

The King's People: Favor in the Fire Part 2

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Preacher: Kevin Smith, Senior Pastor

[0 : 0 0] let's go to the Lord in prayer as we prepare for his word our father thank you who are we that you would choose us to be your children you did it and thank you that you did Lord we would have no real meaning and purpose in this world but for you we would not know that we're not cosmic accidents we would not know that we're not animals we would not know that each of us no matter where we live how much money we have each of us has dignity and honor because we were created in your very image so Lord thank you and thank you for Jesus who redeems rebels like us thank you for having mercy on us now Lord we crave that you would speak to us we've sung it we meant what we sung speak to our hearts oh Lord give us your holy word if we can hear from you then we'll know what to do we won't go alone we'll never be on our own let your spirit guide and let your word abide in us speak to our hearts thank you that you intend to do just that use your unworthy servant to be clear full of your spirit to point people to Jesus let us all see that your word speaks to reality the truth in Jesus name amen we turn once again to this passage to the beatitudes the last beatitudes in Matthew chapter 5 and we're on this second message on this last section verses 10 through 12 here we go blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you that is the word of the Lord please be seated once again thank you praise team for your beautiful music leading us

I hope you noticed if you always if you ever wonder why we do songs from other countries like we did a song from South in South the saints in South Africa we do that so that we don't live in a Christian ghetto America is not the only Christian place where Christians live in the world by singing songs from other countries where the people of God live and breathe and serve we are reminded that our family is global it's a good thing to remember that amen just so you know now since I mentioned Christians being persecuted in Nigeria last Sunday we have some missionary contacts here Karen Ellis is part of a ministry called IRC and IRC stands for

International Christian Concern and we've supported them in the past but we were able to get a report about something about some of that persecution happening in Nigeria now this goes back a few months but it's significant on Monday January 7th at 7.30pm in Nigeria Fulani marauders attacked a Christian village three people were killed including two children the attack was geared solely to eliminate a young Muslim convert to Christianity that was the entire that was the main purpose of the attack upon this village this young man had put his faith in Jesus and was marked for death you see in some places the most radical and dangerous thing that you can do is to become a Christian see I'm not talking about a cultural Christian

I'm not talking about someone who goes to church once in a while shows up on the Easter and whatever and shows up you know no no no we're talking about people who have been who have encountered the risen Christ who have seen his glory and seeing his glory they've been transformed they've been changed they're not the same they can't be the same you cannot be the same and see the glory of Jesus such people have put their faith and life in his hands they would say that our only comfort in life and in death is that I am not my own but belong body and soul in life and in death to my faithful savior Jesus Christ they would say that see that's what we're talking about Christians like that young man I just mentioned you see when you become that kind of Christian and really the only one you become dangerous now listen we can't rule out physical persecution here in the west we have to admit though that most of our persecution right now is emotional and psychological and sometimes legal we keep hearing every year about

Christian organizations there's one place I read about I think it was in Texas where this ministry ministry was serving kids coming out of the gang life and they were getting government federal funds because they were doing such good community work they've been doing it for a number of years and recently they were called on the carpet and their funding was taken because they said that the people who work for them have to adhere to Christian values Christian doctrine now here's a ministry doing great work in the community getting kids out of the gang life but because they insist that the people who work for them must be Christians they've been called on the carpet that case I believe is pending before the Supreme Court in that area yes our our persecution here is emotional psychological sometimes a little legal but it's still true even here that the most radical and dangerous thing you can do is to follow King

[8 : 0 0] Jesus that's true wherever you are wherever you are that will always be true until Jesus comes but kingdom focused disciples are willing to pay the price are you willing to pay the price you see we take what the world dishes out because we know that we have favor in the fire and we know that the Lord's favor is better than the world's favor anytime it's striking here that this beatitude that deals with persecution is the only one that our Lord elaborated on go back and read the beatitudes we've been doing this for some months now he just blessed the poor in spirit for the kingdom of heaven he just goes right through but when he comes to this beatitude beginning in verse 10 he expands the only one he does this with and last time we noted that the people of the

