

# Being a Blessing

From Brokenness to Blessing #8 - Pastor Gary Combs - September 24, 2023 - Matthew 5:10; Matthew 5:11-16

**INTRO:** Good morning church! We're concluding our series entitled, "From Brokenness to Blessing." The series is based on the eight blessings or beatitudes that Jesus declared in His Sermon on the Mount. These eight blessings of Jesus turn worldly wisdom upside down! This week we're looking at the 8th and final beatitude:

Matthew 5:10 (ESV) "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

To be "blessed" means to be supremely happy, completely content. Blessed to the max (*macro*)! In other words, Jesus said that a major aspect of the blessed life is

As we look back over the previous beatitudes, we see how we have come to this place:

- "Blessed are the poor in spirit" - We admit our brokenness. We admit we are powerless and need help.
- "Blessed are those who mourn" - We release our grief to God, believing He has the power to help.
- "Blessed are the meek" - We surrender our control to God, committing our way to Christ.
- "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" - We confess our sins and ask God to set us free from our feelings of past guilt, so that we might walk in freedom and victory.
- "Blessed are the merciful" - We recognize our continual need for God's mercy and grace asking God to transform us into people of mercy and forgiveness.
- "Blessed are the pure in heart" - We ask God to help us forgive those who've hurt us and make amends for harm we've done to others that we might have a pure heart fully focused on pleasing God.
- "Blessed are the peacemakers" - We I will set aside time every day with God for self-examination, Bible reading, and prayer in order to know God and His will for my life and gain power to be peacemakers.

Jesus moves from peacemaking to persecution as the final beatitude topic from His Sermon on the Mount. For being peacemakers for Jesus will inevitably lead to certain people refusing to make peace. Indeed, some will even actively oppose us and seek to slander and persecute us. It comes with being a Jesus-follower.

**ILL:** "More than 5,600 Christians were killed for their faith last year. More than 2,100 churches were attacked or closed. More than 124,000 Christians were forcibly displaced from their homes because of their faith, and almost 15,000 became refugees. More than 360 million Christians suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith." (<https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2023/january/christian-persecution-2023-countries-open-doors-watch-list.html>)



**Need:** Yet, It is still pretty easy to be a Christian in America. We don't face systemic persecution. We have laws that protect our freedom to worship and our freedom to believe what we believe. That's not to say, though, that we never suffer. We still might face scorn and mockery, and especially as the culture around us proceeds farther and deeper into paganism. Though the burdens we bear are light compared to what some others have had to carry, they are burdens nonetheless.

Have you ever suffered persecution for your faith in Jesus? Maybe you had a friend or family member reject you? Or maybe it just meant that you were shunned, not invited to parties or picnics? Have you ever been ridiculed or slandered because of your faith? Or have you kept things quiet to avoid trouble? You know, like a 007 Christian, you've kept your faith a secret? Why? Fear of rejection? Desire for man's approval? Apathy?

**Trans:** The truth is, every committed Christ-follower will face persecution. It's inevitable wherever light and darkness intersect. Yet, we don't have to be afraid. We can even live out a blessed life and be a blessing when persecuted.

**BODY:** In Matthew's gospel, Jesus taught His disciples how to be a blessing even when people persecuted them for following Him. We can be a blessing even when we're persecuted for following Jesus. How can we be a blessing even when persecuted. The text gives **three ways** we can be a blessing even when persecuted.

**Read text:** Matthew 5:10-16 (ESV) <sup>10</sup> "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup> "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. <sup>13</sup> "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. <sup>14</sup> "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

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## HOW TO BE A BLESSING EVEN WHEN PERSECUTED

### 1. Be glad, fully identifying with Jesus.

**EXP:** (10-12) Notice the two imperatives in v.12 “Rejoice and be glad.” When? When you suffer persecution. For what? For living a righteous life (10) and talking about Jesus (11). Why be glad? Because of 3 reasons: kingdom is yours (10), reward is great (12), in the prophet’s fellowship (12).

