh despise this message of Grace and they battle against it tirelessly. This produces persecution against Christians, who are reviled by the enemies of the Gospel. No one looks forward to being treated in such a manner. In fact, our apprehension about facing such things often drives us to be very timid about sharing the Good News of Jesus. We are equally apprehensive about confronting the evil we see in the world around us because we know what kind of reaction it will bring.

Jesus tells us that to be persecuted so is a great blessing and encourages us to meet such obstacles with joy, for great is our reward in heaven! This is truly the mystery of the Cross. Our natural reason would lead us to believe that as God's dear children we ought to be spared all persecution and ridicule, and be exempt from all hardship and trial. Yet, suffering and persecution for the sake of the Gospel is the lot in life for Christian people, just as our Savior was ridiculed and finally crucified when He came to earth for us.

Do not be disheartened or discouraged by these things. We know the way of the Cross leads to eternal life, not as a result of our sufferings but as a result of Christ's sufferings for us. To share in His suffering by being persecuted by the world glorifies Him and gives us joy and hope in His promise. Even as Christ has ascended into glory, so also, He has prepared a place for all those who believe in Him; for all those who suffer for His sake. He will come again to take us to Himself, even as He has promised. What a gracious blessing we have in Him. Great indeed, is our reward in heaven!

Pastor Jacobs

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