

I will not live for pleasure. I will not live for power. I will not surrender responsibility for my life and my actions.

Jesus is now going to set forth the principles and practices of the dedicated life in his sermon on the mount.

A. T. Robertson says in his Word Pictures in the New Testament, "The sermon on the mount does not contain all that Jesus taught by any means, but it stands out as the greatest single sermon of all time in its penetration, pungency and power."

STUDY NUMBER ONE - Matthew 5:1-12

TEXT:

- v. 1 And when He saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.
- v. 2 And opening His mouth He was teaching them, saying,
- v. 3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- v. 4 Blessed are those who are mourning, for they shall be comforted.
- v. 5 Blessed are the gentle (unassuming) for they shall inherit the earth.
- v. 6 Blessed are those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- v. 7 Blessed are those who are merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
- v. 8 Blessed are those who are pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- v. 9 Blessed are those who are making peace, for they shall be called sons of God.
- v. 10 Blessed are those who have been persecuted on account of righteousness for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- v. 11 Blessed are you when they shall heap insults upon you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of me.
- v. 12 Rejoice and be glad because your reward in heaven is great, for in this manner they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

INTRODUCTION:

Real Right Residents of Heaven.

Joseph Parker in his series Preaching Through the Bible says, "In Christ's conception of the blessed life I find many persons mentioned that I did not expect to find referred to. And I find many persons omitted that I expected would have been first spoken of. Let me take the beatitudes as a picture of heaven. Who is in heaven? Blessed are the mighty, for they are in heaven. Blessed are the rich, for theirs is the kingdom of glory. Blessed are the famous, for theirs are the trumpets of eternity. Blessed are the noble, for the angels are their servants. Why, that is not the text. Who is in heaven? The poor in spirit, they that mourn, the meek, they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers. Not many mighty, not many noble, not many learned, not many brilliant or called--then perhaps we may be there. Woman, mother, sister, obscure person, unknown life, you may be there."

W. Phillip Keller in his book Salt for Society says, "We can turn to no higher authority than our Lord himself for a definitive assessment of a Christian's character and conduct in society. He did not leave us in the dark as to what contribution His followers should make to their times and culture. That is what this book is all about. It is intended to help us see and understand clearly what God looks for in his people and endeavors to show that He is as much concerned with what we are in character as with what we do in our conduct."

Thomas Watson in his book on the beatitudes says, "He in whom there was a combination of virtues, a constellation of beauties, He whose lips were not only sweet as the honeycomb but did drop as the honeycomb; His words an oracle, His works a miracle, His life a pattern, His death a sacrifice. He went up into a mountain and taught. Jesus Christ was every way ennobled and qualified for the work of the ministry."

Lloyd J. Ogilvie in his book Congratulations, God Believes in You says, "In the beatitudes Jesus Christ radically reorients our goals, values and hopes. He gives us the eight-fold mystery of happiness. Each of the beatitudes reveals an aspect of the quality of life which brings lasting happiness. The beatitudes are the Master's Magna Charta of a truly happy life. It is significant to me that the beatitudes are Jesus' first formal teaching after the wilderness temptation. He has done battle with Satan's facsimile of happiness. Each of the temptations to change stones to bread, to cast himself down from the temple and to acquire the kingdoms of the world for worshiping Satan were confronted and rejected. The false goals of happiness then and now are represented in the immediate, the expedient and the temporary. When Jesus had fought the battle and won, He was ready to share his secret of happiness, which was so much more than material satisfaction, fame, fortune and power."

Billy Graham in his book The Secret of Happiness says, "A French philosopher recently said, 'The whole world is on a mad quest for security and happiness.' The president of Harvard University has said, 'The world is searching for a creed to believe and a song to sing.' A Texas millionaire confided, 'I thought money could buy happiness. I have been miserably disillusioned.'

"A famous film star broke down, 'I have money, beauty, glamour and popularity. I should be the happiest woman in the world but I'm miserable.' Why? One of Britain's top social leaders said, 'I have lost all desire to live, yet I have everything to live for.' What is the matter? A man went to see a psychiatrist. He said, 'Doctor, I'm lonely, despondent and miserable. Can you help me?' The psychiatrist suggested that he go to the circus and see a famous clown who is said to make even the most despondent laugh with merriment. His patient said, 'I am that clown.' A college senior said, 'I am 23. I have lived through enough experiences to be old and I am already fed up with life.' A famous Grecian dancer of yesteryear once said. I have never been alone but what my hands trembled, my eyes filled with tears, and my heart ached for a peace and happiness I have never found.' One of the world's greatest statesmen said to me, 'I am an old man. Life has lost its meaning. I'm ready to take a fateful leap into the unknown. Young man, can you give me a ray of hope?'"

J. Vernon McGee points out in his work Moving Through Matthew, "The sermon on the mount opens with the beatitudes. It is well to note that they Are Not the 'De-attitudes.' They state what the subjects of the kingdom are and how they are to become this type of person. What we are unable to do the Holy Spirit is able to produce in the heart of a yielded Christian. The Christian who has learned the secret of producing the fruit of the Holy Spirit can turn here to the beatitudes. The beatitudes furnish us with a pocket-size biography of the Lord Jesus himself. Note how each one has a special application to him."

The Beautiful Attitudes!

F. B. Meyer in his book The Director of the Devout Life says, "Let us study our Lord's ideal of character with the prayer that he would graciously repeat it in us and that he would be in us that which he commands. For it is only as he gives us himself in all the fullness of his perfected manhood, that we can apprehend that for which we were apprehended and be that which he desires. Do you realize this, my reader? Have you made room for him and are you allowing him to possess you wholly till he becomes in very deed, your life? The vine must abide in the branch or these fruits will be impossible. Apart from him, nothing. It should be noticed that these beatitudes run in a parallel line with I Cor. 13 and show what love can be and do. Poverty in spirit is love in her chosen garb of humility for she vaunts not herself and is not puffed up. Meekness is love in the presence of wrong. Mourning is love in tears. Hunger is love's appetite. Mercy is love on her errands of beneficence. Purity is love on fire. Peacemaking is love's effort to adjust the wrongs of the world. Persecution is love's requittal at the hands of those whom she would help. And love is all this, intensely, perennial, constantly because she cannot help it. Character has been defined as being what a man is in the dark. And love is all this, not for fee or reward, not for notoriety or advertisement but because she cannot be other. To be this is to be herself."

There is no hope of our being able to realize this exquisite portraiture by imitation or even by meditation. No, he who originally conceived this ideal, who himself lived it, must incarnate himself within us by the

Holy Spirit, that he may reproduce in and through us that which he has inspired us to desire. He must give us what he commands. He must be in us what he prescribes.

Helmut Thielicke in his book Life Can Begin Again says, "This quote is by Leon Bloy, 'I have not done what God desired of me, that is certain. On the contrary, I have only dreamed of what I wanted from God.' The real trouble of modern man expresses itself in two kinds of fear: the fear of the past and the fear of the future. These people who are gathered around Jesus know, or at least think they know, what is coming when Jesus opens his mouth: God's declaration of war against man, denunciation of sin, painful scrutinizing exposure of those innermost thoughts of which God is not pleased. The preachers are always beating the same old track. Everybody knows this. These people know precisely what is coming and this in itself is very distressing and tiresome. Nor will they be able to contradict it, for this preacher of penitence from Nazareth is certainly right. This only makes it more painful and depressing. That stuff never gets you anywhere. Nobody is helped by negatives, even when they are true."

In a book by Fitch called The Beatitudes of Jesus we read, "The Beatitudes are therefore in a very real sense our Lord's own autobiography. They are likewise of necessity a pattern and example for all his servants. Recently I read in a religious journal a statement of the modern American's creed. I repeat a few lines of it: 'I believe in gold, the dollar almighty, maker of nearly everything desirable on earth. I believe in 13% and in as much more as I can safely get. I believe in success measured by salary. I believe in getting ahead. If this means getting ahead of the other fellow, well, I'm sorry for him but it can't be helped. I believe in religion but not too much of it. I also believe that business is business. I believe in doing good in the world but not to the extent of giving til it hurts. I believe that my own sins, which are not many, ought to be forgiven by a just and merciful God. But if anybody sins against me, he better look out. I believe in loving people who love me and in being good to people who are good to me. I believe first and last and always in having a good time. I sincerely hope that my good time won't rob anybody else of their good time, but if it does, well, once more, I'm sorry but it can't be helped.'"

Isaac Watts wrote the following song, "The men of grace have found, glory begun below. Celestial fruits on earthly ground from faith and hope may grow. The hill of Zion yields a thousand sacred sweets before we reach the heavenly fields or walk the golden streets."

A. W. Tozer in the Pursuit of God says, "A fairly accurate description of the human race might be furnished one acquainted with it by taking the beatitudes, turning them wrongside out and saying, Here is your human race, for the exact opposite of the virtues in the beatitudes are the very qualities which distinguish human life and conduct. The beatitudes are our Lord's portrait of the Christian man. All the surprising elements

which he lists here ought to be found in every child of God. Here is a description of what every Christian is meant to be. Here are the standards which he must meet."

Youngling in his thesis Principles of Personal Discipleship in the Sermon on the Mount says, "Nowhere in Scripture is there a clearer teaching on the kind of qualities that a disciple of Jesus Christ should possess. Because this is true these nine verses serve as an accurate yardstick in assisting a believer in determining the extent of his personal discipleship. It is crucial to observe how these qualities are interrelated and how they build one on another as they graphically describe the right character out of which right conduct grows."

John R. W. Stott in his book Christian Counter-culture says, "The beatitudes set forth the balanced and variegated character of Christian people. These are not 8 separate and distinct groups of disciples, some of whom are meek while others are merciful and yet others are called upon to endure. They are rather 8 qualities of the same group who at one and the same time are meek and merciful, poor in spirit and pure in heart, mourning and hungry, peacemakers and persecuted."

The beatitudes paint a comprehensive portrait of a Christian disciple. We see him first alone on his knees before God, acknowledging his spiritual poverty and mourning over it. This makes him meek or gentle in all his relationships, since honesty compels him to allow others to think of him what before God he confesses himself to be. Yet, he is far from acquiescing in his sinfulness. For he hungers and thirsts after righteousness, longing to grow in grace and in goodness. We see him next with others, out in the human community. His relationship with God does not cause him to withdraw from society, nor is he insulated from the world's pain. On the contrary, he is in the thick of it, showing mercy to those battered by adversity and sin. He is transparently sincere in all his dealings and seeks to play a constructive role as a peacemaker, yet he is not thanked for his efforts but rather opposed, slandered, insulted and persecuted on account of the righteousness for which he stands and the Christ with whom he is identified. Such is the man or woman who is blessed. That is, has the approval of God and finds self-fulfillment as a human being.

Boice in his book The Sermon on the Mount says, "Sometimes God gives an unbeliever more insight into the lives of Christians than most Christians have. For instance, someone once said to Hannah Whitall Smith, the author of the very successful book The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life, You Christians seem to have a religion that makes you miserable. You are like a man with a headache. He does not want to get rid of his head but it hurts him to keep it. You cannot expect outsiders to seek very earnestly for anything so uncomfortable."

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his book Studies in the Sermon on the Mount says, "There are certain general lessons I suggest to be drawn from the beatitudes:

BLESSED ARE THE BELIEVERS

ANNE MURRAY

RAIN IN THE SKY, A TEAR IN MY EYE, STATIC ON THE RADIO,
THE LONG NIGHT'S BEGUN WITH DINNER FOR ONE
YOU SAID YOU'D NEVER GO.

BLESSED ARE THE BELIEVERS THEY SHALL INHERIT A HEARTACHE.
BELIEVING IN YOU BABE THAT WAS MY GREATEST HEART BREAK.
BLESSED ARE ALL THE LEFT BEHIND FOR THEIR HEARTS SHALL
ONE DAY MEND, WHEN LOVE IN THOSE SAME SWEET LIGHTS
MAKE US BELIEVERS AGAIN.

First, all Christians are to be like this. Read the beatitudes and there you have a description of what every Christian is meant to be. It is not merely the description of some exceptional Christians. Our Lord does not say here that he is going to paint a picture of what certain outstanding characters are going to be and can be in this world. It is the description of every single Christian. All Christians are meant to manifest all of these characteristics. Not only are they meant for all Christians but of necessity, therefore, all Christians are meant to manifest all of them. None of these descriptions refers to what we may call a natural tendency. Each one of them is wholly a disposition which is produced by grace alone and the operation of the Holy Spirit upon us."

Let us turn now to a consideration and exposition of the text verse by verse.

** v. 1 And when He saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

In Matthew chapter 4 we have the temptation account of Jesus in the wilderness and then the beginning of his preaching ministry, the calling of His first disciples and the healing of many who were sick.

As a result of these initial activities in His public ministry, Christ is gaining a lot of press coverage. There are great crowds who are beginning to follow Him, impressed by His miracles and the message which He speaks.

Thus, this message which we are going to study, that Christ is going to present to us, is early in His ministry.

Our first verse tells us when He saw the crowds, that is, those who were gathering, impressed by what they had already seen and heard, Christ responds by going up on the mountain. And then after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

v. 2 And opening His mouth He was teaching them, saying,

All the world stands waiting to hear these first words recorded of public address. What is this preacher going to say? What message is He going to bring to mankind? Truly we can say with those who came to arrest Him on one occasion, later in His ministry, "Never a man spake like this man."

v. 3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The very first word that He speaks is the word Blessed. A. T. Robertson in his word pictures in the New Testament says, "The Greek word here is an adjective that means happy. The Greek word is as old as Homer and Pindar and was used of the Greek gods and also of men, but largely of outward prosperity. Then it is applied to the dead who died in the Lord in Revelation 14:13. Already in the Old Testament the Septuagint uses it of moral quality. Shaking itself loose from all thoughts of outward

good, it becomes the express symbol of a happiness identified with pure character. Behind it lies the clear cognition of sin as the fountainhead of all misery and of holiness as the final and effectual cure for every woe. Jesus takes this word happy and puts it in this rich environment. This is one of the words which has been transformed and ennobled by New Testament use. It is a pity that we have not kept the word happy to the high and holy plane where Jesus placed it. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them (John 13:17). Happy are those who have not seen, and yet have believed (John 20:29)."

R. C. H. Lenski in his Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel says, "The beatitudes read like a Psalm (Psalm 1:1). Blessed intoned again and again sounds like bells of heaven ringing down into this unblessed world from the cathedral spires of the kingdom, inviting all men to enter. The word, like its opposite, woe, is neither a wish regarding a coming condition nor a description of a present condition but a judgment pronounced upon the persons indicated, stated that they must be considered fortunate."

Joseph Parker in Preaching Through the Bible says, "His very first sentence is a secret which can have no meaning to the vast majority of hearers. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Common-place talk like that; sparkle, brilliance, there was none; He is not worth listening to; He seemed rather weak in His way of speaking, His voice was low and yet well heard; I expected another kind of voice altogether and another type of subject, and He began after all this weary waiting of the listening ages by saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. He began by healing broken hearts. He began by comforting those that we want to write off the register. He stooped to pick up a broken reed, when we thought he would mount the stars and pass before us with the wondrous velocity and splendor of the lightning."

William Barclay in his Daily Study Bible on the gospel of Matthew says, "You can use the term 'O the blessedness' when you are referring to each of these beatitudes. Psalm 1:1 - 'O the blessedness of the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly.' The blessedness which belongs to the Christian is not a blessedness which is postponed to some future world of glory. It is a blessedness which exists here and now. It is not something into which the Christian will enter. It is something into which he has entered. True, it will find its fullness and its consummation in the presence of God. But for all it is a present reality to be enjoyed here and now. The beatitudes in effect say, 'O the bliss of being a Christian. O the joy of following Christ. O the sheer happiness of knowing Jesus Christ as master, savior and Lord.' Makarios then describes that joy which has its secret within itself, that joy which is serene and untouched and self-contained, that joy which is completely independent of all the chances and the changes of life."

Psalm 34:6 "This poor man called and the Lord heard him. He saved him out of all his troubles."

Psalm 9:18 "But the needy will not always be forgotten nor the hope of the afflicted ever perish."

Psalm 35:10 "My whole being will exclaim, Who is like you, O Lord? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them."

Psalm 68:10 "Your people settled in it, and from your bounty, O God, you provided for the poor."

Psalm 72:4 "He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy. He will crush the oppressor."

Psalm 107:41 "But he lifted the needy out of their affliction and increased their families like flocks."

Psalm 132:15 "I will bless her with abundant provisions. Her poor will I satisfy with food."

In all these cases the poor man is the humble, helpless man who has put his trust in God. Got to be true before you ever reach out for the real righteousness.

Blessed is the man who has realized his own utter helplessness and who has put his whole trust in God. If a man has realized his own utter helplessness and has put his whole trust in God, there will enter into his life two things which are opposite sides of the same thing. ① He will become completely detached from things, for he will know that things have not got it in them to bring happiness or security and ② he will become completely attached to God, for he will know that God alone can bring him help and hope and strength. The man who is poor in spirit is the man who has realized that things mean nothing and that God means everything. The poverty which is blessed is the poverty of spirit, the spirit which realizes its own utter lack of resources to meet life and which finds its help and strength in God. We can only do God's will when we realize our own utter helplessness, our own utter ignorance, our own utter inability to cope with life, and when we put our whole trust in God. Obedience is always founded on trust. The kingdom of God is the possession of the poor in spirit because the poor in spirit have realized their own utter helplessness without God and have learned to trust and obey.

W. Phillip Keller in his book Salt for Society says, "From our babyhood we in the West are urged to stand on our own feet, make our own decisions, reach for the top, push our way ahead, plan our work, then work our plan, assert ourselves, fulfill ourselves, decide our own destiny. So thoroughly and deeply are we thus conditioned by our culture that to be considered poor in spirit strikes us as being anything but successful. Put another way, we can say that the person who is poor in spirit will capitulate to the call of God in Christ. Such people will surrender the sovereignty of themselves to the gracious Holy Spirit, to be guided by Him. They will abdicate their role of self-control and self-realization to the supreme purposes of God. No longer will they be the king in their own castles." 

"Above all else they will want to do only God's will and work in the world, no matter how attractive or tough it may be. Our preference is almost always to be our own bosses. As long as this condition persists, we are torn and fractured by inner conflicts. We are men and women of divided minds, divided loyalties, divided interests, divided decisions. If my character is to be consistent, if God is to govern me, if Christ is to condition my conduct, if the Spirit of God is to guide me, **arrogance must go. Pride must be pulverized and self-aggrandizement must end. I must become poor in spirit, humbled and contrite.**"

Psalm 34:18 "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

James 4:4-10 "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us tends toward envy. But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail; change your laughter to mourning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up."

Here are some simple steps to take in developing the attitude of being poor in spirit:

1. Think much about the greatness of God.
2. Give your Father genuine gratitude for all the wondrous gifts, benefits, blessings bestowed upon you.
3. Concentrate on the consistency of Christ. See how patient, faithful and understanding He has been with you, despite your perverseness and pride.
4. Quietly, sincerely, soberly contemplate the cost of Calvary for your redemption, the price for your total forgiveness and acceptance by God.
5. Consider the remarkable generosity of God in not only reconciling you to himself by his own laid-down life, but also recognizing you as his dear child.
6. Run over in retrospect the supernatural ways in which God's spirit has pursued you all the days of your life, down all the tangled trails of your wayward wanderings.
7. Contemplate in awe and wonder the remarkable selflessness of a living God who always acts only in your own best interests, who brings even the best out of your mistakes.

