

**“Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”**

Matthew 5:10, Beatitude 8

By Chris Veley

As John MacArthur notes:

“Those who have been persecuted are the citizens of the Kingdom. Those who live out the previous seven beatitudes. To the degree that they fulfill the first seven they may experience the eighth. ... Suffering persecution is part of the normal Christian life. And if we never experience ridicule, criticism, or rejection because of our faith, we have reason to examine the genuineness of it.”

1. The Meaning of Beatitude 8 and The Cost of Living Righteously

Living righteously means:

- Standing firm for truth

Truth is central to the Christian faith, emphasizing our belief and commitment to uphold and live by the truths revealed in Scripture.

- Refusing Gossip

Gossip can harm relationships, destroy friendships, sow discord, and damage reputations.

- Choosing Integrity

Signifies wholeness, sincerity, and uprightness of character. In Scripture, it is marked by an undivided devotion to righteousness and truth.

There are many examples of righteousness, and unrighteousness, in the Bible.

- Cane and Abel
 - Abel was the first martyr in the Old Testament
- The Stoning of Stephen
 - Stephen was the first martyr in the New Testament

2. What or Who is a Martyr? What is the origin of the word, Martyr?

Justinus (Latin) or **Justin**, son of Priscus (father), son of Bacchius (grandfather), was his given name.

He was born around the year 100 in a Roman city called Flavia Neapolis, but from an early age, something stirred in him. Justin was haunted by a single question: What is truth? He believed the answer must exist, and he was determined to find it.

Eventually, he had found the truth. Not as an idea, but as a Person, and that Person was Christ. Justin did something unexpected after his conversion. He did not abandon philosophy. Instead, he put on his philosopher’s cloak and kept wearing it.

To him, Christianity was not the rejection of reason, it was its fulfillment. Everything the philosophers had been reaching for, Christ completed.

He began to travel, teaching anyone who would listen, but Rome was not a safe place for Christians. Romans called them atheists because they refused to worship the Roman gods. They were accused of immoral practices and strange rituals. Many were arrested. Justin could have stayed quiet. Instead, he wrote. He addressed one of his works to the emperor himself. In it, he defended Christians with calm reasoning and bold honesty. “We are not your enemies,” he argued.

Rome, however, was not friendly towards Christians. Eventually, Justin and his companions were led away, beaten, and finally executed. Most likely beheaded by the sword. And so, the philosopher who had spent his life searching for truth died holding on to it firmly.

From that day forward, he was remembered by a new name: Justin the Martyr (similar to John the Baptist), and later Justin Martyr (Martyr in Greek “Martys”, meaning “witness”).

“You can kill us, but you cannot harm us.”
Attributed to Justin before his execution

The Martyrdom of Jim Elliot

Jim Elliott was born in Portland, Oregon, in 1927. He grew up in a Christian home where faith was taken seriously. From a young age, he began asking what God wanted him to do with his life.

As a young man in college, Jim became known for his commitment to Scripture. During that time, he wrote these words that would later become well known:

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

After college, Jim felt called to take the gospel to people who had never heard the name of Christ. That calling led him to Ecuador and to a remote and violent tribe known as the Huaorani.

In January 1956, the men landed on a sandbar along the Curaray River. They waited, prayed, and prepared for a face-to-face meeting with the Huaorani. At first, the encounters were peaceful. But on January 8th, everything changed. The missionaries were suddenly attacked, and all five men were killed. Each of them died from spear wounds inflicted by members of the tribe. From a human perspective, it appeared to be a complete tragedy. Five lives were lost, and their mission seemed to end in failure.

In time, the story took an unexpected turn. Jim’s wife, Elisabeth Elliot, later returned to live among the same tribe. She learned their language and shared the message of Christ with them. Gradually, many members of the tribe began to believe. Some of the very men involved in the killings came to faith in Christ. What looked like an ending became the beginning of something far greater.

Group Questions

- If you knew your life was to end in the next few years, would you be satisfied with your faithfulness to Christ? If not, what would you change?
- If someone looked at your life right now, what would they say you are living for?
- What do you want the men here, and your wife and family around you, to remember the most about you at your memorial?
- Where in your life are you choosing safety over obedience to Christ?