

1) Ok, let's continue our look into the details of the last 2 Beatitudes.

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

2) *Persecuted* – refers to being harassed by someone, in this case, because of our beliefs or actions coming from those beliefs. “Doing right things for right reasons.”

a) Bottom line is, those who live righteously will inevitably be persecuted for it in some form or another.

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

c) However, Godliness generates hostility and antagonism from the world.

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

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

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

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

Why do you think that is?

g) Now here is one of those hard questions.

i) 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 (doing right things for right reasons)?

h) Be careful here, it will be easy to get off track. – make sure we are thinking about “for the sake of righteousness” not because of a problem you may be having with someone at work, or other non-related thing perhaps like someone just doesn’t like you...

i) AND NOT for being a follower of Christ per se ... we’ll get to that next.

3) Again, this beatitude promises our possession of the kingdom of heaven now, both for those listening to Him on that day and us 2000 plus years later.

1) This next beatitude is similar to the last but addresses a different cause of persecution.

11 “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (9)

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

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To revile (insult) is to find fault in a way that demeans the other, reproach, mock, heap insults upon as a way of shaming.³

To persecute is the same definition as in the last verse - to harass someone, but instead of our beliefs and how we act, in this case, it is our commitment to Christ.

- a) Again, in the last beatitude, we are dealing with persecution because of the way we live – basically doing the right things for right reasons – being and living the way that God wants us to.
- b) Here, it is about claiming allegiance to Christ!
- c) As if all of the other upside-down ideas are 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.”

(1) But there is a good side – the retirement plan is great!

(2) And, not only that but you are in good company – God’s own prophets.

Here’s the same basic question as with the last beatitude ... What are ways we are persecuted and insulted for showing allegiance to Christ?

Any questions about any of the Beatitudes or other things we’ve covered so far?

- 1) 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 (ESV)

Salt and Light

¹³ “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.

- 2) First, we of course are not talking about “salt of the earth” meaning salt to the ground beneath our feet.
 - a) Obviously, we are talking about being salt to the people of the earth – those we come in contact with us every day – Christian or not.
- 3) In the 1st century as now, salt was used as flavoring.
 - a) However, one of the most important functions of salt at that time was not flavoring food but preserving food.
 - 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.

³ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 710.

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- d) To apply this to people:
 - i) To our brothers and sisters, always providing support in their Christian walk when they need it.
 - ii) To those not our brothers and sisters, always living in such a way as to point them to Christ.
 - iii) Also, seizing opportunities to share Christ whenever and wherever they come.
- 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”?
 - a) Left out of a container, salt will deteriorate – it will lose its flavor and its ability to preserve things.
 - i) Salt is hygroscopic, this means simply that when exposed to high moisture it will absorb the moisture and deteriorate.
 - b) If it is dissolved and recrystallized, it loses some of its original ability to preserve and some of its taste.
 - c) If it is contaminated by other substances, it will not be as effective in preserving and providing the same flavor increase.
- 6) I made the statement a moment ago that salt preserves and brings out the best flavor of food, we as believers should bring out the best and preserve others in the same way.

How do we bring out the best (Flavor) of the people of the earth?

- a) Live the life of the commitment to Christ – not in isolation but for all to see!
 - i) Salt will not add flavor to food if it stays in the saltshaker!
 - ii) As Christians we will not bring out the best in others if we hide our Christlikeness.
- b) Caring for others
- c) Living selflessly

How do we preserve people?

- a) Live the life of the commitment to Christ – not in isolation but for all to see!
- b) Caring for others and sharing Christ with the world as much and often as we can.
- c) Always living as much as we can doing right things for right reasons.

Finally, what are some things that cause us to lose our “saltiness”?

- d) 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.
- e) Complacency
- f) Dilution by the world – i.e. buying into what the world sells as right instead of what God says is right.
 - i) Unfortunately, the world and its temptations are to us like water is too salt.

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- ii) If we do not stay in the Word, connected to the body, we are in essence out of our container.
- iii) As such, we will absorb the world just like salt absorbs water.
- g) Dilution by our own ideas – i.e. buying what we sell ourselves as right instead of what God says is right.
- h) Interaction with sinners and evil.
 - i) Not like the Pharisees stayed away from sinners but simply not being part of their sinning either.
 - ii) Psalm 1:1-2 says this clearly ...

Psalm 1:1–2 (ESV)

The Way of the Righteous and the Wicked

1 Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits 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.

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