Thomas Watson in his book The Beatitudes says, "If blessedness does not consist in externals, then let us not place our blessedness here. This is to seek the living among the dead. As the angel told Mary concerning Christ, 'He is not here; He is risen,' so I may say of blessedness, it is not here it is risen. It is in a higher region. How do men thirst

after the world as if the pearl of blessedness hung about an earthly crown. Oh, says one, if I had but such an estate, then I should be happy. Had I had but such a comfort, then I should sit down satisfied. Well God gives him that comfort and lets him suck out the very juice and spirits of it. But alas, it falls short of his expectation. It cannot fill the hiatus and longing of his soul, which still cries, Give, give, just like a sick man. Let us proclaim to the world that we do believe a blessedness to come by living blessed lives. Walk as becomes the heirs of blessedness. A blessed crown and a cursed life will never agree. Many tell us they are bound for heaven but they steer their course a quite contrary way. The devil is their pilot and they sail hellward, as if a man should say he were going a voyage to the east but sails quite westward. The saints may be said in this life to be blessed because all things tend to make them blessed. All things work together for good to them that love God. We say to him that has everything falling out for the best, You are a happy man. The saints are very happy for all things have a tendency to their good. Prosperity does them good. Adversity does them good. Nay, sin turns to their good. Every trip makes them more watchful. Their maladies are their medicines. Are not they happy persons that have every wind blowing them to the right port. Observe how Christ's doctrine and the opinions of carnal man differed. They think blessed are the rich. The world would count him blessed who has everything turned to gold. But Christ says, Blessed are the poor in spirit. **The beatitudes begin with poverty and end with persecution."**

 Rev. 3:17 **"You say I am rich, I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing, but you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked."**

John Calvin says, **"The poor in spirit are they who see nothing in themselves but fly to mercy for sanctuary. Such an one was the publican. 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.' Of this temper was St. Paul, 'That I may be found in Christ not having my own righteousness.'** They are the poor which are invited as guests to Wisdom's banquet."

Poverty of spirit is the very basis and foundation of all the other graces that follow. You may as well expect fruit to grow without a root as the other graces without this. Til a man be poor in spirit he cannot mourn.

Til we are poor in spirit we are not capable of receiving grace. God first empties a man of himself before he pours in the precious wine of his grace. Til we are poor in spirit Christ is never precious. Before we see our own wants we never see Christ's worth. He that is poor in spirit is weaned from himself. He that is poor in spirit is a Christ-admirer. He that is poor in spirit is ever complaining of his spiritual estate. He that is poor in spirit is lowly in heart. He that is poor in spirit is much in prayer. The poor in spirit is content to take Christ upon his own terms.

Lloyd Ogilvie in his book Congratulations, God Believes in You says, "The Hebrew word for blessed is a word of exclamation and congratulation.

"The meaning is, O the blessedness of. In the Old Testament blessedness was inseparable from the blessing of God. To be blessed was to be a recipient of his blessing and blessing contained the three powerful ingredients: ① belonging to God, ② being His beloved, and ③ brokenness resulting in absolute trust. It means to be called, chosen, loved, forgiven, cherished, and cared for with God's incredible punctuality."

The poor in spirit, the truly humble, can acknowledge their need and cry out for God's help. The first step to happiness is to cry honestly, God help me! O how very happy are those of you who know your need for God, ask him to help you, and are willing to receive His blessings. Unhappiness is always caused by self-sufficiency which arrogantly demands our making it on our own strength. We become like Aesop's frog who wanted to be as large as the ox and finally exploded. I have often wondered if the fable was the source of Carl Sandburg's alarming observation that "the earth is strewn with the exploded bladders of the puffed up."

You don't have to be an achiever to be loved. He seems to say, You are loved already. Now let me help you where you hurt.

Amy Grant in her little song "Lay Down Your Burden" says it this way,

"It's a cold, cold world that we're walking through
Lay down the burden of your heart.
But it's warm as toast walking two-by-two,
Lay down the burden of your heart.

Lay down the burden of your heart,
I know you'll never miss it.
Show your Daddy where it hurts
And let your Daddy lift it.

It's a fine, fine line betwixt love and hate
It's tough to tell the two apart.
But you know it's love that He offers you
Lay down the burden of your heart.

Lay down the burden of your heart,
I know you'll never miss it.
O Show your Daddy where it hurts
And let your Daddy lift it.

Lay down the burden of your heart.
I know you'll never miss it.
O show your Daddy where it hurts
And let your Daddy lift it."

So often I am like Peter at the footwashing in the Upper Room. It is difficult to receive. But when I realize what I miss because of pride, I join with Peter in saying, Wash all of me; I need you Lord. Reach down into my inner heart and heal those things I have kept from you.

Peter!!
13:
14:

John MacArthur in his book Kingdom Living Here and Now says, "It says that happy people are the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the hungry and thirst, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted, the reviled. You say, wait a minute. I'm not sure I want that kind of happiness. It sounds like misery with another name. You've got to be kidding. But all the way down the line misery is connected to happiness. The world says, Happy is the go-getter, the guy who pushes everyone else out of the way, the guy who gets what he wants when he wants it, where he wants it and how he wants it. Happiness is macho. Happiness is doing your own thing. Happiness is grabbing all the gusto you can get. Happiness is acquiring. Happy are the rich. Happy are the noble. Happy are the famous. And happy are the popular. Jesus' message devastates world attitudes. You cannot fill a man's empty soul with external things. That's what the world tries to do. Jesus came to announce that the tree of happiness does not grow on the cursed earth. Yet so many seek it there. Solomon with all of his wealth, women and everything else from the world's standards--he should have been an infinitely happy man, yet all he had to say about it was, Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. The word means emptiness. The New Testament teaches that man's life consists not in the abundance of the things he possesses. Do you know who was the greatest man who ever lived up to this time? As far as the world was concerned, he was nothing but an eccentric--religious fanatic, who lived in the wilderness. He was not even part of the religious system, yet Jesus said John the Baptist was the greatest man who ever lived. Then he went on to say, in effect, but there is one greater than he. You know who it is, the least in my kingdom, the poor in spirit, the mourning, the meek, those who hunger and thirst, feel empty inside, those full of mercy, those pure in heart, those who make peace, those who are persecuted, those who are reviled, those who have all manner of evil spoken against them falsely. Doesn't that sound like the biggest bunch of losers you ever heard of? By the world's standards they are. The world says, Exert yourself, demand your rights, be a big shot, push yourself up, hold onto your pride. But Christ has a different kind of kingdom. It even advocates the acceptance of persecution without retaliation and it blesses those who live that way.

All Against Me
IF I'm bereaved,
I'm bereaved,
It's enough

When I buy a car, the first thing I do is read the little book that comes with it that tells me how to operate and maintain it. I know the basics but there is much I need to know and I figure the manufacturer who wrote the book knows the product far better than anyone else I could consult. The manufacturer of everybody in the world is God, yet very few people turn to him to find out how to run their lives. They should be asking God how they can know fulfillment. You made me; you tell me; and Jesus does right here.

Jacob had to face the poverty of spirit before God could use him. He fought God all night, says Genesis 32, and finally God dislocated Jacob's hip. He put him flat on his back. And the Bible says in Genesis 32:29, "And He God blessed him there." I love that. God made him happy in his humility. "Blessed in his brokenness."

O.K. God I Quit ; I can't buck Your System ; I can't win ; I Can't be what I am supposed to be without allowing You to be the God You intend to be. All right I Surrender !!

Why did Jesus begin with this? Because it's the bottom line. It means to be spiritually bankrupt and know it. The result is that you become a possessor of the kingdom here and now and forever. How do you become poor in spirit? Look at God; starve your flesh and ask, beg. He does not mind it a bit.

How will I know when I am poor in spirit? Here are seven principles:

1. You will be weaned from yourself.
2. You will be lost in the wonder of Christ.
3. You will never complain about your situation.
4. You will see only the excellencies of others and only your own weaknesses.
5. You will spend much time in prayer.
6. You will take Christ on his terms, not yours.
7. Finally, you will praise and thank God for his grace.

If ever there was a characteristic of a person poor in spirit, it is an overwhelming gratitude to God.

Stuart Briscoe in his book Now for Something Totally Different says, "Of course there are hindrances to blessing, to happiness, to contentment and fulfillment. Two words describe these hindrances, selfishness and sinfulness. Therefore, if a happy God is going to bring happy people to himself, do you know what he must do. He has to pinpoint the hindrances and eradicate them. There never was a thoroughly selfish man who was a truly happy man. A sinful man just cannot enjoy blessed living. Sin and selfishness stand in the way of our blessedness. To be poor in spirit also means to be realistic about our own spiritual inadequacy. Three Bible characters come to mind here, Jacob, Isaiah and Gideon. They all had something in common. God wanted to bless them, to fill them, to use them but he couldn't bless any of them or fill them or use them until something very beautiful happened to each one of them. They had to face their poverty of spirit. They not only had to admit their own spiritual inability but also their own spiritual inadequacy. What happened to Jacob? He fought God all night until God dislocated his hip, putting him flat on his back. Then he said, Okay, God, I quit. I can't buck your system; I can't win; I can't be what I'm supposed to be without allowing you to be the God you intend to be. All right, I surrender. The Bible says, "And He God blessed him there." The hardest thing for a person to do is to admit his poverty of spirit but it's the only path to real happiness.

God was going to do fantastic things with Isaiah. He wanted him to be a beautiful prophet of the Old Testament but something was in the way. Isaiah was all upset because the king had died. That's all he could think about--his loss. What did God do? God graciously gave Isaiah a vision of himself, high and lifted up. What did Isaiah say? Woe is me, for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King. In effect, God was saying, Amen, great. You hear that fellows? And the angels started clapping their wings. Isaiah had made it. God said, Blessed are the poor in spirit. Isaiah, you're right. Woe is you. You are a man of unclean lips. You have seen the Lord. You're right, you don't have what it takes. And God blessed him there."

Jesus says, on the other hand, don't listen to all this stuff the world gives you. What I am telling you is controversial. It's paradoxical. It runs counter to everything the world will tell you, but it's the truth. Will you admit your own inability, your own inadequacy? Will you mourn for your sin? Will you face your own situation and confess your sin, and then will you be responsive? Happiness is the product of character that is realistic, repentent and responsive. Jesus said, Blessed are the poor in spirit, they that mourn, the meek. He could have approached it from the opposite point of view. Unblessed are the arrogant in spirit, and self-sufficient. Singularly unblessed are those unrepentent, hard-necked, unyielding, uncommitted, unresponsive people, the unfulfilled or discontent and unhappy, completely devoid of joy.

David Hubbard in his book Happiness, You Can Find the Secret says, "Confession of our sin, turning from our wrong ways, seeking God's forgiveness is to be as much a part of our lifestyle as daily food and nightly sleep. Poverty of spirit, that sense of total dependence upon God is not an act we engage in once and then forget. It is a constant attitude, a permanent disposition, an engrained habit. It is our spiritual response to God's greatness and our failure. It is the poverty that leads to royalty by claiming God's mercy and nothing else. When Jesus said, Blessed are the poor in spirit, Job would have known what he meant. It took him 42 chapters to learn the lesson, but learn it he did. He learned to depend on God's grace, not on his own goodness, to hang his hopes on God's faithfulness, not on his own performance. Though he had been rich, he could no longer count on his riches. When he became poor, especially poor in spirit, he found true wealth. The terms of happiness are clear. We should be emptied of confidence and all else but God. We must declare spiritual bankruptcy and look only to God for our relief. As we do, the reward is incalculable, the kingdom of heaven."

Billy Graham points out in The Secret of Happiness, "Eight times in the beatitudes, which someone has called 'the beautiful attitudes,' Jesus used the word blessed. This word blessed could have been translated 'happy,' although it carries a far richer tone than the everyday content of our English word. That is why 'blessed' guards well against its reduction and perversion. His first words were 'Happy are ye,' and then followed the formula of Jesus for happiness. His first word was 'happy.' Immediately His listeners must have pricked up their ears, as we are prone to do. In the pages to follow, it is my prayer that you will do even more. Prick up your ears, open your heart, surrender your will. Then you will begin living life with a capital L. Find the contentment and joy that crowd the futility and vainness out of the daily walk and discover the secret of happiness. No man is more pathetic than he who is in great need and is not aware of it. Remember Samson standing there in the valley of Sorek, surrounded by the lords of the Philistines. 'He wist not that the Lord was departed from him.' It has been truly said, No man is so ignorant as he who knows nothing and knows not that he knows nothing. No man is so sick as he who has a fatal disease and is not aware of it. No man is so poor as he who is destitute and yet thinks he is rich."

This age in which we live could hardly be described as conducive to a sensitiveness of the needs of others. We have developed a veneer of sophistication and hardness. This generation, it seems, would rather see a prizefight than fight for a prize. Not only has the song "Rescue the Perishing, Care for the Dying" disappeared from our songbooks, but its theme has disappeared from our hearts. Abraham Lincoln once said characteristically, 'I'm sorry for the man who can't feel the whip when it is laid on the other man's back.' Much of the world is calloused and indifferent toward mankind's poverty and distress. This is due to the fact that for many people there has never been a rebirth. The love of God has never been shed abroad in their hearts.

Guy King in his book The New Order says, "In the evident estimation of the Master the basis of the new plan is the new man. So here in the forefront of his manifests of the kingdom, he unveils a portrait of the ideal citizen for our examination and emulation. Whatever else we should learn about him, we shall see that he is no gloomy individual. Samuel Rutherford has it, 'Stoop, man, stoop, the door into the kingdom is low.' The real significance of this word 'poor' seems to be 'beggars,' people who have absolutely nothing, who depend completely and entirely on the benevolence of another. 'Nothing in my hand I bring.' The picture of a man who is conscious of having nothing and being nothing. To the Laodicean church it was written in Rev. 3:17, 'Thou knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.' But when a man does know, he is well on his way to blessing. Paul speaks of such 'as having nothing and yet possessing all things.'"

The Master has been concerned to display these qualities before our eyes. It has not been his intention at the moment to tell us how these qualities may be obtained. That secret he revealed later through his servant Paul in Galatians 5:22,23, where in dealing with the same characteristics, he tells us they are the fruit of the spirit. They are not put on from outside, as if the fruit were tied onto the tree, but they grow on from inside, from the life-giving spirit who indwells every believer.

Arthur W. Pink in his exposition of the sermon on the mount says, "What is poverty of spirit? It is the opposite of that haughty, self-assertive and self-sufficient disposition which the world so much admires and praises. It is the very reverse of that independent and defiant attitude which refuses to bow to God, which determines to brave things out, which says with Pharaoh, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?' To be poor in spirit is to realize that I have nothing, am nothing and can do nothing, and have need of all things. Poverty of spirit is a consciousness of my emptiness, the result of the Spirit's work within. It issues from the painful discovery that all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags. It follows the awakening that my best performances are unacceptable, yea, an abomination to a holy God."

W. C. Allan in the International Critical Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew says, "Their spirit is poor because they feel their need of God's help and are aware that it can come from Him alone. In their inner spiritual

life they realize their need of God and this conscious spiritual poverty constitutes their claim to the blessings promised in the next clause."

Ryle points out, "Blessed are the poor in spirit. He means the humble and lowly minded and self-abased. He means those who are deeply convinced of their own sinfulness in God's sight. They regard themselves as wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. Blessed are all such. Humility is the first letter in the alphabet of Christianity. W. A. Criswell in his Expository Notes on the Gospel of Matthew says, 'The character of these who are subjects of the kingdom is described by these beautiful beatitudes. They do not picture several different persons but a singular person. They are not on a level but are in an ascending progression. The characteristics are permanent but they follow in sequence and in vital order. They could be called the seven steps of Christian experience. The word 'blessed' is the Greek word for 'happy,' happiness in the highest sense of the language. Jesus is here stating facts, not offering rewards."

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible says, "We must call ourselves poor because we are always in want of God's grace, always begging at God's door, always hanging on in his house."

G. Campbell Morgan in the Gospel According to Matthew says, "The king does not bestow gifts to make men happy. He creates a condition within the man which enables him to find happiness everywhere. He does not create happiness by new surroundings. He creates new surroundings by happiness. He takes a man and makes him happy by reason of his character, and then immediately this man puts his hand on everything that lies about him, changing his environment by himself being changed. Happiness begins within the man, never without. Someone stands outside certain circumstances of life saying, Oh, if only I were in those circumstances, I would be happy. The king does not begin there. Blessed is a condition consequent upon character. Happiness has its root not in outward circumstances but in inward condition of character."

Let us consider the passive characteristic 'poor in spirit.' It means truly subject. The man who is poor in spirit is the man who is willing to be governed. The man who is not poor in spirit is rebellious, troublesome, creating discord within the kingdom. If this life of mine is willing to be ruled it is ruled. If this life of mine is willing to be governed, it is governed. If I will but take this life of mine and surrender it wholly to the King, the King will take charge of it and administer it.

Warren Wiersbe in his book Meet Your King says, "Imagine how the crowd's attention was riveted on Jesus when He used His first word 'blessed.' This was a powerful word to those who heard Jesus that day. To them it meant divine joy and perfect happiness. The word was not used for humans. It described the kind of joy experienced only by the gods or the dead. Blessed implied an inner satisfaction and sufficiency that did not depend on outward circumstances for happiness. This is what the Lord offers those who trust Him. The beatitudes describe the attitudes that ought to be in our lives today."

F. B. Meyer in the Directory of the Devout Life points out, "Our Lord did not speak of this condition of soul by hearsay. For thirty years it had been His sweet and deep experience. During His life in Nazareth had not the Lamb of God lain in His Father's bosom? Had He not realized that He was wrapped around with the love which had been His before the worlds were made? Had He not been content to let the great ones of the world go on their way of pomp and pride because He was assured of a deeper joy, a more perfect peace, a more satisfying happiness than Caesar's smile or the imperial purple could afford? The well of water was springing up in His own pure heart before He spoke of it to the woman at Sychar's well. He knew the Father, loved the Father, fulfilled His Father's behests, rested in the Father's will, was encompassed with the perpetual sense of the Father's presence, breathed the sunny air of the Father's love. During His earthly life, as He confessed himself, the Son of man was, therefore, already 'in heaven.' He offers us what He was experiencing for himself. 'My peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you.'"

William Hendriksen in the Gospel of Matthew says, "Each beatitude consists of three parts:

1. An ascription of blessedness
2. A description of the person to whom this ascription applies, that is, of his character or condition
3. A statement of the reason for this blessedness - 'For theirs is the kingdom of heaven, for they shall be comforted' and so on.

Jesus does not pronounce these people blessed because they are poor in material goods, though for the most part they are that also. They are called blessed as being poor in spirit, not in spirituality but with respect to their spirit. That is, they are the ones who have become convinced of their spiritual poverty. They have been made conscious of their misery and want. Their old pride has been broken. They have begun to cry out, O God, be thou merciful to me, the sinner.

William Pettingill in his book The Gospel of the Kingdom says, "Mark you, he is describing persons not as they ought to be nor as they ought to try to be, but as they are. They are his workmanship, by the grace of God they are what they are. They have not become what they are by their own striving but by His great favor and power. It is God working in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13)."

II Cor. 8:9 "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor; so that you, through his poverty, might become rich."

Helmut Thielicke in his book Life Can Begin Again points out, "This is how the beatitudes are to be understood. A hand stretched out to us in the midst of suffering and care, a hand that makes it clear that God still has a design for us and that he wants to lead us to goals so lovely that we shall weep for joy. God never merely stops with our past, though he does not let us get away with anything, and puts his finger upon our sorest

wounds. He is always the Lord who is concerned about our future, paving the way to save us and guiding us to His goals."

In his book The Sermon on the Mount for Today T. H. Wright points out, "It was the virtue of lowliness of mind which He claimed for himself, the spiritual quality of humility. Augustine said, 'The poor in spirit are the humble and those who fear God.' The poor in spirit first bow before God, conscious of their deficiency, the personal unworthiness. They turn humbly toward the infinite riches, aware of their complete dependence upon the divine resources for all that makes life adequate and blessed. They repudiate all self-sufficiency and put aside personal vanity. All which they have and can do they regard as largely due to others who have gone before them, and above all, affectionately attribute to the Author and Giver of every good and perfect gift. Self-sufficiency is the stumbling block in all human ways. It can make a failure of any man, can kill the soul of an artist, is most of all fatal to the soul of a Christian. In all spheres pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. And before honor is humility. When Jesus was most keenly aware of his personal greatness, when He knew that He was come from God and went to God, He took a towel and girded himself and began to wash the disciples' feet."

