

Russell Kelfer

The Reality of Persecution

554-A

Series: The Beatitudes

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

The Reality of Persecution

As we have been studying Matthew 5, it has been made painfully clear to many of us that real happiness is a state of being, not a state of having. We have realized that real happiness is the essence of the character of God, and it is manifested by attitudes which find themselves diametrically opposed to the attitudes of the world in which we live. As we approach this eighth and final Beatitude, several things strike us immediately.

1- This Beatitude appears to be an attitude of response and resolve rather than one which initiates and creates within itself. That is, it is the result of something God has done and the response to something God allows.

2- This Beatitude is, perhaps more than any other, an enigma to the world. While all eight are in opposition to the mind of man, none strike so at the heart of human philosophy as this one.

3- This Beatitude is, perfectly placed following “Blessed are the peacemakers,” for as we shall see, it is the natural result of life on Two Mile Island.

4- This closing Beatitude affords the Christian the same promise as the first one, “Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Thus, we have now come full cycle. We encircle the whole of Christ’s teaching with the grandest of Christ’s promises.

THE ATTITUDE OF JOY

The Beatitudes are Christ’s beautiful attitudes supernaturally manifested in the Christian by the Holy Spirit. When allowed to have full sway, they produce self-contained joy. This is joy that finds its root within itself. It is joy that is not affected by outer circumstances, but rather joy that is multiplied by the very external circumstances that destroy the world’s happiness.

1- Jesus said that this kind of self-contained joy came from a heart that was, in effect, the outpouring, first of all, of poverty of spirit. This is the heart that understood its rightful place in the presence of God and in the presence of man. This is a heart that is grasping in the Spirit its relative insignificance and its relative expectations that took on the mind in the Spirit of the One who in this world had nothing.

The Reality of Persecution

2- Jesus said this kind of joy comes from a heart that is able to mourn. We learned that there are four things that make God cry. Over these, plus one more great reason, man in Christ is to be characterized by the capacity to mourn.

3- Self-contained joy also came from a heart that is genuinely meek. It is a heart that is non-retaliatory, quiet and gentle even towards its accusers.

4- Happiness comes from a heart that hungers and thirsts after righteousness.

5- It comes from a heart of compassion that shows forth mercy even as Jesus, moved with compassion, took on the mind of the wounded, the mind of the lame, the mind of the diseased and the mind of the offended.

6) Joy demands a heart that is pure and undefiled. It has a conscience that is void of offense toward man and void of offense toward God. It is a conscience that clearly sees the difference between Satan's lies and God's truth.

7) It comes from a heart that is dominated by peace and thus takes peace and makes peace wherever it goes. It is a heart that is at home on Two Mile Island, turning the other cheek, going the second mile, giving without reservation to those that ask and to those that would borrow.

These attitudes and these responses express and multiply real happiness. So the natural progression of these beautiful attitudes now beats from the heart of the man who yields his rights in order to make peace with men and then comes the inevitable—he becomes the man who is persecuted because of what he does. Jesus wraps this package of joy with the colorful bow,

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 kinds 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.

“You are the salt of the earth; (Matthew 5:10-13 NKJV)

It is no small wonder we have a difficult time relating to this subject. It is also no small wonder that the very discussion of it creates an uncomfortable atmosphere. Persecution? Indeed!

The Reality of Persecution

Many of us have not yet experienced it in the light of the Biblical perspective, or have we? How many of you have experienced persecution in the last week? I know personally of at least four of you who have. The rest of you, I don't know about.

What is persecution, and how can we better understand it in the light of our own personal experience? We will be looking at this in the light of the four R's of persecution: the Reality of persecution, the Reason for persecution, the Results of persecution and the Response of persecution.

REALITY OF PERSECUTION

Persecution is a reality in every generation. The Christian has been promised that while in this world, he shall have tribulation. Jesus says, "But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." But do we as believers fully grasp what an integral part of the normal Christian experience persecution was intended to be? Paul described his life in Christ in II Corinthians 11,

From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one

Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;

in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—

besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?

If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. (II Corinthians 11:24-30 NKJV)

Then Paul hands this life over to us as the natural Christian life. In II Timothy he says this,

But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.

The Reality of Persecution

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (II Timothy 3:10-12 NKJV)

Paul then adds, “Why be surprised? This is part of your calling.” In Philippians 1:29 he makes an astounding statement, And in nothing be terrified of your adversaries for unto you is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake. This suffering is described by Peter in I Peter 2:20,21 as the same suffering Jesus shared. And Peter adds, “For even hereunto were you called for Christ first suffered for us leaving us an example to follow that we should follow in his steps.” Regarding this persecution, he then adds,

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters.

Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. (I Peter 4:12-16 NKJV)

Persecution is part and parcel of the life of Christ. What is persecution? Here is a definition. Persecution is the harassment, abuse or attempted destruction of the rights or happiness of one person or group by another. Its literal meaning is to put to flight through undue pressure. It means to resist, reject, or attempt to put to flight or destroy one whose existence or presence opposed a threat to another’s peace of mind. Think about this definition as we go through this lesson.

The church of Jesus Christ and the Christian as the essence of the church surfaces for the world for the first time a choice between good and evil. The church stands for righteousness. The Christian stands for righteousness. Both pose a threat to the peace of mind of the world that without the presence of the Spirit of God finds no restraint to its hollow and changing values. True Christianity, when held up to the mirror of the world, must result in persecution.

I want to clear up one major source of confusion. How can

The Reality of Persecution

we delineate between the persecution of the Christians in Russia or Cuba or Iran and the persecution of the members of this fellowship whose lives may have demanded a godly choice and aroused the anger of someone who may tell them to yield on Two Mile Island? Maybe this will help.

There are basically two kinds of persecution. There are times when the church of Jesus Christ is persecuted, and there are other times and places when the individual Christians within the body suffer personal persecution. The two oftentimes may not be the same. The world system or the government puts pressure on the church or the individuals, or pressures from without put pressure on the Christians.

Let's look at it this way. Let's first look at corporate punishment. Throughout history, the church of Jesus Christ has seldom faced a time when serious persecution did not exist. The intensity of the decision to be a Christian has often been a decision of life or death in the physical realm as well as the spiritual. You and I, in America today, need to read the Gospels against the backdrop of life as it was in the early church. William Barclay paints this picture of it for us. I want to take the time to read it.

One of the outstanding qualities of Jesus was His sheer honesty. He never left men in any doubt what would happen to them if they chose to follow Him. He was clear that He had come, not to make life easy, but to make men great. It is hard for us to realize what the Christian had to suffer. Every department of their life was disrupted. Their Christianity may have disrupted their work. Suppose a man was a stonemason. That seems harmless, but suppose his firm received a contract to build a temple to one of the heathen gods. What was he to do? Suppose he was a tailor and was asked to produce robes for the heathen priest. What was he to do? In situations such as this, the Christians in the early church seldom found themselves in situations where they were not tested in this area.

More than a hundred years later a similar situation comes up. Their Christianity would certainly disrupt their social life. In the ancient world, feasts were held. Usually, the animals that were used in these feasts were animals that had originally been given for sacrifice. Invitations would go out with these words; "I invite you to dine with me at the table of our god, Serapes." This would be the god to which this animal had been sacrificed. Could

The Reality of Persecution

a Christian share in that kind of feast in the temple of a heathen god? No.

Worst of all, their Christianity was liable to interrupt their home life. Incident after incident is recorded in history, particularly in the early church, even as it takes place today. I believe increasingly so today when men and women become literally on fire for Jesus Christ. The zeal, the excitement and that commitment to Jesus Christ causes other members of the family not to be able to handle that relationship.

Still further, there were penalties that Christians had to suffer that were beyond description. The entire world knows that Christians were flung to the lions and burned at the stakes. William Barclay goes on to say,

Being burned at the stake or thrown to the lions were kindly deaths. Nero wrapped Christians in pitch and set them alight to use them as living torches to light his gardens. He sewed them into the skins of wild animals and sent his hunting dogs upon them to tear them to death. They were tortured on the rack, scraped with pinchers, molten lead was poured hissing upon them and red-hot brass plates affixed to the tenderest parts of their bodies. Their eyes were torn out. Parts of their bodies were cut off and roasted before their eyes. Their hands and feet were burned while cold water was poured over them to lengthen their agony. These things are not pleasant, but these are the things a person had to be prepared for if they took a stand for Jesus Christ.

REASON FOR PERSECUTION

We may well ask, "Why did the Romans so persecute the Christians?" There were two reasons. First of all, there were slanders spread abroad about the Christians. One was that the Christians were accused of cannibalism. The fact that the words of the Lord at the Last Supper were, "This is My body and this cup is the new testament of My blood." The rumor began to take this story and twist it to sound as if the Christians were sacrificing children and eating their flesh.

