



— 10<sup>th</sup> Annual

# Back To The Bible

*Lectures*

Theme:  
**The  
Beatitudes...**

September 21-23, 2007  
WEST JEFFERSON CHURCH OF CHRIST

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**The Beatitudes**

September 21-23, 2007

**Hosted By:**  
The West Jefferson church of Christ

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## FORWARD

The theme of the lectureship this year is The Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are attitudes we need as Christians living in this world. Our purpose for the study of The Beatitudes is to learn how we can develop these attitudes and to demonstrate them in our lives.

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus directs our thoughts to heavenly things rather than the physical. Jesus begins the sermon on the mount by opening up with The Beatitudes. Before He continues with His teachings He first tells us who will be blessed and why they will be blessed. If we make these attitudes part of our daily Christian walk, we are told that we will be blessed, a blessing that will not be felt here in the physical life, but will be one that we will receive in heaven. While living life on earth these attitudes must be shown unto every individual, in order for us to receive our blessing, which is promised by God.

Jesus not only taught these examples unto the disciples, but also lived them in His life everyday. No matter how Jesus was being treated by the people, He was always demonstrating these attitudes. Jesus is our example, 1 Peter 2:21, **“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”** Looking at the above verse, we are told that Christ is our example and that we should follow His steps. Therefore, we must make these beatitudes a part of our everyday walk with Christ.

We hope this lectureship will help everyone to realize how important the beatitudes are to our Christian life here on earth. May we all strive to be more Christ like and add these beatitudes to our lives.

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Chapter 1  
**“Blessed are the poor in spirit...”**  
Eddy Craft

Eddy Craft was born in Signal Mountain, TN. He graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching in 1972. He conducts a weekly Television Program, “Biblical Viewpoints” which is seen in Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, and Jackson, Mississippi. He also is involved in a weekly Radio Program, “Arise To Truth.” He has preached in Saltville, VA, Rogersville, TN, Abingdon, VA, Luray, VA, and Elizabethton, TN.

He has been involved in numerous Gospel Meetings and Lectureships. He is now a full-time instructor for the Tri-Cities School of Preaching and Christian Development and serves as the Dean of Students. He is married to Betty (Cook) and they have three children and four grandchildren.

**BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT**  
**MATTHEW 5:3**

The Sermon on the Mount is without a doubt one of the greatest lessons ever given. The setting and timing of the sermon has divinity written all over it. A study of this great sermon will truly enhance the lives of all who look at its precepts. Brother Don Walker was correct in writing,

There is probably no section of Jesus’ teaching that is as well known as the Sermon on the Mount. Even those who dabble in Scripture see some value in Jesus’ teaching. Those who are genuine students of God’s Word reap even greater rewards from this section of Scripture.

Brother Walker goes on to quote Brother Robert Taylor Jr. in describing the Sermon on the Mount as “the manifesto of the King, the Constitution of Christianity, the Magna Charta of the church and the greatest Spiritual Bill of Rights ever vouchsafed man.” Brother Leslie G. Thomas, in his book *The Sermon On The Mount*, points out that “the beatitudes reveal a beautiful, order of arrangement: (1). The beginning of faith, (2). The progress of faith, (3). The perfection of faith, (4). The trial of faith.” What great lessons in our Lords teaching on this occasion.

First, the setting is seen in the following. Subsequent to the baptism of Jesus and immediately after the descent from the mount of temptation, it is stated, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues,

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and **preaching the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people” (Matthew 4:23). Next, at the conclusion of the Sermon On The Mount, we read, “And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished **at his doctrine**: [29] For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:28-29). This great sermon is therefore the gospel of the kingdom and the doctrine of Christ. Brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr., in his book *The Sermon On The Mount And The Civil State*, makes the following statement concerning this point, “But Jesus did not teach as the scribes, a mere interpreter and expounder of the existing Mosaic law. He was himself lawgiver, possessed legislative power and taught with that authority.” Brother Wallace also pointed out relative to the context of the beatitudes that the following must be understood in order to have a proper comprehensive evaluation of the Sermon On The Mount. “(1). The announcement of the harbinger of Christ John 1:29 (2). The announcement of both John and Jesus in Matthew 3:1-2 and Mark 1:14-15 (3). The announcement of a new dispensation and inauguration of a new covenant as recorded in Luke 16:16, (4). The pronouncement of the permanent precepts of the gospel, not a mere interlude, not temporary and provisional, but corollary to the Great Commission to which they pointed, in which they were fulfilled, and of the permanence of which the Lord said, ‘even unto the end of the world.’”

In this lesson, I have been asked to give attention to the first beatitude. “**Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven**” (Matthew 5:3). First, let us look at the word “blessed”. Brother Keith A. Mosher, Sr. quoted Allen, who wrote,

Our Lord begins the Sermon on the Mount with the word ‘blessed.’ Some have translated the word as ‘happy’ but Carlisle insisted that blessed is better-lest the word happy be confused with that vague something at which men grasp, and, miss. Jesus began by announcing ‘I want to give

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your happiness so deep, so lasting, so complete that you will be a blessed person.

He continues on to say,

Right at this point, we are in danger of missing the real purpose of the Christian faith. Christians have talked so much about sacrifice, about service, and about acceptance of the will of God that leads to a cross, that often we have missed the truth that Christ's purpose is to make people blessed. And how does this blessedness come to a life? Not by possessing something, nor by doing something, but rather in being something.

"Blessed", what a beautiful word in the Greek language. It comes from the Greek word (Makarioi). Roberson in his word study makes the following point about the word. "Etymology goes back to hap, chance, good-luck as seen in our words haply, hapless, happy, happiness." Roberson then quotes from Weymouth, "Blessedness is, of course, an infinitely higher and better thing than mere happiness." Again, in quoting Bruce, Roberson shows us more, "This is one of the words which have been transformed and ennobled by New Testament use; by association, as in the Beatitudes, with unusual conditions, accounted by the world miserable, or with rare and difficult." Roberson also points out that "it is a pity that we have not kept the word happy to the high and holy plan where Jesus placed it."

