

“Blessed Are You When Men...Exclude You”

INTRODUCTION:

1. Back when I was in the first grade, there was a group of about 7 of us who were playing together during recess. We decided to pick teams for some game, and with an odd number of people, guess who got left out? I did, and I was crushed. It doesn't feel good to be left out, or excluded.
2. But being left out is something we better get used to. Stand up for what's right, and we won't be in the “in crowd” very long. Sooner or later, people will let us know, verbally or otherwise, that we're not welcome in their group any longer.
3. No, it's not easy, but notice what Jesus says on this subject in Luke 6:22.
 - a. The NAS uses the phrase “ostracize you”; the ASV and KJV use the phrase “separate you from their company.”
 - b. Again, we may not like it, but Jesus says we are blessed—if this exclusion is “for the Son of Man's sake.”
4. In John 16:2 Jesus speaks of a specific form of exclusion common in the first century, at least among the Jews.
 - a. What Jesus warns about here is the very thing that happened to the blind man in John 9:34.
 - b. The blind man's parents—they didn't want to be excluded, which is why they refused to confess Jesus (John 9:18-22).

BODY:

- I. Forms of exclusion change, but the threat is ever present.
 - A. We may be excluded by people at work or at school, for reasons explained in 1 Peter 4:3-4.
 1. Because we don't “run” with them in their sinful activities, they don't want much to do with us.
 - B. We may be excluded by other “religious” people, perhaps even by some of our own brethren, because we insist on doing the very thing 1 John 2:24 tells us to do—to always go back to the beginning.
 1. Read also 2 John 1:9.
 2. Insisting on authority for all we do, determining if a practice is from heaven or men, is not popular with many people, and they may just let us know how they feel about it.

- a. Insisting that baptism is necessary for salvation.
 - b. Not using instruments of music.
 - c. The church not being involved in social and recreational practices.
- C. We may even be excluded by our own family members, when our obedience to Christ takes us in a different direction from them.
1. Jesus warned of this very thing in Matthew 10:34-37.
 2. More forms of exclusion could be mentioned, but this enough to let us know that this is a very real issue for us.
 3. We need courage and conviction, and we need the “know how” to deal with exclusion in a godly way.
- II. Here are the Biblical principles we need to follow in dealing with exclusion.
- A. Let’s make sure, first, that our exclusion is not for the wrong reasons—that it’s “for the Son of Man’s sake.”
1. It’s quite possible for our zeal to be misguided or misdirected.
 2. It’s possible for us to bind something the Lord never did.
- B. Maintain the right attitude toward those who exclude us.
1. Matthew 5:44-45.
- C. Love the praise of God more than the praise of men.
1. John 12:42-43.
 2. We better seek His approval, because it’s before Him that we’ll stand in the final day.
 - a. 2 Corinthians 5:10.
- D. Realize that while some have “cast us out,” we are far from alone.
1. For one, we still have faithful brethren standing with us.
 2. More importantly, the Lord is on our side, and He won’t ever exclude us—provided we remain faithful to Him.
 - a. John 6:37; Romans 8:35, 39; Hebrews 13:5.
- E. Hold fast to what is right, and we may just lead others to the Lord, perhaps even some who presently exclude us.
1. And this one reason why the right attitude toward them is so important.
 2. It’s when we’re suffering that our light shines the brightest.

F. Look to the reward.

1. Luke 6:22-23.

2. Excluded by men but included by God. We can live with that, right.

CONCLUSION:

1. Revelation 22:14-15.

a. Better to be left outside now than left outside then.

b. The “in crowd” there in v. 14—that’s the one I want to be a part of.