



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

*Special Study:* **PROFITING FROM PERSECUTION**  
**Matthew 5:9-12; 2 Corinthians 12:9,10; 1 Timothy 4:15,16**

In the sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus paints the picture of the blessed man. From one milestone to another, He outlines the path of the blessed one. In the beatitudes, blessed means happy, fortunate, favoured, etc. He makes it plain that the blessedness being talked about is reserved for the poor in spirit, people who mourn, the meek, people who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart and the peacemakers. Ordinarily, these character traits are supposed to be endearing qualities for a heaven-bound believer. But ironically these gracious virtues are rarely appreciated by the society. Rather than being appreciated, possessors of them are hated and subjected to persecution. But the heaven-bound believer is not to fear or cringe before persecution but to rejoice for being counted worthy of being in the company of the persecuted saints.

When He talks about peacemakers, the Lord does not mean organisations that make or settle personal or national conflicts as a profession. Rather, He means citizens of the kingdom who had received comfort after mourning, who have had their broken fellowship and relationship with God mended; He means those who have become meek and gentle; those whose thirst after righteousness had been satisfied and whose chief pursuit is still purity of life. Now as true children of God, they have become so merciful and peaceful that even persecution, conflict, pressure cannot change their spiritual state of love, peace of mind or compassion for others. Appreciation or persecution does not change their peace-loving and peace-making nature. All said and done, reliance on God's grace and determination/willingness to meditate on God's Word remain the only way by which a believer/seeker can profit from the Word in times of challenges, trials and persecution.

### **THE PRACTICE OF PEACE-MAKING CHILDREN OF GOD**

Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:17-21; 14:19; Genesis 13:8-12; 1 Samuel 19:1,4-7; Judges 8:1-3; Proverbs 15:1; Philemon 10-20.

The true child of God is a peacemaker. He not only loves peace, wants peace, promotes peace, works for peace, prays for peace, he also does everything to maintain peace among people; he abhors completely all strifes, discords and contentions. He hates war because it engenders killings and if there is anything he can do it is to make peace. He labours with all might to prevent the fire of contention from being kindled and, where the fire is already kindled, he endeavours to calm the stormy spirits of men and, to quieten the turbulent passion, to soften the minds of the contending parties and reconcile them with each other. That is the ministry of peacemaking.

To be a peacemaker demands that we "**recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.**" It demands that we make up our minds to be the source of peace in the community. Make it a principle to allow the Prince of peace to control everything you do or say to make for peace like Abraham who took the initiative to make peace with Lot rather than promote conflict. He had a willingness to be cheated in the situation. If everyone fights for his right, there will never be peace. Even when you are not personally involved in a conflict, you can also make peace between the warring parties like Jonathan did between Saul and David. Like Jonathan, you should study to know when there is conflict between people and ensure your language promotes peace so that you will be able to reconcile men with men to ensure peace reigns between them "**as in times past.**" The explanation and peace-making effort of Gideon teaches that sometimes, being logical, showing people their fault does not necessarily solve problems. Like Gideon, exalt the qualities which the opposing party has which you lack and sincerely appreciate his good qualities and see how to quieten the stormy spirit in the hearts of men with soft answer.

In making peace, you reconcile others too. When there was conflict between Philemon and Onesimus, Paul the apostle was so committed to ensuring that there was peace between them. Likewise, when there is conflict between people, don't take sides but work towards making peace between them.

## THE PERSECUTION OF PEACEFUL CHILDREN OF GOD

Matthew 5:10,11; Galatians 4:29; 2 Timothy 3:12,13; John 15:18-21; 17:14; 1 Peter 3:14-17; Psalm 7:10-17; 1 Peter 1:6,7; 4:12-16; Matthew 10:22-31; Philippians 1:27-30.

Peaceful children of God are abused, belittled, degraded because those in the flesh will always war against those in the Spirit. Those who are born after the flesh will always persecute those who are born after the Spirit. The unrighteous will persecute the righteous. It happened like that before and it continues to happen and will continue to happen: "**Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.**" The children of God are persecuted because they are not part of the sinful system of the world. When you dissociate yourself from the madding crowd of sinners, when you distinguish yourself from the world they will persecute you. After all, it is far better to suffer for righteousness than for sin; therefore, it calls for rejoicing. We are not to fight the persecutors; God, in His economy, knows best how to do that. The Lord has assured us that there will be persecution; therefore, He does not expect us to be surprised when they come.

But ensure that you are not suffering for your ignorance or unrighteousness. Yes, there is persecution for peaceful children of God but you remain peaceful in the persecution; be unruffled, unoffended, non-retaliating nor change your pattern of peace. The Prince of peace should still live within you in the midst of the persecution. You should not be influenced by their violent attitude or nature; still maintain your Christian stand in the midst of the persecution. Only then will the persecution profit you.

## THE PROFIT OF PERSECUTED CHILDREN OF GOD

Matthew 5:10-12; 2 Corinthians 4:14-18; Exodus 1:12; Genesis 50:20; 2 Thessalonians 1:3,4; 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:10; Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 12:9,10.

To profit from persecution, ensure that you have a Bible definition of persecution: that it is "**for righteousness' sake**" and not that you are suffering from rebuke resulting from your carelessness, foolishness, iniquity or backsliding. If you are disciplined by the church, you are not being persecuted; you are being corrected. But if you are persecuted for righteousness' sake and you endure it, you will be rewarded. Whatever the persecutors say or do to you, be resilient in the faith, "**for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory**". Your persecution will not destroy you as it could not destroy the children of Israel; your persecution will bring promotion across your way. God will turn every negative thing in your life for your own good. "**Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.**"

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