

Why Would I Be Happy To Be Persecuted?

Upside Down series

by Chris Famisaran

All right, well, good morning, everybody. How are you all? All right, let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you, Lord for the opportunity to once again, continue to study. Lord, we are week eight, our last week in our small group. As we look at Blessed are those who are persecuted. Open our hearts and our minds. Help us to understand this passage better in Jesus name. Amen.

So, quick word. Thank you, everyone, to our worship team. And also Ethan, I don't know why I'm having to preach today. You already did a great sermon.

Gordon Galatis. Anybody know who Gordon Galatis is? Or was Gordon Galatis Engineer for millstone nuclear power station, or formerly, I should say, years ago, he found that something was wrong in the system. spent fuel rods were threatening to release radioactivity throughout the plants being nuclear power plant. One should be concerned with this right? Well, the pools they weren't designed to hold all of this nuclear waste, they're not to be a dump. And, of course, the federal guidelines require that Millstone had to move only a third of the rods into the pools have found that Galatis has found that hot fuel had been dumped on to them. And so the alarm bells would go off. And just after 65 hours after a shutdown, there would be another issue instead of the mandated 250. Supervisors, they would just casually wink, yeah, it'll be fine. Because they were what they were saving millions in shortcuts. Now, theory, of course, that if these shortcuts keep happening, people's lives could be at risk, whether from getting sick from getting cancer, or ultimately, dying. Galatis man of conscience tried to make these issues be known. So he told his colleague, George Betancourt, Hey, we should contact the national regulatory commission, and RC. Betancourt agreed. But he also told his colleague more concerned about his future. You do that kid and your dog meets?

Well, Galatis, of course he urged the other plant managers to please stop doing these hazardous practices. They refused. And what was even more baffling some of these supervisors he knew were churchgoers, God's people. And yet they were slowly but surely trying to skate by. For Galatis, this wasn't just splitting hairs. These weren't technical issues. It was an ethical, it was a moral. There was a physical issue for the people around them. So Galatis, he continued to warn the supervisors of what could happen, the plant can be shut down, decommissioned, and also potential criminal investigations and lawsuits. Two years go by and nothing has changed. When he goes into the cafeteria, normally he'd be able to talk to his coworkers and all of a sudden as soon as he walked into the room, people would get up and leave tables. Nobody wanted to talk to him. In the hallways, people avoided him or they would come up and say hey, stop doing what you're doing. So he also experienced rumors. Somebody claimed that he was an alcoholic and his performance evaluation would at times suffer. Galatis would get up he'd begin a very intense, intense search for God's guidance God, how can I handle this problem? He would get up at 4am every day to pray and read Scripture and during lunch break If he would try to drive to a very secluded place where it could just be by himself, instead of having his other co workers look at him, he would pray and he'd search through Scripture. And as he was on one of these lunch breaks as he was praying as he was reading, he felt God whispered to him, will you die for me? Heavy and even though he feared for his safety, Galatis also realized that there were other many ways of dying, his livelihood, his reputation. His family was also at stake. Previous whistleblowers, families had buckled under the intense emotional strain. Northeast utilities, for instance, owner of the nuclear power plants would likely hire one of the nation's top law firms to fight him. And nuclear waste energy I'm sure there's a lot of money, people have a vested interest to make sure it keeps going because it's making their pockets bigger, right? They'll get the best lawyers possible. Galatis was a nobody. He was just an engineer, an employee. So I may he may be right. powerplant had money to fight. How many men in their mid 40s would be willing to lose a high paying job and start a second career? Tough, right. You've already invested time and energy, you want to start all over. So after months of study and Prairie conclude, concluded he could not continue as he was going. He contacted the NRC behind the backs of the company. And of course, they offered him no refuge. And of course, when you do that, and they start to investigate, people are going to figure out why is the NRC investigating us? Obviously,

he was tied to Galatis. His coworkers confronted him publicly in the hallways in his office, they call them a full, a troublemaker, intimidated and harassed for months. Others would just say, well, the polite more polite ways to be quiet and keep your job. After four years of battling millstone and coworker pressure, Galatis finally got a severance and he left. NRC never suspended Millstones license but three reactors were shut down for repairs at a cost of over \$1 billion. Mind you this story is at least 20 plus years old. And a criminal investigation was launched the reactor number one was never reopened. And the second and third plans did not reopen until years later. Think about all those people who had to lose their jobs because they didn't want to do the right thing. Gordon Galatis Of course he experienced the persecution. He was trying to do the right thing and doing the right thing as some of us may be have learned. Writing is not what people always want to follow. Amen.

