

# Persecuted Ones

#0132

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—September 26, 1975

“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. 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” Matthew 5:9–12.

We all desire to share that blessing that belongs to the peacemakers. But we are face to face with the reality that the blessed peacemakers will be persecuted. There is no way in this world of sin to make peace with the Devil.

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” Revelation 12:17.

So while peace is a blessing, provided it is based on truth, so-called peace, sought and bought through compromise is a misnomer. But blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake.

“The servants of Christ are called to the same work, and they should beware lest, in seeking to prevent discord, they surrender the truth. They are to ‘follow after the things which make for peace’ (Rom. 14:19); but real peace can never be secured by compromising principle. And no man can be true to principle without exciting opposition” *The Desire of Ages*, page 356.

Instead of being depressed by persecution, Jesus says we are to rejoice. This persecution is to be for righteousness’ sake. He emphasizes that by saying, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.” Only that reproach, which is for Jesus’ sake, is worthy of blessing. Only the bad things which people say about us that are false bring us this reward in Heaven.

“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. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a

thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf"  
1 Peter 4:14–16.

God doesn't want any of His children suffering for being murderers or thieves, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody. So if we suffer from any of those, we don't get the blessing of the beatitudes.

Whenever we suffer, whenever we have evil spoken against us, our question should be, Lord, are they telling the truth about me, or are they telling lies about me? Do I deserve this or don't I. Thank God, we can get help even from suffering we bring on ourselves. That is discipline. We reap to learn from the sad consequences of evil doing. But on the other hand, Jesus has a blessing for those who suffer wrongfully, who suffer under lies and reproach and for doing right.

"For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" 1 Peter 2:19–20.

Sometimes we suffer for our faults. We certainly ought to take that patiently, knowing we are getting what can teach us a lesson. But even if suffering is without cause, Jesus says, Be happy, rejoice, and thank God.

Why? Let's notice some of the reason why we are to be happy as we suffer for Jesus' sake.

One reason is that persecution and tribulation develop character. We want our characters developed. It would be hard to bake bread without a hot oven. Put the dough out in the hot sun all day, and it still wouldn't be eatable. It takes something warmer. The temperature has to be raised where it really makes changes. So Paul says:

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also:  
knowing that tribulation worketh patience" Romans 5:3.

Do you want hope? That comes from experience. Do you want experience? That comes from patient endurance. Do you want patient endurance? That comes from tribulation. That is the recipe. So one of the reasons we can rejoice in persecution and tribulation is that we know it is doing things for us. It is developing character. But not automatically. Tribulation worketh patience. Sometimes it works impatience. It will do one or the other. What makes the difference? Your choice. You can decide. If you look to Jesus, He will take every bit of persecution and tribulation and use it to work out the character development of your experience. He loves to do it.

Another reason God permits persecution is that it reveals the character of Satan and his agents. When Cain slew Abel, the whole universe looking on said, Is that the kind of an angel Lucifer has come to be that he would inspire a man to kill his own brother? So Satan was unmasked in that. King Saul, chosen by God as the first ruler of the kingdom of Israel, so yielded to Satan's temptations that he sought to kill David. He followed him and repeatedly tried to take his life. The universe, looking on, said, Is that the kind of advisory that Lucifer has turned out to be? And finally, in the judgment hall and at Calvary when Satan inspired the rulers and the mob to persecute Christ, cruelly torment Him and crucify Him, Satan was unmasked before men and angels. And all the worlds on high saw what a devil he is. And when you and I endure persecution, the universe looks on and sees something they despise and abhor. God desires that every occasion of persecution shall be a time when not only are God's people purified through suffering, but the character of Satan is revealed.

Along with revealing the character of Satan, persecution reveals the character of God. Those who persecute demonstrate the character of Satan. Those who suffer under persecution reveal the character of God. And this bears witness. Abel did in his noble standing for right, and his earnest plea to his brother. David did in his beautiful spirit to spare Saul when he was in his power. Christ in Gethsemane and the judgment hall and Calvary revealed the character of God. "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, what a prayer. Can you pray that prayer?

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you"  
Matthew 5:44.

Has anyone done something hard to you? Lied about you? Slandered you? In all these things there are opportunities for you to reveal the forgiving love of Jesus. Christ didn't wait until those who were torturing Him said they were sorry before He manifested His love toward them. He prayed for them when they had no prayers for themselves. He wept for them when they had no tears for themselves. He loved them when they had no love for Him. So as His children, we are to reveal that same character.

"Through trials and persecution the glory, the character of God is revealed in His chosen ones" *Mount of Blessing*, page 31.

Stephen revealed that same beautiful character as they were stoning him, and the influence of that forgiving spirit reached the heart of that proud Pharisee, Saul. Before long, he became the great apostle Paul to take Stephen's place and carry the Gospel far beyond Stephen had ever thought of. There is a power in the testimony of the unselfish, forgiving life.

An early Christian writer in the days of the terrible persecutions under Rome said:

“You may ‘kill us, torture us, condemn us... Your injustice is the proof that we are innocent... Nor does your cruelty... avail you.’ ‘The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is seed.’” *Great Controversy*, page 41.

So it proved to be during those dark ages of Europe when fifty million martyrs gave their lives rather than surrender their faith in Christ. They were the ones who passed on the torch of truth down through the centuries so it was never totally distinguished. And that line is not finished yet.

In symbolic language, the prophet describes the witness of those who have been martyrs for Jesus. He sees them represented as being under the altar. They had been slain, their blood poured out, and there they lie. And as the blood of righteous Abel cried from the ground, so the blood of these martyrs testified:

“And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” Revelation 6:10–11.

