

Title: Can You Really Take it? *(Part I)*

Text: Matthew 5:10-12

Let's take our Bibles and turn to Matthew chapter 5. Tonight we come to the last beatitude. Matthew chapter 5 verse 10.

You know, one of my frustrations is trying to share with you all that I have studied on the subject. And I really hate to see this series end. Because I have just really enjoyed the study of these beatitudes. And it has been a great blessing to me. And I trust it has been a blessing to you.

Matthew chapter 5 Verse 10.....(READ Vs 10-12)

PRAYER

Our Fther in heaven, we give you thanks for the joy that is in our hearts because of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank you for your Word. That we can open it and study it for ourselves. And Father, we pray that you would teach us once again tonight. We thank you for these wonderful statements from our Lord about what it means "TO BE BLESSED." Bless your Word to our hearts. For we pray in the name of Jesus.....AMEN.....

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Now, all the way through these beatitudes, Jesus has been speaking about "THEY". And I notice He begins that way in Verse 10. But, then in Vs 11, He changes to "YOU."

Jesus is probable addressing the growds as we learned from Vs 1. But He then turns to give a divine commentary to His disciples.

So, there seems to be strong emphases on this final beatitude to His disciples as to what they will experience in the way of persecution and suffering.

I would like you to notice, once again, that this beatitude ends in the way of a promise. It ends the same way they began. The promise at the end of the first beatitude was: "FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." And now we find the same statement in Vs 10...."FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." So, it appears that our Lord makes this final beatitude the sum and substance of His teaching.

*SOFTLY*

If you will trace a harmony of the Gospels, you will discover that much of our Lord's teaching is about persecution...about tribulation....about suffering.....about trials in this old world.

Also, it appears to be a <sup>theme</sup> ~~them~~ of the Apostles. There are two books in the N.T. that are given over to that subject: 2 Corinthians and the book of I Peter. And I believe that every christian ought to study those two books very carefully.

Now, in our study of the Word of God, it is very important to understand the doctrinal framework in which you are thinking...

On the subject of suffering, many of us know that we ought to suffer, and do it just like God's Word says. But, we don't ~~have enough evidence so~~ <sup>we don't</sup> ~~that~~ we can <sup>simply</sup> ~~just~~ apply that principle and make it practical in our lives.

I talk with many people who express how difficult it is to experience suffering, or trials, or tribulations. Good christian folks who don't really know what ought to be their reaction or responsibility to suffering.

Now, if that is your feelings, let me tell you that you are not alone. This is a very difficult subject. And it is also very difficult to apply to your life. But, there is one thing that I do know. And that is..that the more you study the Word of God, the more you will discover that real comfort in suffering comes through the Scriptures....

But, I know the problem in your life because it is the same problem that I have in my life. When I read this beatitude: "BLESSED, THE ONES BEING PERSECUTED ".....my first reaction is: "HAY! THAT IS STRANGE."...

But, friends, the more of the Word of God that you get into your life, the more understanding ~~about~~ you have concerning the love of God about the subject of suffering, and then it begins to make sense.....and it begins to come into focus...and you begin to understand it.

Now, I want to spend two weeks on this final beatitude. Because there is so much here for us to get awholed of....So much to understand.

So, tonight I want to look at four key thoughts concerning suffering. And then next week we will study a little about the Biblical doctrine of suffering.....

O.K. four key thoughts in this passage about suffering.....

(1 )Number one....is is very important to understand the reason for suffering.

There is a lot of suffering and persecution which is your own fault. I mean: YOU ARE THE CAUSE. You blow the situation and you suffer as a result. And no one is to blame but yourself.... *There is also suffering that is the result of sickness or loss of a loved one.*

But notice, our Lord says, in Vs 10 that He is talking, specifically, about the kind of suffering that is for the "SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS."

"When you do well", says I Peter chapter 2, "and then you are persecuted, that is well pleasing to God."

"But, if you suffer for your own faults, what thanks is that?"

Listen, friends, that doesn't count anything with God. Not if it has been your mistakes, your faults that caused it.

But, if suffering occurs for the sake of "THE RIGHTEOUSNESS" meaning because of your testimony for Jesus Christ, then Jesus says you are in that condition or state of "BLESSED."