“**Blessed are YOU**” (10) (μακάριοί ἐστε, *makarioi este*) - blessed, happy, “Supremely blessed are YOU.” Notice the change of pronoun from 3rd-person plural (“those who” - 10) to 2nd-person plural (“you” - 11-16). Jesus takes the time to apply this final beatitude using “you” in verses 11-16.

“**Persecuted**” (10) (δεδιωγμένοι, *dediognomenoi*) - Lit., “to make to run, drive away,” persecute, mistreat, to pursue in a hostile manner, harass, trouble.

“**Righteousness sake**” (10) (δικαιοσύνη, *dikaio synē*) - righteousness, right, approved of God, just.

“**Reville**” (11) (ὄνειδίζω, *oneidizō*) - to defame, taunt, revile, to criticize in an abusive or insulting manner.

“**My account**” (11) - Lit., “for my sake.” Reviled and persecuted on account of following Jesus.

“**Rejoice**” (12) (χαίρετε, *chairete* - PresActImp) - to rejoice exceedingly, be glad, joyful. (Do this)

“**Be glad**” (12) (ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, *agalliasথে* - PresMidImp) - to exult, rejoice, be exceeding glad (Be this)

“**Reward**” (12) (μισθός, *misthos*) - reward, wages, pay

“**Prophets**” (12) - you will be in good company for the prophets were persecuted too.

### **ARG:** The certainty of persecution for Christ-followers.

2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV) Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted

John 15:19-21 (ESV) <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

### **Choose to count trials and persecution as joy!**

James 1:2-4 (NIV) <sup>2</sup> Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup> Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

### **ILL:**

**APP:** Choose to rejoice and be glad. This is both an action and a state of being. Not an emotion, but an attitude. Choose joy because the kingdom is yours, your reward will be great, and you’ll be in the fellowship of the prophets. Besides, the church usually grows faster when persecuted.

### 2. Be like salt, exhibiting the character of Jesus.

**EXP:** (13) Don’t get me started on salt. I recently read Mark Kurlansky’s, *SALT: A World History*. I know too much about this topic. Plus, it’s mentioned throughout the Bible, both in reality and as metaphor. Here, Jesus is using it as a metaphor: “You are the salt of the earth” (13).

“**Salt**” (13) - During Jesus’ day, salt was used as a preservative and a seasoning element for food. It was used medicinally and as a cleanser. Roman soldiers were partly paid in salt. Even the word “soldier” – ‘*sal dare*’, meaning to “give salt.” From the same source we get the word “salary,” ‘*salarium*’. Salt was a scarce and expensive commodity and its value was legendary. (ie. “He’s worth his salt”).

“**Thrown out and trampled**” (13) - Not about losing salvation, but being useless as one who exhibits the character of Jesus to a lost world. This kind of salt has only the use of being a weed killer for walking paths.

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**ARG:** Paul equates grace-filled speech with being seasoned with salt (making it tasty and attractive).

Colossians 4:5-6 (ESV) <sup>5</sup> Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. <sup>6</sup> Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

**Being salty, we bless those who persecute us. This is evidence of the transformed mind.**

Romans 12:14 (ESV) Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

**ILL:** Salt is useless when it remains in the saltshaker. It has to be poured out. Have you ever read this book by Rebecca Manley Pippert, *Out of the Salt Shaker and into the World: Evangelism As a Way of Life?* We have to pour our salt out of the shaker! Jesus says, "Be salt!"



**APP:** So what does it look like to be salt? Perhaps the seasoning of grace is in view. Pour out God's grace on people. Be gracious towards others. Exhibit the loving and gracious character of Christ.

And if you're new to the faith and your old crowd doesn't believe you've changed. Keep growing like Jesus. Have you ever caught crabs in a bucket? None of them can get out because the others keep pulling them back in. Don't be like a crab! Be like Jesus when others doubt you, eventually they'll see you've changed.

## 3. Be like light, revealing the message of Jesus.

**EXP:** (14-16) "You are the light of the world" (14). Another metaphor. Salt saves, but light enlightens! Salt preserves, but light proclaims! You will be persecuted for being salt and light, but so was Jesus.