Lord Jesus experienced persecution in the form of as Jesus says verbal assaults because we don't fit the more Christ is seen in us the more dangerous we are because his righteousness exposes the darkness around us and sometimes even in us amen second the more we express allegiance to Jesus this causes the powers of the world to fear for a growing allegiance to Jesus breaks our allegiance to the lesser powers politically socially familiarly religiously ethnically those are lesser powers in this world and our devotion to Jesus breaks the idolatry of those things idols don't like being dumped Sinclair Ferguson in his comments on the sermon of the mouth says the true church is too different for the world to tolerate it the world sees the kingdom of

God as a threat to his own ways and so it seeks to destroy it yes yet in all of this the Lord says we're blessed doesn't sound like it so let's find out why so we're blessed because persecution is a mark of being in God's family the Lord's kingdom people well notice what he says blessed are those who are persecuted for theirs is the kingdom of heaven ours is the eternal kingdom and in this kingdom God is called say it how do we what is how do we refer to God as our thank you okay I it wasn't a trick question it wasn't I wasn't trying to trick you really you knew

I know you knew God is our father and the beatitude before ours told us that peacemakers blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God peacemakers reveal us as the sons and daughters of God we bear the image of the father who makes peace ultimately through the cross of Jesus through the gospel of the kingdom but persecution also demonstrates whose kingdom we are in and also to which family we belong Romans 8 Paul talks about this he says the spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children then heirs heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ provided we suffer with him in order that we may be also glorified with him for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us persecution for righteousness that's suffering in Jesus name is God's way of confirming our adoption and our inheritance it's interesting that in America we tend to adopt cute adorable babies and children amen to that in ancient

Israel and Rome childless couples typically adopted virtuous young men faithful friends and servants that was their culture but God does neither he does neither of those things he adopts those who are unworthy who aren't so cute who may not be the best that America has to offer he adopts the unworthy because we are a mixture of virtues and vices but we have a father we have a father who sovereignly that means he did it without any input from anybody else he is the only wise potentate king of all he surveys he decided and graciously chose to love us and to make us his children and because he's done that

[14 : 01] Sarge he he has guaranteed you an inheritance in his kingdom you were heirs of God Paul says heirs of God wow I mean usually you get the inheritance when someone dies right not this time because he never died he lives forever and he's given us an inheritance now a good question would be what inheritance is Paul talking about right well my pastor Dr.

Boyce suggests five things I put them on the screen four of the five anyway first of all what is the inheritance one a heavenly home Jesus promised that I go to prepare a place for you heavenly home into the new heavens and new earth second he provides a heavenly banquet now that's a good one he's talking about Revelation 19 the marriage supper of the lamb and what that is a picture of in Revelation 19 is the bride of Christ which is the church coming together with its groom Jesus and the marriage supper means it is a place of intimate and eternal fellowship it is a place of closeness and communion that's what the table was to ancient people not like us we do lunch no they ate together and it was fellowship and we've been promised an eternal fellowship with our savior three we're promised that we would rule with

Christ we're seated with him in heavenly places Ephesians 2 says and fourth likeness to Jesus we're told that when he appears 1 John 3 right when he appears we shall be like him finally finally no more sin in my life no more messed up thoughts and wrong desires and speech that goes awry no more of that no more actions that hurt me hurt others and embarrass me no more of that stuff nothing that dishonors Christ ever again we will be fully like Jesus as much as redeemed sinners can be but there's a fifth thing Dr.

Boy says we inherit I didn't put this on the screen ultimately we are like the tribe of Levi the tribe of Levi if you know from the Old Testament all the twelve tribes were promised property in Canaan in the promised land all except the tribe of Levi God said to them you're not getting any beach front property you're not getting any land but then he says because why why Lord because I am your inheritance who got the best deal here okay they were the priest the Levites were the priest they took care of the temple the sacrifices they lived before the Lord day and night they got the better deal saints in the new testament the apostle Peter describes Christians in first Peter two nine as a royal priesthood what's our inheritance

I should say who is our we're priests we offer sacrifices to the Lord right Romans 12 we offer our bodies as living sacrifices then go over to Hebrews 13 you find out we offer the sacrifice of praise the fruit of our lips that confess our name and we do good those we offer those to God because we are the new priests those who are in Christ Jew and Gentile brought together to serve the king forever he is our inheritance hallelujah you know people it always amazes me I've said this before so forgive me it always amazes me when people have those near death experiences and they say they go to heaven how come they never see Jesus very I think maybe one I've heard that saw Jesus no one see they get there they see grandma grandpa they see lights they see angels but listen if Jesus is not in heaven it ain't heaven if God is not dwelling in heaven with all of his power and glory visible as the seraphim the flame like angels surround the throne and all the if if God is not there heaven ain't worth nothing he is our inheritance we get the best deal ever we are priests and then to add to the interpretation

[19 : 23] Paul says we are fellow heirs with Christ fellow heirs Jesus is our elder brother and Dr.

