

The Blessing of Persecution

Matthew 5:10-12

Halifax: 11 January 2004

Introduction

Today we come to the last of the Beatitudes.

- The Beatitudes are the list of blessings—eight of them—with which Jesus began His most well known Sermon:
 - “The Sermon on the Mount.”

Matthew presents this sermon to us as an example of the kind of preaching that Jesus did when He went about all Galilee preaching the gospel of the Kingdom.

- His purpose for coming to His people was to bless them by saving them from their sins.
 - He came to bless, not to curse...
 - And so it is no wonder that He begins His sermon by setting forth the characteristics of those who have obtained His blessing...
 - those who have the blessing of His kingdom.

All through His ministry,

- Jesus labours to show the difference between those that are blessed and those that are cursed.
- He talks about
 - the wheat the tares,
 - the narrow way that leads to life and the broad way that leads to destruction,
 - the house on the sand that falls and the house on the rock that stands.
 - the righteous and the unrighteous.
- He does this because of His love for those He came to save.
 - He has promised that not one of them will perish.
 - Part of His work in saving them is to call them to Himself to obtain the blessing of righteousness...
 - He is the only source of blessing,
 - and if you are one of His sheep, He will not allow you to miss the way...
 - He labours to make certain you understand the way so that you will not miss the way.

- There are only two kinds of people in the world...
 - Those that are cursed and those that are blessed.
 - There is Cain and Able, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Easu...
 - Yet, the distinction has often been blurred.
 - There are many who name the name of Christ who are not blessed by Him...
 - They have come into the church, but they do not have saving faith.
 - There are even many times when two nations have been at war,
 - and the most visible line has been between one nation and the other rather than between Christ's kingdom and the world.
 - Once again, we need eyes to see where the important difference lies.
 - You need to know so you can see if you are truly His disciple.
 - The distinction between the blessed in Christ and the cursed apart from His is the one that will prevail...
 - This is the distinction that will define your final destiny—
 - All who are blessed will be gathered into Christ's eternal kingdom for unmitigated blessing...
 - And all who are out of Christ will be gathered for eternal misery and condemnation.

In the Beatitudes,

- we have seen that Jesus sets forth the characteristics of His blessed ones.
- He says that:
 - The blessed ones are poor in spirit—
 - they realise that they, along with everyone else, has been ruined by the fall and that there is nothing they themselves can do.
 - The blessed ones mourn over their lost condition—
 - they are broken because they realise how desperate their situation!
 - They have sinned against God and their hearts are corrupt and deceitful
 - The blessed ones are meek—
 - they have given up on what they can do for themselves, and so they humbly turn everything over to Jesus...
 - they want Him to govern them and to deliver them!

- The blessed ones hunger and thirst for righteousness—
 - They crave the righteousness that King Jesus brings into the world!
 - They want Him to change their standing with God...
 - They want Him to change their lives and make them godly.
- The blessed ones begin to imitate King Jesus as He works in them by His Spirit...
 - They are merciful...
 - they reach out to those in need and do what they can to help them.
 - They are pure in heart...
 - there is no need to pretend with King Jesus,
 - He sees all, and He forgives all.
 - They are peacemakers
 - they want everyone to be joined together in Christ's kingdom.

Now you will remember that the word “blessed” that is used here means “happy.”

- Yet how contrary this list seems to the world's concept of happiness!
 - A popular magazine took a survey of those who considered themselves to be happy, and it was quite opposite to Jesus' list...
 - According to the responses received,
 - happy people enjoy other people but are not self-sacrificing;
 - (there goes mercy and peacemaking)
 - they refuse to participate in any negative feelings or emotions;
 - (there goes poverty of spirit and mourning)
 - and they have a sense of accomplishment based on their own self-sufficiency.
 - (there goes poverty of spirit again, meekness, and hungering for righteousness)
 - But the beatitude that really stands out in contrast to the world's standard is the last one—the one we come to today!
 - Jesus says,
 - “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for

great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

- It was hard enough to accept that the poor in spirit and the ones hungering for righteousness are blessed—
 - but the persecuted?
 - The man of the world has no concept of this!
 - But I want you to see it!
 - Jesus says it!

I. The blessed ones are the persecuted ones!

A. You need to see it...

- If you have received the blessing of the salvation that Jesus brought from heaven...
 - If you are one of the blessed ones...
 - Then you will be persecuted!