Following are a number of passages where this word is used. "If ye know these things, **happy** are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: **blessed** are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). "According to the glorious gospel of the **blessed** God, which was committed to my trust" (1 Tim. 1:11). "Looking for that **blessed** hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, **Blessed** are the dead which die in the Lord from

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henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev. 14:13).

There is no doubt that the word “blessed” is a key word in this section of scriptures. No doubt many, if not all, have and are seeking for happiness in one way or another; however true happiness is only revealed by Jesus Christ. He did this in the sacred Beatitudes. Brother Leslie G. Thomas makes a good observation concerning this when he writes, “These beatitudes, however, are contrary to the commonly accepted idea of happiness, in fact, so contrary they make it difficult for many to regard them as setting forth the basic elements of blessedness or true happiness.” Some try to apply this to a perfect kingdom, which is somewhere in the future. Such is false because the kingdom which the Bible teaches “is within you” (Luke 17:21). The real state of happiness is found in turning our lives over to the sovereign God. Many of us make ourselves sovereign not God. Again, listen to Brother Thomas, “we want to be happy, to be sure, but we also want to be able to name the conditions of our happiness—we want to be happy on our terms.” The Lord came to serve man, not to satisfy him. “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). We need to be used by God rather than try to use God for our selfish means.

One final point on this word “blessed.” Don Walker makes the following quote from John R. W. Stott, “Nevertheless. It is seriously misleading to render makarios “happy.” For happiness is a subjective state, whereas Jesus is making an objective judgment about these people. He is declaring not what they may feel like (“happy”), but what God thinks of them and what on that account they are: they are blessed.”

Next, let us take a look at the word “**poor**” in our text. The New Testament has three words that express poverty. There are two Greek words translated poor in the English text. The first is “penes” which denotes one who has to work for a living because he has no property. He must work to provide food for his family. If he misses a day



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of work his family will not eat. The other Greek word is “ptochos”. This word means the complete destitution of an individual. Look at the quote Dan Walker makes from Hugo McCord; “the man Jesus described is not in tolerably bad circumstances. He is a beggar...A beggar is desperate...if there is no mercy he knows he must die” (Lloyd).

There are many examples where this word is used. “My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. [2] For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a **poor** man in vile raiment; [3] And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the **poor**, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool” (James 2:1-3). Lazarus is described as a beggar. “And there was a certain **beggar** named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores” (Luke 16:20). Our precious Lord used this word again, “Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. [13] But when thou makest a feast, call the **poor**, the maimed, the lame, the blind” (Luke 14:12-13). This word is also relative to the widow who gave the two mites. “And there came a certain **poor** widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. [43] And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this **poor** widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury” (Mark 12:42-43). A form of the word is even used in reference to our Savior. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became **poor**, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).

Now, let us follow the thought of our Lord to its completion. Jesus speaks not just to those who are poverty stricken, but He speaks to those who are poor in spirit, spiritually destitute, and spiritual beggars. These are the ones who do not possess the answers within themselves. Without outside help they are not going to survive. The

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word carries with it the idea of dependence on something other than one's self. They have the attitude of Jeremiah, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). If a person does not come to realize his spiritual condition, he will never enter the kingdom. The one who is poor in spirit depends upon God for direction, which will then lead him into the kingdom. Brother Wallace makes a good point when he says, "It is opposite of the command of the world's resources which breeds the independence of self-sufficiency and human wisdom." Some people think they are just not that bad. Their thinking is that they do not kill, they do not commit adultery, they are good citizens, they are good neighbors, and etc. so therefore they do not see the need for change. All need to come to realize just how poor in spirit man is without God

The attitude of the poor in spirit is seen in the writings of Isaiah. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a **contrite and humble spirit**, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15). They are also seen in the prophet's description of the poor in spirit. "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. [9] No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: [10] And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:8-10).

The apostle Paul was one man who also demonstrated a poor spirit.

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; [13] Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I

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did it ignorantly in unbelief. [14] And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. [15] This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. [16] Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting (1 Tim. 1:12-16).

“For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” “Kingdom of heaven” is unique to Matthew’s account of the gospel. Mark, Luke, Luke and John use “kingdom of God.” The two expressions mean the same thing. There is no distinction between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. Jesus used the two interchangeably. “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. [24] And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:23-24). The poor in spirit enter the kingdom by obeying the gospel of Christ, as we see took place on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. “Kingdom of heaven” helps us to see that those who are poor in spirit are in touch with the heavenlies. Paul, in the book of Ephesians, uses the word “heavenly” five times (Eph. 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). “Heavenly places.” “Heavenly” is plural in the Greek and “places” is italicized in the KJV, thus “the heavenlies”. The kingdom of heaven describes the present position of believers in relationship to Christ. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). The poor in spirit are in touch with the heavenlies!

Jesus used the terms “kingdom” and “church” interchangeably.

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not

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prevail against it. [19] And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:18-19).

Thus entering the kingdom is equal with entering the church. The kingdom is theirs because they will seek it and conform themselves to the conditions of entrance into and membership in the kingdom of heaven. I love the words of inspiration when it says, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: [14] In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14). How sad it is when men try to find forgiveness of sins outside the kingdom of heaven. My friends, are you in the kingdom? Are you poor in spirit enough to obey the gospel?

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Chapter 2  
“**Blessed are they that mourn...**”  
Eric Burns

“**Blessed are they that Mourn**”  
(Matthews 5:4)

**Introduction**

There is a huge benefit in mourning over the sudden discomfort of feeling pain.

Pain connected with walking on a nail, allows one to correct his last action. When ones legs no longer feel pain, the outcome is usually some type paralysis. Likewise, if one feels no pain when he commits sin, his conscience may be seared:

**1Timothy 4:1-2** *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;*

When the meteorologist warns us about a storm, it is best that we mourn and react.

When there is no mourning, this indicates a lack of feeling fear toward danger. The Bible even describes this attitude as people having no more power of feelings:

**Ephesians 4:17-19** *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance*

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*that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

Imagine if every soul would have that deep mourn that God talks about:

**James 4:8-10** *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

Thus, there is a story in the Bible that is full of warnings concerning mourning over storms. When it comes to mourning, we must know how to react. No matter how the weather is at this present time, the storm is coming. It is important for us not only to watch but also be ready for the storm. Mourn, so that we can be more prepared to face them.

