

Blessed are they that are persecuted

Introduction:

This morning we come to a close of the Beatitudes portion of the sermon on the mount!

I don't know about you, but certainly for me - it has been one of the deepest, most challenging set of verses that I have studied out in scripture!

Each and every beatitude carries with it:

Relevance

Counter-cultural truth

A big challenge to the way I live my Christian life

And the way that I truly view happiness and blessedness from God's perspective!

Each week we have taken one beatitude and studied it out and TODAY we come to that final beatitude in our mini-series within the sermon on the mount:

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT ARE PERSECUTED!

We are going to get into why this verse is so crazy and so against our natural way of thinking I'm just a minute.

But before we do that I want us to take time, for one last time to recite the beatitudes together:

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven

Those are our 8 statements!

8 truths that Jesus shares about kingdom happiness!

8 statements that the world would scoff at

8 statements that can change the way you experience joy and the power of God in your Christian life

And I pray this morning that you will apply the challenge from each of those beatitudes to your life!!!

Not just listening to fulfil a religious duty or perceived obligation

Preaching should pierce

True biblical preaching should convict

Biblical preach should motivate us to change! To realise that I mustn't leave without applying the truth to my life, and laying any false or sinful way before the Lord!!!!

So with that in mind this morning - I am going to attempt to preach a shorter message this morning to give time and room for an invitation at the end of the Message

The altar will be open

I will challenge you to make a personal response to both:

The message from our beatitude we look at this morning

The other 7 beatitudes we have already looked at

And I employ you right now:

Switch on

Don't tune out

You can catch some sleep and brain numbing time in front of your TV when you get home today!!!!

This time right now is to let God - speak into your life and change your heart!!!!

There is a dual responsibility in this room today:

ON THE PREACHER - to accurately and boldly proclaim God's Word and truth

ON THE LISTENER - to be prepared to hear, receive and apply it!!!

I will make you a commitment this morning and every Sunday morning:

I WILL ENDEAVOUR TO ACCURATELY PREACH BIBLICAL TRUTH AND CHALLENGE YOU TO APPLY THAT TRUTH TO YOUR LIFE

IN RETURN I ASK YOU THIS MORNING:

Don't switch off

Don't zone out

Don't drift off

Look past the messenger this morning to the message

If a preacher is preaching God's Word accurately - the message you hear isn't coming from the Pastor, it is coming from God, through His preacher to you today!!!!

So your commitment is this:

I will diligently listen to God speak to me this morning through my Pastor as he preaches

And I will in turn - open up my life to change and adapt to the truths found in your word!!

IT IS NO USE THIS MORNING - IN MY MANY HOURS OF TIME SPENT WITH GOD MOLDING AND SHAPING THE MESSAGE THAT HE WANTS YOU TO HEAR THIS MORNING IF YOU AREN'T GOING TO BE DILIGENT TO DO YOUR PART AND LISTEN!!!

As God's Word says many times:

He who has ears let him hear

I see 2 ears on each person on here today!

Listen to a God speak through his word as we look at a message entitled:

HAPPILY SUFFERING

Matthew 5:10-12 - **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**

We come to our final beatitude and it is at this point that we would be forgiven for questioning

Whether Jesus has lost the plot

Whether he meant to say what he said

Maybe it's a mistake

Maybe he mis-spoke

Maybe it doesn't mean what it sounds like

Maybe Jesus is talking about minor persecution like -

Stepping on a lego

Supporting Arsenal

Following The England National Football Team

Doing the insanity workout

When you try to order Sticky Toffee Pudding from Garfunkels but it's all finished
When you want ice cream, but you go to the freezer and realise your wife finished it all
When your tube is delayed by 3 mins

No friends

This verse is talking about exactly what we think it's talking about

Jesus didn't misspeak

Jesus hasn't lost the plot

Jesus doesn't make mistakes

Jesus closes off the beatitudes - HIS TEACHING ON GODLY, KINGDOM HAPPINESS BY TELLING US:

Blessed/Happy are they that are persecuted

Jesus says this morning:

Are you being persecuted?