Boyce asked the question again what does Jesus inherit Jesus prayed in John 17 the true Lord's prayer because he prayed this he prayed this in verses 4 and 5 he says father I glorify you on earth having accomplished the work that you gave me to do and now father glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed Jesus his inheritance is glory he returned to the glory glory and in Christ we too are glorified we too have it in we look forward for these light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal weight of glory that far outweighs them all them all the troubles glory the glory of the living

Christ is glory he will share with us not that we become deity don't get me wrong but he will share that glory with us in the new heavens and the new earth glory and Paul says again in Romans 8 I read that last verse that glory which is greater than our sufferings will be revealed in us greater than our sufferings let me remind you what he said he said he made the case that there is nothing greater for I consider I read this earlier that the sufferings of this present time that includes persecution illness whatever are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us where do you see the glory it's that we inherit the kingdom this is our reward great great is our reward in heaven he says in the beatitude great nothing's greater than the glory of the triune

God that's what a psalmist in psalm 73 when Asaph he was he was wondering why all the people around him who were not obeying God were being blessed go back and read psalm 73 he said my foot had almost slipped he said I almost lost my I almost went down Lord because I looked around and people he called the wicked but the people who did not obey God were prospering and they were prospering greatly and he felt like I was where's mine have you ever felt that way have you felt like where's mine Lord I've been faithful I've been praying I've been given I've been seeking to follow Jesus I'm having devotions every day I'm giving myself to the work of the Lord and how come my business is failing how come my children are sick or not walking with you how come

Lord how come I'm looking around at people who don't know you and they getting rich everything that guy touches turns to gold and he despises your name and he was like how come what's going on and then he comes to his senses in verse 25 and 26 and he says whom have I in heaven but you and there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you my flesh and my heart may fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion inheritance forever forever you see we get we look at what's out here in front of us and we say give me give me give me more more more and you don't realize that everything out there will die and perish it can be stolen and it can be broken you can't take it with you it's limited and God says

[24 : 41] I am your inheritance Jesus says the glory that God has given me I give you and Jesus is telling us that in the face of persecution this is where we put our eyes in the face of being on the out Luke said and I think in Luke 6 he said the parallel text I read it last week he mentions how they will exclude you I want to comment on that exclusion that that is the American Achilles heel because American Christians like American people don't want to be excluded we want in on everything we demand our rights we we got to be included and

Jesus says blessed are you when you are excluded on account of me when they won't let you into the club when they won't hire you when they won't sit with you in the cafeteria come on somebody blessed are you not because you obnoxious Jim I gotta be clear right not because you arrogant and stuck up and you bunch of sinners not because no no no no that's on you but because of me because you are walking in my righteousness serving serving one enough serving people giving of yourselves to bless others even those who don't like you you see now when they exclude you because of that oh yeah be glad yours yours is the kingdom of heaven that's a better kingdom the king's people now now you expect

Jesus to really say just come on y'all gut it out I know you're being persecuted hang in here gut it out it's it's hard I know but one day it's going to get better he does something better than that the king's people are full of joy in the midst of persecution whoo give me some of this rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you rejoice Luke 6 23 echoes this he's same parallel text rejoice in that day and leap for joy for behold your reward is great in heaven for so their fathers did to the prophets joy in the midst of persecution John Piper who I love to talk about I love to think about his writings when we talk about joy he says joy is a God given spontaneous experience of the beauty worth and greatness of

God a spontaneous experience and it comes up out of here when you behold when you understand when you are captivated by God's beauty worth and greatness now here's the thing here's the thing it's a command when Jesus says rejoice and be glad it's actually a command it's actually a what's called a present verb always rejoice always be glad and it's a command can the Lord command an emotional response especially when we are being persecuted and in pain point one this is not natural rejoicing it is a spirit gifted response given to those in

