

>>>>>> **Matthew – Lesson 07** <<<<<<<

1) Ok, picking up where we left off last time...

¹⁰ “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (8)

a) **Persecuted** – refers to being harassed by someone, especially because of our beliefs or actions coming from those beliefs.

i) Bottom line - those who faithfully live according to the first seven beatitudes are guaranteed at some point to experience the eighth.

ii) Those who live righteously will inevitably be persecuted for it in some form or another.

iii) Godliness generates hostility and antagonism from the world.

iv) We will probably never know the persecution that the early Christians suffered or even others in many parts of the world do today.

v) We live in a country where we cannot be persecuted because of our religious beliefs – something we truly take too much for granted.

vi) Though we will not be persecuted in that manner, we may be persecuted in other ways every day.

(1) If we consider this in a proper perspective, the word “persecuted” almost seems too strong for what we may have to endure.

vii) However, to repeat, in many circumstances, **Godliness generates hostility and antagonism from the world.**

Agree / Disagree?

If you agree, then why do you think that is?

b) Now here is one of those hard questions. Hard because it causes us to evaluate things and think honestly about them.

How do we face hostility and antagonism for the sake of righteousness?

c) Be careful here – make sure we are talking about “for the sake of righteousness” not because of our personality, or other non-related things ... AND NOT for being a follower of Christ ... we’ll get to that next.

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 this same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (9)

d) **Followers Insulted and Persecuted** – here, we have two words to define – **insult** and **persecute**.

To insult is to find fault in a way that demeans the other, reproach, revile, mock, heap insults upon as a way of shaming.¹⁴

¹⁴ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 710.

To persecute is the same definition as in the last verse - to harass someone, especially because of beliefs

- e) We must be clear – there is a marked difference between the last beatitude (#8) and this one (#9).
- f) In the last one, we are dealing with persecution because of the way we live – basically doing the right things for right reasons – being what God wants us to be.
- g) Here, it is about claiming allegiance to Christ!
- h) As if all of the other upside-down ideas were not enough Jesus tells his disciples and the crowd:

“Oh yes, if you follow me and say you do you will be lied about, persecuted, and basically called evil.”

- i) But there is a good side – the retirement plan is great!
- ii) Not only that but you are in good company – God’s own prophets.

Same basic question as with the last one ...

How are we persecuted and insulted for showing allegiance to Christ?

- 2) Jesus continues His teaching – again directed at his disciples but applicable to any in the crowd who will become His disciples (including us).

Matthew 5:13 (NASB 2020)

Disciples and the World

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by people.

- 3) In the 1st century as now, salt was used as flavoring.
 - a) However, the most important function of salt at that time was not flavoring food but preserving it.
 - b) There was no refrigeration therefore, food could not be kept for any length of time without it spoiling unless it was preserved by salting.
 - c) Salt preservation made sailing for longer periods of time, long marches for soldiers, and other necessary long-term food requirements possible.
- 4) Just as salt preserves and brings out the best flavor of food, believers should affect others positively as well.
- 5) So, how does salt lose its “saltiness”?
- 6) Left out of a container, salt will deteriorate – it will lose its flavor and its ability to preserve things.
 - a) First and foremost, it deteriorates because of interaction with water and other environmental conditions.
 - b) Salt is hygroscopic – this means simply that when exposed to highly moist atmospheres, it will absorb water and thus deteriorate.

- c) Dissolving and recrystallization. If it is dissolved and recrystallized, it loses some of its original ability to preserve and some of its taste.
 - d) Contamination with other substances will cause that same loss of preserving ability and taste.
- 7) All these things cause salt to lose its flavor and ability to preserve things.
- 8) I made the statement a moment ago that - just as salt preserves and brings out the best flavor of food, believers should affect others positively.

So, I guess we should ask what makes us like salt – how do we bring out the best flavor of the world?

- a) Live the life of the beatitudes – not in isolation but for all to see!
 - i) Salt will not salt food if it stays in the saltshaker!
 - ii) Fishermen do not catch fish by setting in a classroom learning to fish.
- b) Caring for others
- c) Living selflessly

How do we preserve the world?

- d) Live the life of the beatitudes – not in isolation but for all to see!
- e) Caring for others and sharing Christ with the world as much and often as we can.

Finally, what causes us to lose our “saltiness”?

- f) Like salt, if we are left out (stop being part of the body) we deteriorate in our abilities to be salt to others.
 - i) If we are just going through the motions and not really being a part of the body, we are out of our container.
- g) Complacency
- h) Dilution by the world – i.e. buying into what the world sells as right instead of what God says is right.
- i) Dilution by our own ideas – i.e. buying what we sell ourselves as right instead of what God says is right.
- j) Interaction with sinners and evil.

Psalm 1:1–3 (NASB 2020)

The Righteous and the Wicked Contrasted.

- ¹ Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
- ² But his delight is in the Law of the LORD,
And on His Law he meditates day and night.
- ³ He will be like a tree planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season,
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.

- 9) The bottom line of this is that we cannot isolate ourselves from the world, sinners and evil BUT we must not let them influence us in ways that destroy our proper relationship with God, Christ and others – loose our saltiness.
 - a) If we do, we are no longer able to provide flavor and preservation to the people whom God brings to us that need flavor and preserving.