**Matthew 7:24-27** *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

### **Discussion**

I call your attention to the book of Acts Chapter 25

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Paul was accused of many things concerning his preaching.

**Acts 25:7** *And when he was come the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.*

Not only was this done to Paul, but this was also done to our Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, Jesus warns us that we will suffer just like he suffered.

**John 15:18-20** *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.*

Paul did what a lot of us need to learn how to do: He spoke up for himself.

**Acts 25:8-12** *While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all. But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. Then Festus,*



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*when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.*

Paul is now a prisoner for doing that in which all of must do; preaching the Gospel. He now has a period of mourning, but nevertheless, he is very much blessed.

**Acts 27:1** *And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.*

If you think that life is going bad for you, consider Paul. Paul is now known as a prisoner: Prisoner: inmate, jailbird, lowest of people, locked up, incarcerated. It takes a strong-minded person to overcome the devil. Better yet, it takes the mind of Christ: Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. This is why it takes great faith to be a child of God.

**Hebrews 11:24-27** *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.*

Even though Paul is a prisoner, he detects something. One of the hardest things to do in life is make people mourn. We are not talking about the mourning over a deceased loved one, or the mourning over physical pain, rather, the mourning that would cause one to change his/her actions in this life.

**Acts 27:9-10** *Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now*

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*already past, Paul admonished them, And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.*

Paul tries to warn the people about Euroclydon: the upcoming storm. He tries to get the people to mourn. It is hard warning people about Euroclydon. It also difficult to get people to mourn over sin: Lying, Stealing, Fornication, Forsake Assembling, Marriage, and Unfaithful:

**Matthew 13:15** *For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*

**Romans 10:1-3** *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*

People seem to always believe something else, other than God's Word.

**Acts 27:11** *Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.*

We shouldn't be so wise with in our own selves that we miss heaven!

**1Corinthians 1:26-27** *For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath*

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*chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;*

**1 Corinthians 3:18-21** *Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours;*

They also said that the area where they were was inconvenient.

**Acts 27:12** *And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.*

Being a Christian is not always convenient:

**2 Corinthians 11:24-28** *Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness*

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*Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*

They also made mention of what the majority was doing.

**Matthew 7:13-14** *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

**Luke 13:23-30** *Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.*

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The Bible said that south wind blew softly so they sailed for Phenice.

**Acts 27:13** *And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.*

Things are not always as they seem:

**Genesis 13:8-13** *And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.*

They thought there was no Euroclydon. They thought they didn't need to mourn: oh but Euroclydon is on the way!

**Matthew 24:37-39** *But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all*

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*away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

Paul was trying to cause them to mourn; however they may have laughed at that inmate Paul as they were sailing!

**Proverbs 14:12** *There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*

**Jeremiah 10:23** *O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*

Remember How The Bible Explains How Quick Things Happen.

**James 4:14** *Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*

Look at how quickly things changed.

**Acts 27:14** *But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.*

The warning was given, but the people did not listen. They were not blessed because they did not mourn.

**Matthew 7:24-27** *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew,*

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*and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

Now they're caught up in the storm: only if they would have listen to Paul.

**Acts 27:15** *And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.*

They now have much work because they did not prepare for the storm.

**Acts 27:16-17** *And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven. And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.*

They think that all hope is gone: This is what Euroclydon will do for you.

**Acts 27:20** *And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.*

After long abstinence Paul then spoke:

**Acts 27:21-22** *But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.*

They began to let down the lifeboats to flee off of the ship.

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**Acts 27:30** *And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,*

Paul began to forewarn the people again.

**Acts 27:31-32** *Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.*

### **Conclusion**

It is very important to mourn, especially when it comes to sin. Mourning will cause us to change and do the right thing. No matter how the weather is at this present time, the storm is coming. It is important for us not only to watch but also be ready for the storm. Euroclydon can be beaten. We must mourn. The only way to escape Euroclydon is by the Word of God.



Chapter 3  
**“Blessed are the meek...”**  
Jonnie Hutchison

Jonnie Hutchison has been preaching the gospel for 31 years. He has done local work in Arkansas, Virginia, Missouri, Texas, and North Carolina. He is a 1976 graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching. He is presently in his 14<sup>th</sup> year of labor with the Liledown Road church of Christ in Taylorsville, North Carolina. Jonnie is married to Gail Bishop his helpmeet of 31 years who is an elementary school Media Coordinator. Jonnie and Gail have three married children (all faithful Christians) and two grandsons.

**“Blessed Are the Meek” (Matthew 5:5)**

How many sermons have been preached, how many articles have been written, how many books have been published with regard to the words Jesus taught in the *Beatitudes*? Yet, in spite of the vast amount of words both spoken and written about these verses, they remain an inexhaustible source of joyful anticipation and assurance for those faithful to God. They speak to the blessedness of following the will of God in ones life pointing to the character of those who would constitute the spiritual kingdom of the Lord. They assure us that genuine and lasting happiness awaits those willing to heed the teaching of the loving Master. These words of our Lord fit the description given by His enemies after they had heard the Lord's teaching: "No man ever spoke like this Man!" (John 7:46 NKJV). A careful study of each of the beatitudes will strengthen the faith and resolve of any soul who desires to make his or her eternal abode with the Lord.

*“Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.”* (Matthew 5:5 NKJV). Several questions come to mind regarding the meaning of this passage. What does the term “blessed” mean? Who are the “meek”? What does it mean to “inherit the earth”? When will the meek be blessed by inheriting the earth?