J. Vernon McGee points out, "We Christians today are actually very poor in spirit. We are spiritually bankrupt but we have something to give which is more valuable than silver and gold. Paul expressed it this way, 'As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things' (II Cor. 6:10). 'As poor, yet making many rich' is referring to spiritual riches which are available to everyone who belongs to Christ."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon points out, "Christ is never precious til we are poor in spirit. We must see our own wants before we can perceive His wealth. Pride blinds the eyes and sincere humility must open them or the beauties of Jesus will be forever hidden from us. The narrow gate is not wide enough to allow that man to enter who is great in his own esteem. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a man conceited of his own spiritual riches to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Hence, it is clear that the character described in connection with the first beatitude is essential to the production of those which follow after, and unless a man possesses it, he may look in vain for favor at the hands of the Lord. The proud are cursed. Their pride alone secures them. The curse then shuts them out from divine regard. Wherever the truth as to our condition is truly known, it has been spiritually revealed. We may say of everyone who knows his soul-poverty, 'Blessed are thou, Simon, son of Jonas, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto thee.' To be spiritually poor is the condition of all men. To be poor in spirit or to know our spiritually poverty is an attainment specially granted to the called and chosen. An omnipotent hand created us out of nothing, and the like omnipotence is needed to bring us to feel that we are nothing."

Luke 12:19-21 "And I will say to myself, You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry. But God said to him, You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?"

In God's economy emptying comes before filling, confession before forgiveness and poverty before riches. Christ said there is a happiness in that acknowledgment of spiritual poverty which lets God come into our souls.

Fitch in his book The Beatitudes of Jesus points out, "What is the basic characteristic of those who are in Christ's kingdom? The answer is poverty of spirit. This is the first step toward blessedness. No one will ever be really happy who is not poor in spirit. The citizenship papers of the kingdom of our Lord are held only by those who have this disposition of heart which Christ calls poverty of spirit. Poverty of spirit is essentially the dethronement of pride. In all the lists of the seven deadly sins, pride comes first. Pride is I first and last and is fundamentally selfishness. It worships self, therefore it crucifies God. And it has many manifestations. It expresses itself in pride in material things. This means that God, the giver of every good and perfect gift is forgotten. Pride sets things in the place of first importance. Pride in a man makes him concentrate on what he has rather than on what he is in the sight of God. There is a pride of race. There is social pride. Worst of all, there is a spiritual pride, the spirit of the Pharisee who says, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are. This is the pride of self-satisfaction and conceit. From all such forms of pride destruction flows. Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Pride destroys the plan of God and obliterates the pathway to God. Pride tramples underfoot the grace of God and says no to the love of God. The love of God is never received by a proud heart. God resists the proud, says James, but he gives grace to the humble. And it is the humble who are the poor in spirit."

When Isaiah entered into the temple and saw the vision of the Lord high and lifted up, he cried, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." It is the same spirit that we encounter in Simon Peter when, before the evidence of the miraculous draft of fishes, he fell down before His Lord and cried, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. This is poverty of spirit. This is brokenness and contriteness of heart, only found when a man comes face to face with God. The man who is poor in spirit is a man who has come to an end of himself. He sees that not only has he no assets but he is terribly and desperately in debt. He stands alone before God and acknowledges that in himself he has nothing and is nothing. Augustus Toplady wrote, 'Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. Naked come to thee for dress, helpless look to thee for grace. Foul I to thy fountain fly, wash me Savior or I die.'

Charlotte Elliot wrote, "Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind. Sight, riches, healing of the mind. Yea, all I need in thee to find, O Lamb of God, I come."

All God's fulness floods into the emptiness of the penitent heart. All heaven surrounds the life that has made the great surrender. The blessedness of the largeness of the life of the kingdom of heaven is already opened in the soul, and the closer a man walks with Christ, the more clearly are seen the marks of true humility and lowness of heart. This is the spirit of self-denial. True self-denial is a turning from all self-assurance, all self-confidence, all self-pride, all self-will, all self-culture and care. It is the deliberate acceptance of Calvary as a life pattern. It is a commitment to the principle of living which our Lord outlines when He says, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone. But if it die, it brings forth much fruit.

Phil. 2:5-8 - Emptied Himself.. -

Lower, still lower, down at thy cross,
All the world's treasures counting but loss.
Down at thy feet, blessed Master I fall,
Lower, still lower, Christ all in all.

Rock Star from Kansas:
① Emptiness
② turned in my Arms & Hold
③ I got a big one.

May the mind of Christ, my Savior, live in me from day to day
By His love and power controlling all I do and say.
May the love of Jesus fill me as the waters fill the sea,
Him exalting, self abasing, this is victory.
May His beauty rest upon me as I seek the lost to win,
And may they forget the channel, seeing only Him.

You must begin low if you would build high.

Youngling in his thesis "Principles of Personal Discipleship in the Sermon on the Mount" points out, "The word for 'poor' sheds a great deal of light on the meaning of this beatitude. This word originally meant 'begging, dependent on others for support.' This is a very accurate description of what poverty of spirit is. It means that the disciple of Jesus Christ must be completely bankrupt in spirit. He must come to the place in his life where he realizes his all-encompassing spiritual inability. Pentecost says, 'A person is poor in spirit when he recognizes his own helplessness and casts himself solely upon the grace of God and the spirit of God. In so doing he renounces all spiritual pride and evidences a poverty of spirit that makes it possible for God to bestow blessings on his life. The poor in spirit is the heart on its knees. The poor in spirit is the one characterized by utter dependence. There are four ways the disciple may cultivate this characteristic:

1. He must have a correct self-concept. He must know that he is totally dependent on God, but at the same time, he is an heir of God and a fellow-heir of Christ.

2. He must yield himself to God daily.
3. He must focus on Christ and His blessings, rather than on his sinful past.
4. Lastly, he must actively seek out opportunities to serve others.

Sherwood Wirt in his book Magnificent Promise says, "Poverty of spirit means that the ground of our self-sufficiency has been removed from under us. It is the cry of dereliction from the cross, 'My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?' It is the bitter sobbing of Mary in the garden. It is the heart upon its knees. Jesus is telling us something we very much need to know, that there is no need for us to try to save face before God. In the things of the Spirit it is important to be honest and frank. The way of the cross is not a velvet carpet for a prince. It is a poor way, an unfriendly and deserted way, soiled with blood, sweat and tears. It is a way that breaks down even a man's spiritual vitality and leaves him at the end of his tether. It leads not to self-realization but to self-sacrifice, to the wolves and the Roman execution squad. To walk this way is not to be filled with the Spirit but to be emptied by the Spirit. When we recognize that we are unprofitable servants, the divine blessing is released. How else could God work? He cannot fill our cups with the water of life until they have been drained of all other waters."

Goodspeed translates this beatitude, 'Blessed are they who feel their spiritual need. Our heavenly Father takes us as we are, with all of our lack and shortcoming. The only requirement He makes is we come with an empty vessel. And here is the promise that men's extremity is God's opportunity, and that our place of despair shall become the scene of Christ's atoning victory. It is when we let go of the rope that we discover that underneath are the everlasting arms. It is when we have no spirit at all that we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us (II Cor. 4:7)."

Philippians 2:5-8 "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing; taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness; and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross."

Emmet Fox in his book The Sermon on the Mount says, "To be poor in spirit does not in the least mean the thing we call poor-spirited nowadays. To be poor in spirit means to have emptied yourself of all desire to exercise personal self-will. And what is just as important, to have renounced all preconceived opinions in the wholehearted search for God. It means to be willing to set aside your present habits of thought, your present views and prejudices, your present way of life, if necessary. To jettison, in fact, anything and everything that can stand in the way of your finding

God. One of the saddest passages in all literature is the story of the rich young ruler who missed one of the great opportunities of history and turned away sorrowful because he had great possessions. This is really the story of mankind in general. We reject the salvation that Jesus offers us, our chance of finding God because we have great possessions. Not in the least because we are very rich in terms of money, for indeed most people are not, but because we have great possessions in the way of preconceived ideas, confidence in our own judgment and in the ideas with which we happen to be familiar, spiritual pride born of academic distinctions, sentimental or material attachment to institutions and organizations, habits of life that we may not desire to renounce, concern for human respect, or perhaps fear of public ridicule or of vested interest in worldly honor and distinction; and these possessions keep us chained to the rock of suffering. That is our exile from God."

Carson points out, "Poverty of spirit is the personal acknowledgement of spiritual bankruptcy. It is the conscious confession of unworthiness before God. As such, it is the deepest form of repentance. It is exemplified by the guilty publican in the corner of the temple. 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.' It is not a man's confession that he is ontologically insignificant or personally without value. For such would be untrue. It is rather a confession that he is sinful and rebellious and utterly without moral virtues adequate to commend himself to God. From within such a framework poverty of spirit becomes a general confession of a man's need for God, a humble admission of impotence without him. Poverty of spirit may end in a Gideon vanquishing the enemy's host but it begins with a Gideon who first affirms he is incapable of the task, and who insists that if the Lord does not go with him, he would much prefer to stay home and thresh grain."

John R. W. Stott in his book Christian Counter-culture says, "Indeed, the very first beatitude proclaims salvation by grace, not works. For it pledges the kingdom of God to the poor in spirit, that is to people who are so spiritually poverty-stricken that they have nothing in the way of merit to offer. But gradually because the needy had no refuge but God, poverty came to have spiritual overtones and to be identified with humble dependence on God. Thus, the psalmist designated himself, 'This poor man who cried out to God in his need. And the Lord heard him and saved him out of all of his troubles.' The poor man in the Old Testament is one who is both afflicted and unable to save himself, and who therefore looks to God for salvation, while recognizing that he had no claim upon him. This kind of spiritual poverty is specially commended in Isaiah. It is the poor and needy who seek water and there is none. And their tongue is parched with thirst, for whom God promises to open rivers on the bare heights and fountains in the midst of the valleys and to make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry lands springs of water. The poor are described as people with a contrite and humble spirit. To them God looks, and with them, though He is the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy, He is pleased to dwell. Thus to be poor

in spirit is to acknowledge our spiritual poverty, indeed, our spiritual bankruptcy before God. For we are sinners under the holy wrath of God and deserving nothing but the judgment of God. We have nothing to offer, nothing to plead, nothing with which to buy the favor of heaven.

'Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.

Naked come to thee for dress, helpless look to thee for grace.

Foul I to thy fountain fly, wash me, Savior, or I die.'

This is the language of the poor in spirit. We do not belong anywhere except alongside the publican in Jesus' parable, crying out with downcast eyes, God be merciful to me, a sinner. As Calvin wrote, 'He only who is reduced to nothing in himself and relies on the mercy of God is poor in spirit.'"

J. Dwight Pentecost in his book Design for Living says, "But when our Lord spoke of happiness, he related to holiness. Such is the biblical concept, for in the New Testament, happiness is identified with purity of character. The word sees sin as the fountainhead of misery and holiness as the source of peace, satisfaction and contentment, all that we include in the word happy. So when the Lord said, Blessed are the poor in spirit, He gave the first characteristic of holiness that produces happiness, so as to lay the foundation for a godly, happy life. The poor in spirit is the one from whom the ground of self-sufficiency has been taken. The poor in spirit is the heart on its knees. The poor in spirit is the one characterized by an attitude of utter dependence. In this instance as in all the beatitudes, the Lord did not institute a new concept. Rather, he went back into the Old Testament, particularly the Psalms, and gathered together what Scripture had so clearly taught before, so that He from Scripture might describe righteousness and holiness and the basis of a blessed, happy life. The psalmist wrote, 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' And again in Psalm 34:18, 'The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart and saith such as be of a contrite spirit.' When the psalmist referred to a broken, contrite heart, he did not mean a heart crushed because of bereavement but a heart that had come to the end of itself, which sees no help in itself, and cries out to God for deliverance."

Paul in Philippians 3:3 evidenced this poverty of spirit when he said, "We have no confidence in the flesh." Again he wrote in Romans 8:4,5 that the "righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." When Peter stepped out of the boat to walk across the water to the Lord Jesus and began to sink, he cried out, "Lord, help me." He was poor in spirit. When Mary and Martha were overcome with grief at the passing of their brother Lazarus, "And they sent a message to Jesus Christ to come and help them", they evidenced they were beggars in spirit. When you recognize your own helplessness and cast yourself solely upon the grace of God and the spirit of God, you are renouncing spiritual pride and evidencing a poverty of spirit that makes it possible for God to bestow blessing after blessing on your life. What do you have to offer God? Nothing. What does God have to give you? Everything. What makes God rich is yours. A cry for help,

a cry of dependence, a confession of your own helplessness. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

Boice points out, "I do not know much about Sophie Tucker, the actress, but years ago I heard a statement of hers that I have remembered. She was being asked about her early struggles for success and whether or not she had found a certain special happiness in her years of poverty. She answered, 'Listen, I've been rich and I've been poor. And believe me, rich is better.' For years I have found this remark interesting, and I remember it now because it seems to be the direct opposite of the first great principle taught by the Lord Jesus Christ about how you and I can find happiness. In all fairness to Sophie Tucker, however, I must admit that when Jesus Christ was talking about poverty of spirit, He was not talking about poverty in the same sense that most of us talk about it. He was not talking about the opposite of being materially rich. This is the sense in which many commentators on Matthew's gospel have taken Christ's saying but this is not its true meaning. Being poor in spirit is to be poor in the inward man, not in the outward circumstances. Consequently, to be poor in spirit is to recognize one's poverty spiritually before God. What exactly did Jesus mean? We can see the answer to this question when we recognize that being poor in spirit is the opposite of being rich in pride. In fact, you might say that being poor in spirit is to be spiritually bankrupt before God. It is the mental state of the man who has recognized something of the righteousness and holiness of God, who has seen in the sin and corruption of his own heart and has acknowledged his inability to please God. There you will learn a true humility, a true sense of need, and the result will be beneficial. You will say as Isaiah did when he saw God, 'Woe is me, for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.' C. S. Lewis once wrote of this experience, 'Whenever we find that our religious life is making us feel that we are good, above all, that we are better than someone else, I think we may be sure that we are being acted on, not by God but by the devil. The real test of being in the presence of God is that you either forget about yourself altogether or see yourself as a small dirty object. It is better to forget about yourself altogether."

Braniff Airlines had been on the verge of bankruptcy for quite some time. There were lots of advertising campaigns and influential people speaking for the airlines but all to no avail. Finally, Braniff Airlines declared bankruptcy and ceased operations. **Redball Freight Lines** had driven trucks for years and years but one day, not too long ago, likewise, ceased all operations, shut down all the big tractor and trailer rigs, and Redball declared bankruptcy. So, you and I must come to that point where, before God and the world, we declare our spiritual bankruptcy. We must cease operations in the flesh, and if anything is going to be done, God is going to have to do it, in making provision for eternal salvation through His love and grace and the provision of the gift of His Son.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, "There is no one in the kingdom of God who is not poor in spirit. It is the fundamental characteristic of the Christian and of the citizen of the kingdom of heaven, and all of the characteristics are, in a sense, the result of this one. It really means an emptying, while the others are a manifestation of a fullness. We cannot be filled until we are first empty. That is what is meant by being poor in spirit. It means a complete absence of pride, a complete absence of self-assurance and of self-reliance. It means a consciousness that we are nothing in the presence of God. It is nothing, then, that we can produce. It is nothing that we can do in ourselves. It is just this tremendous awareness of our utter nothingness as we come face to face with God."

John the Baptist had it right in John 3:30 when he said, "He Christ must continually be increasing and I must be decreasing."

Make this poor self grow less and less,
And O Jesus Christ grow thou in me.

You cannot truly look at Him without feeling your absolute poverty and emptiness.

Zane C. Hodges in his book The Gospel Under Siege says, "The lovely story of Jesus and the woman at the well of Sychar is a case in point. His initial offer to her was simple and direct. 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, Give me a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.' This is perfectly plain and carries its guarantee on its face. The woman needed only to ask and Jesus would have given her living water. Thus, upon request, she could be certain she possessed eternal life. Not to be certain was to doubt the offer itself. It should be observed as well that the transaction of which our Lord speaks is a definitive and unrepeatable one. A few moments later He tells the woman, 'Whoever drinks of the water from this well will thirst again. But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give Him, shall never thirst.' The Greek phrase rendered 'will never thirst' is a highly emphatic one. It might be translated 'will by no means thirst forever.' According to Jesus, the need which this water meets can never reoccur. This fact clearly affirms the eternal security of the believer. For if a person could lose eternal life, he would obviously thirst again. But according to the Savior's words, that experience is an eternal impossibility. It must be emphasized that there is no call here for surrender, submission, acknowledgment of Christ's lordship or anything else of this kind. A gift is being offered to one totally unworthy of God's favor, and to get it the woman is required to make no spiritual commitment whatsoever. She is merely invited to ask. It is precisely this impressive fact that distinguishes the true gospel from all of its counterfeits."

It was John Newton who wrote,

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.
'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.
Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come.
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home.
The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be, as long as life endures.
And when this flesh and heart shall fail, and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil a life of joy and peace.
When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise, then we first begun."

29 Have Thine Own Way, Lord

A. A. P.
Slowly

GEO. C. STEBBINS



1. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!.. Thou art the
2. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!.. Search me and
3. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!.. Wound-ed and
4. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!.. Hold o'er my



Pot - ter; I am the clay... Mould me and make me Aft - er Thy
try me, Mast-er, to - day!... Whit - er than snow, Lord, Wash me just
wea - ry, Help me, I pray! Pow - er-all pow - er-Sure - ly is
be - ing Ab - so - lute sway!. Fill with Thy Spir - it Till all shall



will,... While I am wait - ing, Yield - ed and still...
now.... As in Thy pres - ence Hum - bly I bow...
Thine! Touch me and heal me, Sav - ior di - vinel..
see.... Christ on - ly, al - ways, Liv - ing in mel....



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v. 4 Blessed are those who are mourning, for they shall be comforted.

II Cor. 7:10 "Godly sorrow brings repentance, that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death."

John 14:18 "I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you."

This is the mourning of spiritual character. We are guilty of ill performance. The present tense would support this.

Psalm 126:5,6 "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him."

Genesis 37:34 "Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted. 'No,' he said, 'in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son.' So his father wept for him."

William Barclay in the Daily Study Bible for the Gospel of Matthew says, "This is defined as the kind of grief which takes such a hold on a man that it cannot be hid. It is not only the sorrow which brings an ache to the heart, it is the sorrow which brings the unrestrainable tears to the eyes."

I walked a mile with Pleasure, she chattered all the way, but left me none the wiser for all she had to say. I walked a mile with Sorrow, and ne'er a word said she. But Oh the things I learned from her, when Sorrow walked with me.

Christianity begins with a sense of sin. Blessed is the man who is intensely sorry for his sin, the man who is heartbroken for what his sin has done to God and to Jesus Christ, the man who sees the cross and who is appalled by the havoc wrought by sin. It is the man who has that experience who will indeed be comforted. For that experience is what we call penitence, and the broken and contrite heart God will never despise.

The way to the joy of forgiveness is through the desperate sorrow of the broken heart. The real meaning of the second beatitude is, 'O the bliss of the man whose heart is broken for the world's suffering and for his own sin. For out of his sorrow he will find the joy of God.'

1.

Job 42:6 "Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Lancelot Andrews
Private Devotions

PRAISE, BLESSING, THANKSGIVING

BEFORE PRAISE AND THANKS-
GIVING.

I

MAKE me, o Lord, to give myself unto mine own penitence and to thy praises, to withdraw unto penitence and blessings.

Be Thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength :
so will we sing and praise thy power.

Let thy works praise Thee, o God :
and thy saints give thanks unto Thee.

Open my mouth to bless thy holy Name :
Thou shalt open my lips, o Lord,
and my mouth shall show thy praise.

But for me, o Lord, sinning and not repenting,
and so utterly unworthy,

it were more becoming to lie prostrate before Thee
and with weeping and groaning

to ask pardon for my sins
than with polluted mouth to praise Thee

Howbeit, trusting in thy huge goodness, I give praise :
to accent the praises I deare to sing.

I, an unworthy sinner, indeed unworthy :
but would God I were devout and grateful unto
Thee.

To Thee I give thanks, Thee I worship, I praise, I
bless, and Thee I glorify.

Thou art worthy, o Lord God, to receive praises
and thanks, whom I, a sinner, am not

②

Isaiah 6:5 "Woe to me, I cried. I am ruined. For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord almighty."

③

Romans 7:24 "What a wretched man I am. Who will rescue me from this body of death."

