

## Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake

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**Bible Text:** Matthew 5:10-12  
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As is customary, we will read our text this morning and ask the Lord's blessing upon it. Our text this morning comes from Matthew 5:10, 11 and 12. It should be very familiar ground. This is from the Sermon on the Mount. That's Matthew 5:10-12,

10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Let us pray.

*Dear heavenly Father, most gracious and holy Lord, how gracious and how holy, how righteous and how sovereign and how thy ways, Lord, as so much higher than our ways. Lord, as we are brought to a passage like this this morning, we stand in dire need, in dire need of thy truth, in dire need of thy Spirit to lead us into that truth. O Lord, may you reveal to us that eternal vital union that thy children have in thee before this world ever was. O Lord, I am such an insufficient vessel to bring forth this message and I pray, O Lord, that it would come with thy unction for, Lord, you know all things. O Lord, may it be in the strength of thy power. May you keep me from any error and may you be exalted this day. O Lord, abase the creature and, Lord, may you be exalted high and above all men and all this earth in thy rightful place. O Lord, may you be glorified in this hour and the hour to come. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

When we are brought to this passage as I have been many times up here and spoken to you from the Sermon on the Mount and, you know, we can't go anywhere, we can't even begin unless the Holy Spirit leads us to show us where Jesus is coming from. As he brought all of his disciples before him and he started to speak to him, he spoke from this eternal vital union that all of his children have in him that long before this world was ever made, the Lord, the three-in-one God made a covenant to save a people from their sins. He made a covenant with himself because he could swear by no other and that covenant that has been brought forth in time is revealed to every child of God that they have a union in Christ; that that seed of Christ is in their soul, is planted in them and that's Christ himself. And when we are brought to understand what the world and theology calls

beatitudes, we don't understand them as precepts, we don't understand them as acknowledgments, we understand them as the fruit of that union, the fruit of the union of being in Christ. And it helps and it instructs us when the Holy Spirit brings that truth to us that we can understand how vital it is because this passage today with standing by itself is very fearful. When we hear the words "persecution" and we hear the words "persecuted," those are things that our flesh will always draw up against because the carnal mind is at enmity with God.

That's enemy number 1. Genesis 3:15 tells us, well, I'll read it, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed." This is what the Lord pronounced to Satan. There will always be this warfare between Satan and the church. There will always be this warfare between your carnal mind and Christ in you. There will always be a warfare with the world and Christ that's in you. As we are brought to these blessednesses, the poor in spirit, they that mourn, the meek, the ones who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, as the Lord mentioned every one of those, those stemmed from Christ in you, the hope of glory. It's not a matter of will you perform it, it's a matter of what he has done for all of his children and these fruit which you will trace all of them to the fruit of the Holy Spirit, is what's found in his children as the Lord sovereignly brings them forward.

If we don't understand this passage today in relation to what Christ has done and the glory that Christ receives from where he brings his children into in this life, we will miss the entire point. We will be as the Arminian, we will be as the free willer, we will be as the mixture of the law and the Gospel. We will stand outside of Christ's promises and what he has performed for us and we will be looking for a duty for us to perform to procure the Lord's favor. What the Lord has revealed in his word is what he has done in his finished work for his children. I cannot stress that to you, I can't bring that to your soul because that truly is where rest is, what Christ has done.

And when you come to these three verses this morning as I read them, even as I read them, I felt the weight of my carnal mind fighting against persecution. And listen, we've had a lot of it in the headlines lately. We have heard in the headlines about Christians being persecuted, slaughtered all over this world. I'm not standing up here debating to you whether those were true Christians or not. I'm not talking about that, but what I will say and what I believe the Lord will bring forth and make clear today, what is persecution for the child of God that's in Christ. What is it? What is it not? Because the world itself persecutes one another and we, even as the children of God, can be persecuted not for righteousness' sake. We can be persecuted because of our flesh. We can be persecuted because of our taking part in the things of this world. Those things are not being persecuted for righteousness' sake and you'll, Lord willing, see that today.