And then he clarifies: for righteousness sake - in other words for living the way Jesus asks us to live, and standing for Jesus and His Word - BE HAPPY!!!!

Be joyful

Put a smile on your face

Let me ask you this morning:

When you hear the word persecution, suffering, trial, tribulation - WHAT DO YOU THINK OF?

*Smiling face/sad face

*person on the floor in agony/prison jumping for joy

*hugging and embracing persecution as a gift/running from persecution like the plague

FOR ALL of us - WE WOULD HONESTLY SAY - HAPPINESS AND PERSECUTION SHOULDN'T GO TOGETHER!

It's like they're opposites

We couldn't find a way to put the 2 words in the same sentence!

BUT JESUS DOES!

AND JESUS KNOWS BEST

JESUS IS 100% AND SPEAKS 100% - being omniscient!!!!

So the question isn't - Can persecution really bring/produce happiness?

BECAUSE IF JESUS SAYS IT - ITS TRUE!!!

The real question is - WHAT DOES JESUS MEAN? AND HOW DOES PERSECUTION PRODUCE HAPPINESS?

The title of our message today is:

HAPPILY SUFFERING

And I want to take time this morning to build a case from the Bible of the blessing and the gift of persecution and suffering!

Even saying the words gift and blessing alongside persecution sounds foreign!

But hopefully by the end of the Message this morning we will all come to agree with and understand the words of King Jesus!!

With that in mind let's look at a few verses this morning as we study our persecution from a biblical viewpoint:

1. THE PROMISE OF PERSECUTION

We start off the main body of our sermon this morning with something very uplifting - AND HERE IT IS - ARE YOU READY FOR IT:

The bible tells us if we are living a godly and righteous Christian life - PERSECUTION IS A PROMISE

IN OTHER WORDS PERSECUTION IS A CERTAINTY
PERSECUTION WILL COME

You want to see what I mean look at the Bible with me this morning:

2 Timothy 3:12 - **Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution**

Wow! What a promise to have!!!!
That we shall suffer persecution!!!!

Let me make an important clarification at this point:
THIS IS SPEAKING OF THOSE THAT ARE LIVING GODLY IN CHRIST JESUS!!!

Likewise our beatitude makes it clear - BLESSED ARE THEY THAT ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE!!!

Note:

It doesn't say - blessed are they that are persecuted for:

Their own stupidity

Their lack of dedication and commitment to their job

For the political position they hold

For their social stands they take

Note - this is a specific promise and a specific happiness spoken of regarding persecution - AND IT IS CENTRED ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS AND OUR PURSUIT OF RIGHTEOUS AND GODLY LIVING!!!!

And the bible makes a promise - if you are pursuing JESUS and righteousness - **'ALL THAT live godly in Christ Jesus SHALL SUFFER PERSECUTION'!!!!**

It is a promise

It is a reality

It will happen in some shape or form

It's funny because we have prosperity preachers all across our world that preach a message of:

Health

Wealth

Happiness

They talk as if becoming a Christian is a guarantee against trial

A guarantee against suffering, hardship and persecution

THEY COULDN'T BE MORE WRONG!!!!

IN FACT THE OPPOSITE IS TRUE TO THE PERSON THAT IS STRIVING TO LIVE A GODLY CHRISTIAN LIFE

A CHRISTIAN'S LIFE SHOULDN'T BE ONE 'FREE FROM TROUBLE AND SUFFERING AND PERSECUTION - IT SHOULD BE A LIFE MARKED BY IT!!!

Based on this promise in 2 Timothy 3:12 and many others - I don't worry whenever I hear of those facing persecution for righteousness sake - that is to be expected!!!

I AM ACTUALLY MORE WORRIED BY THE CHRISTIAN THAT HAS NEVER FACED PERSECUTION IN THEIR CHRISTIAN LIFE
THE CHRISTIAN WHO KEEPS TO SAIL THROUGH LIFE WITHOUT ANY SUFFERING PR PERSECUTION FOR THE NAME OF JESUS - BECAUSE THE BIBLE MAKES IT CLEAR THAT 'ALL THAT LIVE GODLY IN CHRIST - SHALL SUFFER!!!'