The Christians were also accused of immoral practices because their weekly meetings were called agape or love feasts. The name was grossly misinterpreted. As Christians greeted each other with a holy kiss, the slanderous accusations began to spread about the Christian church. They were accused of

The Reality of Persecution

being incendiaries. It is true that they spoke about the coming end of the world. They would close their message in apocalyptic pictures of the end of the world in flames. Their slanderers used this against them to accuse them of being revolutionaries.

The Christians were accused of tampering with family relationships. There were incidents where one or more in a family would become a Christian, and this would create division within the home.

The greatest source of the persecution was political. It became necessary in order to unite the Roman Empire, that someone be worshipped. Sooner or later as this progressed, the Romans would worship the emperor which was thought to be able to unite the whole empire of Rome. Soon it became not voluntary but compulsory to once a year, go to burn an inch of incense to the godhead of Caesar and say, "Caesar is lord." This is what the Christians refused to do. For them, Jesus Christ was Lord and to no man would they give that title. We can see that from these beginnings and for these reasons the early church of Jesus Christ understood what it was to undergo persecution.

You may say, "Yes, that was life in the first century, but times have changed!" Right? Wrong.

The great Donald Jay Barnhouse made this statement:

"The days that lie ahead for the Christian are dark, darker than most people think. There is every probability that the church is facing tribulation in the last days eminently. Throughout even recent histories, Christians have not escaped persecution in England, in Germany, in China, in Russia and in Korea. More people have died as martyrs for the name of Christ in our generation than in all of the other 19 centuries of the Christian era. If you add up all who died in the arena, all who were fed to the lions, all who were burned at the stake, all who died in Scotland in the days of the martyrdom, all who were killed in the Inquisition and all the believers who died in martyrdom up to 1917, you will find that more have died since that time. In 1917 alone, 100,000 Baptists were killed in Russia. Since then, around the world, believers have been dying for the faith by the tens of thousands. There is no evidence in Scripture that we as Americans will indefinitely go

The Reality of Persecution

on living this kind of unchallenged existence, which is spiritually abnormal. This is not the kind of life which Christ prophesied for the church.”

Everyone else in the church at large has experienced persecution. But what about us? To us, persecution means walking two blocks to church because of parking congestion. To us, persecution is not getting a good seat in Sunday school or worse yet, having to sit through it. To us, persecution is a crowd in the hallway at the water fountain. To us, persecution is skipping church because it takes too much gas. It can be staying ten minutes extra on Sunday and being late for lunch. It can also be not getting to sing our favorite hymn or the kinds of hymns we like. It means a P.A. system is on the blink so that we cannot hear as well.

Just as I was writing this, I was sitting in my air-conditioned home, surrounded by relative luxury. My wife laid her hand on my shoulder and brought me a piece of strawberry shortcake to help me study. Suffering. We don't understand the meaning of the word. But mark my word, in our generation and in the generation of our children, Christians in America will probably come to know what it means to suffer persecution. But don't weep, the Scripture says that when we suffer for Him, we begin to reign with Him.

But there is a more immediate experience that has never ceased to be a reality for some. This is the matter of personal persecution. This is where any given member of the body of Christ is called out by God and given the privilege of suffering at the hands of Satan or of men strictly because his life is an offense to others who cannot tolerate the righteousness of Christ.

This is most prominent in the home. In a marriage, one person finds Christ as Savior and yields to Christ as Lord. The very presence of holiness and joy in that person's life proves too much for the unregenerate or uncommitted partner. Persecution occurs. There can follow personal abuse, unjust accusations, and blatant immorality by the unbelieving partner. This partner dares the committed believer to fight back, to reject the Word and to compromise the truth. The more quietly and gently the believer holds to the truth, the more overtly hostile the partner can become until often, at least temporarily, the persecutor flees headfirst into the world.

The Reality of Persecution

This can happen on the job. It can happen in the classroom. It can happen in the dormitory. I'm not talking about men and women fleeing from offensive Christians. God forbid. I'm talking about being confronted with righteousness and not being able to stand it.

This is a shadow of what persecution is. This is the essence of two kinds of persecution. The persecution of the church happens when a nation or the world declares war on the church of Jesus Christ because its presence challenges the system and the absence of holiness the system represents. Persecution of the Christian man or woman often occurs when they are pressured to be put to flight because Jesus Christ in them is more holy than those who stand to condemn them can tolerate.

RESULTS OF PERSECUTION

We will look more in detail in the next lesson as to why it is the world persecutes the church and Christians. In the time remaining, I would like to read the passage again. I would like to list for you five basic truths that leap out at us for our consideration during this study. They will be looked at in greater detail as we go along. Let's turn to Matthew 5,

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 kinds 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.