So we begin today with the very first verse, verse 10, "Blessed," and that word right there is very hard for us to understand with what comes after that. "Blessed are they which are persecuted," but it's not those who are persecuted, it's those who are persecuted "for righteousness' sake." And you and I both know, I hope you've been taught that, I hope the Lord Jesus Christ has revealed to you that there's only one true righteousness and that is

his righteousness and that is the righteousness that all of God's children are clothed with. That is the righteousness' sake that we are persecuted, we, meaning the church, we are persecuted for his sake, his righteousness. We cannot walk around in a righteousness of our own and claim this blessed promise that Christ gives. And you say, "No, it's not a blessed promise because it's persecution." But, dear ones, it's a promise in this eternal vital union that the child of God will go through and I think a little bit later when we see, when I bring forth the passage that Paul writes it might become a little clearer to you of what Paul said about this.

But right now we're right here on, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." So we have to define what is persecution for righteousness's sake as opposed to persecution that we read of in this world. Everyone in here can point to a time that they've been persecuted for some reason or another but the Bible and Christ's words here are very specific that the child of God will suffer persecution for Christ's righteousness' sake, for his sake. That's the beauty of this passage because if we don't understand that, that Christ has made this way of the cross for each one of his children, if we don't understand that, we'll never be brought to see the blessing that's in it. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, which, by the way, joy is what? A fruit of the Spirit. It shows you right there we aren't going to get there on ourselves today. Our carnal mind cannot ascend to this truth. It cannot. We can't even recognize it. We can't assent to this being two things that are equal to each other. We can't. The Lord in the power of the Holy Ghost must come to our soul and say, "This is what Christ has called his people for and why they are persecuted and the fruit of that."

So the first place I want to go today is you're going to hold your finger there because we're going to come back, we're going to go to the Lord's words in John 15. So turn over to John 15 and remember, this is persecuted for righteousness' sake. In John 15, we're going to begin right here in 16 that tells us where all of this began, eternal vital union. "You have not chosen me." That tells you right there it's none of the creature. This is chapter 15, verse 16, "You have not chosen me." And you know I've said many times from up here how much I love 14, 15, 16, and 17, all red words. All the words of Christ, instruction to his disciples when he left this world and that, too, every bit of it, was about the union we have in Christ, what provisions he's made for our soul, for them there who would be persecuted and for us today who are persecuted and go through trials and are afflicted and are mourning and all of those things. The Lord has made provision. He has made it in himself.

So in 16 we see, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you." It's my power. It is in my decree. It is my will, "that you should go and bring forth fruit." That's what the child of God will bring forth. When we talk about the union that we have in Christ, we're not speaking of a potentiality of us "maybe we will, maybe we won't." The Lord doesn't speak in that. He speaks to his children about what he will do. You will bring forth fruit and it's because I have chosen you. It has had nothing to do with you. I have chosen you and you should go and bring forth fruit, "and that your fruit should remain." That's Christ present. The seed of Christ in us. That's where the fruit comes

from. In other places it is called his Spirit, called the Spirit that resides in us. That is Christ in us. That is the power that is given to the child of God that is not our power.

I hope, I can't stress that enough because when you start to walk down that path of the creature, you've got to follow it the whole way. I'm always baffled by those who want to bring the creature into everything because I've got to sit and ask you: if the creature has all this power, why don't you do it? Why don't you not sin? Why don't you walk the way of the cross? Why don't you not fear? Why don't you choose Christ? But I've never gotten an answer for that.

But as we go on this morning, he says "that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another." Isn't that interesting in that part right there he says that "you love one another." And it's weird because we're about to go into the persecution. Jesus is going to tell his church and his people how they are persecuted but then before he does, he says we have a commonality, that the people of God will all be persecuted in some way and that in the middle of this, he says, "These things I command you." Well, the people of God understand not as a command with a whip and a chain, the command is what he has finished and what he brings forth. As I always quote Robert Hawker in this, his commands are our enablings. This is what the Holy Spirit brings forth in the child of God and the Lord is saying this is fixed.