So that leads me to a natural conclusion of wondering - Are they living and pursuing a godly life??

Jesus adds to this reality in the gospels:

John 15:18-20 - *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.*

Jesus makes it clear - WHENEVER WE IDENTIFY WITH HIM AND STRIVE TO STAND WITH CHRIST - **WE WILL BE PERSECUTED - BECAUSE HE WAS PERSECUTED!**

We will be hated by the world as he was hated by the world!!!

The servant is not greater than his master!

Note the clarifying fact right in the middle of these verses:

If he were of the world, the world would love his own'

I AM AFRAID - THERE ARE MANY THAT NAME THE NAME OF CHRIST, BUT IT IS CLEAR IT IA IN NAME ONLY, NOT IN PRACTICE OR CONVICTION!!!

I would be concerned if the whole world stood in applause for me and my life and lifestyle!!
I would be concerned if I was loved by the world, based on my stands, convictions and biblical beliefs!!

BECAUSE JESUS SAYS THE WORLD LOVES - ITS OWN!!!!

What that means dear friends this morning is this:

I would rather be loved by Jesus and hated by the world
Than loved by the world and despised by Jesus

I would rather have the applause of King Jesus and the persecution from the world
Than have the applause of the world and face the persecution of King Jesus!!

The problem many Christians in the 21st century have is that they just want to get along!
Their Christian life is more **marked by compromise than it is conviction**
It is more marked by trying to **keep the peace than having to face persecution for the cause of Christ**

I WORRY FOR SUCH A CHRISTIANITY AND SUCH A CHRISTIAN LIFE!!!

The early church didn't know of such a compromise

The Apostle didn't care about watering down our convictions and beliefs to placate the world around us

Jesus didn't know what it meant to hold back TRUTH in order to save people's feelings

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego didn't know what it was to compromise and conform to what the world wanted in order TO keep the peace

THESE WERE PEOPLE THAT STOOD FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS
THAT HELD TO THEIR CONVICTIONS WHATEVER THE COST
THAT STOOD FIRM ON THE TRUTHS OF GOD AND HIS WORD NO MATTER WHAT!
THAT WERE WILLING TO GO TO THE PLACE OF DEATH, FOR THEIR LORD!!

And that for me - is a challenge!

I must ask myself today - as I ask you:

Where are the modern day:

Daniels

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednegos

The apostle Paul's

The peters

The John the Baptist

The Little Christ's - I say that because that is what the word Christian literally means - 'Little Christ'
- and so how can we be Christians or 'Little Christ's' without facing persecution and suffering at the hands of the world as our Saviour did!!!!

Jesus makes it clear:

They persecuted me - they will persecute you

They hate me - they will hate you

PAUL - ALL THAT LIVE GODLY IN CHRIST JESUS SHALL SUFFER PERSECUTION

1 Peter 4:12 - **Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:**

THING IT NOT STRANGE

AS IN - DON'T THIIINK IT IS AN UNUSUAL AND UNEXPECTED THING - we should come to expect PERSECUTION!!!

William Barclay once said this:

"Jesus promised his disciples three things—that they would be completely fearless, absurdly happy, and in constant trouble"

What a quote

And how true that is!!!

We can be guaranteed 3 things if we are living as disciples for Him:

Completely fearless

Absurdly happy

Constant trouble

We like the sound of the first 2 - we aren't as sold on the last!

Yet that is the marks of the true disciples life!

One marked by:

Fearlessness

Happiness

Trouble

Last verse as we look at the promise of persecution:

1 John 3:13 - **Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.**

Short

Simple

To the point

And sounding a lot like Jesus in John 15:

MARVEL NOT!

Don't be shocked
Don't be surprised if the world hate you!

Peter knew it
John knew it
Jesus knew it
Paul knew it

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE REALISE THE PROMISE OF PERSECUTION THIS MORNING!

It is a reality for the godly Christian
It is a promise for the Christian keeping to live for Jesus and righteousness!!!

