

Living the Beatitudes (Part 9)

“Blessed are those who have been Persecuted...”

Matthew 5:10-12

¹⁰ “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.

- Here, pushed to the extreme, is the ultimate juxtaposition of the Kingdom of God and the World
- “For the sake of righteousness...” and “because of Me”
- There is a shift from “those” to “you”
- Bookends the Beatitudes’ rewards with “theirs is the kingdom of God.”

This is the culmination of the Way mapped out by the Beatitudes, the summit of the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives: strength to embrace suffering for Christ as a good thing, to welcome the Cross as a gift. Here is the ultimate degree of maturity and spiritual freedom, as well as the most powerful witness human beings can give...

Jacques Philippe
*The Eight Doors of the Kingdom:
Mediations on the Beatitudes*

Persecution

- The Church is no stranger to persecution. One only glance at [Foxe’s Book of Martyrs](#) or [By Their Blood: Christian Martyrs of the Twentieth Century](#) to get a sense of the long and terrible legacy of persecution against those holding fast the Christian faith.
- It might surprise you to know that there has been more violence, persecution, and martyrdom in the 21st Century than in the Nineteen previous centuries combined. Organizations like [The Voice of the Martyrs](#) ([persecution.com](#)) provide continua insight, opportunities to serve and pray for persecuted Christian communities all over the world.
- **Persecution Takes Many Forms Today**
 - Violence & Murder Leading to Martyrdom
 - Social Discrimination
 - Restriction
 - Hateful and Disparaging View of Christians in the Media
 - Exclusion from the Public Square
 - Belittling of Students for their Christian beliefs in Schools and Universities
 - Conflict withing families
 - Defaming and Denying Christian Values

- **The Source of Persecution is not rooted in the origins of the social, historical, or political. It's hostility is born out of the rejection and hatred of God.**

Luke 21:12-17

They will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. ¹³ And so you will bear testimony to me. ¹⁴ But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. ¹⁵ For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. ¹⁶ You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷ Everyone will hate you because of Me. ¹⁷ **And everyone will hate you because you are my followers.**

John 15:18-20, 23-25

"If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. ¹⁹ The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. ²⁰ Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you. ²¹ **They will do all this to you because of me, for they have rejected the one who sent me.**

²³ **Anyone who hates me also hates my Father.** ²⁴ If I hadn't done such miraculous signs among them that no one else could do, they would not be guilty. But as it is, **they have seen everything I did, yet they still hate me and my Father.** ²⁵ This fulfills what is written in their Scriptures: 'They hated me without cause.'

John 16:1-3

"I have told you these things so that you won't abandon your faith. For you will be expelled from the synagogues, and the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing a holy service for God. **This is because they have never known the Father or me.**

- **The Old Testament bears witness that the spirit of persecution and hostility has always existed towards God and His people.**

Psalms 2:1-3

Why are the nations so angry?

Why do they waste their time with futile plans?

² The kings of the earth prepare for battle;

the rulers plot together

against the Lord

and against his anointed one.

³ "Let us break their chains," they cry,

"and free ourselves from slavery to God."

Matthew 23:37

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, **the city that kills the prophets and stones God's messengers!** How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me.

The Grace of Bearing Up Under Persecution

1. **Persecution Purifies** – it diminishes the importance of Self (“dying to Self”) and presents a pure and visible witness to the Greatness of God.
 - a. It is not an expression of heroism or greatness.
 - b. It is a witness to God’s power in our weakness.
2. It is evidence of obedience to the greatest command: *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might”* (Deuteronomy 6:5) .
3. It increases one’s faith in God’s faithfulness.
4. It is the highest expression of love for God.
5. It is the highest expression of love for one’s neighbor and enemy *“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:3).
6. It is one of the most powerful occasions for the Spirit’s presence and support *“If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you”* (1 Peter 4:14; also see Stephen’s Martyrdom Acts 7:55-56).

How to Practice This Beatitude

- To Endure Persecution & Suffering is Essential and Unavoidable if You Follow Jesus and Desire to Enter the Kingdom.

2 Timothy 3:12 **Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**

Matthew 16:24-25

“If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.