Christ's kingdom remember Galatians 5 the fruit of the spirit what is the fruit of the spirit the fruit of the spirit is love joy joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness etc fruit of the spirit if this in order to be a Christian in order to believe in Jesus the spirit of God must make you alive John 3 right must be born again when the spirit of God makes you alive he doesn't leave you he takes up residence and so when you put your as you put your faith in Jesus all the gifts come all and and the fruit of the spirit what the spirit produces in us is joy God wants a joyful people not folk I'm a Christian I don't think that glorifies the

[30 : 14] Lord very much it doesn't mean we walk around like this all time hallelujah thank you Jesus I'm the head not the tail we mess up our own stuff no Christians no we live in the real world come on brother Tony it hurts man folk let you down and sometimes they do more than that your back is turned sometimes they give you the left foot of fellowship sometimes you know I mean you get sick I mean really sick I mean things happen so hold it now and then you add persecution to that and Jesus says I command you to rejoice and be glad and to do it always and you can command it because first of all it's the gift of the spirit the spirit wells up in us have you ever had those moments when the spirit of

God just wells sometimes maybe in the worship service sometimes in your own devotions sometimes in your car you're driving down the street and you're hearing a song and all of a sudden you're in tears you you swerving because the presence and the glory and the majesty of Jesus fills the place come on somebody am I the only one people think you crazy because you're walking down the street singing and because you're just full of the joy of the Lord and it came and it wasn't something you did he just did it the spirit just welled up in you it's this reality in particular that helps us respond in a Christ honoring way to those who persecute us we listen Jesus gets no glory when we take revenge that's not the beatitude that's not

Christian that's not who Jesus is that's not what he did oh joy he commands joy he is telling us that to we are to pursue that which the spirit gives he gifts us with joy and the reason he can command it because now he's telling us to pursue it to pursue what the spirit gives that's a good thing y'all how do you pursue what the spirit gives by looking at the biblical reasons for it listen we have joy our joy comes because of our relationship to Jesus because of what Jesus has accomplished for us and because and we rejoice in knowing that he is glorifying himself in us in the midst of the suffering you are taking because you are suffering remember we saw for righteousness sake and for his name you recognize in that moment that it isn't because of you and you talk to yourself you remind your soul of why we are going through this isn't because we did wrong it's because we did right in the name of

Jesus and I have to be reminded now that I am only going through this because Jesus is savior of my life I'm only going through this because he paid for my sins and made me a child of God his spirit is living in me I am only going through this so that through this not I will glorify Jesus no Jesus will glorify himself in me our joy in the midst of persecution and suffering exalts Jesus because it shows that he is better than what we may be losing at the moment what do people lose they lose peace freedom wealth health even life they may even lose respect in under persecution because the shame revile you we saw this revile you shame you but

Jesus is better than what you may be losing do you see it is he better really I mean that's the question is he really better the apostles believed that in acts five they were called on the carpet for preaching Jesus here it goes when they had called in the apostles they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus and let them go then the apostles they left the presence of the council rejoicing rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name and every day in the temple from house to house they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus that the savior is Jesus keep in mind the beating they experienced was the 39 lashes with a leather strap they would have been tied to a stake or forced to lay on the ground they would get 26 lashes on their back and 13 lashes across their chest it would have all been done publicly to humiliate them have you experienced that may have felt like it right sometimes it may feel like it but no listen listen they did not rejoice because of the pain and shame but in spite of the pain and shame because they were suffering for the name how did you get up in pain raw from this beating and go away rejoicing they would have been limping they would have been helping each other come on you can make it

[37 : 21] Peter come on Andrew come on we can they didn't do it they weren't walking out like this no they were limping out they were dragging themselves out because they were hurting their backs were riddled with stripes and across their chest riddled with stripes and pain cut open open cuts and welts they were limping their way back to the saints and yet they were rejoicing they understood why they were suffering and they saw that Jesus is worth it their joy was God's gift but it was also their choice based upon what they knew about Jesus they didn't pursue suffering and persecution that's spiritual disease if you want people to hurt you you got a problem if you do things intentionally and Christians have done this by the way if you do things intentionally to get people to persecute you you got a problem but if in the providence of God as you are living your life you're walking in the character of Christ seeking to give your all to Jesus in providence of God you get the left foot of fellowship that's when that's when you seek the joy you seek the reality of Christ and you trust in the spirit of God to well up in you in other words you pray you ask for what