“You are the salt of the earth; (Matthew 5:10-13 NKJV)

Truth 1- Persecution produces joy. Blessed are those who are persecuted. Oh, what bliss! What self-contained joy for the man or the woman who experiences the blessing of being persecuted. The inference is that there is a quality of incompleteness in the life that has not suffered persecution. As well, there is the quality lacking in the life whose very presence does not evoke persecution. There is wrapped up in this statement a reference to the very essence of that mysterious truth that suffering creates God-likeness. Through some supernatural, spiritual miracle the Christian can actually enter into in some way the suffering of Christ and thus complete His activity on our behalf. Listen to what it says in Philippians 3,

The Reality of Persecution

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

(Philippians 3:7-9 NKJV)

Truth 2- Real persecution has only one object, the righteousness of God. The second thing we must learn from this passage is in the next phrase.

that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

(Philippians 3:10 NKJV)

The church is persecuted for what it stands for, the righteousness of God. The Christian is persecuted because the righteousness of God in him calls for one of two responses from the world. The Christian operating in his own strength, using the world's philosophy and the world's standards, is viewed by the unbeliever with a big question mark that says, "So what?" But the Christian in the midst of testing, who lives in righteousness and godliness that only Jesus Christ can provide in the Spirit, forces the unbeliever, when he looks at him, to make a decision. He must decide either, "Yes, I want that," or "No, I reject that." This is where persecution comes from. It comes from the righteousness of God in the believer.

But beware, as Martin Lloyd Jones put in his commentary.

"It does not say, blessed are those who are persecuted because they are objectionable. It does not say, blessed are those who are persecuted because they are unwise in their testimony. It does not say, blessed are those who are persecuted because they are fanatical. It does not say, blessed are those who are persecuted because they have done something wrong. It does not say, blessed are those who are persecuted for a cause. It does not say, blessed are those who are persecuted for political reasons. It does not say, blessed are those who are persecuted for being good, for being noble or for being self-sacrificing."

The Reality of Persecution

The world will love you for being good, in yourself, but it cannot stand your being godly. What the world cannot stand is the life that is so daringly yet so lovingly different. This is the life we found on Two-Mile Island. It is so different that it evokes the need for a decision. The world cannot see the righteousness of God without either having to say yes or no. The righteousness of God is the only reason for real persecution.

Truth 3- Persecution often takes the form of verbal abuse, as well as physical abuse. Some of you here understand what I mean. Jesus said, “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you.” There are three Greek words that are used in the New Testament for revile. All three of them reflect various shades of the same meaning. It means to verbally abuse, to jeer at, to sneer at, to upbraid in derision and to speak profanely of or to rail at. We see it used in Matthew 27:39 with Jesus on the cross. It says, they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads. Again, with Jesus on the cross, we read in Mark 15:32, They that were crucified with Him, reviled Him. Jesus understands verbal abuse. When your life is truly being crucified, you will be reviled.

There are two incidents in Scripture where Jesus always seemed to be reviled. One is when He was serving and meeting people’s needs. The other situation was when He was being crucified. The same thing will be true of us.

The passage also says it means to be lied about. Blessed are you when men say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. In other words, it can be a source of happiness and growth when someone lies about you and falsely accuses you because you are a Christian. I Peter 2 adds that if you take it patiently, God gets excited.

Truth 4- Persecution demands a supernatural response. When these things happen, Jesus tells us to rejoice and be exceedingly glad. I wonder why He put both of those phrases in this Scripture. The word “rejoice” means an inner spirit of contentment that praises God while it endures the suffering. Rejoice. But to be exceedingly glad goes one step further. It is the beating of the spiritual heart. It is the eager anticipation that not only endures, but it is ecstatic at the opportunity because of the permanence of the outcome. In Luke 6 we find the sister verse of this passage.

Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man’s sake.

The Reality of Persecution

Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.
(Luke 6:22,23 NKJV)

Leap for joy, it says. Boyce, in his commentary on this passage tells this story, which I think is excellent. It is a story about a missionary couple, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Matthews and their daughter, Lila. They were the last missionary family from the China Inland Missions after the communist takeover. The story relates the events that occurred during their last two years in China. I want to read some of these stories lest we be overtaken with misconceptions as we see our nation and communist China become close friends.