W. Phillip Keller in his book Salt for Society says, "The emphasis of our times is to live it up, laugh it off. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. God keeps his promises. He will give us new life, but first we must mourn our spiritual death. In passing, it must be stated here that this emphasis upon deep remorse and mourning over sin and selfishness in our lives is a note seldom emphasized in the modern church. There are three meanings to 'Blessed are they that mourn':



1. For those mourning over loved ones who have died physically
2. It is the mourning over sin and selfishness in our own lives before we come to know Christ.
3. There is mourning over others who are lost and dying without the Savior.

Thomas Watson in his book The Beatitudes says, "We must go through the valley of tears to paradise. Though the saints tears are bitter tears, yet they are blessed tears. The first object of holy mourning is our own sin. Sin must have tears. While we carry the fire of sin about us, we must carry the water of tears to quench it."

An illustration of spontaneous mourning is seen in Mary Magdalene's repentance. She stood weeping. She came to Christ with ointment in her hand, with love in her heart, with tears in her eyes.

Psalm 51:3 "For I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me."

Luke 15:18,21 "I will set out and go back to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'"

We must mourn for sin as it is a piece of the highest ingratitude. It is a kicking against the breasts of mercy. We sin against the blood of Christ, the grace of the Spirit; and shall we not mourn. May not the Lord say to us, These wounds I have received in the house of my friends. We must mourn for sin as it is a privation. It keeps good things from us. It

hinders our communion with God. Mary wept for Christ's absence. They have taken away my Lord. So our sins have taken away our Lord. They have deprived us of His sweet presence. Will not he grieve who has lost a rich jewel. When we mourn for sin under this notion as it makes the sun of righteousness withdraw from our horizon.

Joel 2:12 "Even now, declares the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning."

True mourning begins in the love of God and ends in the hatred of sin.

Ephesians 4:30 "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

And if that blessed dove weeps, shall not we weep.

Zechariah 12:10 "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourns for an only child; and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a first-born son."

Men have tears to shed for other things but have none to spare for their sins. There are many murmurers but few mourners. Most are like the stony ground which lacked moisture in Luke 8:6.

We have many cry out of hard times but they are not sensitive of hard hearts.

If God's bottle be not filled with tears, his vial will be filled with wrath.

Well, therefore, might Chrysostom solemnly bless God for giving us this laver of tears to wash in.

Rev. 21:4 "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Hell is a place of weeping, according to Matt. 8:12. They who will not shed a bottle full of tears shall hereafter shed rivers of tears.

weeping
Wailing
Gnashing
teeth

But oh what need is there for everyone to go into the weeping bath. Think what a sinner you have been. You have filled God's book with your debts. And what need you have to fill his bottle with your tears.

Psalm 30:5 "Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."

It is not so much the weeping eve God respects, as the broken heart. Yet, I would be loathe to stop their tears who can weep. God stood looking on Hezekiah's tears. "I have seen thy tears." David's tears made music in God's ears. The Lord has heard the voice of weeping. It is a sight fit for angels to behold tears as pearls dropping from a penitent eye.

Lloyd Ogilvie points out, "That's what it means to mourn creatively. Happy are those who express the need for forgiveness, for they will know the power of the comforter."

John MacArthur in his book Kingdom Living Here and Now says, "The psalmists shed tears of loneliness. Timothy shed tears of discouragement. Jeremiah shed tears of disappointment. Paul shed tears of concern. In Mark 9 a father brings his demon-possessed son to Jesus. The tears run down the father's cheeks as Christ said, 'If you can, all things are possible to him who believes.' And the father of the child cried out with tears, 'I do believe. Help my unbelief.' Those were tears of earnest love for a son. In Luke 7 a woman washes Jesus' feet with her tears and dries them with her own hair. Those were tears of devotion and tears of worship, tears of heartfelt gratitude. Love can make people cry. ① Our Lord wept at the grave of Lazarus because he loved him. ② He wept over the city of Jerusalem because he loved its people. Mary Magdalene wept because Jesus was dead. Hers were the sorrowing tears of loss, a God-given way to release the terrible pain in her heart."

③ He wept in the Garden of Gethsemane.
Stuart Briscoe in his book Now For Something Totally Different says, "Happiness is the product of a character that is realistic and repentant before God. There is no blessedness for the unrealistic and the unrepentant. Such people are fighting a losing battle and running a losing race."

back to right forth calls a lamentation
David Hubbard in his book Happiness: You Can Find the Secret says, "The second beatitude is tied to the first. Poverty of spirit prompts us to mourn. Our failure to do God's will evokes deep grief. A lack of righteousness calls forth a spirit of lamentation. We are not only bankrupt, we are cut to the core over this bankruptcy."

Jesus' comfort lasts because it is the comfort of a destiny assured, the comfort of a new age. The comfort of the good news that Jesus offered so dramatically on the mountain is a comfort that continues to the end of history and beyond. Death cannot defeat it. Hell cannot conquer it. It is the comfort of God's eternal commitment to the welfare of those who mourn. One of the last scenes of the Bible describes it beautifully. "He will wipe away all tears from their eyes and there shall be no more death nor sorrow nor crying nor pain. All of that has gone forever." Then and only then will we know the full happiness that comes to those who mourn. But in the meantime we gladly acknowledge our sin. We gratefully confess our utter need of God and we begin to mourn our way to happiness.

Pink points out in his exposition of the sermon on the mount, "the mourning of our text is a spiritual one. A previous verse indicates clearly the line of thought here. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Yes, blessed are the poor. Not the poor in purse but the poor in heart, those who realize themselves to be spiritual bankrupts in themselves, paupers before God. That felt poverty of spirit is the very opposite of the Laodiceanism which is so ripe today--that self-complacency which says, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing.' In like manner, it is a spiritual mourning which is in view here. Further proof of this is found in the fact that Christ pronounces these mourners blessed. They are so because the spirit of God has wrought a work of grace within them, and hence they have been awakened to see and feel their lost condition."

Ryle points out, "He means those who sorrow for sin and grieve daily over their own shortcomings. These are they who trouble themselves more about sin than about anything on earth. The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite spirit."

II Cor. 1:3,4 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary on the Whole Bible says, "Evidently, it is that entire feeling which the sense of our spiritual poverty begets. And so the second beatitude is but the complement of the first. The one is the intellectual. The other is the emotional aspect of the same thing. It is poverty of spirit that says, I am undone, and it is the mourning which this causes that makes it break forth in the form of a lamentation."

lament

Poor in Spirit = Intellectual
Mourn = Emotional

Psalm 119:136 "Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed."

Daniel 9:19 "Oh, Lord, listen; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hear and act; for your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your name."

The word for mourning in the second beatitude indicates a sorrow that begins in the heart, takes possession of the entire person, and is outwardly manifested. Thus, tears, like raindrops, fall to the ground and come up in flowers.

T. H. Wright in his work The Sermon on the Mount for Today says, "The sympathy of Jesus went beyond those who are bereaved. The deep value of the benediction is that it expresses his whole attitude toward earthly sorrow and pain. He had in mind those who were caught in the bewildering disappointments and pains of the spirit which life brings to so many. His words reveal that he believed in this world as it is and accepted it in the confidence that God would bring it to a noble issue for those who suffered its most mysterious experience. The sensitive heart regarding violations of love is fundamental to all progress in the Christian career. And through all the sorrows due to the painful side of life in general, that sensitive spirit is not far away. Many trials and disappointments are directly caused by a disturbed and broken condition of the world. In the midst of these disturbing facts, the heart cannot but mourn and be sad, not selfishly for its own peace, but unselfishly for the peace of the world and the glory of God. It is the shallow heart that can always be gay in a sore, distressed age. But this beatitude gives the assurance that men need not turn away from this painful trial, regarding it as all loss. If men bear themselves aright towards it and toward the God of their spirit, even this painful experience will bring unmeasured gain. Jesus had known the barbed pangs that strike on the human mind and heart. His face was more marred than any man's, yet He had been folded in the everlasting arms; and from His own life He speaks to all that mourn. In the realized comfort of the divine compassion there is a holy compensation, a lasting gain, a quality of spirit which are worth far more than all the sorrow costs."

Billy Graham in his book Secret of Happiness says, "So what, laugh and the world laughs with you. Weep and you weep alone. In God's economy you must go down into the valley of grief before you can scale the heights of spiritual glory. You must become tired and weary of living alone before you seek and find the fellowship of Christ. You must come to the end of self before you really begin to live."

Happy are they that mourn for the inadequacy of self, for they shall be comforted with the sufficiency of God. Tears shed for self are tears of weakness. But tears of love shed for others are a sign of strength. You are not as sensitive as you ought to be until you are able to weep o'er the erring one and lift up the fallen. Until you have learned the value of compassionately sharing others' sorrows, distress and misfortunes, you cannot know real happiness.

Dr. Edward Judson, in speaking of the life of his father Adoniram Judson, at the dedication of the Judson Memorial Church in New York City, said, "Suffering and success go together. If you are succeeding without suffering, it is because others before you have suffered. If you are suffering without succeeding, it is that others after you may succeed. Happy are they that mourn. They are happy because they know that their pain and their distress and the privations are the travail of a new creation, the birth pangs of a better world. They are happy because they are aware that the Master artist, God, is employing both light and shadow to produce a masterpiece worthy of divine artistry. They are also made to glory in their infirmities, to smile through their tears and to sing in the midst of their sorrow because they realize that in God's economy, if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him."

Fitch points out, "It is, of course, a spiritual mourning to which he refers. All the beatitudes deal with spiritual conditions and spiritual attitudes, with those essential elements of the spiritual life that are evidence of the reality of a work of God within the soul of man."

Thomas Bensen Pollock writes, "Father, hear thy children's call,
Humbly at thy feet we fall,
Prodigals confessing all.
We beseech Thee hear us,
Christ beneath Thy cross we claim,
All our life of sin and shame
Penitent we breath Thy name
We beseech Thee hear us.
Holy Spirit grieved and tried
Oft forgotten and defied.
Now we mourn our stubborn pride
We beseech Thee hear us."

Now this is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. He shows us daily the glories of Christ. As He does so, we see the corruptness of our hearts, our proneness to sin, to compromise, to unbelief, to carnality and to self-glory. And at the sight of such things, we mourn. Penitence is a grace that must never pass from the Christian. The way of them that are being sanctified will ever lie through the lonely valleys of spiritual poverty and soul humiliation.

To mourn like this is to partake of His passion. Blessed indeed are they who are prepared to follow their Master, even through Gethsemane to His Calvary.

Guy King in this book The New Order says, "It is mourners over ill performance that the Master is thinking of. They are happy who mourn over their failure, if their sense of disappointment leads them to seek from God the strength to do better, to come up to the standard that should characterize all who have the measureless resources of the kingdom to draw upon."

Sherwood Wirt in his book Magnificent Promise says, "Spiritual awakening has never come to a people who have not mourned."

Romans 9:1-3 "I speak the truth in Christ; I am not lying. My conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit. I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart, for I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race."

Romans 10:1 "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved."

Isaiah 61:1-3 "The Spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn and provide for those who grieve in Zion, to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair."

by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results *only* if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor.

GET SERIOUS

1-2

Where do you think all these appalling wars and quarrels come from? Do you think they just happen? Think again. They come about because you want your own way, and fight for it deep inside yourselves. You lust for what you don't have and are willing to kill to get it. You want what isn't yours and will risk violence to get your hands on it.

2-3

You wouldn't think of just asking God for it, would you? And why not? Because you know you'd be asking for what you have no right to. You're spoiled children, each wanting your own way.

4-6

You're cheating on God. If all you want is your own way, flirting with the world every chance you get, you end up enemies of God and his way. And do you suppose God doesn't care? The proverb has it that "he's a fiercely jealous lover." And what he gives in love is far better than anything else you'll find. It's common knowledge that "God goes against the willful proud; God gives grace to the willing humble."

7-10

So let God work his will in you. Yell a loud *no* to the Devil and watch him scamper. Say a quiet *yes* to God and he'll be there in no time. Quit dabbling in sin. Purify your inner life. Quit playing the field. Hit bottom, and cry your eyes out. The fun and games are over. Get serious, really serious. Get down on your knees before the Master; it's the only way you'll get on your feet.

11-12

Don't bad-mouth each other, friends. It's God's Word, his Message, his Royal Rule, that takes a beating in that kind of talk. You're supposed to be honoring the Message, not writing graffiti all over it. God is in charge of deciding human destiny. Who do you think you are to meddle in the destiny of others?

NOTHING BUT A WISP OF FOG

13-15

And now I have a word for you who brashly announce, "Today—at the latest, tomorrow—we're off to such and such a city for the year. We're going to start a business and make a lot of money." You don't know the first thing about tomorrow. You're nothing but a wisp of fog, catching a brief bit of sun before disappearing. Instead, make it a habit to say, "If the Master wills it and we're still alive, we'll do this or that."

16-17

As it is, you are full of your grandiose selves. All such vaunting self-importance is evil. In fact, if you know the right thing to do and don't do it, that, for you, *is* evil.

DESTROYING YOUR LIFE FROM WITHIN

1-3

And a final word to you arrogant rich: Take some lessons in lament. You'll need buckets for the tears when the crash comes upon you. Your money is corrupt and your fine clothes stink. Your greedy luxuries are a cancer in your gut, destroying your life from within. You thought you were piling up wealth. What you've piled up is judgment.

4-6

All the workers you've exploited and cheated cry out for judgment.

James 4:6-10

Peter taught us that the sufferings of Jesus Christ are a pattern for us to follow. John painted on a mighty canvas the picture of those who came out of great tribulation and had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Paul and Silas received the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. As with sore backs, they sang songs at midnight in the Philippians jail... Some through the water and some through the flood, Some through the fire but all through the blood Some through great sorrow but God gives a song, In the night seasons and all the day long.

Doesn't say
Blessed are
the mourners

As we distinguish the true meaning of mourning, we find it necessary to sift out the false. Mourning, as Jesus described it, must never be construed to suggest self-pity, preoccupation with one's own woes, carping and plaintiveness have no stake in this beatitude. Jesus certainly did not teach, Blessed are they that moan. The chirping of the 'pity-me' bird can be insatiable as well as incessant.

Luke 13:34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you. How often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."

Emmet Fox points out, "Nevertheless, trouble and suffering are often extremely useful because many people will not bother to learn the truth until driven to do so by sorrow and failure. Sorrow then becomes relatively a good thing. Sooner or later, every human being will have to discover the truth about God and make his own contact with Him at first hand." B.J. Thomas: "Dawn isn't so bad when it gets you looking up!"

John R. W. Stott points out, "We should experience more godly grief of Christian penitence like that sensitive and Christ-like 18th century missionary to the American Indians, David Brainerd, who wrote in his journal on 18 October 1740, 'In my morning devotions my soul was exceedingly melted and bitterly mourned over my exceeding sinfulness and vileness.' Tears like this are the holy water which God is said to store in His bottle. Such mourners who bewail their own sinfulness will be comforted by the only comfort which can relieve their distress, namely, the free forgiveness of God. The greatest of all comfort is the absolution pronounced upon every contrite, mourning sinner."

Psalm 42:1-3 "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, Where is your God?"

II Tim. 1:3,4 "I thank God, whom I serve as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers; recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy."

Jeremiah 9:1 "O that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears. I would weep day and night for the slain of my people."

Acts 20:31 "So be on your guard, remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you, night and day, with tears."

Luke 22:61,62 "The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter, then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to Him, Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times. And he went outside and wept bitterly."

Boice points out, "The unusual thing about Christ's statement, however, is that He links the comfort of God to mourning, or to what we would call intense sorrow. He seems to say that the way to a jubilant heart is through tears. Everything in the world opposes this principle. The world says, Let us eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. The English poet Edward Young wrote, 'Tis impious in a good man to be sad, 'We sing, What's the use of worrying. It never was worthwhile. So pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile.' But Jesus says that happiness comes through sorrow."

D. Martyn Loyd-Jones says, "To mourn is something that follows of necessity from being poor in spirit. It is quite inevitable as I confront God in his holiness and contemplate the life that I am meant to live. I see myself, my utter helplessness and hopelessness. I discover my quality of spirit and immediately that makes me mourn. I must mourn about the fact that I am like that. But obviously, it does not stop there."

A WORTHY LAMENT

Read: Joel 2:12–19

"Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. —Joel 2:12–13

My best companion during Lent is my old Book of Common Prayer. Just listen to the Collect for the beginning of Lent:

Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent; Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

If that prayer sounds a bit out of fashion, it may be we aren't reminded often enough that our sin is a stinking offense to God. Only an honest view of our sin will give us a full appreciation of God's mercy. Only when we understand how lost we really are, do we grasp how great is our salvation.

Christ did not die merely for the general sins of the world; he died specifically for *your* sin. If you have grown dull to the offense of your sin, ask God to help you to "worthily lament" in the spirit of Joel 2:12–13.

Joni Eareckson Tada

PATH TO PRAYER

My Lord and my God, I know that I so easily become dull and callous when it comes to my own failings and wrongdoing. Work in my heart so that I will come to know how much I have grieved and hurt you and so that I will truly grasp how great a treasure your love and forgiveness are to me. Create in me a clean, soft, heart, O God, and give me a right spirit. Amen.

Rev. 5: "And I saw a mighty angel, proclaiming in a loud voice, Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll? But no one in heaven or on earth, or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, Do not weep; see the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals. Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. It had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He came and took the scroll from the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, and when He had taken it, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song. You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals because you were slain. And with your blood you purchased men for God, from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God. And they will reign on the earth."

Oh what a precious thought it is to realize that we, as we mourn over our sinful condition, weeping that there is no one worthy to pay the price, see the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, step forth and make a sacrifice of himself in shedding his own precious blood, purchases redemption for mankind, finds forgiveness of sins, and provides the gift of eternal life to all those who by faith will come and respond.

'Blessed are those who are mourning, for they shall be comforted.'

O what comfort for we who mourn, as we have the promise of His presence when we walk through the valley of the shadow. We have the promise of His peace. He will keep us in perfect peace, as our mind is stayed upon Him. And we have the promise of His power. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. What a blessed provision is ours, as well, for His grace is sufficient for us.

v. 5 Blessed are the gentle (the unassuming), for they shall inherit the earth.

Swindoll in his book Improving Your Serve says, "The spirit of humility is very rare in our day of strong-willed, proud as a peacock attitudes. The clenched fist has replaced the bowed head. The big mouth and the surly stare now dominate the scene once occupied by the quiet godliness of the poor in spirit. How self-righteous we have become. How confident in and of ourselves. And with that attitude how desperately unhappy we are. O Lord, I am a shell full of dust, but animated with an invisible, rational soul, and made anew by an unseen power of grace. Yet, I am no rare object of valuable price, but one that has nothing and is nothing. Although chosen of Thee from eternity, given to Christ and born again, I am deeply convinced of the evil and misery of a sinful state, of the vanity of creatures but also of the sufficiency of Christ. When Thou wouldest guide me, I control myself. When Thou wouldest be sovereign, I rule myself. When thou wouldest take care of me, I suffice myself. When I should depend on thy providings, I supply myself. When I should submit to thy providence, I follow my will. When I should study, love, honor, trust Thee, I serve myself. I fault and correct thy laws to suit myself. Instead of Thee, I look to man's approbation and am by nature an idolator. Lord, it is my chief design to bring my heart back to thee. Convince me that I cannot be my own God or make myself happy, nor my own Christ to restore my joy, nor my own spirit to teach, guide, rule me. Help me to see that grace does this by providential affliction, for when my credit is God, thou dost cast me lower. When riches are my idol, thou dost wing them away. When pleasure is my all, thou dost turn it into bitterness. Take away my roving eye, curious ear, greedy appetite, lustful heart. Show me that none of these things can heal a wounded conscience or support a tottering frame, or uphold a departing spirit. Then take me to the cross and leave me there.

Thus far the Lord Jesus has said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who are mourning, for they shall be comforted." And now we come to the third in this series of beatitudes: "Blessed are the gentle (the unassuming), for they shall inherit the earth."

Psalm 37: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord; and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him; and He will do this. He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him. Do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret, it leads only to evil. For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land. A little while and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace."

The meek are the mild, gentle, patient individuals. The word refers to an **inward virtue, exercised toward persons.** When they are wronged or abused, they show no **resentment and do not threaten or avenge themselves.** The opposite are the **vehement, bitter, wild and violent.** Jesus is the greatest example of meekness.