(2 ) Now, secondly, please remember that Jesus is talking about a normal christian experience. Those who are indeed blessed because certain facts are true about them. And so it is common, normal, to expect as a believer that you will be persecuted for the sake of "THE RIGHTEOUSNESS". Don't think this is limited to the few. It is the common state of the believer. And as a result of this: YOU ARE BLESSED. You are not blessed if you are free from trails and ~~sufferings~~ and persecutions.....OH, NO....You are blessed because these things are happening to you.

I, also, notice that this reviling, this slandering, or this false accusation, which by the way is the number one kind of suffering according to the N.T....., those verbal, mental, emotional conflicts that we experience with other folks, that is the real hard nose stuff about persecution. And I notice that Jesus, also, says in Vs 11 that this is for my sake.....MY SAKE..... So, when someone puts you down for your testimony about Jesus, then rejoice and be glad.....

(3 ) The third thing that I want you to notice is the fact of our reaction to persecution. WHAT SHOULD OUR REACTION BE?

Vs 12 says that we "should rejoice and be glad." And it is interesting that Jesus didn't say to be happy on the spur of the moment. OH, NO...He is indicating a pattern of life. And He emphasises it with a little bit of extra words when He says: "REJOICE"...Now, we understand that. But, then He adds "BE GLAD"...

This reminds me of Ephesians 3:20 where Paul says: "Now to him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think." And then Paul gives us five different adverbs and adjectives modifying that statement, and telling us how great is the Lord's provision for us.

And here is much the same thing. "REJOICE AND BE GLAD"....I mean, really get <sup>excited</sup> ~~happy~~ about it. Get thrilled that you are being persecuted.

Now, I know that sounds a little strange. Especially to the old sin nature and human behaviour. And I will show you WHY next Sunday. But, the principle to remember: WHEN WE ARE PERSECUTED....Our reaction <sup>for "The Righteous"</sup> should be to REJOICE AND BE GLAD....

(4 ) Then fourth, the reward that is involved. There are two things here.

(1 ) I notice, first of all, that it is in heaven.

You know, a lot of us are looking for appreciation or acknowledgment that we are suffering. And the truth is that we are blowing our reward. THAT IS RIGHT... We are just shooting it right out the window. Because Jesus taught in this same sermon on the mount that if you do things, even the good things, like righteousness, like fasting, like praying.....if you do it to be seen of men, you have your reward. MEANING: you got just what you wanted. You wanted to be noticed by others. And you were. So, that is your reward. And thus, you will not receive ~~anything~~ from God.

But, when you suffer, secretly, and only the Father knows, He will reward you openly in heaven.

So, dear friends, notice ~~a~~ carefully the teaching of this passage. It will not do you any good to go around telling everybody how much you are suffering,

how much you have been persecuted, or how people talk about you and you are taking it patiently because you feel you have a reward coming. Listen, it is best not to talk about it because you are likely to throw it out the window in your talk. YOUR REWARD IS IN HEAVEN NOT ON THE EARTH.

Jesus taught this principle over and over again. For example in this same sermon Jesus said, "Do not lay up treasures on earth but in heaven." And I know it is hard to get that principle through our thick skulls because we want somebody to express understanding of what we are going through. But, oh, how we need to remember that OUR REWARD IS IN HEAVEN, NOT ON EARTH. (2 ) The second thing about our reward is: "Be encouraged, others ~~are~~, also, are suffering. Vs 12 says "So they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Others are going through difficult waters.

You know, the prophets suffered greatly. In fact, many of the prophets found no response at all. Isaiah was told to go to a certain people and to tell them the message of God and God said: "Listen, they are not even going to respond to you. They will not even listen to your message."

And how true that is of Christians who in witnessing experience a little bit of slander or opposition. They receive a little criticism and then they give up and quite. Well, so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. And I doubt seriously that there is anyone here, tonight, that has been under real persecution like the prophets of old.

But, the point is that there is encouragement for our lives in the face of persecution. Why? Because our reward is in heaven *and other share in our persecution*

O.K these four key thoughts will help us to understand now the doctrine of suffering. And we will continue this theme next Sunday night.

Let's close with a word of prayer