**“BLESSED”**

The term “blessed” (Greek. *Makarios*) refers to being “supremely blest; by extension, fortunate, well off.”<sup>1</sup> Most agree that the word refers to being happy and

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contented. However, it is not limited to outer rejoicing, but to that deep inner joy that comes to one who knows he is in the right relationship with the Father. It is happiness and contentment unaffected by outward circumstances including the trials, tribulations and persecutions of this life. "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12 NKJV). It is the blessedness that comes to one "Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night." (Psalms 1:1-2 NKJV). It is the same joy that was experienced by the Ethiopian nobleman who after being taught about Jesus and having been baptized into Christ "went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:35-39). Why did the Ethiopian rejoice? He knew that his sins had been washed away (Acts 22:16) and therefore he was a saved person and a recipient of all the spiritual blessings that are found "in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). This happiness and joy is available to any person willing to humble himself before God in submission to His divine will (Matthew 11:28-30; Hebrews 5:8-9). Every person who has been baptized into Christ and thereby put on Christ (Galatians 3:26-27) has every reason to "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). It is the supreme happiness that results from continuing as a "faithful and wise servant" who will be found by his master doing the master's will and will be appointed ruler over all His goods (Matthew 24:45-47), It is the blessedness that comes to those who have not seen, yet believe (John 20:29). It is the blessedness of forgiveness: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin." (Romans 4:7-8 NKJV). This is the "joy inexpressible and full of glory" which the prophets inquired about and angels desired to look into and which is reserved for those who possess the hope of heaven (1 Peter 1:3-12). Yes let us "be glad and

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rejoice and give Him glory for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready” for “blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!” Revelation 19:7-9 NKJV).

The word “blessed” is used seven times in the book of Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14) and is used twice in the New Testament to describe God (1 Timothy 1:11; 6:15).

### **“ARE THE MEEK”**

Who are the meek? Many associate the word meekness with weakness, passivity and lack of courage. The meek are thought of as those who are easily intimidated and imposed upon without protest. However, the word as used in this passage has no reference to either weakness or cowardice, nor is those who possess this characteristic easily intimidated by others. Instead the word indicates humility of mind and life. It is the idea of remaining composed and calm even in the face of the severest circumstances of life. “In the Greek New Testament, ‘meek’ is from the Greet term *praus*. It does not suggest weakness, rather, it denotes *strength brought under control*. The ancient Greeks employed the term to describe a wild horse tamed to the bridle.... In the biblical sense, therefore, it describes one who has channeled his strengths into the service of God.”<sup>2</sup> Barnes wrote, “meekness is patience in the reception of injuries. It is neither meanness nor a surrender of our rights, nor cowardice; but it is the opposite of sudden anger, of malice, of long-harbored vengeance.”<sup>3</sup> One who is meek is not easily provoked or irritated but exercises self-restraint when threatened. One who possesses meekness will not possess a quick temper or be easily agitated when things do not go his way. The attitude of meekness will result in healthy relationships with family, friends and even ones enemies. The meek will give a “soft answer” in volatile situations and thus “turn away wrath” rather than provoke it in others (Proverbs 15:1). The meek will strive to live peaceably with all men, refuse personal vengeance and

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allow good to overcome evil (Romans 12:17-21). The meek will allow God to guide and teach them (Psalm 25:9). The meek will be exalted by God (Psalm 147:6) and beautified with salvation (Psalm 149:4). No wonder Jesus taught “blessed are the meek.”

Biblical examples of meekness include Moses who is described as “very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3). Though Moses hesitated when first called, no one can honestly doubt the courage and conviction of Moses who, with God’s guidance and by His power, faced the powerful Pharaoh of Egypt and led God’s chosen people from hard bondage and to the edge of the Promised Land.

Before his conversion the apostle Paul was the greatest enemy of the church of Christ of his time. He persecuted Christians, capturing and delivering them to prison and death. There is no doubt that Christians feared him even after his conversion (Acts 9:26). Yet, in his communications with the various churches Paul exhibited meekness while fulfilling his mission as the apostle to the Gentiles. “But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.” (1 Thessalonians 2:7). From the intimidating persecutor to the meek apostle, Paul’s character drastically changed. Yet, the meekness with which Paul approached his brethren and his enemies did not indicate a lack of courage or tolerance of error. Paul did not hesitate to speak the words the Holy Spirit gave him in rebuking error both in the church and out. He stood firm against false teachers in the church who desired to bind where God had not bound. “And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” (Galatians 2:4-5 KJV). Paul rebuked the blasphemous errors of Hymenaeus and Alexander who made shipwreck of their faith (1 Timothy 1:19-20). His life was constantly in danger from the Jews.

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On one occasion more than forty of them went so far as to make a pact to not eat or drink until they had taken Paul's life (Acts 23:21). Yet, Paul did not go into hiding nor did he cease preaching and teaching the gospel of Christ. Paul stood before Roman authorities to defend himself from the false accusations of the Jewish leaders and used those opportunities to preach the gospel. He was not intimidated by any man or group of men because he possessed that characteristic of meekness, which allowed him to have tranquility under even the most arduous of circumstances. In Philippians 4:11-13 Paul expressed his meekness in the words, "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (NKJV). No one can read of the life of the apostle Paul and conclude that meekness is equal to weakness.

The greatest example of meekness found in the Bible is Jesus Christ. He is the greatest example because He is the perfect example of the characteristic of meekness. The prophet Isaiah predicted the meekness of Jesus when he wrote, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. (Isaiah 53:7 NKJV). Jesus' suffering of the ridicule, scourging and sacrifice on the cross was an expression of His meekness. The Bible says of Jesus, "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed." (1 Peter 2:22-24 NKJV). Jesus had within His power the ability to both escape His death and to immediately punish those responsible for it. However, He came down to do the Father's will and the

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Father's will was that He die on the cross for the sins of the world. This He did willingly and meekly (Matthew 26:39, 42). Yes, this is the same Jesus who "went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" (Matthew 21:12-13 NKJV). Yes, this is the same Jesus who in the presence of the scribes and Pharisees denounced their hypocrisy in terms so plain that none could misunderstand. "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. 14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. 15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves." (Matthew 23:13-15 NKJV). Was Jesus passive, weak, and spineless? No, but Jesus was meek. He submitted Himself to the will of the Father in all things regardless of the threats made against Him by those who considered Him to be their worst enemy.

Today it is those who willingly sacrifice whatever is necessary in serving the Lord and who humbly submit to His divine will in daily life that follows the great example of meekness set by the Lord (John 13:15; 1 Peter 2:21).

