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The Results of Persecution

(Part 2)

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Series: The Beatitudes

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The Results of Persecution

(Part 2)

In this lesson, we will hopefully conclude our series of lessons on the results of persecution, so that we can conclude the broader series of our Beatitude, “Blessed are they which are persecuted”. In the last lesson, we began a look at eleven ways in which we can be blessed by persecution. We discovered that the first four benefits of persecution were supernatural identification with Christ, supernatural spiritual growth, supernatural response and supernatural rewards. By supernatural, I mean that they are the work of the Spirit and are totally beyond the work and understanding of the natural mind.

I want to clarify one point before we continue. The Scripture teaches that persecution is not an abnormal Christian experience. It says, Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. Jesus, Paul, Peter and John all came to the rather astonishing conclusion that persecution is a part of the normal Christian experience. We therefore, cannot judge its normality based upon our experience. Rather, we must base the normality of our experience on the authority of Scripture.

V- THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

The Holy Spirit in us helps to complete the sufferings of Christ. The fifth benefit is more theologically complex but more spiritually exciting perhaps than some of the others. The Scripture teaches us that the Holy Spirit within the Christian, when the Christian is in the lion’s den of life actually, in some mysterious way, enters into and helps to complete the sufferings of Christ. In I Peter 4:12-13 we see this. Verse 12 tells us not to be surprised when tribulation and persecution comes into our life. Verse 13 tells us to rejoice in as much as we are being partakers of Christ’s suffering. We are actually partaking of the very suffering that Jesus suffered so that when His glory shall be revealed, we can be glad also with exceeding joy.

Let’s imagine that there is a big bucket that holds the sufferings of Christ. The sufferings of Christ, when properly mixed with the atmosphere of the world, send forth a vapor which is called the glory of God. There is only so much suffering in that bucket. Jesus finished the suffering He came to do. But, by divine design, He allowed a certain portion of that bucket to be filled up with the

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suffering of the saints so that when we experience the sufferings of Christ, glory is accrued to the Father. Colossians 1:24 tells us in the Amplified Bible,

Even now I rejoice in the midst of my sufferings on your behalf and in my own person I am making up whatever is still lacking and remains to be completed on our part of Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, the church.

What we see is that as the Christian suffers and becomes persecuted and is afflicted for the name of Christ, weakness is created. In II Corinthians 12:9,10 Paul says that he glories in his persecutions. He gets excited about being persecuted because when he becomes weak, God gets the glory. Here in some mysterious way, though we cannot fully explain it, you and I, as we suffer for the name of Christ, actually help fill up and complete Christ's sufferings on behalf of the church. Paul said it is even possible for one believer through his suffering to help fill up the sufferings of Christ on behalf of other saints. We may not fully understand it, but we need to at least begin to grasp this concept. It will begin to make more sense to us as we go along. Filling up the sufferings of Christ is one of the benefits of persecution.

VI- BRINGS GREATER GLORY TO GOD

The believer who is persecuted and entering into the sufferings of Christ, is actually able to give more glory back to God. We can understand it better by looking at a glory triangle. It basically represents God, the Father, revealing Himself through God the Son only. God the Son reveals Himself to man but through God the Spirit. Man gives the glory back to God the Son but only through the Spirit as the Spirit Himself bears witness with us. He is the one who interprets the glory back to the Son. The Son doesn't keep the glory. The Scripture says that He only does those things that please the Father. So the Son gives all of the glory back to the Father. So the Father reveals Himself through the Son who reveals Himself through the Spirit to the believer who is supposed to give the glory back to the Son through the Spirit who in turn always gives the glory back to the Father. This is called the glory cycle. It begins with the Father and ends with the Father.

What is glory? It is the attribute of God that reveals the character of God and demands that its recognition be returned to God. It is the life of God in unwearable form. Nobody can wear it but Him. When you take the glory of God and begin to clothe

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yourself with it, you take from God that which is rightfully His. When God reveals His glory to man, man has a choice. The world is looking at him. Man can do one of two things. He can hold up a mirror which will bounce the glory back to God. The person looking on will see the glory of God. Or, he can hold up a window of self-righteousness. The glory of God comes through, and he takes credit for it. The world says, "Wow, what a strong person." God's desire is that our weakness magnify the glory of God.

An interesting study to do on this subject is John 17, which is Jesus' prayer to the Father. Take note of how many times He refers to the Father's glory. What Jesus basically said was, "Father, You gave Me this glory before the foundation of the world. I have come to pass it on to the saints who in turn want to give it back to Me so that I can give it back to You." This is how suffering in the name of Christ accrues glory to God.