And interestingly he says in here "that you love one another." And that's the thing, the child of God, the children of God, the union that we have, that eternal vital union we share with one another. That's what unites the people of God together. It's not the carnal exercises in this life. It's not even the blood of family lines. It's not even a party in a political scene. It's not even a race, it's not a color, it's not a creed. What unites the church together is the union that they have in Christ. It's the bond of the Spirit and that's what he talks about here. We, as the church, will always be able to sympathize, to mourn with one another who are being persecuted for righteousness' sake because as they are persecuted, we are too because they are persecuted for righteousness' sake. And that same Christ righteousness is what's in us. And that same seed and the thing that they're being persecuted for is what is in us. So we see right in the middle of this and I'm telling you as we read this you're going to say, "That's kind of out of place that he says that," but it's not. It's not. It's part of the vital union. He just said, "You have nothing to do with this, creature. You have nothing to do with this. This is what I've done."

And then we go into 18. That enemy that I told you we were going to mention, we've already talked about Satan, we said a little bit about the carnal mind being enmity against the Lord, but then he brings the world out right here. "If the world hate you." You say, "Well, why would you say such a thing, Lord?" Because the world will.

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." Do you know what that is? That's union. The reason that the child of God is hated in this life by the world is because of Christ's union in them and them being in Christ. That's the part that he's

focusing on here. Not because of our flesh, the world will love us because of our flesh; the world will embrace our flesh.

"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." Now, I don't know about you but when Christ says words like that, they're very searching to me. As I stand before you this morning and I read those words, that, to me, just comes as a dagger and it comes like the Holy Spirit just comes and says, "Are you that man? Are you the one that if you're of the world, the world loves his own? Does the world embrace you? Does the world as you're out there look at you and say, 'Do you know what? You're one of me?'" And I can't answer that for you and I'm praying right now the Lord answers that for me.

"Are you one of those," because it says, "but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." I can't tell you whether you're hated or not. I can't tell you whether you've suffered what the Lord is about to say about persecution. But remember our text this morning that it is persecuted for righteousness' sake. This is because Christ is in you. It's not because you've stood up against the world and said, "I don't see the way you do it, why don't you do things the way I want to do them?" In our flesh, in our trying to fit in with the world or reform ourselves to the world.

But he's not done. He comes to, "Remember." Anytime I see that word, I say, "Lord, I can't," and there's a reason he told them remember. But he knows, listen, how many times did he tell them he was going to the cross and they couldn't remember? And then they were just shocked when it happened, right, because we heard last week the two on the road, "What happened? Well, we don't understand it. We thought he was the Messiah." We don't remember without the covenant remembrancer which is the Holy Spirit. When he brings to our remembrance, these are the things that we're taught. He leads us to Christ.

"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me," listen to this, "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." There is the union again. There is the promise again. There is where the child of God is brought. It doesn't sneak up on him. Why? Because the Lord has shown him that in this union he will suffer persecution and it comes in many forms and we're going to see that in verse 11.

We're still right here in John, he says, "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." Do you see the dichotomy there? Do you see how it's cut right in half? If they persecute you, it's because they persecuted me. If they keep the word, if the word is blessed, it's because they kept mine also. So if they kept my saying, they will keep yours also. He reveals it. He reveals his truth in our relationships in this life. He reveals where the commonality is and he also reveals where the division is.

Verse 21, "But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake." Isn't that what we know about Saul? Didn't he go around persecuting the church because he got letters from the church? I mean, think about that. We're got two churches there, I hope you understood that. By the religious leaders. By those who rejected the Messiah. And if you ever look at the Scriptures, that's the one thing that's prevalent is the hatred and the rejection of the Lord. He was not the King that they wanted. They wanted a physical king. When the Lord told them his kingdom was not of this earth, they rejected him because it did not do them any good here for the persecution they believed that they were under. And the irony in all of that is that they believed that Jesus at one time would deliver them and when he didn't, then 70 AD came along and they were destroyed. I know it's bitter irony but they put all of their hope and their desire in something to be delivered and the one that could deliver, they said, "No, we don't want your deliverance."

Now think about how deep that is in our lives and think about how experiential that is. I don't know about you but do you struggle with things like that? This is the Lord who said, "This is the way of the cross." O Lord, I don't want to go that way. You know, I'm going to reject that right now and I'm going to go and walk this way because it's easier. But look what the end of it was, total destruction. You and I today, if we reject Christ, guess what the end of that is? Total destruction. It's really deep. The Scriptures don't lie.