Jesus used His meekness as an incentive to the lost. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am **meek** and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Matthew 11:29 KJV). Would one respond to the invitation of an aggressive, arrogant, malicious, unkind, unloving Savior? No, but one has every reason to respond to the invitation to salvation from a kind, gentle, loving and meek Savior. Jesus desires to relieve every person of the burden of sin. He wants all to come to Him for salvation. (2

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Peter 3:9). To that end He shed His precious blood on the cruel cross. It makes no difference if one has been a great persecutor of the church like Paul or a betrayer of the Lord like Judas. It makes no difference if one has lived to this point in willing disobedience and rebellion to God. It makes no difference if one has left Christ for the world. If one desires to be saved the Lord will cleanse the penitent obedient person and make his precious soul as white as snow. (Acts 17:30; Hebrews 5:8-9; Revelation 1:5; Isaiah 1:18). He alone provides freedom from the burden of sin and rest for the eternal soul (Acts 4:12).

Every child of God should strive diligently to make the characteristic of meekness a part of his or her life. Colossians 3:12-13 reads, "Therefore, as the **elect of God**, holy and beloved, **put on** tender mercies, kindness, humility, **meekness**, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do." NKJV. In the Christian's relationships with his brethren meekness will encourage cooperation and unity. To approach our brothers and sisters with gentleness and patience and to be willing to yield to them in matters of opinion will produce the loving relationship that the God of heaven desires for the spiritual body of Christ and which is necessary to accomplishing our task of saving souls. At the same time we do not have the authority of the Lord to back down in the face of religious error. We cannot compromise divine truth to pacify others. Children of God must stand against and rebuke evil wherever it may be found (1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; 2:15). We must be strong in the Lord and the power of His might (Ephesians 5:10). We must not allow the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ to intimidate us to silence and inaction! This too is meekness.

### **"FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH"**

The sense in which the meek are said to inherit the earth has been a source of debate down through the years. Commentators and other religious writers have

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advanced various views regarding the meaning. Some suggest that this is a symbolic reference to all the promises of God. Others advance the idea that to “inherit the earth” refers to the “new heavens and the new earth” which is symbolic of heaven (2 Peter 3:13). Still others believe that the phrase refers to all of the blessings and good things that those who exhibit meekness enjoy in this life.

Some have used this passage in an effort to advance their false doctrines. Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that the phrase “shall inherit the earth” refers to the original plan of God to make the earth the eternal dwelling place of man. Consider this explanation from the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ Official Website:

“The transformation of the earth into a paradise will take place under a government that exercises its dominion from heaven, a Kingdom with Jesus Christ as King. ([Matthew 6:9, 10](#)) First, that Kingdom will ‘bring to ruin those ruining the earth.’ ([Revelation 11:18](#); [Daniel 2:44](#)) Then, as the ‘Prince of Peace,’ Jesus Christ will fulfill these prophetic words: ‘To the abundance of the princely rule and to peace there will be no end.’ ([Isaiah 9:6, 7](#)) Under that Kingdom, millions of humans, including those who will be brought back to life by means of the resurrection, will have the opportunity to inherit the earth.”<sup>4</sup>

This view clearly contradicts those passages, which speak of the spiritual nature of the kingdom of Christ (Luke 17:20-21). Nowhere does Jesus teach that His kingdom would be an earthly kingdom. If Jesus had intended to establish an earthly kingdom He would have done so at His first coming. Consider the words Jesus spoke to Pilate concerning the nature of His kingdom. “Jesus answered, **My kingdom is not of this world.** If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now **My kingdom is not from here.**” (John 18:36 NKJV). Clearly Jesus describes the



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nature of His kingdom in an entirely different sense than taught by the Jehovah's Witness organization and others who embrace the false doctrine of premillennialism.

Actually, the Bible teaches the total destruction of the earth and the entire material universe by fire at the second coming of Christ. The contention of the Jehovah's Witnesses that the earth will simply be cleansed of all evil by fire rather than destroyed by fire does not fit with the description given by inspiration. The Bible declares, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will **pass away** with a great noise, and the **elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.** 11 Therefore, since **all these things** will be **dissolved**, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness," (2 Peter 3:10-11 NKJV). Note the word "elements". What are the "elements" of this material universe? Friends, the term elements refer to the basic building blocks of the physical universe. All material things are made up of atoms. The atom is the basic building block of matter. More than 100 different elements exist in nature, each with its own unique atomic makeup. The atoms of these elements react with one another and combine in different ways to form a virtually unlimited number of chemical compounds. For this material universe and all that is in it to exist these basic elements or building blocks must all be arranged in the right order. Yet, the Bible teaches that **all of the constituent elements of this material universe will be "burned up" and "dissolved."** The Greek word translated "dissolved" means "to loose". When the elements are loosed their orderly arrangement ends and then the physical will cease to exist. There will be no earthly paradise for man to inherit for God will destroy it all by fire!

The meek are those who will enjoy the inheritance of heaven. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a **living hope** through the

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resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an **inheritance** incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, **reserved in heaven for you**, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for **salvation ready to be revealed in the last time**. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the **revelation of Jesus Christ**, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 **receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.**" (1 Peter 1:3-9 NKJV). Clearly men and women who possess genuine faith and who have endured the trials of this life are looking for an eternal inheritance, not on this earth, but in heaven. This is the end of ones faith, that is, the culmination of living faithful to the Lord in this life – the salvation of the soul.