God has promised you pray for it well I'm going to skip all the rest of this being a kingdom focused church because the kingdom focused people will cause the empire to strike back it's unavoidable are you listening any who will live godly in Jesus Christ will suffer persecution 2nd Timothy 3:12 if you're devoted to Jesus it's not if you experience persecution it's only a matter of when and put a bunch of folk together determined to follow him oh boy it's going to be ugly and the enemy loves to start within to cause the folks to fight in the middle he loves to do that and if you're seeking to honor

Christ according to his word even sometimes Christians who are less mature in the Lord or just cultural Christians will say will put you on the outs they will no you can't stay you can't be here he'll come for you but for the most part the world is encroaching upon the church John Piper gives us ideas of how this could play out I want you to hear this we can see why a life devoted to righteousness or godliness will be persecuted or reviled or spoken against here it goes if you cherish moral purity your life will be an attack on people's love for unbridled sex if you embrace temperance your life will be a statement against the love of alcohol or any other substance if you pursue self-control your life will indict excess eating or any other place where people are showing lack of control if you live simply and happily you will show the folly of luxury if you walk humbly with your

God you expose the evil of pride if you are punctual and thorough in your dealings you will lay open the inferiority of laziness and negligence go to work okay go to work if you speak with compassion you will throw calluses into sharp relief if you are earnest you will make the flippant look flippant instead of clever if you are spiritually minded you will expose the worldly mindedness of those around you etc so the question is why aren't you being persecuted okay couple thoughts if you don't spend significant time with people who do not share your faith in Jesus you won't be persecuted you're living in the ghetto you're keeping yourself away you're not you're not supposed to be in the world but not of it you're not even in it if you don't humbly take biblical stands publicly in the world or the church you will not experience persecution because you're just keeping your mouth shut you're not you're not so that's how you avoid persecution last thing if your life does not bear the marks of the other beatitudes

Christ in you then you won't be persecuted either because you're living like the world you're living according to the world's values not according to kingdom values and your character is suspect no one's gonna bother the devil's not gonna bother you in any of those cases because you're working for him why am I not being persecuted maybe there are others but those are three I can think of but if you will unashamedly live for Jesus I can promise you a few things you will be persecuted if you stand upon his word and say this is where I stand even if you do it humbly and you should humbly and with respect and gentleness never attack people but if you will stand upon his word even publicly at times when you call for not every you gotta open your mouth every time but when called for

[44 : 20] I guarantee you at some point you will be persecuted even in Chattanooga Tennessee in the Bible Belt and I can promise you another thing glory I can promise you God being more real to you at times than you could ever ever think I can promise you joy in the Lord I can promise you that he'll hear you as you cry out to him in your pain I can promise you that he'll wrap his arms around you and he'll keep you going I can promise you that as you wake up in the middle of the night and you and you're tossing and turning and God will meet you there I can promise you these things too because I know about them it's no fun being persecuted no fun being lied on slandered reviled

Jesus no fun no joy and all that stuff the joy comes because Jesus is Lord of your life and if you're standing upon his word well okay fire if you're standing upon his word shoot like Luther said here I stand here I stand I can do no other my conscience is self captive to the word of God Jesus is worth it he really is worth it trust him glory glory is coming father bless your people and Lord right now yes so much of our persecution is emotional and we feel excluded sometimes and we're grateful that we don't have to fear being put to death or thrown in jail pray for our brothers and sisters in

Nigeria and other places that are suffering that you would strengthen them that they would see Jesus as worth it that their faith would not fail that they would be strong in the Lord and in your mighty power Lord we pray for them that they would bear they would fight the good fight of faith and Lord we pray that you would look upon us because our enemy sneaks in on us he sneaks in we don't even see him coming because we're not always watching he sneaks in because we don't know the word of God as well as we should he sneaks in Lord deliver us from the evil one deliver us from him and may Jesus get all the glory and be our strength amen