VII- BRINGS YOU INTO COMPANY WITH GOD'S GRACE

The Christian who is under the fire of persecution walks in the holiest of God's company. They are the crack drill team of the heavenly army. They are the ones counted worthy of front line service. In Matthew 5:12, we see this, rejoice and be exceeding glad. Why? Because great is your reward in heaven and so persecuted they the prophets who were before you. God lines up the prophets in heaven and when you suffer properly, taking persecution for His name, God lines you up with Elijah, Daniel, Moses and all of the others. In Matthew 16:21-24, Jesus told the disciples that He was to suffer, be persecuted and die. Peter said, "Wait, Lord. No sir. I won't let that happen to you." Jesus replied, "Get behind Me, Satan. You are a hindrance to Me. I must suffer before the glory can be revealed." You are in great company. You are in company with the King when you are persecuted for righteousness sake.

In Hebrews 11:32 and into chapter 12 we see God's hall of fame. This is what it was like to be a believer and to stand in God's kingdom by faith. It says,

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:

who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword,

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out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.

They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—

of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,

God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

(Hebrews 11:32-40)

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

(Hebrews 12:1-3 NKJV)

This is the hall of fame that God puts you in when, by faith, you allow yourself to undergo persecution rightfully.

VIII- BRINGS UNITY IN GOD'S FAMILY

Persecution unites the family of God. Have you ever wondered what tool God has used through the years to keep the Jews together? Look back through history. It is persecution. They have been hated. They have been mocked. Attempts have been made to annihilate them again and again and again. Through the persecution there developed a cohesive spirit that only God could develop. Today they are back in the land and are about to be used as the curtain of history opens for the final act. They are back in the land after all of the years. How have they maintained their

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identity as a people? It is through persecution. In Jesus' high priestly prayer, He said, "Father, make them one as We are One." How does the body become one? One way is through persecution.

I want to give you an illustration. Think of two soldiers on K.P. duty. They are arguing over everything. One blames the other for not putting the silverware in the right place. The other one blames the other for not putting the pots in the right place. They argue incessantly. About that time, a siren goes off as an air raid begins and bombs start to fall. The two soldiers on K.P. duty hit the deck and pick up their weapons as they are now fighting a war. Guess what? It doesn't matter anymore whether the spoons are in the right place or not. It doesn't make any difference now which size pots are in the cabinets. There is a war on. They are in it together, and it is life or death.

This is the way the church of Jesus Christ is when in the throes and in the midst of persecution. When all is well, it is amazing what kinds of things Christians can find to bicker about, be divisive about and to separate themselves from other parts of the body. But, when persecution comes, the church of Jesus Christ finds itself becoming a more cohesive unit bound together by the Spirit through the Word.

IX- EQUIPS FOR MINISTRY

Persecution equips us to have a ministry. Look at II Corinthians 1:3-5 in several translations. You will come to the amazing conclusion that God has put you through persecution, trials and difficulty so that you will be equipped to have a ministry to other people who are passing through the same situation. If you go to countries where Christianity is against the law and you interview Christians, you will most likely find that they have sensitive spirits, compassionate spirits and a zeal and hunger for the Word. You will find a hatred of evil. You will find a band of believers who have been persecuted.

X- GIVES THE ABILITY TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS

Christians who are under attack are drawn into a cohesive body. A similar benefit is that a Christian who is persecuted and bears well his burden, gives comfort, encouragement and motivation to other Christians. In Philippians 1:12-14, Paul said that amazing things happen when under persecution. He had been thrown in prison, chained to the Roman guards, and he was excited. He felt this way because the guards were being won

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to Christ. It never would have happened if God had not put him there. But he also said that as the believers wrote to him they said, “Paul, your standing in the midst of that kind of persecution has lit our fire for the Lord. We are encouraged because of your faith.”

I had an experience a few weeks ago when one of you here asked if I would take some time to listen to someone who is undergoing a tremendous trial and persecution. I agreed although I was a little scared to do it. As I began to listen to their testimony, I gave no encouragement to them, but I was dancing up and down with excitement over the grace God had poured into this person’s life. They had undergone such testing, such tribulation, such persecution that most of us have never experienced. There was a freedom, a grace and an excitement that you don’t see very often. I was asked to encourage them, but I came back encouraged. This is the way it works. We see this in our own midst with people who have been tested. We grieve with them over their testing, but we get excited with them over their response.