There are several passages in the book of Psalms, which uses the phrase "inherit the earth." The Psalmist writes of one, who fears the Lord and declares, "He himself shall dwell in prosperity, And his descendants shall **inherit the earth.**" (Psalms 25:13 NKJV). Psalms 37:9 reads, "For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the LORD, They shall **inherit the earth.**" NKJV. Psalms 37:22 reads, "For those blessed by Him shall **inherit the earth**, But those cursed by Him shall be cut off." NKJV. Actually, the statement made by Jesus that the "meek shall inherit the earth" is also found in the book of Psalms. "But **the meek shall inherit the earth**, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Psalms 37:11 NKJV). Barnes indicates that the phrase "inherit the earth" was used by the Jews "to denote any great blessing." He explains, "It was promised to them that they should inherit the land of Canaan. For a long time the patriarchs looked forward to this, Genesis 15:7-8; Exodus 32:13. They regarded it as a great blessing. It was so spoken of in the journey in the wilderness, and their hopes were crowned when they took

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possession of the promised land, Deuteronomy 1:38; 16:20. In the time of our Saviour they were in the constant habit of using the Old Testament, where this promise perpetually occurs, and they used it 'as a proverbial expression to denote any great blessing, perhaps as the sum of all blessings,' Psalms 37:20; Isaiah 60:21. Our Saviour used it in this sense, and meant to say, not that the meek would own great property or have many lands, but that they would possess special blessings... To inherit the land became, therefore, an expression denoting those blessings. When our Saviour uses this language here, he means that the meek shall be received into his kingdom, and partake of its blessings here, and of the glories of the heavenly Canaan hereafter."<sup>5</sup> Burton Coffman writes, "Inherit the earth ... does not refer exclusively to the 'new heaven and the new earth' (2 Peter 3:13), but to this present earth as well. This is not a mere prophecy that the Christians shall be the landed gentry; but it is a statement that their relationship to the earth and its possessions shall be such as to bring them the greatest possible benefit and enjoyment of it."<sup>6</sup>

One who possesses the characteristic of meekness does enjoy many blessings in this life that others do not. The person who exhibits meekness gets along with more people than the arrogant contentious person. The person who is governed by meekness is often the recipient of the wonderful gift of friendship as well as material gifts by those who appreciate his meek and gracious attitude toward life. The meek enjoy a special relationship with family. The meek man does not abuse his spouse or children but leads them to the knowledge of divine truth and living for Christ in this world. He exhibits godliness and patience as he brings his family up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4). The meek person is better able to endure with patience whatever trials come upon him in this life. Because the meek person puts the Lord first in his life he receives the promise of the Lord that the necessities of life will be provided for him (Matthew 6:33). God provides all the need of those who

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subject themselves to His divine will. "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19 NKJV). Therefore, the faithful of God may enjoy this life and its blessings more than all others. No, this is not the promise of freedom from trials, temptations or persecutions. This is not "the gospel of health and wealth." But the child of God who possesses the characteristic of "meekness" is armed with the necessary weapons to overcome whatever this life and the devil throws at him. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (Ephesians 6:10-11 NKJV).

In addition to the above blessings we must also consider the great spiritual blessings we enjoy in this life as the meek children of God. The spiritual fellowship of Deity and one another as brethren is one of those tremendous blessings. (Hebrews 8:11; 1 John 1:7). The avenue of prayer which allows one on one communication with the God of this universe, the very Creator of all things is another. God's throne may be approached with total confidence that He will hear and answer the prayers of the meek (John 16:23; James 1:5; 1 John 5:14-15). "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16 NKJV). Still another great blessing available to one who possesses that characteristic of meekness is the hope of eternal life in heaven. It is this hope that anchors us through the storms of life that sometimes seem almost unbearable. In Hebrews 6:17-20 inspiration declares, "Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, **we might have strong consolation**, who have fled for refuge **to lay hold of the hope set before us**. 19 **This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast**, and which enters the Presence behind the veil," NKJV. Yes, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

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## CONCLUSION

In prophetic utterance the prophet Zephaniah uttered, “I will leave in your midst A **meek and humble** people, And **they shall trust in the name of the LORD.**” (Zephaniah 3:1 NKJV). Who are the meek? The meek are those who submit to the will of God in all things. In what sense and when will the meek inherit the earth? Those who are meek and obedient to God enjoy the many physical and spiritual blessings which God makes available in this life to those who have become a part of His spiritual kingdom and ultimately the fulfillment of His promise of an eternal existence in heaven. Yes, “blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.”

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<sup>1</sup> Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright (c) 1994, Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, Inc.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 5:5 – Meek Inherit the Earth, By Wayne Jackson, *Christian Courier Website*, November 26, 2004, [http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/read/matthew\\_55\\_meek\\_inherit\\_the\\_earth](http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/read/matthew_55_meek_inherit_the_earth)

<sup>3</sup> Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft

<sup>4</sup> “The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth – HOW? Author Unknown [http://www.watchtower.org/e/20041001/article\\_02.htm](http://www.watchtower.org/e/20041001/article_02.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft

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<sup>6</sup> Coffman's Bible Commentary, Copyright © 1971-1993 by ACU Press, Abilene Christian University. All rights reserved.

## Chapter 4

# “Blessed are they which do hunger...”

Paul Kirkpatrick

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He has been preaching for twenty-five years and has preached Gospel meetings in West Virginia, Indiana, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Udon Thani, Thailand. He has been a guest speaker on lectureships in Indiana, North Carolina, and South Carolina. He has made mission trips to Jamaica and Thailand. He has had articles published in the Carolina Christian, Palmetto Messenger and the Carolina Messenger. He is also a former Board Chairman and Associate Editor for the Palmetto Messenger [now the Carolina Messenger], and currently serves as board member. Paul is active in youth work, such as the South Midlands Youth Rally, and Christian camps in Ohio, Tennessee, South Carolina, and North Carolina.

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## “BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH DO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS”

Matthew 5:6

In the giving of His judgment against the wicked and His blessings on the Godly, Isaiah wrote: Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice but ye shall be ashamed (Isa.65: 13).

It seems that many are confused about the idea of happiness! People try and make blessedness what they desire. These carnal pursuits completely "miss the mark." Hunger will make a man yearn and seek for that which will make him full, and thirst will drive him until he is quenched. To hunger *and* thirst is to make every effort to seek what is right at the center of our life. This hungering and thirsting, ought to truly make our lives harmonize with the sweet song of the Psalmist, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God (Psa.42: 1).

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John wrote, "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal upon Him" (John 6:27).

The key for any of us to understand this idea in the monumental aspect in which it was given, is for us to realize that the "voice from heaven" (2 Pet.1: 18), wasn't talking about snack-hunger to tide us over, but rather a kind of starvation that would make us long for the nectar of the honeycomb of God (Psa. 19). The Prodigal Son understood this kind of hunger--starvation. When things got sour for the young son who left his father and went to a far land, he had to do something that he never thought of himself doing (Luke 15:15). While he was indeed hungry and that hunger led him to feed the pigs. It was in no way the kind of starvation that lead him back to the arms of his father. This man's faith began to stir within his heart. Luke records: "But when he had spent all, there arose a great famine in the land, and he began to ***be in want.***" (Luke 15:14) "But when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants, of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I ***perish with hunger***" (Luke 15:17).