Verse 21, "But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because," what? "They know not him that sent me." There is no relationship there. "Marvel not," he said, "marvel not that the world hates you." Dear ones, does it hate you, first of all? And if it does, marvel not if, but there's a qualifying statement, isn't there? "If you are persecuted for righteousness's sake."

So now we go back to our text again which is back in Matthew and now we're talking still about 10, persecuted for righteousness' sake. I told you I'd tell you what Paul said. In 2 Timothy 3:12, Paul said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Now, I read a sermon this week by Thomas Bradbury and I'll tell you, it stopped me in my tracks when in that sermon he was talking about this verse and he said, "Do you know what? Did you ever notice what that says? It does not say anything about all that live godly in Christ Jesus that will suffer persecution, it says all that will live godly." Now, we know that in this life, there are some who live godly lives that suffer very little persecution. They will suffer persecution in many different ways: by Satan, by the world, by their flesh. But there are degrees of it. Why is that? It's that little qualifying word "will."

And I thought about that and the whole point that Bradbury brought out was when the Lord gives you, the church, the will to suffer persecution, I'm sorry, the will to live godly out in this world, that's when the persecution comes. And I thought about that and I said, is that really true? And then the very next paragraph, he went on to how the church is persecuted here and it made a lot of sense. When we speak openly of Christ's finished work, we're persecuted. When we speak of Christ doing all things for us, we're persecuted. Why? Because the will is given to speak the truth of Christ. When you look at all those who suffered persecution in the word, they are suffering persecution because of

the truth that they have in Christ Jesus. This religious world will always persecute the child of God because of his rest that he has in Christ, because of the finished work that he's rested in Christ because he sees Christ as all sovereign over all things.

But this religious world will not take that and if you throw the creature out and the creature is debased, they will not take that either and that's exactly the point that Bradbury was making when this verse was written. That's what Paul meant, "Yea, and all that will." When the Lord gives you the will to stand in his truth and you say, "No, that's not my Lord. My Lord has performed all things for me. My Lord has undertaken for me" And haven't we seen that and I address the children, haven't we seen that in all of the book of Job when Job was raised to speak the truth and how much they hated it because there was no works involved with it, there was no salvation that he wrought for himself, there was no getting up and doing anything about it as he was led to sit and wait upon the Lord. Persecution. Persecution. "Job, you're not God's child. You're going to be destroyed. You've got to do it this way. Save yourself." You've heard that from this pulpit. You've heard me say those things in the past week as I have read them and as I have showed you that in Job.

It's no different for you and I today. When the Lord gives you his will, his will, in the day of his power, when he brings forth that seed and he manifests it and that seed is brought out that Christ has done all things, that's when the persecution comes. When Christ is my sovereign Lord and my rest is in him and him alone and there is no duty and there is no law for me to keep because it's all swallowed up in him. He has kept it perfectly for me and the duties and the have-tos and the must-dos, my Lord has done that. Persecution. Persecution. Why? Because the carnal mind is at enmity with Christ. Because Satan is at enmity with our Lord. Because the world is at enmity with Christ.

That is why we suffer persecution, we being the children of God. As I said, it's for righteousness' sake. If you look at those who have suffered, if you look at the Stephen's. Stephen who stood up and preached a sermon about what the Lord had done and then said to them, "You have persecuted this one. You have put him on the tree." What did they do to him? And all he did was spoke the truth. Do you know what? I have to tell you his witness at the end when he was brought to look up into the heavens and he saw his Lord standing and reigning, he rejoiced. He rejoiced and was exceeding glad because the Lord's presence was with him and all those stones that pelted him in the head, it didn't matter. And all of those things that the world had to say to him, it didn't matter. And even the Lord brought him to pray for his children that were there and we know Saul was one of them who was consenting to death. That's the power of this union. That's the power of being in Christ Jesus and being kept in Christ Jesus. And all through the word of God as we've seen what Christ had to say today, it's the same thing. He went that way. Paul went that way. Peter went that way.