So another individual Dietrich Bonhoeffer noted pastor and theologian who, who was a pastor, during the rise of Nazism, protested the Nazi regime and their policies towards Jews. Because of his resistance. He was eventually arrested, imprisoned, and he was also later assassinated for an attempt to try to get rid of Hitler. He was executed for his faith and opposition for a very violent government. And he didn't try to hide them while he was trying to lead this underground seminary he once wrote, When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. Pastor, why are you talking about death? If we truly hold belief, to our, our, our faith, that our principles, it may go against others who don't like those principles, because it's gonna get in the way of their beliefs, their way of making money.

Matthew five, let's go to Matthew five. Matthew five, chapter 10. This is our last and final beatitude. I'm kind of sad, it's coming to an end. I truly am. I hope and pray that you've experienced growth and have learned something new from this series. So Matthew, chapter five, verse 10. Right well, they're blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. And Jesus, why is Jesus leaving a downer at the end of the Beatitudes? And yet, there is truth because if we

truly are going to be people of principle, you're gonna go get you're gonna find opposition, amen.

So the principle of the kingdom are in conflict with the principles of Earth. In fact, if you if you continue to read, Jesus talks about being a, an ambassador for, for Jesus to be in an example talking about the assault in the light. He also says later in verse 21, you shouldn't murder, you shouldn't commit adultery. And in verse 27, he also talks about divorce. And also being careful when you make oaths, and dealing with being an eye for an eye, you should love your enemies. He also talks about the principle of helping out those who are in need have to be a prayerful person and fasting and laying up where does your ultimate treasure in heaven? Those that you find things that are closest to nearest dear to you? Are they things here on Earth? Are they principles that are in heaven? He also says don't worry about your life. And also, hey, don't be judging other people. Be faithful. Ask, seek and knock. And know... especially in verses 13 and 14, know that the path it's not going to be easy. You go the bigger path, which is easy and destructive, or follow the narrow, faithful path. He also points out that there are true and false prophets, true and false disciples. Everything that you build is a foundation. Are you going to build it on a firm rock? Are you going to build it on stand where it's shaking eventually, could sink? Now when we look through after Jesus has ascended to heaven, and we look, especially in the book of Acts, did the disciples face persecution? Absolutely. In fact, one of the first martyrs Stephen was killed for his belief. James, the brother of John and even Peter and Paul, several times, were imprisoned. They were beaten. And save for John, all of the disciples, the apostles died, many of them a horrible, gruesome death.

Now what's interesting about this passage, this this verse is, he starts talking Jesus in verse 10, talks in the third person, blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. But then he switches it, he turns into second he's, he's talking directly to the people. Bless it, are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you, because of me, Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, or in the same way they persecuted the prophets, who were before you. So Jesus also says the king, this is the for the kingdom of theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And in Matthew, Jesus also talks about the kingdom.

Is a kingdom, a future kingdom, or can it be even now? Does God want us to wait to practice to be good people? No, we should be doing it now. All right. So following in the footsteps of Jesus, okay, following in the footsteps of Jesus will be difficult at times. We we've been talking about last week, we talked about being a peacemaker. Is it easy to be a peacemaker? Oh, is it easy to seek forgiveness or grant forgiveness? Not always. Right. We've been talking also about being meek, being humble. Being pure in heart, being merciful being poor in spirit. Also morning. All of these things. Happy are those don't necessarily. They're not necessarily easy. But the beautiful thing is, even though life is not always easy, we at least thank God do not have to go it alone. Because God wants to be there to lead and guide us. Now, unfortunately, doing the right thing, again, is not always well received.