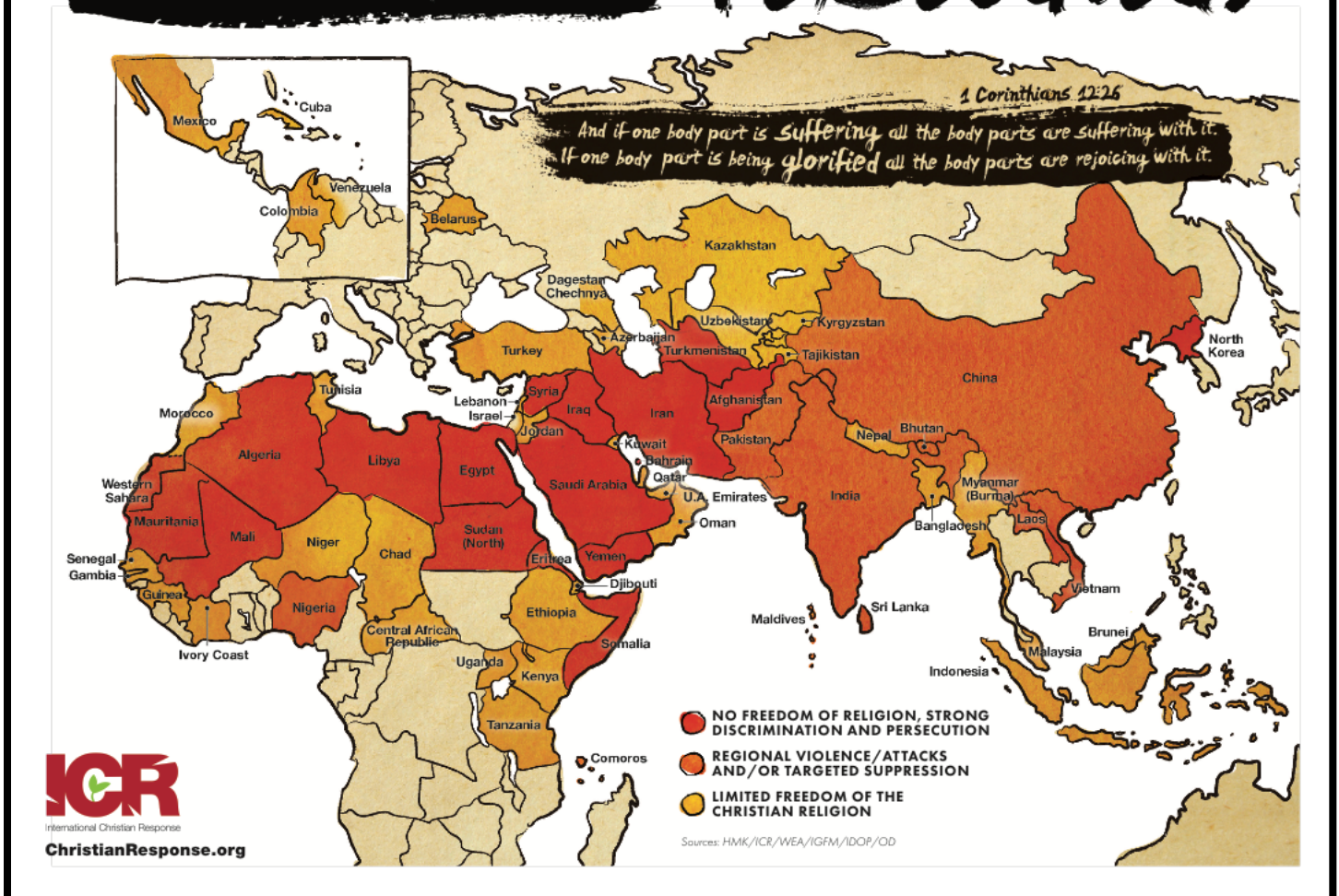
1Peter 2:19-21; 4:12-13

God is pleased when, conscious of his will, you **patiently endure unjust treatment.** ²⁰ Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. **But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you. For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps.**

Dear friends, **don’t be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through,** as if something strange were happening to you. ¹³ Instead, be very glad—for **these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering,** so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world.

1. **Renew Your Mind to Correctly Understand and Accept Your Life is Carrying a Cross; Not Amassing and Protecting the kingdom of Self.**
2. **Practicing Spiritual Disciplines of Fasting and Self-Denial**
3. **Diligently Pray for Suffering Christians Everywhere (see 2020 Map on following Page)**

Will You Pray For The Persecuted?



4. Endure the Suffering and Injustice that Comes Your Way as Opportunity to Shine in the Darkness
 - a. Beware of Retreating or Withdrawing
 - b. Beware of Complaining and Fighting for Self-Rights

We make desperate attempts to forestall what seems to be the inevitable decline of the church in our Western society. During all of this, the world is watching our tweets and Facebook posts. They hear us grumble when we've lost the latest battle in the culture wars. They listen when our leaders lobby for what is rightfully ours, and they see us grabbing for power, recognition, for glory and honor in this life...

When we suffer, if our collective Christian tone is complaint, if we constantly lament our loss of cultural influence of social standing, if we weep and mourn as if Jerusalem has fallen when our chosen political agenda is overlooked, then we expose our true values. Sadly, far too often they reveal our hopes have actually been in this present age and not in the one to come...

As freedoms slip away and suffering draws near, we must not be known as exasperated people always ready to give an answer for our protest and grievance. We must not be a people always longing for the past—for the glory days—but as those looking to a certain and truly glorious future. Then we'll have opportunities to reason with others about the hope we possess.

Elliot Clark
Evangelism as Exiles: Life on Mission As Strangers in Our Own Land