Meekness is not weakness. It is yieldedness. Our Lord was meek but not weak.

It is not so much the blessing of the man who is self-controlled, for such complete self-control is beyond human capacity. Rather, it is **the blessing of the man who is completely God-controlled.** For only in His service do we find our perfect freedom and doing His will our peace. It describes man's only possible attitude to God, the humility, the acceptance of the necessity to learn and of the necessity to be forgiven. **Blessed is the man who has the humility to know his own ignorance, his own weakness and his own need.**

It was the lack of that very quality which ruined Alexander the Great, who, in a fit of uncontrolled temper, in the middle of a drunken brawl, hurled a spear at his best friend and killed him. **No man can lead others until he has mastered himself.** **No man can serve others until he has subjected himself.** **No man can be in control of others until he has learned to control himself.** But **the man who gives himself into the complete control of God will gain this meekness which will indeed enable him to inherit the earth.** O the bliss of the man who

is always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time, who has every instinct and impulse and passion under control because he himself is God controlled, who has the humility to realize his own ignorance and his own weakness, for such a man is a king among men.

Phillip Keller in his book Salt for Society says, "So, essentially, in the Scriptures, where we find such phrases as 'broken hearted,' 'contrite in spirit,' 'meek and lowly in heart,' that is what is meant. A man's will has been brought into subjection to the will of God. A person's powerful passions and drives and energy have been harnessed to do God's work in the world. The meek man is the disciplined man, trained and taught to take on great responsibilities and to discharge them without fuss and fanfare. He handles tough assignments with apparent ease. The meek person is the one easily entreated of God. The master need only speak the word and the worker will throw all of his full weight and strength into the enterprise. The meek man is the one under divine discipline, responds to the call of Christ and tackles the tough task without hesitation. The meek individual is the one who gets God's work done in the world without a lot of showmanship and theatrics."

*Big
Bold
Brash
Brazen
Best*

We who have been totally conditioned by our sophisticated Western society are assured that to be big, bold, brash and brazen is still best. We insist that one must simply get ahead on his own by grim determination and fierce fighting.

Thomas Watson in his book The Beatitudes says, "Meekness toward God implies two things:

- ① submission to His will and
- ② flexible ness to His word

Submission to God's will when we carry ourselves calmly without swelling or murmuring under the dispensations of Providence. It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth, Him good.

The meek-spirited Christian says thus, Let God do what he will with me. Let him carve out what condition he please; I will submit. God sees what is best for me, whether a fertile soil or a barren one. Let him checker his work as he pleases. It suffices that God has done

it. Meekness is a great ornament to a Christian, the ornament of a meek spirit. How amiable is a saint in God's eyes when adorned with this jewel. What the psalmist says of praise, the same may I say of meekness, it is comely for the righteousness. No garment is more becoming to a Christian than meekness. Therefore, we are bid to put on this garment. Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, meekness. A meek spirit brings credit to religion and silences malice. It is the varnish that puts luster upon holiness and sets off the gospel with a better gloss.

Matt. 21:5 "Say to the daughter of Zion, See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Christ was the pattern of meekness. When he was reviled, he reviled not again (I Peter 2:23).

Matt. 11:28-30 "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Moses was a man of unparalleled meekness, according to Numbers 12:3.

Meekness results from all the injuries and unkind usages we meet with from the world, as seeing that they do not fall out by chance but are disposed of by the all-wise God for our good. If we look higher than instruments, our hearts would grow meek and calm. What wisdom were it for Christians to see the hand of God in all the barbarisms and incivilities of men. Job eyed God in his affliction and that meekened his spirit. O that all this might help to meeken and sweeten Christian spirits, but some will say, It is my nature to be passionate. I answer this as sinful arguing. It is secretly to lay our sin upon God. We learn this from Adam. "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat. Rather than Adam would confess his sin, he would father it upon God. God made you straight. You made yourself crooked. All your affections at first, your joy, love, anger were set in order as the stars in their right orb. But you misplaced them and made them move eccentric. At first the affections like several

musical instruments well tuned made a sweet concert. But sin was the jarring string that brought all out of tune. Vain man, do not plead that it is your nature to be angry. Thank yourself for it. Nature's spring was pure til sin poisoned the spring.

Lloyd Ogilvie in his book Congratulations, God Believes in You says, "The door to true happiness is double locked. It takes two keys to open, and Jesus gives us both keys in this powerful beatitude. The blessedness of the truly happy is waiting behind a mysterious double-locked door of our human experience. The two keys are in the two words, gentle and inherit. One key is relinquishment and the other receptivity. Surrender and expectation. Trust and hope. The spirit breaks our pride and softens our aggressive willfulness. Then we can surrender all our needs, hopes and dreams to the Lord. Tension is the result of pulling away from the Lord and His plan and purpose for us."

David Hubbard in his book Happiness, You Can Find the Secret says, "Nice guys finish last. It was a baseball manager, Leo Durocher, I think, who laid down that basic rule of the game. And there are those who would make it a fundamental law of life. The victory goes to the tough, to the mean, to the scrapers, who fight for their rights and let no one get in their way. Nice guys finish last is their motto, although they may not broadcast it. These Old Testament passages show us that the meek are those who depend on God, even in bitter circumstances without becoming arrogant and vindictive. Such meekness has little to do with weakness. The Greek background of the word 'meek' makes this even clearer: restraint in anger, ability to control strong feelings, would be simple definitions of the Greek idea of meekness. Gentleness, discipline and self-control are all involved, especially when a person has been reproached or slighted. Strong characteristics these are, the marks of a man or woman able to absorb hurt without the need to retaliate. There it is then, a definition of the meek, whom Christ has blessed. Humble before God in the midst of affliction, gentle toward others in the face of opposition. This definition can take on flesh and blood when we look at two biblical illustrations of meekness. They are Moses and Jesus."

I Peter 2:21-23 "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate. When he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly."

Before we bog down in doubt, we need to hear Peter's reminder about this meek path to happiness. It would be hard to find a better description of meekness.

Pink points out, "Meekness is the opposite of self will toward God and of ill will toward men. The meek are those who quietly submit themselves before God to his Word, to his rod, who follow his directions and comply with his designs and are gentle toward men. Godly sorrow softens the heart so that it is made receptive to the entrance of the Word. Meekness consists in the spirit being made pliant, tractable, submissive, teachable. Inasmuch as meekness is that spirit which has been schooled to mildness by discipline and suffering, and brought into sweet resignation to the will of God, it causes the believer to bear patiently those insults and injuries which he receives at the hands of his fellows, and makes him ready to accept instruction or admonition from the least of the saints, moving him to think more highly of others than of himself. Meekness enables the Christian to endure provocations without being enflamed by them. He remains cool when others get heated."

Everyone of the beatitudes is the result of a work of God.

G. Campbell Morgan points out in his Gospel According to Matthew, "We still think of pomp and glitter and tinsel as signs of greatness. Our ideas of a kingdom are still very much what they were in olden days. Our ideals of a kingdom are still somehow strangely mixed with trust in military prowess. Slowly, very slowly, there is dawning on the common consciousness of man the conception that national greatness is the greatness of character. Then we notice that happiness is declared by the king to depend not on doing, not on possessing, but on being. Blessed are the poor; blessed are they that mourn; blessed are the meek; blessed are they that hunger and thirst; blessed are the merciful; blessed are the pure in heart; blessed are the peacemakers--not a single word about doing or possessing. **It is what a man is that matters.**"

William Hendriksen says, "It is hardly necessary to state that when Jesus speaks about the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, he does not refer to eight different classes of people: some poor in spirit, others mourning, still others meek, but to one and the same group. Moreover, in describing those who belong to this group he is at the same time giving a description of the kingdom to which they belong showing that it is not an earthly realm but a heavenly; not a physical but a distinctly spiritual empire, in which the one and only true God, the Father of Jesus Christ, is acknowledged and worshiped as Sovereign."

But the most complete fulfillment of the promise in this beatitude 'that they will inherit the earth' is reserved for the future, when, at Christ's return in glory, the meek will inherit the new heavens and earth, the rejuvenated universe, from which every stain of sin and every remnant of the curse will have been removed, and in which righteousness will forever dwell.

T. H. Wright in the Sermon on the Mount for Today says, "The two are often confused, even by men of discernment, and they are akin. Humility is the virtue on which meekness must be based, without which, no comportment or outward behavior is really meek. The two can only be separated in thought, not in human experience. Humility, rather, emphasizes the right bearing toward God, while meekness lays its main stress on the spirit towards man and life in general. Humility and meekness are also bound together in the common contempt they encounter in most present-day sentiment. The meekness must be the expression of a heart that bows before God and therefore lives in reverence before all he has made. Jesus is the supreme example of meekness and lowliness. No heart was ever so lacerated by the injustice and the malignity of this world. The pangs his spirit bore inwardly in face of human insincerity and alienation from all that was divine were symbolized outwardly in the agonies of the cross. Men have declared that the fact that such sufferings should be the lot of one so divinely worthy goes far to destroy men's faith in God. But Jesus accepted that lot with meekness. He bowed His neck to the yoke, which love to God and man imposed, and found that yoke kindly to his nature. For wrongs done to himself he expressed no resentment, and he meekly bowed to all the hardships he had to bear in the way of his vocation. In the words of the Negro spiritual 'He never said a murmurin' word.' He was assured that every one of these indignities and pangs could and would, in some way, hidden from his vision, serve the holy purpose."

"Isaac Walton once said, 'God has two dwellings, the one in heaven, the other in a meek and thankful heart.'"

Meekness is the power of love to quell the ebullition of anger, to restrain the violent and the hasty temper. The irritation may be most keenly felt. The temptation to retaliate may be very strong but love keeps the upper hand and imposes discipline and self-restraint. Now this is really the epitome of moral strength. Meekness is not weakness. Meekness is spiritual victory. It is spiritual power. It is the expression of a love that is not easily provoked. The meek man has fought and won the battle against himself, and is eager only to know more of Jesus, who in calling men to himself said, 'I am meek and lowly in heart.'

This is the inheritance of the meek. Sinners may inhabit the earth. Only the saints inherit the earth. It is true as of now, and it will be true hereafter. The meek possess here and now only that earnest of their inheritance. But the day is coming when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. And in that day the meek shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. For that day the meek man is willing to wait. He rests in the faithfulness of God and knows that God will be faithful forever.

The cross teaches us a definition of meekness that will keep us from ever being bothered by this word again. We must be nothing, that God might be everything.

I Peter 3:15,16 "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander."

Sherwood Wirt says, "Meekness is like the surface of the water that is tossed by wind and storm. But when the tumult dies, it invariably returns to its calm reflection of heaven. Meekness is a food soft to the palate but it produces sinews of steel. Before God it bends to a humiliation beyond humility. Before man it endures

J. Vernon McGee points out, "Only the spirit of God can break you and make you meek. If you could produce meekness by your own efforts, you would be proud of yourself, wouldn't you? And out goes your meekness. Meekness is not produced by self-effort but by spirit-effort. Only the Holy Spirit can produce meekness in the heart of a yielded Christian. The Christian who has learned the secret of producing the fruit of the Holy Spirit can turn here to the beatitudes and read, 'blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,' and see that the rewards of meekness are still in the future. Paul asked the Corinthian believers, 'Do you know that the saints shall judge the world?'"

Charles Haddon Spurgeon in the Treasury of the Bible says, "When a man is converted, the first operation of the grace of God within his soul is to give him true poverty of spirit. So the first beatitude is 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' The Lord first makes us know our emptiness and so humbles us, and then next he makes us mourn over the deficiencies that are so manifest in us. Then comes the second beatitude, 'Blessed are they that mourn.' First, there is a true knowledge of ourselves and a sacred grief arising out of that knowledge. Now, no man ever becomes truly meek in the Christian sense of that word until he first knows himself and then begins to mourn and lament that he is so far short of what he ought to be."

They are meek before God that are submissive to His will and flexible to His Word.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon again in The Treasure of the Bible says, "Put those five qualities together and you have the truly meek man. Humble, gentle, patient, forgiving and contented, the very opposite of the man who is proud, harsh, angry, revengeful and ambitious.

A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses but in the meek and quiet spirit which thanks God for whatever he pleases to give.

Fitch says, "The Christian life begins in poverty of spirit, develops in the sorrow of true repentance and evidences itself in an attitude of meekness toward God. The meek man has accepted the divine verdict on his life. He knows himself to be absolutely bankrupt before God. Because of this, he sorrows and is truly penitent, and is prepared to submit himself to whatever God proposes and provides. This is meekness.

"beyond endurance. Here is a strange declaration, so simple it is passed over as obvious, so profound it is usually misunderstood. Were we to substitute the words 'Blessed are they who keep struggling to do better, for they shall be rewarded,' we would express the meaning usually attached to the beatitude. We would then have a worthy addition to the world's collection of platitudes and half truths. We would also be doing a great injustice to the words of Jesus. Our beatitude says nothing about toil or struggle. It says nothing about achievement, or even about improvement. Quite the contrary, it speaks of men whose emptiness leaves them unable to work."

Emmet Fox in his book The Sermon on the Mount says, "The true significance of the word 'meek' in the Bible is a mental attitude for which there is no other single word available. And it is this mental attitude which is the secret of prosperity or success in prayer. It is a combination of open-mindedness, faith in God and the realization that the will of God for us is always something joyous and interesting and vital and much better than anything we could think of for ourselves. This state of mind also includes a perfect willingness to allow this will of God to come about in whatever way divine wisdom considers to be best, rather than in some particular way that we have chosen for ourselves."

D. Martyn Loyd-Jones puts it this way, "The man who is truly meek is the one who is amazed that God and man can think of him as well as they do and treat him as well as they do. Finally, I would put it like this: We are to leave everything, ourselves, our rights, our cause, our whole future in the hands of God, and especially so if we feel we are suffering unjustly. Moreover, one day he will come into the fullness of his inheritance, when he will find the beatitude fulfilled most literally, 50 million, trillion years into eternity. God's people will still be rejoicing that this beatitude is literally true. In a new heaven and earth they will be grateful that by grace they learned to be meek during their initial three score years and ten."

J. Dwight Pentecost in his Design for Living says, "The sign of a meek man is that he recognizes divinely constituted authority and submits himself to every manifestation of it. He is subject to the authority of government. He is subject to the authority of the employer. He is subject to the authority in the home and he is subject

to the authority in the assembly of believers. Lawlessness or rebellion against any divinely constituted authority is lawlessness against God. One who is lawless is not meek because meekness means submission to God and confidence in God."

Boice points out, "According to Jesus, it is the meek not the haughty, forward, arrogant or aggressive whom God blesses. A final sense of the word meek comes from the fact that in biblical language the word is used most often to indicate a subservient and trusting attitude before God. And this makes meekness generally a vertical virtue rather than a horizontal one. It is the characteristic that makes a man bow low before God in order that he may stand high before other men. It makes him bold because he knows that his life has been touched by God and that he comes as God's messenger. Yet, there is a sense in which the meek shall inherit the earth now, for the meek man is the man who is satisfied and is therefore content. Paul was such a man. He owned very little yet he spoke of himself as possessing all things (II Cor. 6:10).

D. Martyn Loyd-Jones says, "Abraham, as you look at him, you see a great and wonderful portrait of meekness. It is the great characteristic of his life. You remember his behavior with respect to Lot and how he allows the younger man to assert himself and take the first choice, and does it without a murmur and without a complaint. That is meekness. You see it again in Moses who was actually described as the most meek man on the face of the earth. Examine his character and you will see the same thing, this lowly conception of himself, this readiness not to assert himself, but rather to humble and to abase himself. That's meekness. The same is true of David, especially in his relations with Saul. David knew he was to be king. He had been informed. He had been anointed, and yet how he suffered in Saul's unjust and unkind treatment of him. Again, take Jeremiah, and the unpopular message that was given to him. He was called upon to speak the truth to the people, not the thing he wanted to do. While the other prophets were saying smooth and easy things, he was isolated. He was an individualist. Come, however, to the New Testament and here you will see it again and again. Look at the portrait of Stephen and you will see this text illustrated. Look at it in the case of Paul, that mighty man of God. Consider what he suffered at the hands of these different churches and at the hands of his own countrymen and various other people. But of course we must come to the supreme

Joseph

example and stand and look at our Lord himself. 'Come unto me,' he said, 'all ye that labor and I will give you rest. I am meek and lowly in heart.' Meekness means patience and longsuffering, even when we are suffering unjustly. There is no credit, Peter argues in that chapter, if when we are buffeted for our faults we take it patiently. But if we do well and suffer for it and take it patiently, then that is the thing that is praiseworthy in the sight of God. That is meekness. But it also means that we are ready to listen and to learn, that we have such a poor idea of ourselves and our own capabilities that we are ready to listen to others. Above all, we must be ready to be taught by the spirit and led by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Meekness always implies a teachable spirit. Finally, I would put it like this: We are to leave everything: ourselves, our rights, our cause, our whole future in the hands of God, and especially so if we feel we are suffering unjustly. We learn to say with the apostle Paul that our policy must be this: Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. We have nothing to do. We leave ourselves, and our cause and our rights and everything with God, with a quietness in spirit and mind and heart. Now all this, we shall see later, is abundantly illustrated in the various detailed teachings of the sermon on the mount."

Bishop in his book The Spirit of Christ in Human Relationships says, "Meekness consists in a happy willingness to give up having one's own way. It is the choosing of God's way rather than one's own and thus fully trusting him with the outcome. It imparts the ability to be agreeable when disagreed with. One of the most effective ways to gain knowledge is to listen with an open mind to those who oppose our ideas. Meekness enables us to do this. It enables us to take sides against ourselves. Would I appreciate and be genuinely thankful for a frank answer from my friends to the following questions: What do you consider my greatest weakness? What do you see in me that keeps me from being more Christlike? How can I be a better Christian?"

W. Phillip Keller in his book A Gardener Looks at the Fruits of the Spirit says, "It is the kindness of God that enriches and energizes me, not only spiritually but also morally and physically. I am surrounded on every side by the full-orbed environment of his overwhelming kindness. It comes flowing to me in a thousand forms from the fountainhead of his own love. All that I have and experience is an expression of his kindness.

"And wonder of wonders, marvel of marvels, all of this in spite of my awkwardness, my waywardness, my stubbornness, my perverseness, nothing so pulverizes my pride and humbles my hard heart before him. The truly kind person is one who does not flinch at the cost of extending kindness. He forgets his own personal preferences to proffer help and healing to another. At the price of inconvenience, labor and personal privation he goes out quietly and without fanfare to bring pleasure to another. Sensitive to the sorrow and suffering of a struggling society, he undertakes to do what he can to alleviate the suffering. He tries to make the world a better and brighter place for those enmeshed in its pain and pathos. This is the quality of kindness that characterizes God our Father. He does care; he does suffer for us. Our heavenly Father does come to us in absolute honesty and openness. He lays down his life for us and he expends himself without hesitation to enrich us. He identifies himself with us in our dilemma."

I am ever reminded of the gentle and kindly David Livingstone. His tremendous foot safaries took him for thousands of miles through unmapped territory, among strange and savage tribes. Yet wherever his footprints were left behind, there remained the legacy of the love of Christ expressed in his simple, humble kindness to the natives. Long after he was dead and gone to his heavenly home, he was remembered in the Dark Continent as the kind doctor. What greater accolade could any man earn.

v. 6

Blessed are those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Lenski points out, "Hunger and thirst are very commonly used to express strong spiritual desires and needs. Both participles are duritive present tenses, for this hungering and thirsting continues and, in fact, increases in the very act of being satisfied. Daily we cry for forgiveness and daily God satisfies us. We are blessed just because our hunger and our thirst continue. If they should cease, Jesus could no longer pronounce us blessed because he could no longer satisfy us.

William Barclay points out, "It is the hunger of the man who is starving for food and of the man who will die unless he drinks. In effect, it demands, How much do you want goodness? Do you want it as much as a starving man wants food and as much as a man dying of thirst

wants water? How intense is our desire for goodness? Most people suffer from what Robert Louis Stevenson called 'the malady of not wanting.' It would obviously make the biggest difference in the world if we literally desired goodness more than anything else in the world."