In fact, Matthew when He calls his the disciples. Matthew, let's go to chapter 16, verse 24, Matthew 16 Verse 24. Okay, then Jesus said to His disciples, Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their what? their cross and follow Me. Now in the time of Jesus was what was the cross, a symbol for punishment, ultimately leading to death is their equivalent of the electric chair. And it's not unreasonable to say if you want to follow me start saying no to what you want, and get used to the idea of an electric chair. That sounds so morbid, right. But yet, Jesus is saying that to follow him requires self denial, and even the willingness to die and the courage to do so also comes from knowing that it's not going to be easy to follow, Jesus is at times gonna come into opposition, and sometimes there is going to be some suffering. And yet, even in the challenging times, whether it's physical or you got somebody who hates you, or this or that people are spreading rumors, we know that we have the calm assurance that Jesus does not leave us hanging and knows that does not leave us to our condition. No, he is aware. We have a great reward in heaven. Amen. So how do we respond to this? How do I respond to persecution with joy? Oh, that's hard. But yet it says in verse 12, okay. In chapter five, verse 12, it says, Rejoice and be what? Be glad. Rejoice and be glad. Not always easy. But yeah, that is what Jesus says, as Jesus puts it, this is what also happened to who the prophets before us, okay, they spoke out for God. And when you live differently, people notice that, and when you live differently, people think, Oh, I don't like that. So they start to make fun of you because you live differently. But yet, when you're living differently, it's not so much an attack on you. It's an attack on the

fact that they know that you may be right. And they may even want what you have. But they're scared because that requires making changes in their life, that they don't want to give up. Amen. So rejoice, even when people don't treat you, right, rejoice even when you're doing the right thing. Why would the world want to persecute people, for instance, who are poor in spirit? Why would they want them to revile those who are meek or show scorn? Those who want to be peacemakers?

The Beatitudes are not teaching us to be aggressive. So to unbelievers, but actually to be kind, as it says, To be subversive to slowly but surely subtly change people's minds. Bless it or happy or those who experience all of these things. That's not normal. And yet people are going to wonder why are you so happy when people are treating you like junk? Why are you happy? When you know, you, you're being criticized, because I have a confidence knowing that in the end, I am redeemed, knowing that I have a Savior that I am loved. And though I may not have everything I have what I need. To close with the Beatitudes is twofold. It's accompanied by a promise, if we are faithful, if we're faithful, and we do what is called. We know that number one, we're being true to God. And we have a clean conscience, but also, we also will be rewarded for our faithfulness. So Jesus, was he not a peacemaker? Was he not also one who came to heal? Was he not meek? Was he not a peacemaker? Was he not a healer? He helped to bring peace and to reconcile that which was said braided by God, ultimately leading to the combination of him dying on the cross, so that we could also have faith and he could save us from ourselves and that beautiful promise of salvation. We know what we can look forward to if we didn't have the cross, well, then forget it. Why would I want to? Why would I want to put all of this hardship in front of me? Forget it, it's not worth it. But knowing what Jesus means to me, knowing that I have a Savior and Redeemer, and a wonderful life build ahead, not always going to be easy. But knowing that I'm not alone, and that I get to share it with you praise the Lord, is a wonderful promise that I do not take lightly. So following Jesus will sometimes mean pain and suffering. How do we respond to persecution? Rejoice, and be glad also, just as Philippians four says as well.

So why should I follow Jesus when it seems like it will bring hardship? That's a real conversation that you got to have, and maybe have it with your family today? Why is it

important? Ultimately, it's because number one, we need to do the right thing. But number two, God has called us to be a difference maker, in the lives of our homes, in our work, and our school, at the post office, and our neighborhood, the playground. And here, God wants us to be people of integrity. Even when it's not an easy decision. But by faith, God gave every god did so much more than we could ever imagine. Amen. When we often don't really think about that. How can we not give up a little, and to be true and faithful. So at times, it may be tough may be challenging, but that's why we're also here because we are here to help support and care for one another, to pray for about one another. I mean, we've experienced that some of our friends and family here have literally suffered, facing death. And what did we do? We got together and we prayed. There are people who've suffered in many ways, and we've been there to walk alongside them. So may we continue to do that as a church family.

So this week, rejoice when you face adversity because it's gonna happen and are challenged for your convictions. Amen. Rejoice, and be glad father in heaven. Lord, this world is not an easy place to live in. Help us, Lord, to be able to see the big picture, to be reminded of that you are our Savior and our Redeemer. And Lord, it's not much to live faithfully even though it took me it may cost us everything. God help us to be faithful and true to you. And Laura, when challenging times when pressures when peer pressure is knocking on the hearts. Help us Lord to say no, and grant us strength to say no, and to walk away and to be faithful to you and to our families. And our friends in Jesus name. Amen.

Grace and peace everyone.