1. God has told you that it will be so and it will be so!

- a. After the fall, He promised to put enmity between the woman’s seed and the serpent’s seed.
 - This was a wonderful blessing!

1) God was promising that He would not leave us all to perish in our rebellion and sin!

- We had rejected Him and fallen under His judgement.
- We had decided that we would find our own way to happiness and blessing without God.
- We rejected Him because we thought we could attain a greater blessing on our own!

2) God could have left us all to perish together in that miserable condition...

- We would have been unified with everyone else in seeking our own way while rejecting the true God...
 - busy making up our own idols to worship...
 - busy making our own laws according to our own wisdom.
- God could have left us all in league with Satan...
 - and with each other... in this rebellion.

- 3) But right then He promised that the woman's seed (that is Christ) would come as a champion to destroy Satan, the ruler of this world...
 - a) And through all the ages, Jesus has been calling and gathering a people to Himself...
 - A people that He leads back to God.
 - A people that He restores to righteousness!
 - He has been establishing His righteous kingdom in this fallen rebellious world!
 - b) And so all through the ages there has been enmity between the seed of Christ and the seed of Satan.
 - Jesus with His people... and Satan with His people.
- b. God said He would put the enmity there, and it has been there!
 - 1) Right from the first, there was Cain and Able.
 - John explains the enmity between them in 1 John 3:12:
 - Cain was of the wicked one and murdered his brother, and why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's were righteous!"
 - Able came to God in Christ,
 - not looking to himself, but to Christ for blessing...
 - Cain, though religious in one way,
 - wanted God to approve his own works, and God would not because they were not of faith.
 - 2) This enmity is so prevalent than when God renewed His promise to Abraham,
 - He put the mark of difference between the seed of Christ and seed of Satan in this...
 - Those who belong to Christ would bless Christ and His people...
 - Those who belong to Satan would persecute or curse Christ and His people...
 - He gave the promise like this:
 - Those that bless you I will bless, those that curse you I will curse.
 - 3) And Paul says that the same thing was still going on his day...
 - In Gal 4:29, he says,

- But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, even so *it is* now.
 - He assures us in 2 Timothy 3:12 that:
 - “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”
 - He doesn’t say it **might** happen,
 - He says it **will** happen if you truly belong to Jesus Christ.
2. Persecution must come because of the very nature of things!
- a. There are two kingdoms, and each has its own way of attaining blessing!
- 1) The way of Christ’s kingdom is outlined here in the beatitudes...
 - It is to give up on ourselves and look to King Jesus for righteousness.
 - It is to come to Him for blessedness.
 - It is to come to Him with nothing of our own and find all in Him.
 - 2) Those who entrust themselves to Him attain the kingdom of heaven...
 - He brings them His righteousness.
 - He offered Himself to God as a sacrifice to atone for their sins...
 - And He gives them the Holy Spirit who turns them to Himself and restores His image in them.
- b. But the way of Satan’s kingdom is exactly the opposite!
- 1) He teaches that the way to blessing is in yourself—
 - That real happiness comes from going your own way.
 - 2) He is not altogether opposed to using divine power to get what you want...
 - in fact, he loves to lead people into false religion...
 - but in his religion, the worshipper is able to manipulate God—
 - to get what he wants from God by doing something for God.
 - In other words, you never give up on yourself!
 - 3) In every case, it is what man does that gains him the blessing...
 - whether man manufactures his own blessing by making life a party...
 - or by saying the rosary...
 - whether by offering his children to Molec...
 - or making his career his source of blessing...
 - whether pursuing the simply life...

- or looking for blessing in a relationship with someone...
 - It is always **man** making his **own** way to his **own** blessing.
- c. Now you can surely see that Christ's way and Satan's way collide!
- 1) Christ's way is very confrontational to Satan's way!
 - a) Here you have people supposing that they can find blessing by their own devises...
 - But this is just simply not possible!
 - There is this problem that God's judgement always catches up.
 - Death comes to all, and there is nothing that anyone can do to change that!
 - A person can pretend he doesn't care, but its still there!
 - b) And those who are in Christ's kingdom are constantly exposing the lie—
 - just by being there!
 - To the guy trying to find a blessing by cutting corners at work, there is the believer doing his work heartily to please the Lord because of gratitude.
 - To the woman trying to find a blessing by saying rote prayers, there is the believer claiming that all our religious acts are worthless apart from the righteousness of Christ.
 - c) To the unbeliever, it is as if the Christian is running around screaming all the time—
 - “You are not righteous, you are going to die, God is going to judge!”
 - The very thing the unbeliever is trying to forget, the believer keeps reminding him about.
 - But the unbeliever does not want to give up on his own way!
 - He wants to make it work!
 - He wants to shut the believer up!
 - 2) Jesus explains it very well in John's account...
 - He said,
 - John 3:19-20: And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds

were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

- The people Jesus speaks of were experts at decking out their own way...
 - but when Jesus comes, he exposes it for what it is—evil!
 - No matter how hard they try to dress themselves up,
 - their own righteousness is filthy rags...
 - Jesus exposes this.
- The Christian message is down-right offensive because it tells the world that they are evil and cannot save themselves!
 - Those who have come to Christ are no longer part of the world's system,
 - and they continually testify against that system by their subjection to Jesus Christ.
 - And so Jesus says to His followers:
 - John 15:19: “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”
 - It must be so—
 - There are two opposite and entirely contrary principles!

TRANS> So let me say then to all you who belong to Jesus...

B. Do not be surprised by this persecution!

1. If you are a new believer, know that you have just entered into a cosmic war—a war with the world!
 - a. When the apostle Paul was saved, the first thing the Lord did was to show him what great things he would suffer for his name!
 - Jesus told His disciples that they would be hated by all men for his sake...
 - And He warned everyone who was interested in following Him that to do so meant to deny yourself and take up your cross daily!
 - He wants you to know!
 - b. Persecution is a part of Christ's kingdom as long as you are in this world...
 - You cannot follow Him without it!
 - And don't kid yourself—
 - It is not persecution for your own foolishness or your own nastiness...

- It is persecution for righteousness that Jesus is talking about here.
 - It is the persecution that comes when you renounce your parent's false religion...
 - It is the persecution that comes when you lose your job because you would not lie or would not work on the Lord's day...
 - It is the persecution that comes when people oppose you or mock you for training up your children in the Lord...
2. Covenant children, you need to know about this persecution too!
- a. You have grown up in a godly home...
 - but the day will come when you will go off to university...
 - or take your first job in a place where there is no fear of God.
 - b. What will you do when others tease you because you won't give yourself to drunkenness and immorality?
 - 1) Will you just be quiet about your faith and let them mock?
 - Or will you rise to the occasion to testify of the hope you have...
 - 2) Young men, will you play the part of the man or the wimp?
 - Will you speak up for the truth?
 - When they tease you because you don't join with them in immorality, will you say,
 - "Men, God has called us to be strong and to protect women, not to use them for our own selfish pleasure!"
 - "My goal is not to drool after every woman that walks by... my goal is to find a girl I can cherish and care for for the rest of my life."
 - 3) I am often concerned for Christian young men!
 - There are too many who think their only goal is to be nice!
 - But God has not called you to be nice...
 - He has called you to be righteous and to testify of your hope.
 - If you are nice, you won't be persecuted, but neither will you be blessed.
 - Jesus said:
 - Luke 6:26: Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.

- I don't mean that you should be rude...
 - But you must learn to firmly, graciously, boldly speak the truth.
 - It's not an easy thing to do, but God will help you!
- c. Paul makes fun of the Corinthians because they got along quite well with the world!
- With biting sarcasm, he says:
 - 1 Cor 4:9-10: For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We *are* fools for Christ's sake, but you *are* wise in Christ! We *are* weak, but you *are* strong! You *are* distinguished, but we *are* dishonored!
 - Paul is talking about what He and the apostles were in the eyes of the world—
 - The Corinthian church was like many churches in North America today...
 - They sought to court the world's favour and to impress them into the kingdom...
 - They were seen as wise and distinguished by the world!
 - But those who were following Christ were seen as fools.

TRANS> I tell you, if you follow Christ, you will be persecuted!

II. Persecution will come with great variety...

A. It comes from a variety of sources.

1. Sometimes it comes from other believers.
 - a. This is perhaps the most difficult of all, but we see it in the Bible!
 - Did Jesus' own disciples not try to dissuade Him from going to the cross?
 - Did the apostle not have to correct the Church at Rome for persecuting one another regarding the eating or not eating of meat?
 - b. When you come to believe something from God's word, you must practice it.
 - Those who have not seen it or accepted it will oppose you and ridicule you.
 - Do not hate them, they are your brothers.
 - Patiently follow Christ and bear with your brothers.
 - You do your part for Christ's kingdom to follow Him.

