

20:20 Vision Ministries -- Devotions by Roger Browning Week 6 (February 2-8, 2014)

The final beatitude is about coming persecutions and it will be the subject of the entire week's devotions.

Sunday -- February 2

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:10)

Jesus never hides the fact that persecutions are coming to the true believers. Those who know they are bankrupt in their own ability to earn salvation, who mourn over their sins, who are broken in their spirit so that they can serve the Master, and who constantly hunger and thirst for those things that only God can supply have come to God with a beatitude attitude (Matthew 5:3-6). They will offer mercy to others just as God offers to them, they will be pure in heart even while their sinful nature continues to exist, and they will live as an example and at peace with others (Matthew 5:7-9). Today's verse promises persecutions to all who dare to live by God's standards while rejecting the politically correct standards of this Satan-controlled world (see last week's devotions from which this summary came). God promises that the Kingdom of Heaven will already be living in us through His Holy Spirit as we live out these beatitudes.

Monday -- February 3

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. (Matthew 5:11)

Jesus says we are blessed when people falsely accuse us of being narrow-minded or uneducated or ignorant of this world's scientific discoveries, because we trust in the words and deeds of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As I write these thoughts, Phil Robertson of "Duck Dynasty" is making headline news, partly because he quoted 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 in an interview. He has been removed from his family's TV show for an indefinite period of time just for agreeing with God's Word. I do not deny that he could have expressed his thoughts in a more compassionate manner, but his treatment by the network and news media is a preview of coming persecutions for all true Christians who have the audacity to stand up for their Christian beliefs. How strong is your faith and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures? If you are arrested for being a Christian, is there enough evidence in the way you live to convict you?

Tuesday -- February 4

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:12)

This is one of God's great commands accompanied by an immediate promise. He tells us to rejoice (not gripe) when the world rejects us, because our **Heavenly** rewards will be great. If the society of the prophets who spoke the Word of God persecuted them, should we expect anything better when we live with a beatitude attitude? We will be living in direct opposition to the current worldview and practices. Are you surprised that our government is forcing military bases to remove nativity scenes and crosses and anything else that is a symbol for Christianity? If so, didn't you believe Jesus when He warned you that such things would come? Now is the time for true Christians from all denominations to unite for the cause of Christ. The time for sitting quietly on the sidelines has gone!

Wednesday -- February 5

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. (2 Timothy 3:12-13)

In Paul's letter to his young helper, Timothy, he emphasizes what Jesus taught in Matthew 5:1-12: Those believers who live with a beatitude attitude will suffer persecution. Notice that this verse does not even say those who **succeed** in their efforts to live for Christ, but those who **want** to live for Him will be rejected and ridiculed by the secular society. Their actions and motives will convict those who live only to gratify their own desires. Preachers and laypeople who live just like the people of this world will prosper financially as they blend in with the politically correct views and actions of their society. Isn't it sad to note that these people deceive themselves as well as their listeners? The world will honor and applaud them for their success while Jesus wonders if He will find true faith on earth when He returns (see Luke 18:8).

Thursday – February 6

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. (James 1:2-3)

Have you grown so deep in your faith that you **rejoice** over your trials? If not, you are in company with me and almost all other Christians. Today's verses teach us that trials are allowed in our lives to make us stronger in our faith; therefore, we have reason to "consider it pure joy." The verse following today's text says, "Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:4). Isn't that what you really want in your Christian journey? God warns us in advance that we will suffer some persecutions in this world, because it is under the control of our enemy, the devil. Those who expect smooth sailing in their walk with the Lord are in for a surprise in the very near future. The entire world seems to be united against Jesus. Are you ready to stand tall no matter what circumstances come your way?

Friday – February 7

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him. (James 1:12)

What a promise from the Word of God through the pen of James, the earthly brother of Jesus! In exchange for our love for the Lord, we will be given the **crown of life**, salvation paid in full by God's Son. I hope you are experiencing a deeper love for Jesus every day. I pray that you know the joy of saying with John the Baptist, "He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30). There is no greater joy in life than knowing that you have a home in Heaven if your earthly journey should end today. I cannot imagine facing a single day in this unsettled world if I did not know for sure that the **crown of life** has been awarded to me. I pray that you can say the same!

Saturday – February 8

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Pet. 1:6-7)

Peter tells us that the coming trials will strengthen the faith of true believers while the false followers will fall by the wayside. I have spent an entire week warning you of what the Bible says about coming persecutions. So far, we have had it pretty good in our country, because our founders insisted that we be "one nation, under God." However, because of those who promote "political correctness," Christians are currently losing one right after another. It is definitely open season on Bible-believing, evangelical Christians. Live your life in such a way that Jesus will receive praise, glory and honor when He comes with His redeemed saints!