This story of the Prodigal Son epitomizes the very nature of the Son of God on the Cross. It was on that hill of Golgotha that the Lord showed the world, with crystal clarity, the very attitude it takes to "seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..." (Mat. 6:33). With two simple, yet paramount, words, "I thirst" (John 19:28), the Lord underscores the very essence of the *Beatitudes*. Doing the will of the Father satisfied a desire in Christ that was more intense than the satisfying of His own physical pain. Considering all that the Lord could have asked, the words "I *thirst*" showed man that the spiritual far out weighs the physical in any situation.

We live in a time when people live in great fear for their jobs, their neighborhoods and their families. This fear often leads to desperation and the danger is that in our desperation we often leave God out of our thoughts. Everyone seems to worry about something. The young worry about getting old and the old worry about getting



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older. Some worry about the rains and still others worry about the drought. Single folk worry about getting married and married people worry about being that way. The point is that most of what man worries about is the material, cosmetic and natural things that will not endure (2 Pet. **3: 10-11**). Jesus said, "I thirst" That was all that our Lord needed and that, my friend, is all we should concern ourselves with as well.

Man must come to realize who God is, and upon realizing that, he must respond in the only appropriate way, to fall at His feet. It is our sins that have separated us from God and like the Prodigal Son we must mourn and grieve over that fact (Isa. **59: 1-2**). May we ever yearn for God and that righteousness which makes us like our God. It is a hunger and thirsting that makes us want to "do whatsoever he tells you to do" (John **2:5**).

Jesus tells us to desire righteousness as surely and persistently as we do physical hunger and thirst. Physical hunger and thirst are as natural to us as sitting down and standing up. Sadly though, this is not the case with the spiritual hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Often, children of our heavenly Father get out of the habit of going to services, studying their Bibles daily, bowing their knees in fervent prayer and even minding their words as they issue forth from their mouth. Friend, if our neighbors cannot tell by the way we act, live and speak, "that we have been with Jesus," (Acts 4:13), then we have forgotten our purpose of glorifying Him (Psa. 43:5).

Even as sad as that is, sadder still is the one that does not even know that he or she is starving spiritually. In this land in which we live where everything, including the Bible, is so readily available, there are teeming millions that are starving their souls by eating at the trash piles of error instead of feasting on the "words of life" (Phil.2: 16), the "manna from heaven" (John 6:48-55).

It has been said, "Change the hunger, and you change the man; control the hunger and you control the man." Brethren, how true that is in light of the word of God.

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The promise of the Lord, for all that would "*Hunger and thirst after righteousness*," was that they would "*Be filled*." There is no more comforting thought for that child of God than the thought that if we continue to desire to go to heaven that heaven will be our reward. The Lord said, "He that endures to the end, shall be saved" (Mat. 10:22).

While many pride themselves on being intelligent the only intelligent ones, in the only sense that will matter eternally, are those who continue to practice the saving knowledge of the Bible. Jesus said, "If any man wills to do his will, he shall know of the teaching" (John 7:17). He adds: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45). He assures us, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

As the promise was spoken while Jesus was upon the earth, its fulfillment is redeemed in the confines of glory. John what do you see? John said, "I see people who shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ... For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. 7: 16- 17).

Those that *hunger and thirst after righteousness* enjoy this earth, this life, with blessing one hundred fold, and will bask in the radiant sunlight of God's presence in the world to come. It is indeed the meek that utters, "All this and heaven too!

Chapter 5  
**“Blessed are the merciful...”**  
Milton Mathers

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**BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL**

By Milton Mathers

**Text: Matthew 5:7: “Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.”**

So far the beatitudes have been teaching on man’s need and consciousness of his need (Poor, Mourn, Meek, Hunger and Thirst). The next three begin to look at what we become because of what’s happened before.

The one who is poor in spirit, has mourned over his sins, meekly submitted to God’s will, hungers and thirsts after righteousness sake, and becomes a merciful person. This does not mean one who has an easy-going attitude towards sin or pretends to not see sin, or one who winks at sin, smiles at it, or is too weak to take a stand against sin. God is merciful, but He does not have an easy-going attitude toward sin. Not only is God is merciful, He is also holy, righteous and just. Ps 22:3: “But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel.” Deut. 32:4: “He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.”

“Merciful” is from the adjective “eleemon”; “mercy” is from the noun “*e/eos*” and is defined as “kindness or good will towards the miserable and the afflicted, joined with a desire to help them.” Strong’s Concordance states that mercy is “to feel sympathy with the misery of another, and especially sympathy manifested in act”. Mercy

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involves seeing the misery and pain of others, having compassion, and doing something about it!

### **THE FIRST USE OF “MERCY” IN THE BIBLE**

Genesis 19:14-16: “So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, “Get up, get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city!” But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking. <sup>15</sup> When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, “Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.” <sup>16</sup> And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.”

Lot had compromised. He pitched his tent toward Sodom (Genesis 13:12), dwelled in Sodom (Genesis 14:12), then he was sitting at the gate of Sodom (Genesis 19:1). He was still described as righteous in 2 Peter 2:7. He was now in greater trouble than he realized, but the Lord had mercy on him and saved him. God had compassion on this weak man and did something about it – He was merciful.

### **The Mercy Seat**

Exodus 25:17-22: “You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width. <sup>18</sup> And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. <sup>19</sup> Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. <sup>20</sup> And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. <sup>21</sup> You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. <sup>22</sup> And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the

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Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.” This is a picture of the truth Peter wrote of in 1 Peter 1:10-12: “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you,<sup>11</sup> searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.<sup>12</sup> To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.” The angels saw the mercy seat covering the Law. The law brought condemnation. How was God going to cover the law with mercy? God saw the condition of mankind, He had compassion, and did something about it.

### **Requests for Mercy**

When people asked Jesus for mercy, they weren't asking for sympathy, they were asking Him to do something!