I wrote down a Scripture from Micaiah. If you remember, Micaiah was the one and I don't even know if I'm saying his name right, but he's the one that the Lord sent as a prophet, his mouthpiece, and he sent him to Ahab and Ahab was the one that pouted, almost like a little, he was a king and he pouted, "Every time you come here, you say

something against me. I don't like you. In fact, I hate you." Micaiah said this in 1 Kings 22:14, "And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak." That's what the mouthpiece of the child of God, the ministers of God, they can't preach anything else. It is what Christ has put upon their soul and because they've experienced the power of him in their soul and they have to preach what the Lord has constrained them in his love to preach because that is where it originates from. It originates from the love of the Lord and what he's done for his church. And I wish, if nothing else today, that the Holy Spirit reveals that to you that there's no greater love than what this one has done in laying down his life for you, a sinner. And not only that, what we see in this union is that our Lord went first in everything. He was persecuted long before you and I are persecuted. Do you know why? So he could suffer us today. He could show us that he was persecuted. And not only that, that he overrules the sting of the persecution. How? By bringing us to rejoice in it which we haven't quite gotten there yet.

We taught all the way back from even from Cain and Abel. Do you know what John wrote about that? In 1 John 3:12, he said, "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil." That's why he slew him. That's why he looked at it and he said...did I quote that right? That sure doesn't sound right. Let me go to 1 John 3:12 real quick. "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works," that's the part I left out, "his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Why were they righteous though? How do we know they were righteous? Hebrews tells us it was the faith of the Son of God, "by faith Abel offered this." By faith. Do you notice that? When the child of God lives by the faith of the Son of God, then persecution came. His own works were evil. His own works. Do you notice that? The works of the creature. I can't prove to you today that your own works are evil, the Lord must do that, but that's what he convinces his children of, that our works outside of him are evil. His works that he performs in us are pure and holy and good and just. That's why John wrote that. That's why Cain was persecuted. It goes right in line, but not Cain, Abel. I'm going to get this right, Lord willing.

But now we come to verse 11. Now we've looked at, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And certainly the kingdom of heaven is what? Christ himself. It is the presence of Christ and being in glory with Christ. And we're going to look at that. We're going to look at the prize because the prize is always the manifestation of the union, whether it be here in bits and pieces that we get here or whether it be in glory where we'll have the whole glory and all the union manifested to us with unbroken communion.

So verse 11, he comes and he scrutinizes it and he looks at it a little bit more and he starts, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you." Reviling is verbal abuse. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you." Persecute means to harass, to trouble or molest. "And shall say all manner of evil against you falsely," once again the qualifying statement, "for my sake." They're not saying things falsely against you because of your flesh rising up or because of your will that you're putting out there, but because of Christ in you and that's what he says, "for my sake." And that last part, he says, "and shall

say all manner of evil against you falsely," that's what we call defamation of character. They are sitting there telling you, they're spreading lies about...oh, and that's the one thing, all of our brothers before us that preached the truth, they were labeled these words, Antinomians, things like you're against the law. They're not against the law, they're against you saying the law must be the believer's rule of life. The law is what my Lord perfectly satisfied because I could not, and if I had to, I would perish. He did it for me. What more glory could there be for the Lord who did that? "Oh, no, no, this is what you have to do. This is what you need to do." And all the glory is robbed from the Lord and what he's done.

But that's what happens in this life when we are reviled. We're spoken against, verbal abuse. We're harassed and troubled and molested for the truth's sake, for Christ's sake. And all defamed things are said. I mean, sometimes I stand amazed at some of the things I hear that are brought against the people of God based on how the world sees them and it's the furthest thing from the truth. But do you know what I've noticed? Not only what the Lord has revealed to me and he's brought me the same place, when those defamation things come from the world and the world sits and makes their accusations, do you know what the child of God does? He's on his knees and he's saying, "Lord, is it I? It is me?" The Lord humbles his children that way and he brings them to him. The only one that's going to pronounce us not guilty is the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of his blood that justifies and the power of him to justify and say, "No, you're not guilty. You are standing in my truth. You are being persecuted for my sake, for my righteousness' sake." That's how the child of God is made to stand. He's made to stand in the Lord's finished work. He's made to stand and his Lord is his witness, that he went to the cross, that he did not mumble a word, that he went as a lamb to the slaughter and he did not say anything. He did not say, "Why are you persecuting me this way?" Because it was the Father's will and, dear ones, if we're persecuted in this life, it's because it's the Father's will and it's part of the great union that the children of God only have in Christ Jesus.