Do you think there are going to be any martyrs ahead? Oh, yes. In connection with the preaching of this message in various parts of the world field there has been many a martyr. In Asia, Africa, South America, and the Islands of the sea, and in this country, there have been those who have been called to lay down their lives for the testimony of Jesus. And the end is not yet.

The greatest reason for the blessing upon those who are persecuted is the blessing of fellowship with Christ.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 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” 1 Peter 4:13.

A partaker is one who shares. Jesus shared our sorrows and afflictions as He came to this world. He longs to see love springing up in our hearts, causing us to rejoice for the privilege of sharing His sufferings. He longs for our fellowship, our understanding and appreciation of what He has suffered for us, and our sense of joy and honor as He lets us suffer with Him.

Peter didn’t understand this before the cross. That’s why he shrank from suffering and denied his Lord in the judgment hall. But after the ordeal of Calvary and the experience of the days that followed, Peter was a new man. Then he

rejoiced to suffer for Jesus' sake. When he and John were seized by the religious authorities and thrown into prison, beaten and commanded never to speak in Jesus' name again, they boldly testified, We ought to obey God rather than man. And when they suffered, they counted it a joy to suffer for Jesus' sake and praised God that they were counted worthy to experience shame for His name.

This is real love. It brings a fellowship with Jesus, such as nothing else can.

A friend was telling me that when he was over in Africa as a missionary, he heard an African giving a definition of fellowship. It is two fellows in one ship. This is the ship of suffering, the ship of persecution. Jesus has already experienced that. And when you and I are called to share that, we have fellowship.

"If you are called to go through the fiery furnace for His sake, Jesus will be by your side even as He was with the faithful three in Babylon. Those who love their Redeemer will rejoice at every opportunity of sharing with Him humiliation and reproach. The love they bear their Lord makes suffering for His sake sweet" *Mount of Blessing*, page 30.

Do you suppose that anyone here tonight will be a martyr for Jesus? Die for Him? How will God get you ready to be a martyr for Him?

Ninety years ago, the prophet to the remnant spent some time in Europe witnessing for Jesus in various countries. During her trips, she visited the Waldenses. She looked upon those towering heights. She went into one of the caves where many were massacred. She saw the places where the Waldenses preserved their witness for the truth through centuries of persecution. She made an appeal to an audience to stand firm for the truth as their forefathers had done. Then she said:

"God does not give us the spirit of the martyrs today, for we have not come to the point of martyrdom. He is now testing us by smaller trials and crosses" *Historical Sketches*, page 233.

If someone who burns the toast irritates us and we lose our patience, we are not ready to be burned at the stake. No. We haven't begun to get ready. God is testing us now with smaller trials and crosses.

In education, there is no way to skip a grade. God is constantly leading us from smaller trials to greater trials. If we understand the lesson of this beatitude, it will keep us from becoming frustrated by the experiences of life.

Many have come here as students. What are you going to find? Heaven on earth? If you bring Jesus with you, you can have Heaven in your heart. Jesus had Heaven on earth when He was here. His Father was with Him. But the way people treated Him wasn't heavenly. The Bible says He was made perfect through sufferings. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And as He seeks

to develop this experience of faithfulness in you and me, and rejoicing in His love and rejoicing in suffering, He leads us into experience after experience that we wouldn't choose.

God has not asked us to go out and hunt for trouble. There will be plenty without our hunting for them. He certainly hasn't asked us to make trouble for ourselves or anyone else. But Jesus allows the enemy to make trouble for us. In a sense, the Devil is on God's payroll.

I don't know much about prize fighters, but I have heard about them. When a man is getting ready to defend his title, or try to take the title away from another fellow, his manager puts him through a period of training. How do you suppose that fellow trains him? He doesn't say, "This fellow is going into a bloody contest. Let's be nice to him now." Oh, no. Someone is there sparring with him. And it isn't make believe. He has to experience the real thing.

You and I are going into the last battle of the controversy. Our Manager, Jesus, is allowing the Devil to act as our trainer. As the Manager watches that trainer hit that prize fighter, and feels that the prize fighter has had enough, He says to the trainer, That is enough for today.

I am not talking about something funny so we feel like laughing. I am talking about the deep, calm assurance in our hearts that God is our friend, and that we belong to Him, and He is making all things work together for our good. We praise Him by faith, whether we have any feeling about it or not. And the greatest object is fellowship with Jesus.

Jesus suffers when you suffer, whatever the cause of your suffering. "In all their affliction He was afflicted" Isaiah 63:9. If you get to thinking about that and remember that Jesus is suffering not only because of your affliction, but the affliction of all the people in the world, you will begin to have your heart go out in sympathy with Jesus, and your feeling of depression will be eclipsed by a great love and longing to cheer the heart of Christ.

I want to read something. This is the first vision to the prophet to the remnant. She is describing the journey of exploration, the green fields and beautiful woods of the earth made new.

"As we were traveling along, we met a company who also were gazing at the glories of the place. I noticed red as a border on their garments; their crowns were brilliant; their robes were pure white. As we greeted them, I asked Jesus who they were. He said they were martyrs that had been slain for Him. With them was an innumerable company of little ones; they also had a hem of red on their garments" *Early Writings*, pages 18–19.

There are those who have learned the lesson of standing firm for obedience to God's law, no matter what the consequence. And those who have loved their

Savior enough to lay down their lives for Him are going to have special rewards all through eternity.

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