

# The Bliss of the Martyr's Pain



# Matthew 5:10-12

<sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup> Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.



# Persecution-reason for

- “Righteousness’ sake”
- “on my account”



# Persecution Defined

- Identification of “you”—his listeners who would follow him
- Identification of “they”—religious leaders who persecuted the prophets
- Plight of the prophets:

**Hebrews 11:32-38**



# Persecution Anticipated

- Early in Jesus' ministry—hearers could not imagine at this point
- Preparation for his disciples
- Persecution as a significant theme in Matthew



# Persecution Response

- Rejoice and be glad
- Not a natural response, given Roman occupation
- “The apostles took to heart this admonition of the Savior to rejoice in persecutions”=James 1:2-4; Paul in 1 Tim. 3:12; The Twelve in Acts 5:41.



# Persecution Tradition

- “those having been persecuted”
  - perfect participle
- The prophets who were before you
- Uncomfortable part of Israel history



# Persecution Reward

- For theirs is the kingdom of heaven
- Your reward is great in heaven
- Reward significant in Matthew's theology



# Conception of Reward in the Teachings of Jesus

**“...Service not ‘for reward,’ but yet, to our surprise, ‘rewarded’ by the Lord in His goodness, since he wishes his followers to live in peace, with...their emptiness filled with the fullness of life.”**

# Contemporary Relevance

- William Bennett's book, *Tried by Fire:*
- Voice of the Martyrs
- Sporadic occasions  
today in our country
- How is the Western World going to respond to escalating persecution of Christians over the next decades?
- Pliny to Trajan Correspondence