This beatitude says it is not enough to be satisfied with a partial goodness. Blessed is the man who hungers and thirsts for the goodness which is total and complete. This is the fact which some people seldom realize. They are content with a part of righteousness. O the bliss of the man who longs for total righteousness as a starving man longs for food, and a man perishing of thirst longs for water, for that man will be truly satisfied.

Psalm 42:2 "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?"

Watson points out, "Those that hunger after righteousness shall be filled. 'God never bids us seek him in vain' (Isaiah 45:19). 'He has filled the hunger with good things' (Luke 1:53). 'He satisfies the longing soul' (Psalm 107:9).

Psalm 63:1 "Oh God, you are my God. Earnestly I seek you. My soul thirsts for you. My body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water."

Lloyd Ogilvie in his book says, "I want my people to want me, he said winsomely and tenderly. I long for my people to long for me as much as I long for them. Jesus ached over people who had no passion to know God and to be right with him. He looked lovingly after the rich young ruler who didn't want the kingdom of God more than anything in all the world. And he wept over Jerusalem because the Holy City, his beloved people, did not either want the things which belonged to their peace, nor the time of their visitation by the Messiah. It's alarming to note that Jesus condemned those who were satisfied with their relationship with God and commended those who hungered and thirsted for God. The Lord had been through the temptation of the wilderness not long before he gave the sermon on the mount. The conviction that 'man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God' from Deut. 8:3 sustained him. He knew from fresh experience that the hunger for the word of God was itself a gift of God."

Self-Right =
Satisfied
X's Right =
Hunger + Thirst
Mat. 4: ←
||



ILLUSTRATION

John Ortberg on Thriving

[Send to printer](#)

Topics: Abundant life; Christian life; Church; Discipleship; Fruitfulness; Growth; Joy; Life; Personal growth; Prosperity; Spiritual growth; Tenacity

Filters: Christian Culture; Editor's Choice★; Stories

References: John 10:10, John 15:8, Romans 8:1-13

Tone: Commend

FTT—my wife first introduced me to those initials. Nancy was a nurse when I first met her. There were many parts of nursing for which she did not care. But she loved diagnosis. To this day there cannot be too many episodes of *Grey's Anatomy* or *ER* for her. (Oprah either, but that's another story.) She is constantly telling me her private diagnoses of people—even total strangers—based on their skin color. She can tell you how long you have to live if she gets a long look at your face and the light is good.

But of all the diagnoses I ever heard her discuss, FTT is the one that sticks in my mind. Those initials would go on the chart of an infant who, often for unknown reasons, was unable to gain weight or grow.

Failure to thrive.

Sometimes, they guess, it happens when a parent or care-giver is depressed, and the depression seems to get passed down. Sometimes something seems to be off in an infant's metabolism for reasons no one can understand, so FTT is one of those mysterious phrases that sounds like an explanation but explains nothing.

Failure to thrive.

I didn't know why it struck me as so unspeakably sad until I read Dallas Willard's *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, a book that has affected me more than any book other than the Bible, from which Dallas actually gets his best ideas.

Dallas writes that although we have tended to think of the word *salvation* as the forgiveness of sins or the escape from punishment, it actually has a much more robust meaning for the writers of Scripture: "the simple and wholly adequate word for salvation in the New Testament is 'life.' 'I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.' 'He that hath the Son hath life.' 'Even when we were dead through our trespasses, God made us alive together with Christ.' "

This is the human condition. FTT.

*Spiritual
Hungering & Thirsting
For Righteousness.*

Thrive is a life word; a word full of shalom. Thriving is what life was intended to do, like a flower stubbornly pushing through a crack in the sidewalk. It is why we pause in wonder at a human being's first step, or first word; and why we ought to wonder at every step, and every word. Thriving is what God saw when he made life and saw that it was good. "Thrive" was the first command: be fruitful, and multiply.

John Ortberg, "Ministry and FTT," *LeadershipJournal.net* (June 2008)

John MacArthur in his book Kingdom Living Here and Now points out, "Jesus says, ①Happiness is brokenness. ②Happiness is mourning ③happiness is meekness ④happiness is hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Notice how the result of each of these fit together. ①Theirs is the kingdom of heaven, ②they shall be comforted ③they shall inherit the earth, ④they shall be satisfied. Isn't that fabulous? If we summed that all up, we receive everything there is. When I came to Jesus Christ, I hungered and thirsted for his righteousness. I know him; I hunger and thirst for more of it."

* This hungering and this thirsting continues and, in fact, increases in the very act of being satisfied. It is a moment-by-moment way of life. If you do not hunger and thirst for righteousness, there is a question whether you are even in the kingdom.

Psalm 119:20 "My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times."

Isaiah 26:9 "My soul yearns for you in the night. In the morning my spirit longs for you. When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness."

Rev. 7:16,17 "Never again will they hunger. Never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd. He will lead them to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Billy Graham in his book the Secret of Happiness, "In the world in which we live we give most attention to satisfying the appetites of the body and practically none to the soul. Consequently, we are one sided. We become fat physically and materially while spiritually we are lean, weak and anemic."

Psalm 107:9 "For he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things."

Billy Graham says, "Some people hunger for wealth or fame or lust or pleasure or success. But these never satisfy. They do not quench the thirst as pure water does, but only intensify it as salt water does. These blessed ones of whom the Master speaks are ever grateful for the material provision that rewards their meekness. But they long for something other, something deeper than the earthly. They have a voracious appetite for goodness, righteousness, to be right with God and to be right with their fellows. That is their deepest desire, and thank God."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon says, "They are not full of their own righteousness but long for more and more of that which comes from above. They pine to be right themselves, both with God and man, and they long to see righteousness have the upper hand all the world over. Such is their longing for goodness, that it would seem as if both the appetites of hunger and thirst were concentrated in their one passion for righteousness."

We cannot be truly happy and live in sin. Holiness is the natural element of blessedness and it can no more live out of that element than a fish can live in the fire. The happiness of man must come through his righteousness, his being right with God, with man, with himself. Indeed, his being right all around. Since then, the first blessedness of our unfallen state is gone and the blessedness of perfection hereafter is not yet come. How can we be blessed in the interval which lies between? The answer is: Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.

There are several things that can spoil your appetite for the righteousness of God:

1. First, sinful pleasure can ruin your appetite for the things of God. 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world' (II Tim. 4:10). Many of us have no appetite for spiritual things because we are absorbed in the sinful pleasures of this world. We have been eating too many of the devil's delicacies.
2. The second is self-sufficiency. No man is so empty as he who thinks he is full. No man is so ill as he who has a fatal disease and yet thinks he is in perfect health. No man is so poor as he who thinks he is rich but is actually bankrupt.

Sermon on Mount

KNOWING CHRIST by S. Craig Glickman

In a similar manner, he will also tempt us. Food, for example, may be a legitimate bodily need. Scripture includes sex as a legitimate bodily need as well. But both of these God-instilled needs must be met by means He has approved. Food should not be stolen, and sex should not be adulterous. Legitimate needs must be met by legitimate means. This the Lord Jesus knew, and this He showed by hungering more to do the Father's will than to eat the bread of Satan's table. And by so doing, He left for us the example to hunger and thirst after righteousness to the same degree.

3 The third thing is secret sin. It can take away your appetite for the righteousness of God.
4 The fourth thing is neglect of your spiritual life. It can take away your appetite for the righteousness of God.

Samuel Rutherford said, "There is as much in our Lord's pantry as will satisfy all his children and as much wine in his cellar as will quench all their thirst. Hunger on, for there is meat in hunger for Christ. Go never from him but trouble him with a dish full of hungry desires til he fill you. He is ever well-pleased with the importunity of hungry souls."

Hast thou seen him, heard him, known him?
Is not thine a captured heart?
Chief among ten thousand own him
Joyful, choose the better part.
What has stripped the seeming beauty
From the idols of the earth?
Not a sight of right or duty
But the sight of peerless worth.
'Tis that look that melted Peter.
'Tis that face that Stephen saw.
'Tis that heart that wept with Mary
Can alone from idols draw
Draw and win and fill completely
'Til the cup o'erflow the brim.
What have we to do with idols
Who have companied with him?

Christ is never a reality unless he is first a necessity.

In a very real sense our Lord could have phrased the fourth beatitude like this: 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after me, for they shall be filled.' He said that in other ways and at other times. 'I am the bread of life.' He that cometh to me shall never hunger. 'He that believeth on me shall never thirst.' And again he said, 'I am the bread that comes down from heaven, which if a man eat thereof, he shall not die.'

Youngling in his thesis on Principles of Personal Discipleship in the Sermon on the Mount says, "The secret of spiritual growth is a spiritual appetite. The beautiful thing about this beatitude is that God promises that the disciple's appetite will be totally satisfied. He

must continually keep Christ before him in order to maintain a constant appetite. The more he is satisfied, the more he desires. If the first beatitude was the foundation, this fourth beatitude must be the pinnacle. The first three build up to it and the last ones are actually the result of it. The disciple sees his need of true righteousness and then earnestly desires it. As he does so, the following beatitudes are the result."

John R. W. Stott in his Christian Counter-culture says, "looking back we can see that the first four beatitudes reveal a spiritual progression of relentless logic. Each step leads to the next and presupposes the one has gone before."

- 1 To begin with, we are to be poor in spirit, acknowledging our complete and utter spiritual bankruptcy before God.
- 2 Next, we are to mourn over the cause of it, our sins. Yes, and our sin too, the corruption of our fallen nature and the reign of sin and death in the world.
- 3 Thirdly, we are to be meek and humble and gentle towards others, allowing our spiritual poverty, admitted and bewailed, to condition our behavior to them as well as to God.
- 4 We are to hunger and thirst for righteousness, for what is the use of confessing and lamenting our sin, of acknowledging the truth about ourselves to both God and men if we leave it there. Confession of sin must lead to hunger for righteousness."

Boice points out, "Have you drunk deeply at that spring and fed on that bread, or are you still feeding on things that do not satisfy? When the prodigal son left home, he expected to find complete satisfaction. He wanted to live, and life to him meant money, clothes, food, companionship, and gay times. Instead of these things, he found poverty, rags, hunger, loneliness and misery. When he was hungry, he turned to feeding swine. It was only when he was finally starving that he turned back to his father. In his father's company he found all he had thought to find in the world. His father clothed him, fed him, welcomed him and rejoiced in his return. How sad if you should turn from the One who guarantees satisfaction in life to things that will never satisfy for long. How blessed for you to return to the Father through the way in which He has told you to come through the Lord Jesus Christ."

D. Martyn Loyd-Jones says, "We are not meant to hunger and thirst after experiences. We are not meant to hunger and thirst after blessedness. If we want to be truly happy and blessed, we must hunger and thirst after righteousness. We must not put blessedness or happiness or experience in the first place. No, that is something that God gives to those who seek righteousness. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is nothing but the longing to be positively holy. I cannot think of a better way of defining it. The man who hungers and thirsts after righteousness is the man who wants to exemplify the beatitudes in his daily life. He is a man who wants to show the fruit of the spirit in his every action and in the whole of his life and activity. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to long to be like the New Testament man, the new man in Christ Jesus. That is what it means, that the whole of my being and the whole of my life shall be like that. It means that one supreme desire in life is to know God and to be in fellowship with him, to walk with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the light. Our fellowship, says John, is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. They shall be filled, or satisfied, the Lord says. They shall be given what they desire. The whole gospel is there. That is where the gospel of grace comes in. It is entirely the gift of God. You will never fill yourself with righteousness. You will never find blessedness apart from him. To obtain this all the fitness he requireth is to see your need of him, nothing more. When you and I know our need, this hunger and starvation, this death that is within us, then God will fill us. He will give us this blessed gift. 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' Now this is an absolute promise. So if you really are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, you will be filled. There is no question about it. Make sure you are not hungering and thirsting after blessedness. Hunger and thirst after righteousness. Long to be like Christ and then you will have that and the blessedness."

Charles Swindoll in his book Improving Your Serve says, "We are only halfway through the list but it is a good place to stop and summarize what we have seen in this inspired portrait thus far. Jesus is describing how to be different, how to be his unique servant in a hostile, wicked world. He honors particular character traits and offers special rewards for each:

1. Those who are genuinely humble before God, who turn to him in absolute dependence will be assured of a place in his kingdom.

2) Those who show compassion on behalf of the needy, the hurting will receive in return much comfort in their own lives.

3) Those who are gentle, strong within, yet controlled without, who bring a soothing graciousness into irritating situations will win out.

4) Those who have a passionate appetite for righteousness, both heavenly and earthly, will receive from the Lord an unusual measure of personal contentment and satisfaction.

v. 7 Blessed are those who are merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Swindoll in his book Improving Your Serve says, "What different counsel we get from man. J. B. Phillips illustrates this when he alters the beatitudes to read as follows: Happy are the pushers, for they get on in the world. Happy are the hard-boiled, for they never let life hurt them. Happy are they who complain, for they get their own way in the end. Happy are the blasé, for they never worry over their sins. Happy are the slavedrivers, for they get results. Happy are the knowledgeable men of the world, for they know their way around. Happy are the troublemakers, for they make people take notice of them."

William Barclay says, "Mercy means the ability to get right inside the other person's skin until we can see things with his eyes, think things with his mind and feel things with his feelings. Clearly, this is much more than an emotional wave of pity. Clearly, this demands a quite deliberate effort of the mind and of the will. It denotes a sympathy which is not given, as it were, from outside but which comes from a deliberate identification with the other person until we see things as he sees them and feels them as he feels them. In the last analysis is this not what God ^{did} in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, in the most literal sense, God got inside the skin of men. He came as a man. He came seeing things with men's eyes, feeling things with men's feelings, thinking things with men's minds. God knows what life is like because God came right inside life."

Poor in spirit
Mourn
Meek
H.T. For Right.

*

Incarnations

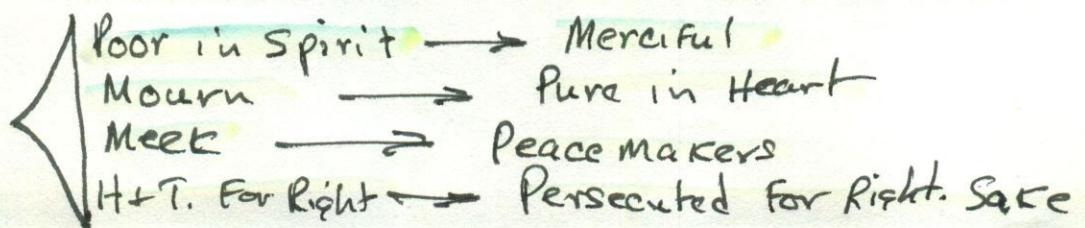
O the bliss of the man who gets right inside other people 'til he can see with their eyes, think with their thoughts, feel with their feelings. For he who does that will find others do the same for him and will know that that is what God in Jesus Christ has done.

Micah 6:8 "He has showed you, O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."

Watson said, "Love is like a friend that visits when we are well. Mercy is like a physician that visits when we are sick. Love gives its heart to another. Mercy lends its help to another."

Lloyd Ogilvie in his book Congratulations, God Believes in You says, "Mercy is our pain in his heart. A merciless pout! So often we say we forgive or try to express in spite-of love but hold another person at arm's length with our hurt and bruised feelings. We create a purgatory for people to wait in until we decide they are worthy of our acceptance."

John MacArthur in his book Kingdom Living Here and Now says, "Martin Loyd-Jones has well put it, 'A Christian is something before he does something.' To be a child of the King, a subject of the kingdom, he is first to possess a certain kind of character, a character of brokenness, a mourning over sin, meekness, a hunger and thirst for righteousness, mercifulness, purity of heart, a peacemaking quality. We are not meant to control our Christianity, our Christianity is meant to control us. The first four beatitudes were entirely inner principles dealing with how you see yourself before God. This fifth beatitude, while also being an inner attitude begins to reach out and touch others. This is the fruit of the other four. When we are broken as beggars in our spirit, when we are mournful and meek and hungering and thirsting after righteousness, being merciful to others will be the result. The first four beatitudes line up with the last four. The first four are inner attitudes and the last four are the things the attitudes manifest. When we have poverty of spirit and we realize that we are nothing but beggars, we will be willing to give to another beggar, so we will be merciful. When we mourn over our sin, we wash our hearts pure with the tears of penitence and we will be pure in heart. When we are meek, we will be peacemakers because



meekness makes peace. And when we are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, we will be willing to be persecuted for righteousness' sake. We think of mercy so much in terms of forgiveness and salvation but it is really a much broader term. It goes beyond compassion. It goes beyond sympathy. It means sympathy and compassion in action toward anyone in need. When our Lord talks about it here, the real mercy is not the weak sympathy that carnal selfishness feels but never does anything about. It is not that false mercy that indulges its own flesh in salving the conscience by giving tokens. It is not the silent passive pity that never seems to help in a tangible way. It is genuine compassion with a pure, unselfish motive that reaches out to help. In other words, Jesus was saying to them, The people in my kingdom aren't takers, they're givers. The people in my kingdom aren't the ones who set themselves above everybody. They're the people who stoop to help. Mercy is seeing a man without food and giving him food. Mercy is seeing a person begging for love and giving him love. Mercy is seeing someone lonely and giving him company. Mercy is meeting the need, not just feeling it. Mercy is infinitely bigger than just forgiveness. Psalm 119:64 says, 'The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy.' Genesis 32:10, 'I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies.' II Samuel 24:14 'For his mercies are great' Nehemiah 9:19 'Thy manifold mercies.' Psalm 69:13, 'The multitude of thy mercy.' Forgiveness is an act of mercy. Yes, but there are many other ways I can be merciful. In Lamentations may be the most beautiful of all the mercy passages. It says this, 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness' (Lamentations 3:22,23)."

Ma Bell : "Reach out Reach out & touch someone."

The merciful are those who reach out, not those who grasp and take. God help us to be able somehow to overrule the inundation of a corrupt society and hear the voice of our God who tells us to give everything we have.

St. Augustine was so merciful to others that he invited people who had no place to eat to come to his big beautiful dining room table. On the top of the table it is said that he had engraved, 'Whoever loves another's name to blast, this table's not for him; so let him fast.'

Love won't come by waiting & Looking. . . You Must give it. . . withdrawal = Loneliness, Bitterness, Resentment . . .

Stuart Briscoe in his book Now for Something Totally Different says, "A Christian is merciful. He is kind. A practicing Christian goes the extra mile and turns the other cheek. Why? Because his God is rich in mercy. If there were no other call given in Scripture, I would expect Christians to be merciful people for this very simple reason. Our God is a merciful God. Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve. Mercy is God withholding from us what we do deserve. Merciful kindness is seeing someone reap the results of his rash actions and being heartbroken over their pain. It's the opposite of the one who gloats over the misfortunes of others."

Pink points out, "This mercy is something more than a feeling. It is an operative principle. It not only stirs the heart but it moves the hand to render help unto those in need, for the one cannot be severed from the other."

William Hendriksen in the Gospel of Matthew says, "The 5th, 6th and 7th beatitudes describe the fruit of the work which God, through His Spirit, performs in the hearts of his children. They are therefore very closely connected with that which immediately precedes. Those who according to the 4th beatitude have become filled or fully satisfied as the result of God's mercy shown to them, now in turn exercise mercy toward others. Those who have experienced the purifying influence of the Holy Spirit become pure in heart. And of course these same people have been saved by the Prince of Peace, now become peacemakers."

Mercy is love for those in misery, and a forgiving spirit toward the sinner. It embraces both the kindly feeling and the kindly act. We see it exemplified in the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, and especially in Christ, the merciful High Priest (Hebrews 2:17).

*Beatem up
Passeen up
Picken up.*

Billy Graham says, "To paraphrase this beatitude we might say, They which have obtained mercy from God are so happy that they are merciful to others. Our attitude toward our fellow men is a more accurate gauge of our religion than all of our religious rantings. Emerson must have been reading the gauge of human mercy when he said, 'What you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.'"

Fitch points out, "In Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice we see portrayed the two conflicting elements of mercy and justice. Justice is represented by Shylock the Jew, who demands his pound of flesh. Portia is the champion of mercy, trying to dissuade him from his cruel pursuit of justice. When Shylock asks for a good reason why justice should not be done, she replies, 'The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed. It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.'"

Robert Robinson says, "Come thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing thy grace.
Streams of mercy never ceasing
Call for songs of loudest praise."