XI- GIVES SPECIAL PROTECTION, PROVISION AND PRESENCE

God gives the believer who is under fire for his or her faith the right to experience supernatural power, supernatural protection, supernatural provision and supernatural presence in a way that other believers may never, ever know. I want to read a foundation passage in Isaiah 43:1-4. Many of you have memorized this. If you haven’t, put it on your list to consider memorizing. It is one of the most powerful passages in Scripture.

But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine.”

(Isaiah 43:1 NKJV)

Look at the six-fold expression of God in that one passage. He is the God of creation, the God of design, the God of redemption, the God of selection, the God of recognition and the God of ownership all in that one passage. The exciting thing is that He says we are to fear not for He has redeemed us. He has called us by name and He recognizes us and He knows us. Therefore, when these other things happen, we don’t have to worry or be afraid because He has called us by name.

In the last lesson, I talked about my daughter graduating. As we were sitting in the auditorium, we thought like every other family, that we would be able to see her walk across the stage.

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The graduates looked like a sea of penguins with a square Frisbee on their heads. They were all over the place and all looked alike. The man beside us was trying to take a picture of his daughter with a very expensive camera. He wanted to take her picture from across the auditorium. As the graduates were about to walk into the auditorium, he went down closer to take the picture. But, all of the graduates looked alike as he was trying to focus his camera. Finally, a girl came up and started waving, but he didn't see her. He finally gave up and came back up to our seats and said to his wife, "I guess she came through the other door." As only a wife can do, I heard this big sigh as she said, "Dear, she walked right past you." He didn't recognize her because they all looked alike. It was exciting when they finally started walking across the stage as their names were being called. When our daughter's name was called and she came across the stage, we clapped and cheered. When they called her name, there was instant recognition. I couldn't see her clearly, but I knew she was there.

Our God has a perfect knowledge of His children. He knows us by name. He knows the very beat of our hearts. He can see us in a sea of people and knows each one of us by name. Because of that, we don't need to be afraid. Let's continue with verse two,

When you pass through the waters (here is God's presence),
I will be with you; and through the rivers (here is God's
protection), they shall not overflow you. When you walk
through the fire (here is God's provision), you shall not be
burned, nor shall the flame scorch you (here is God's power)

For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your
Savior; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in
your place.

Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honored,
and I have loved you; therefore I will give men for you, and
people for your life. (Isaiah 43:2 NKJV)

This passage says that each of us has a purpose, the purpose of our ministry. What an exchange. God says that He wants to trade people for our lives. If we give Him our life, He will give us back eternal people. In the process to accomplish this purpose, there is a fire and a flood to give you a message through which your ministry will come. The promise is that amidst the fire and the flood you will have supernatural power, supernatural protection, supernatural provision and supernatural presence. The Scripture is one unfolding after another of God's presence keeping God's

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people in the midst of trouble. The children of Israel were always at Jehovah's post office awaiting special deliveries. The fire and the flood of persecution brought from God a supernatural power.

God's Power

Look at David and Goliath. David was fighting against the giant Goliath, and God's reputation was at stake. Goliath was belittling the power of God. David remembered the God who could help him kill a lion and a bear so a giant would be nothing for him. David said, "In the name of the Lord I come!" He crawled up inside of God and the giant fell. God is still in the slingshot business. When His reputation is at stake and His children are being persecuted and they cry out and give glory to Him, He is still in the slingshot business.

Let's look at Elijah on Mount Carmel. He wanted to have a barbecue, but there was no fire. The rest of the troops were worshipping Satan and crying out to Baal. They cried for Baal to come down and show his power. But God had tied Satan's hands and wasn't going to let his power be shown. When Elijah cried out in the name of the Lord, he made it as difficult as possible by filling the trenches with water and soaking down the sacrifice with water. God sent fire down as rain, and they had the biggest barbecue you ever saw. The key is that our God still has the power to rain down power from heaven when His reputation is at stake. When you and I totally identify with His reputation, His power will be revealed. His power was not used up at Pentecost. It is still available to us. The world has yet to see the full power of God. When that full power is released, the Scripture says, every knee shall bow. This power is yours and mine when we undergo persecution.

God's Protection

Psalms 18:1-19 and Psalm 46 are wonderful passages to read in this area. They tell how persecution reveals supernatural protection. God can protect His children and build a wall around them when He needs to. When the children of Israel were trying to get out of Egypt, we saw how God delivered them by bringing the plagues against Pharaoh, while the people of Israel were not touched. I'm sure you remember the story. Let's turn to Exodus 9:1-7. God has a wall built just for His children.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and tell him, 'Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews: "Let My people go,

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that they may serve Me.