Not just do we want to see the promise of persecution this morning but very quickly I want to share:

2. THE PICTURES OF PERSECUTION

All throughout the bible and throughout church history we can see numerous pictures, examples and people that have suffered incredible persecution!!!!

More than anything this morning I pray as we look at these pictures and examples that it will do 2 things for you:

***ENCOURAGE YOU** - you are not alone in your persecution and suffering for the name of Jesus

***MOTIVATE YOU** - as these faithful men and women suffered and were persecuted for JESUS it motivates each of us to take our stand for JESUS

And like those that have gone before us - our world needs now more than ever:

FAITHFUL

BOLD

DEVOTED

COMMITTED

CONVICTION HOLDING

BIBLE LIVING CHRISTIANS

AND I PROMISE YOU AS WE HAVE ALREADY KOOKED AT THIS MORNING - IF YOU ARE THOSE THINGS - you will suffer persecution!!!!

So let's get stuck into Gods Word together and look at some biblical pictures and examples of those who suffered for living godly and standing for righteousness!!!

a. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

Daniel 3:10-15 - *Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image: And whoso falleth not down and worshipping, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?*

3 boys had a choice:

Compromise and be comfortable in Babylon

Stick to convictions - and face persecution in Babylon

Would they be willing to stand for God and stand for righteousness?

LET ME ASK - what would you do?

Would you compromise or stick to convictions?

Would you have bowed down, or would you have went against the multitudes?

These boys chose - WE WILL STAND WITH GOD!

WE WILL STAND FOR OUR CONVICTIONS

WE WILL STAND FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE

WE WILL NOT BOW DOWN TO THE GODS OF BABYLON

WE WILL NOT COMPROMISE

WE WILL NOT SEEK COMFORT IN BABYLON, WE ARE COMMITTED TO OUR GOD AND HIS GLORY!!!

The story goes on:

Daniel 3:16-18 - *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*

What boldness

What conviction

What a stand!

It would have been easy to give in!

It would have been easy to bow down

It would have been easy to compromise

They could have said:

Well everyone else is doing it

It's the culture we live in - everyone else in Babylon is bowing down

We don't have to 'mean it' - we can just bow down to fit in, but then go home and live our our faith!!!

NO THESE BOYS TOOK A PUBLIC, BOLD STAND FOR GOD!

THEY DIDNT JUST DO WHAT WAS EASY

THEY DIDNT JUST DO WHAT EVERYONE ELSE WAS DOING

THEY DIDNT JUST GO ALONG WITH THE CROWD

THEY WERENT WILLING TO COMPROMISE!!!

They had faith in their God

They believed truly that if they stood with God, God would stand with them!

And if necessary - this is something they were willing to die for!!!

Story goes on - they are thrown into the furnace:

Daniel 3:23-25 - *And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.*

What a story:

Three boys thrown into the fiery furnace

They stood for God, and friends - GOD STOOD WITH THEM!!!

There was a 4th man in the furnace that protected them!
The 4th man in the furnace worked a mighty work through these boys and their conviction and stand for God!!!!

THE FOURTH MAN OF COURSE BEING A PRE-INCARNATE APPEARANCE OF JESUS - THE SON OF GOD!!!'

Here's the thing right:
In standing for God and facing persecution - was it easy for these boys to do it? NO!
Was it comfortable? NO
Was it a blessing? Do you think those boys left joyous and happy afterwards? YES!
THEY COUNTED THE COST AND STOOD WITH GOD, AND GOT TO SEE GOD DO THE MIRACULOUS!!!

Friends:
We need more shadrachs, meshachs and Abednegos!!!
We need more young people willing to take a stand for JESUS and count the cost
We need more Christians willing to sacrifice comfort and ease of life in our country - and where necessary keep standing for JESUS!!!

There are many shapes and forms that the Gods of Babylon show themselves in London and the UK today:

View of marriage
View on sex and sexuality
View on God, Jesus, heaven, hell, sin, etc!
Standing for counter cultural truths in God's Word!!!