In Matthew chapter 18 the Lord Jesus tells the story of the servant who was forgiven a huge debt and then turned around and refused to forgive a much smaller debt of one of his own servants. So the first master, according to verse 32, "called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said. 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers until he should pay back all he owed." This is how your heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.

Sherwood Wirt in his book Magnificent Promise says, "Mercy does not set aside justice or belittle justice. The word of God is terrible in its promise of recompense. Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Mercy does not minimize the offense of the cross. 'If I were God,' cried Martin Luther, 'and the world had treated me as it has treated him, I would kick the wretched thing to pieces.' Yet so unspeakable is the love of God that he took the penalty of our sin upon himself, that mercy might rejoice over judgment and the stain upon men's lives might be wiped away."

D. Martyn Loyd-Jones says, "Perhaps an example is the best way of illustrating this. The great New Testament illustration of being merciful is the parable of the Good Samaritan. But let us go from that to the supreme example of all, the perfect and central example of mercy

There is a therapy that comes into our own lives when we reach out & touch others & minister healing.

and being merciful is the sending by God of his only begotten Son into this world and the coming of the Son."

v. 8 Blessed are those who are pure in heart, for they shall see God.

R. C. H. Lenski points out, "The pure in heart equals singleness of heart, the honesty which has no hidden motive, no selfish interest and is true and open in all things. Nothing is lost by thus specifying this virtue for it is possible only in a heart that is justified and sanctified by God."

It is good to be pure in mind; better to be pure in heart; best to be pure in spirit.

William Barclay says, "Blessed is the man whose motives are always entirely unmixed, for that man shall see God."

James 4:8 "Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

I John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Ephesians 5:26 "To make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word."

John 15:3 "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you."

I Cor. 13:12 "Now we see but a poor reflection, then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part but then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

I John 3:2,3 "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in him, purifies himself, just as He is pure."

Mourn → ISA. 1:18 Pure in Heart

-69-

Poor in Spirit → Merciful
Mourn → Pure
Meek → Peacemaker
H.T. → Persecuted

Face to face, O blissful moment
Face to face, to see and know
Face to face with my Redeemer,
Jesus Christ, who loves me so.
Face to face I shall behold Him
Far beyond the starry sky.
Face to face in all His glory,
I shall see Him by and by.

Ogilvie says, "Happiness is having eyes in your heart. Congratulations to the single-hearted, for you will know intimate communion with the Lord and see with His eyes."

John MacArthur points out, "The mind and the heart were really together. 'As he thinks in his heart, so is he' (Proverbs 23:7). Sometimes the word heart does refer to the will and the emotion as they spin off from the intellect. For example, if my mind is really committed to something, it will affect my will, which will affect my emotion. The will is like a flywheel. The mind sets it going and once the flywheel moves, it generates the emotions."

Proverbs 4:23 "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life."

In other words, whatever the heart is, it is the source of the springs of life. The issues of thinking and feeling and acting all spawn out of this heart.

Psalm 51:10 "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

Psalm 73:1 "Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart."

I Samuel 13:14 "The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of His people."

I Samuel 16:7 "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart."

Psalm 9:1 "I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart. I will tell of all your wonders."

Psalm 19:14 "May the word of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer."

Psalm 26:2 "Test me, O Lord, and try me. Examine my heart and my mind."

Psalm 27:8 "My heart says of you, Seek His face. Your face, Lord, I will seek."

Psalm 28:7 "The Lord is my strength and my shield. My heart trusts in Him and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy, and I will give thanks to Him in song."

Psalm 57:7 "My heart is steadfast, O God; my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make music."

David Hubbard points out, "Here again self-deception is the dreaded enemy. No one can begin to be pure in heart who does not recognize how impure his heart is. This beatitude is linked to all the others. What it says about happiness only makes sense when we see it as part of the golden chain forged by Jesus on the mountainside. No purity of heart without poverty of spirit; no purity of heart without mourning over our sinful emptiness; no purity of heart without meekness that clings to God and cares for others; no purity of heart until we hunger and thirst after a right relationship with God; no purity of heart until we taste God's mercy and share it with others. So the links of this chain of blessing fit together."

Jer.17:9

'Blessed are the pure in heart.' The world says, Blessed are the levelheaded. * It is good to be pure in mind; better to be pure in heart; best to the pure in spirit. * Only the pure in spirit gain illumination. Application of this can be seen in the three tenses in which we see God:

- 1 Past tense - I John 3:6 - 'No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or known Him.'

"In evil long I took delight
Until a new object took my sight
I saw one hanging on a tree."

John Newton

Heb. 12:1,2
Acts 1:7

2. Present - This is seen of Moses in Hebrews 11:27
"By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger.
He persevered because he saw Him who is invisible."
(This should be true as a daily experience of every
child of God.)

3. Future - I John 3:2 "Soon we shall be like Him,
for we shall see Him as He is."

W. A. Criswell says, "The pure in heart is he who is wholly
devoted to his Master. He is not double-minded. He has
a high commitment to his Lord's service. He has no other
purpose but to serve. The pure in heart are like that.
They are intent on the Master's service and have no other
purpose or aim."

"When I in righteousness at last Thy glorious face
shall see,
When all the weary night is past and I awake with
Thee,
To view the glories that abide then then shall I
be satisfied."

Thus will be fulfilled the prayer of Jesus, 'Father, I
desire that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with
Me where I am, in order that they may gaze on my glory
which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovest me before the
foundation of the earth.'

Fitch points out, "Blessed are the pure in heart. It
is for this kind of heart that Wesley cries,

'O for a heart to praise my God
A heart from sin set free
A heart that always feels thy blood
So freely shed for me.

A heart in every thought renewed
And full of love divine
Perfect and right and pure and good
A copy, Lord, of Thine.'

continued

'Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart
Come quickly from above
Write thy new name upon my heart
Thy new best name of love.'

The Holy Spirit leads the heart of such a man to desire this righteousness and makes him to hunger and thirst after it, and in all this ministry God is working to create a clean heart and to renew a right spirit within him, for God's goal is a people purified and holy.

There can be no purity of heart until we are delivered from all false confidences, all vain hopes, all empty pride, all earth-bound ambition. Only thus is purity of heart achieved.

This beatitude holds at its heart a great warning, for there is a vision of God which the impure in heart will someday know. And terrible indeed that vision will be. Dr. Alexander Maclaren, prince of preachers of the last century, when speaking to his people on the sixth beatitude, closed his message with these words, 'There is a vision of God possible to the impure heart in which there is no blessedness. There comes a day in which they shall call upon the rocks to fall and cover them from the face of Him who sits upon the throne. The alternative is before each of us. Either 'every eye shall see Him and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him' or 'I shall behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness.'

Jeremiah 17:9,10 "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."

Matthew 15:19 "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander."

'Pure' here carries with it the idea of being without hypocrisy or single in heart. The idea is that the disciple is to have a heart united on one purpose. He must be focusing on Christ-likeness. It also refers to being clean and without defilement. The only way a disciple can attain a clean and single heart is by first realizing the need to be cleansed and by then joining with David in his

prayer, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.' Coupled with this, in the disciple's responsibility to 'draw near to God and He will draw near to you' (James 4:8), he must do everything he can to be near to God. The two most obvious suggestions are Bible study and prayer. When the disciple does all of this, God will instill in him a purity of heart that will manifest itself in cleanliness of affection, thought and motive.

Psalm 24:3,4 "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false."

Isaiah 59:1,2 "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God. Your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear."

Isaiah 59:12 "For our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us and we acknowledge our iniquities."

D. Martyn Loyd-Jones says, "One of the best definitions of purity is given in **Psalm 136:11** 'Unite my heart to fear thy name.' The trouble with us is our divided heart. Is not that my whole problem face to face with God? One part of me wants to know God and worship God and please God but another part wants something else. You remember the way Paul expressed it in **Romans 7**, 'For I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.' Now the pure heart is the heart that is no longer divided. And that is why the psalmist, having understood his trouble, prayed the Lord to 'unite my heart to fear thy name.' Make it one, he says, make it single; take out the pleats and the folds; let it be whole; let it be one; let it be sincere; let it be entirely free from any hypocrisy."

Gal. 5:16

To be pure in heart, in other words, means to keep the first and the great commandment, which is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind." Reducing it still further,

it means that we should live to the glory of God in every respect, and that that should be the supreme desire of our life. It means that we desire God, that we desire to know Him, that we desire to love Him and to serve Him. And our Lord states here that only those who are like that shall see God. That is why I say that this is one of the most solemnizing statements in Holy Scripture. "Moses endured as seeing Him who is invisible. Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Soon we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Acts 24:16

"A heart in every thought renewed
And filled with love divine
Perfect and right and pure and good
A copy Lord of Thine."

Aggie Going
New Mexico

Jail — Jail first time
I've been able to pronounce
since we went through
Alba - coco.

v. 9 Blessed are those who are making peace, for they shall be called sons of God.

When we are thinking of peace, we can't help but think of Anwar Sadat. The tribute given to him was: "He was a man who lived for peace and died for his principles."

William Barclay in his Daily Study Bible says, "Abraham Lincoln once said, 'Die when I may, I would like it to be said of me that I always pulled up a weed and planted a flower when I thought a flower would grow.'"

On the other hand, thank God there are people in whose presence bitterness cannot live. People who bridge the gulfs and heal the breaches and sweeten the bitternesses. Such people are doing a God-like work, for it is the great purpose of God to bring peace between men and himself and between man and man. O the bliss of those who produce right relationships between man and man, for they are doing a God-like work.

James 3:17 "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peaceloving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere."

Hebrews 12:14 "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy, without holiness no one will see the Lord."

Ogilvie says, "None of us find it easy to be an initiator in making peace. It is a demanding, soul-stretching responsibility our Lord has given us. We cannot do it without him. He is the patron of the first steppers, and patron means pattern and defender. What he guides, he provides. Peace is a key word of Jesus' life and ministry. He came to establish it. His message explained it. His death purchased it and His resurrection presence enables it. The Messianic predictions were that he would be the Prince of Peace."

Poor → Merciful
Mourn → pure
Meek → peace
Hunger → perse
cuted

John MacArthur points out, "Did you notice something even more intricate? The first and the fifth, the second and the sixth, and the third and the seventh seem to fit together. It is the poor in spirit who realize that they are nothing but beggars who are going to reach out in mercy to others. Those who mourn over their sin are going to know the purity of heart. Finally, there are the meek who are the peacemakers. The beautiful weaving together of these beatitudes shows how the mind of God works. This one is in the right place historically and chronologically."

MacArthur also says, "The idea of peace dominates the Bible. It opens with peace in the Garden of Eden and closes with peace in eternity. In fact, you can chart the course of Biblical history by the peace theme. Man's sin interrupted peace in the garden. At the cross Christ became our peace because He has provided peace. There can be peace in the heart of a man or woman who comes to know Him. Someday He will come again and His title will be fulfilled as the Prince of Peace. He will establish an eternal kingdom of peace. The world's peacemakers have a terrible record. The peace we hail today begins to collapse tomorrow. We do not have political peace, economic peace, social peace or domestic peace. We have peace nowhere because we have no peace in our hearts. That's the real issue. Someone has said, 'Washington has lots of peace monuments. They build one after each war.' Peace is merely that brief, glorious moment in history when everybody stops to reload." *

Philippians 4:7 "And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Colossians 3:15 "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace, and be thankful."

David Hubbard points out, "What Jesus preached on the hill where he taught, he practiced on the hill where he died.) There he became the great peacemaker, the pioneer of all who seek peace and pursue it."

Ephesians 2:14-18 "For He himself is our peace who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in His flesh the law, with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace; and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit."

Hubbard points out, "War is hell, the battle-weary general said. And there are probably few citizens of our wounded planet who have not been seared by its hellish fires. In this kind of world there is no more welcome word, no better news than peace. Isaiah put it well, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who bring the happy news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns.' In all of life's vistas there is no more welcome sight than that of a herald who announces peace. Jesus did that on a mountain and He calls us to send the echo of His announcement through every valley and over every hill til every creature knows that Jesus has made peace possible."

Stewart Briscoe says, "If I'm going to build a bridge between myself and another person, I have to start on my side. Have you ever seen a bridge built? The builders start with a solid structure on each side of the body of water they want to span. Then a thin little cable is sent across, securely fastened at one side and secured at the other. That is the basis for the bridge. A thin little cable starting from one side but eventually connected at both sides. That's the way it is with peacemaking. It must start with me. That is what Jesus was calling for when He said, 'Blessed are the peacemakers.' When does peace begin to be made? When blood is shed, when barriers are broken down. Why don't people live in peace? Because each one is waiting for the other to bring the cable and no bridge is ever made. Pay the price, shed the blood, break the barriers, build the bridges--this is the price of peace."

Being a peacemaker involves two things:

1. Personal relationships of the believer - abstinence from giving offense and abstinence from taking offense
2. In the spiritual sense of bringing others into a relationship of peace with the Messiah.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon speaking on this particular beatitude in the Treasury of the Bible says, "The verse which precedes it speaks of the blessedness of the pure in heart, for they shall see God. It is well that we should understand this. We are to be first pure, then peaceable. Our peaceableness is never to be a compact with sin or an alliance with that which is evil. We must set our faces like flints against everything which is contrary to God and His holiness. That being in our souls a settled matter, we can go on to peaceableness toward men. Peace to the billows and hush to the winds, and so he biddeth men live. They have so little while he thinketh to dwell together that it were mete they should live in harmony. And so he saith, How good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

Colossians 1:20 "And having made peace through the blood of His cross."

Isaiah 26:3 "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee."

Lonnie

The wicked is like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Peace, peace where there is no peace.

"A guilty, weak and helpless worm
Into thy arms I fall.
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

Fitch says, "Only they are peacemakers who have become partakers of his peace. Through storm and agony, through bitterness and mourning of spirit, through total bankruptcy and rending cataclysm of despair, they have reached the point of surrender and meekness and have entered into peace. Such men and women can never forget the wormwood

"and the gall. They know that they are at peace only through the merits of the Prince of Peace."

II Corinthians 5:19-21 "That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us, we implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Guy King in his book The New Order says, "Do you remember that happy, spirited church whose joy and testimony were endangered because two of its members were at loggerheads, squabbling over some personal difference? It was two of the ladies of the congregation, in that case Phil. 4:2 'I beseech Euodia and Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.' Often it is the men but how infinitely sad. What blessed employ is this that goes about trying to get people first reconciled to God and then reconciled to one another."

Sherwood Wirt in his book Magnificent Promise says, "On His cross the innocent was sacrificed for the guilty and became our peace. God having purchased peace for us at so great a price, the suffering of His innocent Son on behalf of the guilty, now presents us with His peace terms, unconditional surrender. The resurrected Jesus came through the closed door and said, Peace, to His disciples, but it was a peace amid clamour and tumult. It was the peace of life and joy, not the peace of tranquilizers and sanitariums. Such was the kind of life Jesus led, and such is the only kind of peace He gives. We can have it anywhere, any time simply for the asking. God built it into the poles and axles of the universe."

D. Martyn Loyd-Jones says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be owned as the children of God. Who is going to own them? God is going to own them as His children. It means that the peacemaker is a child of God and that He is like His Father. One of the most glorious definitions of the being and character of God in the Bible is contained in the words, 'the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ' (Hebrews 13:20)."

v.10 Blessed are those who have been persecuted on account of righteousness for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

v.11 Blessed are you when they shall heap insults upon you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of me.

v.12 Rejoice and be glad because your reward in heaven is great, for in this manner they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Lenski points out, "The beatitudes are not a string but a circle. All are paradoxical but strikingly true. Together they cover the whole life of the Christian, the first four in regard to God; the second four in regard to men. The main features of life are selected and combined in a grand whole. From the second to the seventh, pertinent parts of the kingdom are assured. But no disciple who has such a part can have it without having the whole. Yet, whatever our experience in the disciple life, for that experience the kingdom has a corresponding blessing."

I Cor. 4:12,13 "We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless. When we are persecuted, we endure it. When we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world."

William Barclay points out, "One of the outstanding qualities of Jesus was His sheer honesty. He never left men in any doubt. What would happen to them if they chose to follow Him? He was clear that He had come not to make life easy but to make men great. The word for 'be exceeding glad' has been derived from two Greek words which mean 'to leap exceedingly.' It is the joy which leaps for joy, as it has been put. It is the joy of the climber who has reached the summit and who leaps for joy that the mountain path is conquered."

No man ever suffers persecution alone. If a man is called upon to bear material loss, the failure of friends, slander, loneliness, even the death of love for his principles, he will not be left alone, for Christ will be nearer to him than at any other time. The old story in Daniel tells how Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into the

~~furnace heated seven times hotter because of their refusal to move from their loyalty to God. The couriers watched. 'Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?' they asked. The reply was that it was indeed so. Then came the astonished answer, 'Lo, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God' (Daniel 7:19-25).~~

John 15:18-21 "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belong to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: No servant is greater than his master. They persecuted Me; they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me."

II Tim. 3:12 "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

Hebrews 11:32-40 "And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell you about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephtha, David, Samuel and the prophets; who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice and gained what was promised, who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames and escaped the edge of the sword, whose weakness was turned to strength, and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced years in flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they were put to death by the sword, they went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated. The world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us, so that only together with us would they be made perfect."

Watson points out, "Religion will cost us the tears of repentance and the blood of persecution." The saints

have no charter of exemption from trials. Though they be ever so meek, merciful, pure in heart, their piety will not shield them from sufferings. They must hang their harp on the willows and take the cross. The way to heaven is by way of thorns and blood. It shows us what the nature of Christianity is; namely, sanctity joined with suffering. A true saint carries Christ in his heart and the cross on his shoulders. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Christ and his cross are never parted."

Lloyd Ogilvie says, "I want you to meet my best friend. I have known him for 32 years. He has been with me through trials and tragedies, pain and persecution, ups and downs, success and failure. He is the kind of friend who knows all about me and never goes away. He has a special way of helping me to see myself and do something about it. He accepts me the way I am and yet that very acceptance makes me want to be all that I was meant to be, in spite of all the difficulties around me. He laughs with me over my mistakes and weeps with me in my sorrows. He has been faithful all through life's battles. I've never been left alone. When I suffered criticism, hostility or resistance for doing what love demanded, he is with me, when truth triumphs and is always there to absorb the anguish of defeat in a righteous cause. We share a vision, a hope, a dream together, my friend and I. As a matter of fact, he gives me the daring to be true to what I believe, regardless of cost. He meets all the qualifications of a real friend. He loves without limit. He is loyal when others turn away. He listens to my hurts and he liberates me to grasp at life with gusto, regardless of the consequences. I have only one hope: when I come to the end of this portion of heaven and pass on to the next, one thing people will remember is that I was his friend. My best friend is Jesus Christ."

Genesis 4:8 "Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field.' And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him."

John MacArthur in commenting on these verses says, "We need more preaching like that. We need to tell people that God is calling them to a life contrary to the system of the world, and that there will be a price to pay. It's going to affect what they do. It's going to affect how they make their living. More than 100 years after the

sermon on the mount a man came to Tertulian and said, 'I have come to Christ but I don't know what to do.' I have a job that I don't think is right but I have to live.' To which Tertulian replied, 'Must you?'"