"Light of the world" (14) (φῶς τοῦ κόσμου, *phōs tou kosmou*) - a spiritual metaphor for illumination through the revelation of God's will to people. Shining with gospel light.

"City on a hill" (14) - Perhaps like the light of Jerusalem, which sets atop Mt. Zion.

"Under a basket" (15) - Not hidden or secret, but on a "stand," on display. We are to be public about our witness, making disciples of every nation (Matt. 28:19).

"Let your light shine" (16) (λαμπάτω τὸ φῶς ὑμῶν, *lampato to phōs humon - Aor/Act/Imp*) - Lit., "Shine the light of you." You were born again in order to shine for Jesus!

"So that they may see" (16) - You are to shine with good works, not for your glory, but for...

"Give glory to your Father" (16) - Shining for Jesus leads people to come out of darkness and into His light so that they see and give the Father glory.

**ARG:** Don't be fearful or troubled to shine your light for Jesus.

1 Peter 3:14-17 (ESV) <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup> but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

**As the body of Christ, we too are to be light in the world. Light leads to life!**

John 8:12 (ESV) Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

**ILL:** The sun lights the world by day and the moon by night. But the moon's light reflects the sun's. We are called to reflect the light of Jesus to this dark world.

**APP:** Will you give glory to Jesus in everything? Reflect His light onto this dark world? Tell others about Him without fear?

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**CONCLUSION:** Will you decide to be salt and light for Jesus even when persecution comes your way? Following the 8 beatitudes of Jesus we are changed FROM BROKENNESS TO BLESSING, so that we can BE A BLESSING to others.

This is where our **Celebrate Recovery** ministry comes in. It's a place where you can spend time with other believers who are learning to let Jesus move them FROM BROKENNESS TO BLESSING, so that they are able to walk in freedom and BE A BLESSING to others.

In **CR** we lead people through 8 steps to recovery. Here are the first six we've covered thus far:

## **R.E.C.O.V.E.R.Y.:** (8 principles based on the Beatitudes)

**R** **realize I'm not God.** I admit I'm powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and my life is unmanageable. *This is the "reality" step. "I've got a problem. I need help."*

**E** **arnestly believe that God exists.** I believe that I matter to him and that he alone has the power to help me recover. *The "hope" step. "God's the answer."*

**C** **onsciously choose to commit.** I commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control. *The "commitment" step. "I'm giving my life to Jesus"*

**O** **penly examine and confess my faults.** I confess my sins to God, to myself, and to someone I trust. *The Housecleaning Step. "I'm casting my sin, my shame, my guilt on my Savior Jesus Christ!"*

**V** **oluntarily submit to make changes by God's power.** I submit myself to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask Him to remove my character defects. *The Transformation Step. "I'm asking God to transform my character to be like Jesus."*

**E** **valuate all my relationships.** I will offer forgiveness to those who've hurt me and make amends for harm I've done to others except when to do so would harm them or others. *The Reconciliation Step. "I'm asking God to help me be reconciled in all my relationships."*

**R** **eserve a daily time with God.** I will set aside time every day with God for self-examination, Bible reading, and prayer in order to know God and His will for my life and gain power to do it. *The Maintenance Step. "I'm learning to depend on God's Spirit and His Word daily to maintain my peace and power to live for Him."*

**Y** **ield myself to be used by God to help others.** I yield myself to God to be used to bring the Good News to others by both my example and my words. *The Fulfillment Step. Be a blessing to others by word and deed.*

**WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOU:** Will you decide to get real with other believers about your own hurts, habits, and hangups in one of our Community Groups or in our Celebrate Recovery ministry? We relaunch this Thursday!

**WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR OTHERS:** We really need this ministry to thrive in our church and for our community. Anxiety and addiction are at all time highs in our country and in our city. We need your support for CR. Will you go out and talk to the people at our CR table in the lobby today and consider signing up to serve. We need help with set up, childcare, tech team, coffee service, etc. Will you help us provide this important ministry to our community?

And will you decide to be a blessing to others even when they persecute you...

(1) Being glad, (2) Being like salt, and (3) Being like light?

Let's pray.