For if you refuse to let them go, and still hold them, behold, the hand of the Lord will be on your cattle in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the oxen, and on the sheep—a very severe pestilence.

And the Lord will make a difference between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt. So nothing shall die of all that belongs to the children of Israel.””

Then the Lord appointed a set time, saying, “Tomorrow the Lord will do this thing in the land.”

So the Lord did this thing on the next day, and all the livestock of Egypt died; but of the livestock of the children of Israel, not one died.

Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh became hard, and he did not let the people go. There were dead cattle everywhere on the Egyptian farms, but the children of Israel had the healthiest cattle ever seen. (Exodus 9:1-7 NKJV)

As we read on,

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt—on man, on beast, and on every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.”

And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground. And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt.

So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, so very heavy that there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

And the hail struck throughout the whole land of Egypt, all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail struck every herb of the field and broke every tree of the field.

Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, there was no hail. (Exodus 9:22-26 NKJV)

Can't you just see the news that night? The weather reporters were telling of the great hailstorm throughout the region except of Goshen. The children of Israel had an umbrella over their land that was put there by Jehovah. Exodus 10:21 goes on to tell us,

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward

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heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, darkness which may even be felt.”

So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days.

They did not see one another; nor did anyone rise from his place for three days. But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.
(Exodus 10:21-13 NKJV)

The children of Israel were plugged into the Jehovah Power and Light Company. The children of Israel had light in their dwellings. We see the supernatural protection from God.

In Daniel 6 we see Daniel in the lion’s den. He goes down in there and everyone is sure that he is going to come up as a hamburger. Instead, Jehovah wired shut the mouth of the lion. Daniel comes up out of the lion’s den completely unscathed. The lion did not touch him. You can try it explain it away but more than likely God went down into that den with Daniel and used creative dentistry to wire shut his mouth Himself.

What about Jesus when people were out to get Him, yet He walked right through the crowd? The Scripture tells us that His time had not yet come. The Scripture tells us that He walked right through the middle of them, and nobody laid a hand upon Him. Why? It wasn’t His time. Jesus had supernatural protection. The Spirit of God had built a wall around Him and until the time was right, nobody was going to lay a finger on the Son of God.

You and I are among the untouchables until it is God’s will that we be touched. You and I will live until God wills to call us home. We will live until God’s clock for your hour to come or my hour to come. We have supernatural protection, particularly when we are under persecution.

God’s Provision

Then there is supernatural provision. This means that when the pressure is on and you are being persecuted, God has a supernatural way of providing what you need. In Deuteronomy 8 God didn’t give the children of Israel T-bone steaks, but He did give them manna. They never went hungry. The entire time they were on their journey, they had enough to eat. Every day, just at the right time, the manna came. They couldn’t store it up. They had to be dependent on God. But, they always had enough. The verse goes on to say that not only did God provide them with food but their shoes did not wear out for forty years. They were not

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going to have shoe repair shops to take their shoes to, so God provided for them by making what they had last.

Some of us have experienced God's supernatural provision when we are being tested or persecuted. There is no way to get the things that we need but God provides and provides and provides. Sometimes as we become more affluent in life, we miss that blessing. It is one of those blessings we like missing, but nonetheless, we miss out.

When God's children are taken hostage by Satan's revolutionaries, they will never starve to death. They will never lack for clothes to wear. Their clothes will never wear out. Their shoes will never wear out. They will never suffer needs. They may not have what they want, but what they need will always be provided supernaturally. These needs will be met supernaturally in a way that the natural mind cannot comprehend.

Not only will God supernaturally provide for needs, but God will also supernaturally provide words. Let's look at Matthew 10,

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues.

You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak;

for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. (Matthew 10:16-20 NKJV)

Take for example that you are being persecuted. The enemy is coming to get you. You hear the footsteps and you ask, “Lord, what do I say?” You hear the Lord say, “What did I say to Moses?” You reply, “You said to Moses, ‘Who made your tongue?’” You turn to the Lord and say, “Okay, Lord, I get the picture. This tongue is yours. This heart is yours. Do with it what you please. Say through me what You please.” This is supernatural provision.

God's Presence

In the fire of persecution, the believer has an awareness and reflection of the presence of Christ in a way they will never have unless the fire is burning. The best illustration is Daniel 3

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beginning in verse 14. It is another passage that is familiar to many.

Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?

Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?”
(Daniel 3:14,15 NKJV)

Here we see the world’s question. Who is that God who can deliver you out of my hands? In verse 16 we find the real confidence.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.

But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”
(Daniel 3:16-18 NKJV)

The reputation of God was at stake. The worship of God was at stake. The three men said that under no circumstances would they compromise the will of God.

Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

(Daniel 3:19 NKJV)

Seven times always speaks of completion. The furnace was as hot as it would go. They took the thermostat off, and wired it direct.

He commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace.
(Daniel 3:20 NKJV)

Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.
(Daniel 3:21 NKJV)

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A study of the clothing words means these garments were long, loose and flowing. They would catch fire easily and burn quickly.

Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.

(Daniel 3:22 NKJV)

This is what happens to the world. They were bound and determined to destroy God's children. In the process, they got the heat up so high that they destroyed themselves. Remember that the hotter the fire, the cooler the God. The greater the challenge is, the more powerful the God.

And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king."

"Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Nebuchadnezzar Praises God

Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire.

And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

(Daniel 3:23-27 NKJV)

God does everything completely.

Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!

Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this."

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Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon. (Daniel 3:28-30 NKJV)

Here we see a God with supernatural power. What the Scripture is saying is that in the midst of the fire and in the midst of the flood, the world will look at you and they will see something so demonstrably different that they will say, "Someone is in there with you. Who is it?" You can answer, "I have a supernatural God, and He loves the fire, and He loves the flood. The fire will not harm me, and the flood will not overtake me because my God's presence is always with me." The world will fall down on their knees and say, "The Lord, He is God." In the fire of persecution and the flood of hostility to righteousness, you will know the power of God, you will know the protection of God, you will know the provision of God, and you will know the presence of God as you will never know it in the sunlight or on the dry land of compromise where the world's righteousness and yours finds no conflict.

We are so accepted in our society that we have lost touch with the God of deliverance. But when the fire falls, I want to remind you that the fireman is still on duty. When the rain comes, God's umbrella still has no holes. When the lions growl, the dentist is still in His office. When the furnace gets hot, the King of kings with His asbestos cloud will still walk through the fire with His children. Supernaturally, these will be the results of persecution. The world will stand in awe at a defenseless lion, at asbestos saints, super slingshots, eternal shoes, manna burgers, unplanned testimonies and heavenly vacuum cleaners. The world will stand in awe and fall down before the King and worship. That, my friend, is the best result of all.

One thing you may notice is that all of these miracles had these things in common.

- 1- The reputation of God was at stake.
- 2- The saints stood their ground.
- 3- Before anything ever took place, in advance, they gave all of the glory to God. They said, "My God is able."
- 4- They were persecuted. They were not delivered from the persecution, they were delivered through it.
- 5- God revealed Himself strong on their behalf.
- 6- His timing was split-second perfect.
- 7- In the midst of the fire, God was glorified again.

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8- In each case, His reputation was vindicated.

9- In each case, God's children were encouraged.

Here we have it, eleven results of persecution. Isn't that just like God? All eleven of them are blessings. There is no small wonder Jesus said that the Christian who is persecuted, reviled and slandered is a blessed man or a blessed woman.

In the next lesson, we will look at the final phase of this final beatitude. We have looked at the reality, the reason and the results. In the next lesson we will look at our response to persecution. How does God expect us to react? It may take us back to Two Mile Island. But, if that is where Jesus lives and that is what Jesus expects of us, Two Mile Island is not a bad place to be.

You may or may not suffer persecution in the near future. If the cross is central in your life, chances are that you might. But, if you do suffer persecution and if you respond God's way, eleven great things will happen. You will be supernaturally identified with Christ. You will be supernaturally transformed into His image. You will supernaturally respond. You will supernaturally receive rewards laid up in heaven. You will supernaturally actually enter into the sufferings of Christ. You will supernaturally accrue glory to the Father. You will supernaturally be associated with God's hall of fame. You will supernaturally see the body become united. You will supernaturally be prepared for a ministry. You will supernaturally have a testimony to the saints who need encouraging. You will supernaturally experience joy amidst the firepower you have never felt before. You will see protection you didn't know was possible. You will find a provision you never knew existed. You will see the presence of God in a way you never knew was possible. All of these things are yours. All these things are mine in the furnace and in the fire of persecution. If it comes, or when it comes, let's do God a favor and do ourselves a favor and look at it Jesus' way. He said, "Leap for joy." Why not? In addition to all of these, He gave us the ultimate promise that the kingdom of heaven will be ours. Hallelujah! What a Savior.

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