Just like the 3 Hebrew boys - we are like foreigners in this land just like Babylon!
We need to strive to commit to stand for God and His Word!
We need to hold fast to our convictions!
We need to stand for truth, stand for God's Word and go against the flow in this world that is moving away from God's truth!

One of the greatest examples of standing strong for God, facing persecution and seeing God's hand at work through it all!!!!

b. Daniel

Daniel 6:10 - **Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime**

Knowing the cost of his commitment
Knowing the likely persecution and consequences
Daniel was willing to be persecuted for righteousness sake
HIS STAND AND CONVICTION LED HIM TO THE DEN OF LIONS!!!

Even at the very start of the book - we see all 4 of these men taking a stand from the time they first entered into Babylon:

Daniel 1:8 - **But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself**

The story of Daniel and the 3 Hebrew boys is really a constant story of:

BOLD stands and convictions for God

Fierce opposition and persecution

Mighty providence and power of God

And through it all - God magnified his name through their witness!

What a testimony of FAITHFULNESS in such persecution we find throughout the book of Daniel!

Moving on:

c. The Early Church

Acts 8:1 - **And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.**

The early church faced incredible persecution

Murders

Martyrs

Beatings

Torture

All for taking a stand for JESUS and truth and righteousness!!!

THE EARLY CHURCH SHOW A GREAT PICTURE OF STEADFASTNESS IN PERSECUTION.

Here are a few specific examples:

d. Peter and the Apostles

Acts 5:40-42 - **And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.**

What a story!

The apostles are arrested

The apostles are beaten

The apostles are persecuted

And look at their perspective on their persecution - **REJOICING! THAT THEY WERE COUNTED WORTHY TO SUFFER SHAME FOR HIS NAME!!**

What courage

What strength

What an example of commitment to JESUS!

e. Paul

If anyone knew persecution it was Paul!

And yet throughout IS life he remained joyful, faithful and committed to JESUS and the gospel.

Here are a few examples of his incredible commitment to JESUS and his view of persecution:

2 Corinthians 4:8-12 - **We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you**

2 Corinthians 11:23-27 - **Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five**

times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness

Lastly and very quickly - Jesus is the one speaking the words in our beatitudes and He more than anyone knew the meaning of persecution!

HE IS OUR EXAMPLE OF PERSEVERANCE AND COMMITMENT THROUGH PERSECUTION!

f. Jesus

Hebrews 12:2 - Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Isaiah 53:3-7 - He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

So we not know:

The promise of persecution - it will come if your living godly

The pictures of persecution - we are not alone in our persecution for righteousness

Lastly:

3. THE PRODUCT OF PERSECUTION

So now the big question:

Why is PERSECUTION a blessing?

Why is it something that we can equate with happiness?

After all that's what JESUS and the bible tells us - both in Matthew 5:10 and elsewhere:

a. We identify with Christ

John 15:18 - If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

1 peter 4:13 - But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy

b. It proves we are His - proof of our salvation

1 peter 4:14 - If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

c. God can work through it for your good and His glory

Acts 8:1 - And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

d. It builds character and deepens faith

Romans 5:3-5 - And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us
James 1:2-4 - My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

e. Builds Strength

2 Corinthians 12:10 - Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

For these reason - we can begin to get our head around the statement - 'Blessed are those that are persecuted'

BECAUSE FRIENDS IT IS through persecution it:

- *Identifies me with Christ
- *It proves we are his
- *We realise God can work through it for our good and his glory
- *It builds character and deepens faith
- *Builds Strength

IT IS FOR THESE REASONS AND MANY MORE THAN WE CAN BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND THIS BEATITUDE OF JESUS!!!!

As we close:

CONCLUSION

Don't wish away PERSECUTION
Pray through it

If you are living a godly life - IT IS PROMISED TO YOU! JUST AS SURELY AS ETERNAL LIFE IS A PROMISE TO THE BELIEVER, SO TO IS PERSECUTION TO THE GODLY CHRISTIAN!!!!

Encourage and motivate yourself with the pictures of many PERSECUTION saints that have gone before us

And remember - the products of persecutions - many of which are fruits and results that can only come from persecution!