- Persecution from your brothers will not last because it is the result of what we were,
 - not the result of what we have become and soon will be!
 - God will bring us into perfect peace in time.
2. But the fiercest persecution of all comes from nominal Christians...
- a. Those who are churchgoers, but who do not approach God by faith in Jesus Christ and are not born again.
 - Because they are trying to attain their own righteousness among God's people, they are the most antagonistic of all to the truth!
 - b. It has always been this way...
 - Jesus called Jerusalem, "You who kill the prophets!"
 - He asked them, "Which of the prophets have you not slain?"
 - Jesus' opposition did not come primarily from the Romans or the Greeks, but from God's covenant people themselves.
 - They were trying to attain their own righteousness by the works of God's law...
 - And Jesus showed them true righteousness that only comes by faith in Him...
 - They could not bear this message!
 - They crucified Him.
 - c. The same opposition is found in the church today.
 - There are many covenant people,
 - baptised in the name of the triune God,
 - who absolutely despise the gospel!
 - They are seeking to obtain their own righteousness, and though they speak of Christ,
 - He is only a piece of wax to them that they shape in whatever way pleases them.
 - They do not hear His word, they do not hear Him.
 - They do not accept that a real atonement was necessary—
 - to them, Jesus on the cross is only an example of dedication to a cause.
 - Such men have killed thousands of true believers.

3. Persecution can also come from your own family.
 - a. I have a friend that went to Nazareth on a summer mission and while he was there a young Muslim was converted.
 - The night after he was baptised,
 - he awoke to find that his own mother had crept into the room with knife to cut his throat while he was sleeping.
 - He fled and found lodging with a Christian family.
 - b. Some of you have certainly had opposition from your parents because of Christ.
 - Whether it be for your church affiliation or your doctrine or your practice, you have known what it is to be opposed for Christ's sake.
 - Don't try to avoid this persecution!
 - Jesus tells you that if you are to be His disciple,
 - you will have to hate your own mother and father and sister and brother for His sake!
 - In other words, when you must choose between pleasing them and pleasing Him, you must follow Him!
4. Sometimes persecution is organised and official.
 - a. Governments will sometimes outlaw true faith.
 - In Rome, anyone who would not confess that Caesar was Lord (a confession that was mandatory each year) was persecuted.
 - Many Christian's lost their property, their families, and even their lives for refusing to swear their allegiance to Caesar.
 - b. The same thing happened again in Scotland during the killing times...
 - Our Presbyterian forefathers were commanded to confess that the King of England was the Head of the Church, and when they refused, they were tortured and burned and hung.
 - What is especially striking about their testimony is the fact that they did not believe that all who confessed that the King of England was the Head of the Church on Earth was essential to salvation—
 - but even so, they were unwilling to confess falsehood even when the price was their own life.
 - c. Brethren, we do not know what persecutions we may face in the days to come from our own government...
 - but things are moving in that direction.

- The great offense is the same as it ever was—
 - We confess that Jesus is Lord and that He is the only Saviour.
 - His word is our rule and we condemn what He condemns and condone what He condones.
 - In our day, that means that we confess that sex outside of marriage between one man and one woman is sinful and perverse...
 - We cannot allow anyone who practices such without repentance into our congregation.
 - The day may come when we will face imprisonment or fines for such a confession.
 - Jesus says, “blessed are you” when that happens.

TRANS> Persecution not only comes from a great diversity of sources...

B. You can also expect it to come in a great variety of ways.

1. You do not need suppose that it must be in a certain form to be real persecution.
 - a. I have observed more than one professing Christian who endured physical persecution in his own nation,
 - only to deny Christ in North America because of the onslaught of temptation here.
 - b. The goal of persecution is to get rid of righteousness.
 - And that can be attempted by murder, confiscation of property, torture, imprisonment and all that sort of thing...
 - Or it can be attempted by ridicule and exclusion along with enticement and seduction to follow the world.
 - A man of the world loves nothing more than to lead a Christian into evil—to see him renounce some aspect of the truth—
 - either in what he believes or what he practices.
 - And by our modern societies’ definitions,
 - this pressure that is applied to seduce and entice and draw away is called harassment.
 - Indeed, it is a form of persecution.
 - Joseph experienced it with Potipher’s wife.
 - We experience it today.
2. Now it is clear from verse 11 that when Jesus pronounces His blessing on the persecuted,

- He is thinking of all different kinds of persecution.
- a. First there is “when they revile you.”
 - 1) This is ridicule or insult in your face...
 - Literally, it is something cast into your teeth.
 - 2) This is what the Pharisees did when Jesus healed the man born blind.
 - The light was shining so brightly when he began to ask them how Jesus could heal a man born blind if he had not come from God, so they replied:
 - John 9:34: "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out.
 - Since he was blind, they said he was “completely born in sins.”
 - They reviled Him.
 - 3) Jesus bore the same kind of thing when they called him “the carpenter’s son” and “the Nazarene” and said he was “a Samaritan who had a demon.”
 - but worst of all was when he was on the cross and they mocked him and said,
 - “If you are really the son of God, come down...”
 - and then they said, “He saved others, Himself He cannot save.
 - 4) If you have been a Christian for long, you have surely been reviled!
 - Some laugh at you and say,
 - “You actually believe that people are going to Hell that don’t believe like you believe?”
 - Or, “Do you mean to tell me that you actually believe the Bible is the word of God?”
 - What about all the contradictions?
 - What about evolution?
 - What about slavery?
- b. To reviling, Jesus adds a second form—“and persecute you.”
 - This, of course, is the general word that is used three times in these verses.
 - The word itself means to pursue, as to hunt you down like a hunter hunts his prey.

- 1) The picture of David in the wilderness with Saul in hot pursuit comes to mind.
 - The picture of the High priests scheming together about how they may catch Christ comes to mind...
 - They tried to catch Him in His words while He was teaching...
 - When that miserably failed, they went out to arrest Him when he was away from the crowds.
 - All along they were in pursuit of Him.

 - 2) If you are living for Jesus, there are people who are pursuing you...
 - They are waiting for you to slip up so they can gloat...
 - They would like nothing more than to see you stumble and fall.

 - 3) But of course, persecution includes more than the hunt...
 - It also includes the abuse that falls when you are found...
 - There is torture, banishment, confiscation of property, and of course death itself—
 - all ways to try to silence righteousness where it is found.

 - 4) We need to pray for our brothers and sisters in places where heavy, bloody persecution is going on today.
 - In Sudan, in China, in India, in parts of Africa, in many Muslim countries.
- c. Finally, Jesus adds, “and say all kinds of evil against you falsely.”
- 1) This is the slander that goes on, usually behind your back.
 - It is a favourite device.
 - People are really excited to report it if an eminent minister falls into sin...
 - but when this does not happen, they will often make things up about him.

 - 2) The Pharisees actually went around saying that the spotless and pure Jesus Christ was a glutton and drunkard!
 - This was a rather desperate effort to put out His light because it was shining all over them and exposing their sins.
 - At His trial, they tried to get false witnesses together—anything to get rid of the light!

 - 3) In the early church, it was just the same.

- The believers were accused of Cannibalism because they claimed to eat the flesh of Christ in the Lord's Supper.
- They were accused of atheism because they refused to worship other gods.
- They were accused of immorality because met privately to avoid persecution.
- They were accused of sedition because they would not worship Caesar and take the oath of allegiance I mentioned before.

4) Now look at us today:

- We are accused of child abuse because we discipline our children...
 - Yet, we are those who love our children and take time for them and who have children that grow up to love us rather than to rebel against us.
- We are accused of oppressing women because we believe that wives are to submit to their own husbands...
 - Yet, Christian men are committed to the honour of women and to loving them and sacrificing for them.
- We are accused of hate because we condemn all forms of sexual immorality including homosexuality...
 - Yet, our goal is for sexual purity and sexual beauty as God designed it in marriage for His glory...
- We are accused of bigotry because we say that Jesus is the only way of salvation...
 - Yet, the world has found no other way of salvation that saves...
 - How can we do anything but hold out the truth to them?

TRANS> And so you see that persecution comes in a whole variety of ways.

- If you are one of the blessed ones in Christ's kingdom, you surely experience it in various forms.
 - And your tendency is to say,
 - "This is bad."
 - and to try to avoid it.
- Now it is certainly true that we are not to go courting persecution...
 - But we also need to change our attitude about it.