Turn with me to 1 Peter 2 and we're just going to begin in 18. "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear." Union. This is what the Lord brings out of his children. This is what he performs. This is the life. "Be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." You're going to have a lot of those in this life.

"For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully." Now notice verse 20, "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults," that's suffering not for righteousness' sake. There are many times we suffer in this life for our own faults, for things we do stupidly. For our sins we suffer in this life. Because of our lies, we suffer in this life. Because of walking waywardly. That's not what the Lord is talking about.

He goes on and he says, "be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently." What is patience? It's a fruit of the Spirit. It's a fruit of God in the soul of the child of God. That's his power. You take it

patiently. "This is acceptable with God." Why is it acceptable with God? Because it's his work. It's what he's done. It's his patience.

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." Now, dear ones, that's not telling us that that example is out there and that we're to pattern our life after it. If you want to try to do that, go and do it. You're going to fail miserably. What he's telling us is that our Lord went first. That's what Peter is saying. What we have is a Lord to look at and the Holy Spirit says, "Look at what he's done. Look what he did for you. Look how he suffered in your place. Look how he suffered first. Look how he walked the way, the way of the cross." And do you know what that does to you and I if we be in Christ? It says and it brings a child of God way down and says, "Lord, thou hast gone first. You must bring me through here, Lord. Who am I to say to you that I can't walk this way, that you haven't ordained this for me?"

"Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again." Notice that? You're going to be reviled over there. All these false words are going to be said against you. But the fruit of Christ when he gives you the longsuffering. What is longsuffering? It's a fruit of the Spirit. All of this is stored in the Lord. All of this is what he does for us. I don't know about you, but I don't suffer long very well. In fact, I've been told many times as these events have come up in our life, I've been told by some in my family, "Oh, you should run your mouth. You should say a lot more. You should say." And there are times I say that very thing, "You're right. This is what I want to say." That's the flesh because do you know why the child of God's mouth is shut? Because his Lord's mouth was shut. The Lord went first and the Lord brings him through the persecution. It's a relationship between Christ and his people. "This is what I've done on your behalf and I'm going to carry you through this." You see, the Lord works in his children's heart and mine and they don't want to shed a bad light upon their Lord and then all of a sudden, like Job at the end, their hand is over their mouth and they're not saying a word. That's him. He debases. He increases and we decrease but that's by him.

"He threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Do you know what that was? "Nevertheless, Lord, Father, thy will be done." He committed himself. O Lord, work in our soul now to commit self, commit all. Lord, what you've done. Lord, show us what you've done. Give us the power to submit to thy sovereign rule in our lives. "To him that judgeth righteously." And I'm going to tell you something, you aren't going to find that in this world.

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop." Notice that? How did we get back? You are returned. That's his work. "I've brought you back, I've shown you the way that I've ordained for you to walk and I'll make you to lie down in that pasture." And it's green, by the way, because all things work for good what the Lord hath done for his people. That's a hard one to swallow at times.

Back in our text now we go to verse 12 and the final place today and that's, "Rejoice." And I've already hinted toward it. I just put a watch on me and I'll tell you, we can't get here on our own. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit and there is no way we're going to joy in being persecuted and there's no way, I mean, how could we be exceeding glad? Well, we're trying to understand it in our carnal mind which is never, never going to happen.

But I want to show you a couple of examples that in this union that his children have gone through in this life, what he has done for them, and we'll start in Acts 5, if you'll turn with me there. The disciples and Peter were raised to speak the truth. They hated, of course, what they had to say. You know, they really thought they had a great victory when they put Christ in the grave. They thought he was done away with. They could assure a bunch of people saying, "We're not going to have this one raising up," but that was for naught as man's plans are.