In Don Richardson's Lords of the Earth he tells the story of Stan Dale, who ministered to the Yali tribe in Irian Jaya, Indonesia. Stan was way up in the snow mountains, very high and precarious in a village encamped on the slopes. The Heluk, a thunderous, rapid river crashes down through the mountains and into the valley below. The Yali were steeped in an incredible religion. They had little sacred pieces of ground and they believed that if even a child happened to crawl onto one of them, the child was desecrated and the whole village could be cursed. So they would throw the child off a cliff into the rapids. If anyone ever said a word against the religious system, he was slaughtered on the spot, so there could be no rebellion, no change, no possibility of altering anything. One tribesman tried to point out some of the things that seemed foolish to him. They shot him so full of arrows that he looked like a reed swamp. It was hopeless until a little undaunted, bandy-legged Australian Stan Dale tramped into the village. In an incredible way that amazed man opened his heart and the hearts of his wife and five children to those savage people who were not only headhunters but also cannibals. He came to save them from the impenetrable darkness and death of the terrible beliefs and practices in their culture. What happened to him? I'll quote it directly from the book. "A priest of Kambu named Bereway slipped around behind Stan and at point-blank range shot an arrow in under his up-raised right arm. Another priest Buno shot a bamboo-bladed shaft into Stan's back, just below his right shoulder. As the arrows entered his flesh, Stan pulled them out one by one, broke them and cast them away. Dozens of them were coming at him from all directions. He kept pulling them out and breaking them and dropping them at his feet until he could not keep ahead of them. Nalimo reached the scene after some thirty arrows had found their mark in Stan's body. How can he stand there so long, Nalimo gasped. Why doesn't he fall? Any one of us would have fallen long ago. A different kind of shaft pierced Nalimo's own flesh. Fear. Perhaps he is immortal. Nalimo's normally impassive face melted with sudden emotion. Stan faced his enemy steady and unwavering, except for the jolt of each new strike. Fifty arrows, sixty, red ribbons of blood trailed from the many wounds but still Stan stood his ground. Nalimo saw that he was not alone in his fear. The attack had begun with hilarity but now the warriors shot their arrows with desperation.

bordering on panic because Stan refused to fall. Perhaps Kusaho was right. Perhaps they were committing a monstrous crime against the supernatural world instead of defending it as they intended. Fall! they screamed at Stan. Die! It was a plea. Please, die! Yemo did not hear Phil Masters, a fellow missionary, say anything to the warriors as they aimed their arrows at him. Phil made no attempt to flee or struggle. He had faced danger many times but never certain death. But Stan had shown him how to face it. If he needed an example, that example could hardly have been followed with greater courage. Once again it was Bereway who shot the first arrow. And it took almost as many arrows to down Phil as it had Stan. Yemo and the three Danis waited until they knew Phil was too badly wounded to survive. At the sight of the killings after both missionaries had fallen on the stony beach, the Yali dragged their battered bodies away from the stones and placed each of them in separate forest alcoves overhung with boughs. Buno moved by fear beheaded both Stan and Phil." There is a price to pay, isn't there? The wonderful end to the story is that the Yali village and that whole territory has now come to know of Jesus Christ. And they do not gather to eat missionaries anymore. They gather around the Lord's table. One of the most wonderful things about this story is that Stan's fifth child, who was a baby when Stan died, was saved by reading a book about his father. If we confront the world, there is a price to pay. Savannah Rolah paid it; Stan Dale paid it. It will be paid in the future because in Revelation 9 a group of people under the altar cry out, people who were slain, martyred for the cause of Christ. It will always be this way. There is always a price for living a kingdom life but the fruit of it is forever. When we give up this life, we inherit the kingdom of heaven.

When Paul came, he did not say I graduated from the University of Gamalia magna cum laude. I am a world man. I speak many languages. I am a personal friend of many kings, rulers, famous men. I died once and came back from the dead. I have ascended into the third heaven. Could he have made it on the circuit today? There is no end to what the guy could have done. Unbelievable testimony. He could have kept you listening for hours. But what does he say? Do you want my credentials? Look at II Cor. 11:23-27. Ladies and gentleman, I'd like to introduce you to the apostle Paul.

Colossians 1:24 "Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, which is the church."

~~Joseph was persecuted by his brothers for righteousness' sake.~~ He ended up in a dry well in the desert, despised and hated, yet God picked him up and made him prime minister of Egypt. ~~Daniel, for righteousness' sake, was in the lion's den~~ about to be lunch for a bunch of hungry lions but God locked the mouths of those lions and raised him up to be prime minister of Babylon. ~~Jeremiah was thrown into a slimy dungeon because of his righteous life~~, yet God lifted him up and made his name as a prophet, as honorable as anyone's who ever lived.

David Hubbard in his book Happiness: You Can Find the Secret says, "The woman emptied her large handbag item by item. Finally, from the bottom she dug a gift for her newfound friends. In a television play that Ruth and I were watching the woman had spent a stormy night in a remote cabin with these people. As they talked about their attitudes and values, it became increasingly apparent that she was a lonely woman, lonely by choice. Her soul was scarred by disappointment and suspicion, burned deeply by bitter experiences in love. She could no longer bring herself to love anyone. Traveling by herself, she drifted from place to place, bent only on surviving with as little hurt as possible. Still she felt drawn to the handful of strangers who had shared their shelter with her and who sought to give her a perspective to deal with the storms within her own spirit. Unaccustomed as she was to expressing appreciation to others, she fumbled for a way to say thanks. Finally, she remembered the object in her handbag. She drew it out and offered it to one of the friends. It was a piece of petrified wood about the size of a large paperweight. With great sincerity she explained why the petrified wood had been so precious to her. 'It is one of my favorite things because there is no way it can be hurt any more.' A pathetic picture she presented. A woman so weary of her wounds that she envied a piece of rocklike wood. But she is not alone. Most of us hurt enough on occasion to know how she felt. Shakespeare reminds us not to make light of her. 'He jests at scars who never felt a wound.' Our wounds, our own wounds, sting sharply enough to keep us from making fun of her."

John 7:7 "The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil."

John 15:19 "If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."

II Chronicles 18:7 "The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the Lord, but I hate him; because he never prophesies anything good about me but always bad."

Helmut Thielicke in his book Life Can Begin Again says, "The spectacle of Christians in Nero's arena or on the scaffold or in the concentration camps, not merely bearing it with set teeth but singing songs of praise to heaven, not merely lying down and taking it but lifting up their heads because their redemption was drawing near, because they knew who was coming to meet them on the other side of their torments. Why then did they know this mysterious happiness? for nobody can make us believe that this was merely masochistic pleasure in suffering or a morbid death wish. After all, they were people just like us. They loved life in the sun as we do. They too had loved ones to leave behind and their hearts too swelled with flooding joy in anticipation of the coming of spring and the rich beauty of summer. What then is the secret of this blessedness in the midst of suffering?"

Once we see this, the comfort in our text becomes apparent. Suffering does not sabotage the plans of God, nor does it contradict the promise of our Lord. Rather, he has taken it into his calculations and it is the profoundest reality in the kingdom of God. Only through suffering can we enter into glory. More than that, only in suffering do we become aware of the glory of God because it pleases God to have men cry to him out of the depths and to send his only begotten Son into the depths. And this then is the second comfort. Nothing can happen to us that has not already entered the Saviour's eye and wounded his heart. It was all there in the Saviour's eye and soul long ago and remains there everlasting present in his heart. Do you understand? Everything, everything of pain and grief that faces us now. We walk beneath an open heaven. What matter then whether our path runs through dark valleys and awful chasms. We know who is watching over us. We know that the terrible deeps, the abysses of life and our fear of what men can do can no longer swallow us up and that underneath us are the everlasting arms. If we fall, then it is into those arms that we shall fall.

 The beatitudes begin with poverty and end with persecution. Such is the program and the paradox of Christianity.

II Corinthians 4:7ff "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not abandoned; struck down but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body."

II Corinthians 11:23ff "Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked. I spent a night and a day in the open sea. I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep. I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food. I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches."

The hymnwriter put it this way:

"The Son of God goes forth to war, a kingly crown to gain,
His blood-red banner streams afar, who follows in his
train.

Who best can drink his cup of woe, triumph over pain,
Who patient bears his cross below, he follows in his
train.

The martyr first, whose eagle eye could pierce beyond
the grave,
Who saw his master in the sky and called on him to save.
Like him with pardon on his tongue, in midst of mortal
pain,

He prayed for them that did the wrong, who follows in
his train.

A noble army, men and boys, the matron and the maid
Around the Savior's throne rejoice in robes of light
arrayed.

They climbed the steep ascent of heaven, through peril
toil and pain,

O, God, to us may grace be given, to follow in their train."

Sherwood Wirt in his book Magnificent Promise says, "Our Lord said further that our persecution would prove to be a blessing. Blessings come from God. In his will and for his purpose God deliberately metes out to His own this kind of suffering. So determined is our Lord that we should be trained and hardened for his work that he sends us test after test in a life-long spiritual fitness program. The deeper a believer gets into God's training program, the more he realizes that God will stop at nothing to bring one of his sons or daughters to proper conditioning. It may even seem that God is reckless in the way he exposes us to the perils of the world. But he always knows what he is doing."

I'm Afraid I Couldn't Stand the Noise...

Creath Davis in his book Lord, If I Ever Needed You It's Now says, "None of us would knowingly invite pain, agony or struggle into our lives. Yet all the greats in history owe a significant part of their greatness to the battles they fought which forced them to become more than they ever would have been without the struggle. Still, we would probably prefer a little less greatness in order to enjoy a little more tranquility. But reality does not always offer us a choice between trauma and tranquility. The only real choice seems to be what we do with what comes. Even a casual observer of life is aware that tragedy can strike swiftly and without warning. One day life may be sweet and the next day bitter. What we choose to do with the bitter reveals more about us than any other dimension of our lives."

Again Davis says, "Virginia would talk freely about death. On one of those visits she said, 'I am not going to survive this illness but I don't dwell on it because I don't know when, but I do wonder what it will be like to die. In a way I'm excited except for having to leave Ted and the kids.' This was more than Joanie could handle and she began to cry and say, 'Why? Why does it have to happen? Why does it have to be you?' Virginia's reply was one that came from a woman who had found God to be so real in the midst of her agony that she had lost her fear. 'Why not me?' was her response. Those three words were not weak resignation but profound acceptance."

Sometimes the trauma strips us of all emotional supports, leaving us only with the haunting questions, Why is this happening? Where is God? C. S. Lewis, when he lost his

wife was plunged into the very depths of despair. In his book A Grief Observed he wrote, "Meanwhile, where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms when you are happy, so happy, that you have no sense of needing Him; so happy that you are tempted to feel His claims upon you as an interruption. If you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be, or so it feels, welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face and a sound of bolting and double-bolting on the inside. What can this mean? Why is He so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in the time of trouble?"

Philip Yancey in his book Where is God When It Hurts? points out clearly that "the real issue in suffering is not who caused it but what will be my response?"

John Claypool in his book Tracks of a Fellow Struggler points out, "The flow of events did not seem to be going in any meaningful direction and I had my moments when I understood how a man could raise his fist to heaven and curse God. At times I was not far from looking up and shouting, 'Just what on earth do you think you are doing in all of this, anyway?' At other times the temptation to despair was very near, when I felt like saying, I quit; I give up; I can't stand it any longer. Stop the world, I want to get off."

Virginia's husband came to faith in Christ out of what he saw in the living and dying witness of the wife he loved so deeply. In his living room some time later, with tears flowing down his cheeks, he shared with me, "You know that woman loved me so much, that had she known that this is what it would take to bring me into God's kingdom, she would have gladly chosen to endure it." Virginia's suffering had eternal significance and meaning far beyond what we with our limited perspective can ever envision. Thank God for the Virginias who have endured, and in so doing have inspired hope in us all.

D. A. Carson points out, "This eighth beatitude is so important that Jesus expands it, making it more pointed by changing the third person form of the beatitudes to the direct address of second person."

John R. W. Stott in his book Christian Counter-culture says, "Few men of this century have understood better the inevitability of suffering than Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He seemed never to have wavered in his Christian antagonism to the Nazi regime, although it meant for him imprisonment, the threat of torture, danger to his own family and finally death. He was executed by the direct order of Heinrich Himmler in April 1945 in the Flausenberg Concentration Camp only a few days before it was liberated. It was the fulfillment of what he had always believed and taught. Suffering, then, is the badge of true discipleship. The disciple is not above his master. Following Christ means passio passiva, suffering because we have to suffer. That is why Luther reckoned suffering among the marks of the true church. In one of the memoranda drawn up in preparation for the Augsburg confessions, similarly defines the church as the community of those who are persecuted and martyred for the gospel's sake. Discipleship means allegiance to the suffering Christ and it is therefore not at all surprising that Christians should be called upon to suffer. In fact, it is a joy and a token of His grace."

Luke 9:23 "then He said to them all, If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me."

"the tests of life are to make, not break us..."

Philippians 1:29 "For unto you it is given on the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake."

"God gets his best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction."

Boice says, "Much of what is considered persecution is not persecution. That is Mr. Bayly's point. It is a provoked response to an unjustified invasion of privacy, and similarly it is not persecution today when Christians are snubbed for pushing tracts onto people who do not want them, insulting them in the midst of a religious argument, poking into their affairs when they are not invited, and so on. Christ was speaking of the persecution of those who are abused for the sake of his righteousness."

"O thou hast shown thy people hard things" Psalm 60:3

How does a Christian rejoice in persecutions? I am convinced that the only valid answer to that question is by knowledge. In order to understand this, it is necessary to recognize that some battles in the Christian life can be won in no other way than by knowledge, not by reason,

"Soon shall the cup of glory wash down earth's bitterest woes."

Rom 8:18

not by feelings, but by knowledge. A young man goes to college and meets a girl with whom he falls in love and whom he would like to marry but who is not a Christian. He wants to marry her but he should not. The Holy Spirit within him is telling him so. As a result, a terrific battle is in progress. How is he to win it? Well, it is certain that he will never win it by trusting his feelings, for his feelings are what have created the problem in the first place. He will not win it by reason, for the human mind is subtle and he will always find 10 reasons why he should marry her for every 1 why he should not. Neither can he win the battle by trusting his conscience. The human conscience can be bent to do almost anything we want it to do. In this case it can even be bent to immorality. There is only one way in which the young man will win the victory in the situation and that is by clinging to the knowledge of God's will that he has received from Scripture. He must say, Lord, I do not want to give this particular girl up. I can think of a dozen reasons why I do not need to give her up. I can even make my conscience tell me that I should not give her up, but I know that I must. And because of that, I will do it. The young man must make an intellectual decision; and this means that apart from any other factor, he must determine simply to walk in the way that he knows God would have him to go.

Job knew suffering and great persecution but he triumphed through knowledge. And the persecution itself led on to more knowledge. At the beginning Job knew that he was nothing in himself and that he had no rights at all before God. When God allowed the most severe blows of life to fall upon him, Job thrived in the knowledge that there was yet the corresponding grace of God and the extinguishable love of God for himself. As the trials continued, he came to know that God was testing him and purifying his faith and he rejoiced in that knowledge. Finally, he learned that God was revealing himself to him in a new way, and he came to expect an even fuller revelation. For Job knowledge was the key to spiritual victory and his knowledge actually grew because of it. So should it be for every persecuted Christian.

D. Martyn Loyd-Jones says, "It does not say 'Blessed are those who are persecuted because they are objectionable.' It does not say, 'Blessed are those who are having a hard time in their Christian life because they are being difficult.' It does not say, 'Blessed are those who are being persecuted as Christians because they are seriously lacking

in wisdom and are really foolish and unwise in what they regard as being their testimony. It is not that. There is no need for one to elaborate this. But so often one has known Christian people who are suffering mild persecution entirely because of their own folly, because of something either in themselves or in what they are doing. But the promise does not apply to such people. It is for righteousness' sake. Let us be clear about that."

David Thomas in his book The Gospel of Matthew says, "But another point of correspondence between them all is, thirdly, they are all present. Blessed are, says Christ, not blessed shall be. He who has these dispositions is blessed. The dispositions are blessedness, and as the dispositions increase in purity and strength, the blessedness will heighten and expand. We are not to look to any distant locality or onward period to get happiness but to the state of the heart. The true heaven is in the soul. Unless glory is revealed within, there will be no glory without. A soul clouded with guilt and turbulence with conflicting passions will darken the brightest suns and turn the sweetest music into discord."

John MacArthur says, "In other words, the whole matter will become a testimony to you that you belong to God. Isn't that great? The people in the world apart from those being drawn by God cannot handle our kind of life. They cannot stomach it. They do not even understand it. Poverty of spirit runs counter to the pride of an unbelieving heart. The repentant, contrite disposition that mourns over sin is never appreciated by the callous, indifferent, unsympathetic world. The meek and quiet spirit that takes wrong and is not quick to strike back rasps against the proud, militant, resentful spirit characteristic in our world. The craving after deeper spiritual blessing from the Lord is a rebuke to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, as is a merciful spirit to the hardness and cruelty of our world. Purity of heart contrasts sharply and painfully with hypocrisy and corruption. A peacemaker cannot be tolerated by a contentious, antagonistic world. It is the poor, the meek, the sorrowing, the hungry, the sincere, the peacemaking, the persecuted, they enter and the proof of their citizenship is that they are hated by the world."

John F. Walvoord in Matthew, Thy Kingdom Come says, "The beatitudes pronounce those blessed or happy who fulfill

these six standards of the kingdom in character and experience: those poor in spirit or consciously dependent on God; those who mourn; those who are meek or humble; those who thirst after righteousness; those who are merciful, pure in spirit; and who are peacemakers, although persecuted for righteousness' sake, are proper disciples and subjects of the kingdom."

Let us survey again these wonderful words of our Lord and try to summarize the elements that enter into blessedness. There are eight beatitudes. They divide naturally into four separate parts. The first three show us a man turning from his sin to God, and the fourth shows us God turning to the sinner and clothing him with the righteousness of Christ. The next three, that is the fifth, sixth and seventh beatitudes, show us the newborn child of God working the works of righteousness among men. And the final beatitude shows how men react. We might put it another way. There are first, three graces of a contrite soul, followed by God's answer in mercy, in righteousness and in grace. Then follows three graces of a commissioned soul, followed by the world's answer in persecution and reproach. This is the way of blessedness.

 Guy King in his book The New Order says, "So our study of the ideal portrait is finished. What ravishing qualities are displayed. This is the style and size of person the Lord Jesus wants us, expects us to be. How terribly humbling it all is, to look upon that picture of what we should be and then to look upon what we actually are. How far off this ideal citizen we are, at least, I speak for myself."

D. Martyn Loyd-Jones says, "In verses 3-10 you have the character of the Christian described in and of itself, that is, more or less the beatitudes which are a description of the character of the Christian in general. And verses 11 and 12, I would say, show us the character of the Christian is proved by the reaction of the world to him. We are told, 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.' In other words, the character of the Christian is described positively and negatively. First, we see the sort of man he is and then we are told, because he is that, certain things happen to him. Yet, it is still a general description. Then obviously verses 13-16 is an account of the relationship with the Christian

to the world. Or if you prefer it, these verses are descriptive of the function of the Christian in society and in the world. And these descriptions of him are emphasized and elaborated and then are summed up, as it were, in exhortation. 'Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'"

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular passage?

LESSON #1: It is the poor in spirit who inherit the kingdom.

LESSON #2: The God of all comfort comes to those who mourn.

LESSON #3: The Lord protects the rights of the gentle.

LESSON #4: A hungering and thirsting soul for righteousness is a manifestation of spiritual health.

LESSON #5: Suffering for the Saviour involves a great reward.

I think it would be well for us to consider the prayer of Joseph Parker at the conclusion of this first study,

"Dear Lord, hear the prayers we cannot speak, the uprising and motionings of our dumb hearts. Multiply our few words into a great intercession and let all our utterances be repronounced by our priest in heaven. Lord, send messages from your great house to the dwellingplaces of those who are ailing, sick, dying, wearying to die, waiting for the angel, longing for some sound of the coming chariot wheels. Lord, send messages to those who are sitting in the gloom of despair, who say they have tried every key upon their girdle and none will fit; who sit down beside barred gates and walls too high to be scaled. Lord, send your own comforting word to hearts to whom the darkness is a burden, and to whom the night has no star. Preserver of the strangers, take away the loneliness of the stranger's heart. Give him to feel in thine house that he is at his Father's table

and under his Father's blessing; and grant unto the widow and the orphan, the poor, the lonely, the comfortless, and them that have no helper, some message and assurance that shall recover their heart's hope and reestablish them in a wise confidence."

- ① **The poor in spirit** for theirs is the ~~Kingdom~~ of heaven
- ② **They that mourn** for they shall be comforted
- ③ **The meek** (gentle) for they shall inherit the earth
- ④ **Hunger + thirst** for they shall be satisfied
- ⑤ **Merciful** for they shall receive mercy
- ⑥ **Pure** for they shall see God
- ⑦ **Peace-makers** for they shall be called sons of God
- ⑧ **Persecuted** for theirs is the kingdom of heaven

When a person comes to know Jesus Christ in a personal way, this is how he will begin to look!! Real Righteousness