III. Jesus tells you how to respond to persecution, and you need to hear what He says!

A. He says that you should rejoice and be exceedingly glad when persecution comes!

1. He does not say

- “Feel sorry for yourself!”
 - You know how easy it is to go around saying,
 - Why me?
 - Why do I have to put up with parents like this?
 - Or why do I have to deal with people at work that don’t understand?
- Nor does He say,
 - “become bitter and find ways to retaliate,”
 - He calls you to love your enemies and be merciful to them.

2. He tells you to rejoice and be exceedingly glad!

- The language is very strong...
- It is really something that you are to rejoice about.

B. But why?

1. In verse 12 Jesus tells you why:

- Rejoice and be exceedingly glad because great is your reward in Heaven.
- a. This goes right to the root of what I was talking about at the beginning of this sermon...
 - As Christians, we believe that God is the One from whom all blessing is to be found!
 - Everyone wants to find happiness and blessing!
 - The fall occurred when man decided that he would find blessing on his own, by rebelling against God and going his own way!
 - Jesus Christ is the way back to God.
 - And when He saves us,
 - He gives us faith such as Hebrews 11 talks about!
 - We come to God believing that **He** is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.
 - In other words, we believe that God is the only source of blessing...

- And because we believe that, we come by the way that He has made...
- Righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ!

b. Now this is the thing that stirs up the enmity.

1) Christian, you are pursuing blessing and have found blessing in a way that is absolutely contrary to the way the world wants to obtain blessing!

- You have given up on yourself and have turned to Jesus Christ to save you!
- In Him, you have the forgiveness of sin and the certain hope of eternal and perfect happiness!
- Great is your reward in Heaven!

2) The persecution is there because you have been delivered out of the old way of trying to fabricate your own blessing!

- How futile it was!
- How foolish it was!
- How hopeless you were!
- How wonderful it is to be delivered from this!

3) The persecution is there because you have defected from Satan's kingdom and the kingdom of this world.

a) And you know that you have a great reward—

- Not because **you** have earned it, but because God is giving it to you through Jesus Christ.

b) You are identified with **Him** now!

- You are identified with Him and with all the prophets who were before you...(v. 12)
- They were persecuted for the same reason that you are...
- Because you are linked up with Jesus as they were...
 - They were **His** prophets and they were rejected because they preached that blessing comes through Him, not through our own efforts and ways.

2. Do you know what keeps you from rejoicing?

a. It's when you forget that your reward is in heaven!

- God has told you that for now there will be enmity.

- This world is still a fallen world, and it rejects you because you are no longer of the world.
 - As long as you are here following Christ, you will be opposed for it.
 - If you expect God's blessing to come in this life, you will be disappointed.
 - I don't mean that there are no blessings now—
 - there are many...
 - but these blessings would be worthless if we were not assured by God that they were not backed up by the promise of Heaven.
- b. If you are only seeing this world—
- There is not much to rejoice about.
 - Jesus makes it clear here that the rejoicing is on account of the reward that is yet to come!
 - Paul says that what we have now is not even worthy to compare...
 - 2 Cor 4:16-5:2: Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal. For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven.
- c. What's more, God is such a gracious father that He actually gives us a greater reward on account of the suffering we endure for Christ in this world!
- As a loving father, He offers this to motivate you...
 - He comforts you in your suffering with the assurance that every moment of suffering for Him will add to the greatness of your reward!
 - And you know, this really is where your focus ought to be!
 - Why should you look for reward in this world that is perishing when God has promised to reward you in Heaven?
 - He has made it clear...
 - The blessed man in this world is the persecuted man!
 - It is that man whose reward in Heaven will be great.

Conclusion

I can't tell you just what heaven will be like!

- But I know that there will be no more sorrow and no more tears...
- I know that there will be no more sin and no more evil...
- I know that it will be a world of perfect love...
- I know that it will be a place of glorious light where we will be dazzled with the beauty and the perfections of God forever and ever...

Give up, give up my friend, on trying to carve out your own blessing apart from God.

- Abandon yourself to Jesus Christ...
- He is the Saviour, not you.
 - His kingdom belongs to those who have forsaken this world in order to obtain the righteousness that He brings.
 - If you follow Him, you will be persecuted here,
 - but you will be blessed hereafter.
 - Rejoice and be exceedingly glad—
 - for great is your reward in Heaven.