Acts 5:40-41, "And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles," okay, this was after they had spoken the truth and then, I believe it was Gamaliel who was raised up and he said, "Listen, if God has done this, there's nothing we're going to do against him. But if he hasn't, then they'll go away like all the other ones have." But listen, "And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them," they persecuted them, "they commanded that they should not," why did they persecute them? "That they should not speak in the name of Jesus," for his righteousness' sake, for his sake, "and let them go. And they departed," here's the joy, "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing." How do you get beaten and lay stripes upon and be laying there on the ground and suffering and then get up and rejoice? That's the eternal vital union. That's Christ in his people. "They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." That's where persecution comes, for his name's sake. For his righteousness' sake.

Now look over to Philippians and it seems like I'm always led here to this passage. I don't know why but every time it's just a different little facet of truth in Philippians 3 because it's so full, usually 7 through 10, I'm just going to start with 9. "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law." Do you understand that? Our own righteousness is of the law. Last week we heard a beautiful message on the resurrection and what that life is for his children and it's not a one time event, it's the life that we have in Christ.

Paul says, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ," faith of who? Christ. Of myself, no. The faith of Christ, "the righteousness which is of God by faith." That's how we understand it. Once again, a fruit of the Spirit in his power to give.

Then verse 10, "That I may know him," personal, "and the power of his resurrection." Notice what goes hand-in-hand with the power of his resurrection that we heard last week. "The power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." Conformable means growing. It means growing. Growing

in what? The grace and knowledge of the Lord. But the fellowship of his sufferings, that's what being in the fellowship of his persecution is. That's what we have in this eternal vital union. It's a death of self. Being made conformable unto his death. How is that? We die with him. That's what self does. When self is put down and Christ is exalted in your life, then, yes, your flesh will always tremble at this but the Spirit and Christ in you will always glory in what the Lord has done.

We know the Lord was rejected by his own. I can't even begin to tell you what persecution the Lord has called for his church that's in this room but I can tell you this, that in any way that you are called, he has gone first and that he calls us to it and then somehow by his glorious power causes his children to rejoice in it. To rejoice that they too.

Last place we'll go, look over at 1 Peter 4. I think that's what this passage says. I'm pretty sure. Yes. This is how we'll end today in 1 Peter 4:13-14, "But rejoice," there it is again, joy. "But rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." How do we do that, Peter? You do it in Christ and it's not you, it's he who has done it for you. "I'll fight for 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," notice that, when his glory is revealed, when the power of the Lord comes, then you'll be glad also with "exceeding joy." And look at 14, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ," what for? The name of Christ, "happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you," that's the vital union, that's the Lord revealing to you that union, the glory is his and this is the beautiful part, "on their part he is evil spoken of," isn't that true? Evil spoken of. "Oh, that's not true. That truth is not truth." Evil spoken of, "but on your part," on Christ in you, listen, "but on your part he is glorified." All glory to the Lord and none to the creature. That's his work. I don't know how else we could end on that note. That's how the child of God is brought to rejoice.

One more time our text this morning, 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." And I've got to say this on that last part, he just showed us, Christ just showed us, all of his children come this way. The prophets of old came this way. They are brought this way, the way of the cross, and in some form, in some form. But as the Lord raises us in this life to stand in his truth, that's when the persecution is more violent. But we're persecuted a lot, sometimes it's just in our souls with the devil working on us, with our flesh working on us, with the world working on us. But what this says here, great is your reward in heaven.

Dear ones, we're strangers and pilgrims in this place. Strangers and pilgrims. That means we're just passing through. This is not our home. The Lord has made great mansions for his people. He has prepared a place for all of his people and one day as he brings us there,

we will unite together praising our Lord together, singing his praises, and there will be no more persecution and there will be no more sin and there will be no more of these enemies and there will be nothing but our Lord who is worthy to be praised and in us, all the dross will be done away with where we will all be glorifying in our Lord together in unity.

*Dear heavenly Father and most gracious and holy Lord. Add thy power and thy clarity and, Lord, may you be glorified. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*