

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP (LESSON 43)

SPIRITUAL RISK. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake" (Matthew 5:10). If ever there was a cause, this is it. We are to be willing to be persecuted for the sake of righteousness. Righteousness is the cause, and radical disciples are to take it up. There is a price to pay for the disciple who takes a radical stand for righteousness. Living for Christ has risks. Faith promises protection, and at the same time warns of risks. The writer of Hebrews talks about those who took a risk and paid the price. "Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings...of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain...The wandered about.....being destitute, afflicted, and tormented" (Hebrews 11:36-37). They took a radical stand and paid a radical price. A disciple can be sure that God will protect him until his purpose on earth is ended. When our purpose is ended, so are we. God will take us home. Until then we are invincible. The faith of radical disciples allows God to make the determination as to who stays, who goes, and who suffers. As soon as John the Baptist's purpose was fulfilled, the Lord took him. Radical discipleship calls for unqualified faith. Jesus extends the last beatitude by saying, "Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:12). The blessing: This is the only beatitude with an addendum. It promises reward commensurate with sacrifice. "Theirs is the kingdom of Heaven, and "great is your reward in Heaven," changes from the third person to the second. Jesus knew that many listening to Him would be would face martyrdom when they chose to be His disciples. Jesus ended beatitudes by using two metaphors to describe those who live by the beatitudes. The first is "salt." "You are the salt of the earth." Salt adds flavor. Radical disciples are an additive that add flavor to this world. The second metaphor is "light." "You are the light of the world." The purpose of light is to shine. Radical disciples manifest the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world" (John 1:9).