

THE BEATITUDES

(Continued from last issue)

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The Persecuted

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (Matt. 5:10-12).

Persecution is a painful ordeal. It really means that in the thoughts and actions of some folks, one is a target, held in contempt, counted unworthy of regard, mocked, perhaps. That is painful. There is one thing, however, that should not be overlooked. It is this: the persecution mentioned in this beatitude and associated with rejoicing and reward, is "for righteousness' sake"—"for my sake"—"for the Son of man's sake." Persecution for reasons other than those is ruled out as far as reward is concerned. For instance, one may be persecuted because of a religious notion or theory that may be unscriptural, although the one advocating it may be sincere.

Strangely enough, persecution in this beatitude is associated with rejoicing, gladness; indeed, St. Luke says, "leap for joy"—and leaping for joy is some unusual action under persecution! It sounds like a paradox, but God's grace is sufficient. It is recorded in "The Acts" of a man who was healed, how "he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (3:8-9). One cannot help wondering what might happen in a modern church should a scene like this be re-enacted!

The Persons Described

They which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: The One who spoke these words was himself a target for persecution. His wonderful life, sinless as it was, made Him a target; for such a life was a constant rebuke to sin. To His disciples, He said: "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

Godliness always has been a silent rebuke to godlessness; Christlikeness, a rebuke to Christlessness. Light shining upon darkness dispels the darkness. True Christian standards always show up inferior standards, and naturally interfere with those who are bent on evil. The spirit of carnality always has been, and is, against the spirit of Christianity, either in open opposition or in silent indifference. For the comfort of the persecuted, the Master himself has said, "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (3:12).

The Promise Designated

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven: The persecuted are blessed (1) because they have accepted the fact of persecution as one of the gracious promises in the reward of discipleship. "Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-

fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30).

(2) The persecuted are blessed because to be persecuted for Christ's sake assures one of true Christian character. To discover within human personality nothing but love for an enemy is to be blessed indeed of God.

(3) The persecuted are blessed because it means suffering for Jesus' sake: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." The report is false; it is a lie, and God will bless the innocent.

(4) The persecuted are blessed because of the Lord's promise: "For great is your reward in heaven." "Persecuted," said Paul, "but not forsaken"—that is present. "Great is your reward in heaven"—that is future.

(5) The persecuted are blessed because they have the assurance that they are in the royal line; "for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

(6) The persecuted are blessed because of the great honor conferred upon them in that they share the sufferings of Christ, and thus become the medium through which God can give to the present generation and to the coming generations the spirit of true Christianity. The words "bleed" and "bless" come from the same root. Is it not true that we must bleed in order to bless? Do we not suffer with Him?

Dr. Jowett put this well when he said: "The gospel of a broken heart demands the ministry of a bleeding heart." Here it is: "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:36-40).

(7) The persecuted are blessed because the ordeal, through the grace of God, becomes an occasion for great rejoicing: "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." St. Luke says: "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets" (6:22-23).

SANCTIFICATION, AND WHAT THEN?

(J. B. Maclagan, London, England)

The question is often asked, "What follows the experience of Entire Sanctification?" A great deal! Entire sanctification should be followed by a life marked as never before by the highest order of integrity.

Paul speaks of "things that accompany salvation." Certainly there are some things which accompany, or perhaps more properly, are the outcome of this work of the Holy Ghost in the soul; things, the absence of

which may well lead us to question the genuineness and reality of our experience.

A Higher Order of Obedience

The destruction of sin in a human soul must result in intensified conceptions of God and of His law, and a higher order of obedience must follow, or the soul cannot keep up with the added light.

The statement so often made, that the outer life of the justified should be as perfect as the life of the wholly sanctified, needs qualification, for there are practices which have to be abandoned as the light increases. This holy relationship to God reveals things not seen before, and brings with it added capabilities. Sanctification always brings the abiding Holy Spirit, whose wondrous presence and light must intensify the conscience and result in marked changes in the outer life. A sanctified man must take God into every relation of life as never before. Increased light means increased appreciation of the claims of both God and man upon him, and he cannot afford to be careless about either.

Restraint in the Use of the Tongue

An increase in light and love must bring new restraints in the use of the tongue. Many people who have been sanctified wholly are now lacking that blessed experience through a careless use of the tongue.

Perfect love to God and man is inseparable from holiness. The ease with which many who profess this grace herald the faults or sins of their brethren must astonish angels. They would not do this with regard to the members of their own families. Why not? The answer is plain: they love them!

Whatever plea may be urged in its justification, a delight in retailing the faults of our brethren is forever incompatible with holiness.

Increase in the Knowledge and Fellowship with God

Persistent separation from all practises and objects of desire which increased light makes apparent as not pleasing to God, will be followed by great increase in the knowledge and fellowship of God. The soul can hardly have the experience of entire sanctification without increased thirst for the Scriptures. The abiding Presence of the indwelling Comforter as the soul's guide cannot but result in constantly increasing light on the Bible and wonderful revelations of the Father and the Son to the soul.

It would be most wholesome and profitable to look back over, say, the last month of our Christian experience and see what further light has been given, and whether we are acting up to it; and then, not casually, but diligently seek for more.

A Life of Sacrifice for others

This blessed and wonderful relation to Christ cannot fail to produce the spirit of self-abnegation and a life of sacrifice for the good of others, which finds its chief joy in making others blessed. May the outcome of the work of the Holy Ghost be seen in all our lives!

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