In the last two years after the communist China takeover, this family was allowed to live in a one-room shack. The only furniture they were allowed to have was one stool. They were not allowed to communicate with any other Christians. Nearly all of their income and funds from the outside were cut off. The only heat they had was from a small stove that they were allowed to light once a day to cook enough rice to eat their one meal. The fuel they used for the stove was made of refuse of animals that Mr. Arthur got from the street. The story goes on to tell that stoically, they endured knowing that one day God would deliver them. One day, as the family was reading from the Bible, they realized the power in this passage. The power was that Jesus did not meekly submit to His Father's will, He rejoiced in it. They began to rejoice. They began to praise God. They started as a family to sing hymns and rejoice throughout the day that they were counted worthy to suffer for His name's sake. They were finally delivered, but only after they were able to leap for joy as much in their captivity as they did in their deliverance, just as the Scripture says.

Do you get the picture? This is supernatural. That will change the world.

Truth 5- The response is justified for at least two reasons. We will discuss them in detail in a later lesson.

Reason 1- The passage says, "For great is your reward in heaven for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." If you are a Christian under persecution, listen. You have a special reward in heaven. Do you remember the Bema Seat of Christ? All must appear before the Bema Seat of Christ to receive rewards done in this body whether they be good or not.

The Reality of Persecution

In our mind's eye, try to imagine that this is not merit badge day in heaven. This is a time when you and I will stand in the awesome presence of the King of kings not to be judged according to our sins, that has already been done. There is therefore now no condemnation, no judgment to those who are in Christ Jesus. We must appear at the Bema Seat of Christ to worship Him, not to be judged for our sins. The Scripture teaches us that as Christ appears in all of His glory, we will be awed by the magnitude of His glory. As He approaches us, all of those things done in the flesh will vanish. They will go away because they are sin, and He cannot look upon sin. All that will remain are the things done in the Spirit: gold, silver and precious stones in the spiritual realm.

You may say, "What are we going to do with that gold, silver and precious stones?" I believe that at that instant, those who have walked in the Spirit and those who have lived through persecution in the Spirit will receive special jewels to cast at His feet. We are told that there are special crowns of righteousness. I believe the reward will be that we will have all the more with which to worship the King. Great is your reward in heaven.

Reason 2- This response is justified is that you are in great company, for so persecuted they the prophets who went before you. Just as Moses in Hebrews 11 chose rather to suffer affliction with the children of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, we as Christians can follow in these footsteps.

Some of you might like to study persecution on your own. I want to leave you with these verses and ask the ones who are interested to study some of these passages on your own. Acts 5:39-42, Romans 8:16-17, I Corinthians 4:9-14, II Corinthians 1:1-11, II Timothy 2:12, Hebrews 2:10 and John 15:20 and 24.

I would like to leave you with two thoughts:

Thought 1- We are and have been living as a people, a highly abnormal Christian life. In this world, the church is to have persecution. Christians in virtually every other nation of the world have experienced it. As the final days of history appear on the horizon, we, in this country, ought not to face God with such a presumptuous spirit that we are a chosen people too privileged to suffer for the Gospel. We are not to presume that we have a guaranteed, mystical protection by God not afforded to believers in Russia, in China or Cuba or Iran, much of Africa, much of South America and other such countries. Yea and all

The Reality of Persecution

who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. They will be separated, strengthened, but they will stand. I wonder, if, by God's grace, we as a people ought not to anticipate it. I wonder if by God's grace we as a people ought not to leap for joy at the prospect of it, of being counted worthy, as the Scripture says, to suffer for His name's sake.

Thought 2- There are more than a few people around you whose hearts are broken because the essence of the righteousness of God in them has cost them a husband or a wife or a job or a position or a family. They know the joy of persecution, but they, in acquiring it, have tasted the bitterness and the loneliness and the rejection that accompanies spiritual persecution. Sometimes this is more painful than a beating with stripes or days in a dungeon. We need to be more sensitive to the source of their conflict. It is a battle between God and Satan. We need to be more prayerful for their response and more tenderhearted toward the pain they bear. Paul said that if one member of the body suffers, all suffer. Instead of being quick to judge, let us be quick to love. We must encourage these fellow believers to leap for joy for great is their reward in heaven, but we also must enter with them into the fellowship of His sufferings before we can rejoice with them in the glory that will one day be theirs.

It is true, Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. But it is also true that unto us is given on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake. The question is: Do we love Him enough to leap for joy at the prospect of it? Do we love Him enough to ask Him if it will honor Him and change us to count us worthy to face persecution?" Those are the real issues. Having left Two Mile Island where all of the signs say Yield, we come to Suffering City where all of the signs say Stop. But the Prince of Peace says Stand.

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer