



Lighthouse Beacon

New Mexico Lighthouses - September 2003

Are You A Blessing To Your World?

This month we come to the eighth Beatitude that Jesus presented as part of the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew 5:1-16. Once more we see that Jesus is describing a work in progress, because the persecution of Christ's followers takes many forms and has been continuous ever since He walked on earth. And it's getting worse.

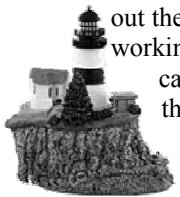
How does persecution affect you in the 21st century? Are you persecuted where you live, work, or attend school? This is a big subject, so this month we will focus on Our Condition and next month on Our Blessing and Our Response. *Let Him Shine!* — KC

"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Matthew 5:10-12 (NAS)

What is our condition?

In his book, "The Guardian," Antonio Socci says that in the past 2,000 years, some 70 million Christians have been killed for their faith, but that 45 million of them have died in the 20th century alone. Gospel.com quotes a source as stating that "During (the 20th) century, we have documented cases in excess of 26 million martyrs. From AD 33 to 1900, we have documented 14 million martyrs." Whether one chooses the numbers from Mr. Socci or Gospel.com or somewhere in between, it is obvious that the single largest effort to persecute and eliminate a



religion has been, and continues to be, aimed directly at the Bride of Christ. Even the nation of Israel has not endured the sheer number of martyrs as has the Christian church.

But what should be most alarming is the tremendous acceleration of persecution experienced during the last one hundred years. Both sources agree that more Christians died in the 20th century than in the first 1900 years combined! Throughout the world today, the forces of evil are working harder than ever before to eradicate all traces of Jesus Christ from the face of the earth. As His followers, filled with His Holy Spirit, we are the bull's-eye on Satan's target. As Jesus Himself told us in John 15:20; "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."

Most Christians in the U.S. would state that they have experienced only minor, if any, instances of persecution because of their faith. Perhaps we have had a family member, neighbor, or co-worker react unpleasantly to our witness

"Let your light shine so that others may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven." Matthew 5:16

...you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light —Eph. 5:8

about Jesus, but seldom have Christians in our country seen any real discrimination. And we've had difficulty conceiving what it must be like to face even minor persecution. That is, until recently. Both the number of instances and the severity of mistreatment grows steadily in America until now it is common for Christians to be *persecuted for violating the law* as they pursue their worship of Christ. Whether a ban against witnessing in certain venues, removing a display of the 10 Commandments, or a job lost for wearing a cross on a necklace to school, the laws of this land are being rewritten to silence Christians.

Ironically, this movement is a direct violation of what our founding fathers intended. Here is what they stated in The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution: ***Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.***

Their intention was to stop the U.S. Government from ever being able to interfere with the freedom of religion. It was specifically written to restrict the federal government, because several states did officially recognize some specific religions (most were evangelical Christian)! This amendment was to stop the Feds from interfering with the state's decisions.

Unfortunately, the Supreme Court has decided to violate those laws which establish and constrain their authority. Instead, they illegally legislate and control religion in the U.S., especially Christianity.

So what does all of this have to do with the scriptures we are reviewing? Simply put, the push to constrain the influence of Christianity is rapidly evolving right here, in one of the last great strongholds of freedom. Many influential leaders have publicly expressed their absolute disdain for Christians and Christianity. While we have enjoyed great freedom from persecution in this country for over 200 years, that could easily and dramatically change within the next few years. We now have a Christian president, but one national election could fill our leadership positions with those who are hateful towards Christians and determined to eliminate our influence on society. We may never face martyrdom or extreme persecution in this country, but our ability to influence the world could be greatly reduced. Consider 2 Timothy 3:12-13 "And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." The way things are going, "all" could easily include Christians in America in the 21st century.

Next month we will look at Our Blessing and Our Response concerning this Beatitude. Meanwhile . . . *Let Him Shine!*

Invite Jesus to Your Christmas Party!
LightShine Ministries is working with several churches to help their people learn how to have a Christmas party that introduces guests to our Savior in a loving and respectful manner. We offer church based training and we have materials available (Training Manual and Training Videos) that will lead you step by step through the process of hosting a non-offensive, but Christ glorifying celebration that will introduce others to the true "reason for the season." If you would like to learn more about hosting a Christmas Party that lets Jesus shine in your home for family, neighbors, or friends, contact LightShine Ministries at 293-0743!