The request of the Canaanite woman. Matthew 15:21-22: “Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon.<sup>22</sup> And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.” She was asking for more than sympathy, she was asking for Jesus to do something.

The request of the man with the epileptic son. Matthew 17:14-15: “And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying,<sup>15</sup> “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.” He wanted more than mere pity for his child, he wanted him cured and only Jesus could do that by showing him mercy.

The request of Bartimaeus. Luke 18:35-41: “Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain

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blind man sat by the road begging.<sup>36</sup> And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant.<sup>37</sup> So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.<sup>38</sup> And he cried out, saying, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”<sup>39</sup> Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”<sup>40</sup> So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him,<sup>41</sup> saying, “What do you want Me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, that I may receive my sight.” Bartimaeus (Mark 10:26) wanted mercy. He didn’t just want Jesus to feel sorry for him, but he wanted Jesus to do something! (18:41) Jesus would not just use words only in showing His mercy upon others, He did something about it!

The request of the lepers is a similar incidence in Luke 17:11-13: “Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.<sup>12</sup> Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off.<sup>13</sup> And they lifted up their voices and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” The 10 lepers wanted mercy. They wanted Jesus to do something! It is too bad that they all didn’t appreciate it like the one did. Are we guilty of this ourselves at times?

The request of the rich man in torment found in Luke 16:23-24: “And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.<sup>24</sup> “Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ Now here is a case where Abraham couldn’t show mercy on this rich man, it was too late to do so. He should have been more interested in the things of God while he was alive, but now it is too late for any kind of mercy.

### **The Mercy of the Good Samaritan**

Jesus teaches about the Samaritan who saw the need and did something about it. Luke 10:29-37: “But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”<sup>30</sup> Then Jesus answered and said: “A certain man went down

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from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. <sup>34</sup> So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' <sup>36</sup> So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" <sup>37</sup> And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

How many are the priest or levite, too busy being religious to do something about the misery they see? Why was this story told to begin with? It answered the question asked in vs. 25. The question: Luke 10:25: "And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The answer: Luke 10:37: "And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

If it is all possible we must take care of physical needs of others if we expect to go to heaven, Matthew 25:31-46. The reason the goats were lost – Not because they were not baptized, etc., but what they had not done for others. They had not been merciful.

We can have the right doctrine and go through the right motions, and still be lost if we do not have mercy towards others. Matthew 23:23: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."

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## Our Greatest Need Is Spiritual

We can be too busy being like the Levites and priests, that we forget to show mercy. We can go to church, meetings, wait on table, do invitations, etc.; go through all the functions necessary, but forget compassion on those that have been beaten and mauled. Too many seem to think that going through the motions of worship services make's one faithful. We cannot be faithful without proper worship, but too many seem to never understand that Christianity includes helping people turn from sin and be forgiven. We need to be merciful towards the sinner. What gives us the ability to be merciful is our realization of what we have been forgiven. Jesus told the story of the "unmerciful debtor" to illustrate the willingness we should have to forgive others. Matthew 18:23-35: "Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. <sup>25</sup> But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. <sup>26</sup> The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' <sup>27</sup> Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. <sup>28</sup> "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' <sup>29</sup> So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' <sup>30</sup> And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. <sup>32</sup> Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. <sup>33</sup> Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' <sup>34</sup> And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. <sup>35</sup> "So My heavenly



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Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

Both “compassion” and “pity” in verse 33 are translated from “eleeo”, the same word translated by the phrase “shall obtain mercy” in Matthew 5:7. This is why newer translations say “mercy”. Matthew 18:33: (NASB) “Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?”

The context of the story of the unmerciful debtor. Peter asked if he should be willing to forgive his brother seven times. Jesus said, no, you should forgive seventy times seven because you need to remember your great debt that God was willing to forgive. Matthew 18:15-22: “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. <sup>16</sup> But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ <sup>17</sup> And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup> “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup> “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” <sup>21</sup> Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.” Matthew 6:14-15: “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

### **The Mercy of the High Priest**

Hebrews 5:1-3: “For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. <sup>2</sup> He can

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have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness.<sup>3</sup> Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins.”

“Compassion” is from metriopatheo. It is from a compound of the base metrios (a little) and pathos (emotion, whether sad or joyous) It is literally – little emotion. Hebrews 5:2 is the only place it is used in the Bible. (1) to be affected moderately or in due measure. (2) to preserve moderation in the passions, esp. anger or grief. (2a) of one who is not unduly disturbed by the errors, faults, sins of others, but bears them gently. The thought of his own weakness and sin makes him moderate in his (justifiable) displeasure and anger at the sins of the people.” Strong’s Concordance.

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament states, “Because he was aware of his own weakness, the High Priest was not to get overly angry with the sins of others. This doesn’t mean that he wasn’t to take a stand against sin, but he was to be merciful as he took a stand. Those who are not merciful have never considered the enormity of their own debt before God. When we understand how much mercy God has had towards us, it should change us into being a more merciful people towards others.”

Look at the order of the Beatitudes.

- If we are poor, have mourned, become meek, and hunger, we will be merciful.
- We become poor in spirit when we compare ourselves to God.
- We mourn over what has made us separate from our God and such failures.
- We become meek as humbly submit to God’s will and depend on His Word in everything.
- We hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God. We know our righteousness without forgiveness is as filthy rags.

All of this changes us. We now become a merciful people. We now see others in a different way. We know others are sinners just as ourselves and they are in need of the same

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mercy we have received from God. We have freely received mercy and we freely show mercy to others.

### **Shall Obtain Mercy**

If we want mercy from God we must show mercy to others. Just as if we want to be forgiven by God, we must forgive others.

Psalm 18:25: “With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless.”

James 2:13: “For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.”

Matthew 7:2: “For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”

### **The Mercy of God**

Psalm 136:1-26: “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! for His mercy endures forever. <sup>2</sup> Oh, give thanks to the God of gods! for His mercy endures forever. <sup>3</sup> Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords! for His mercy endures forever: <sup>4</sup> To Him who alone does great wonders, for His mercy endures forever; <sup>5</sup> To Him who by wisdom made the heavens, for His mercy endures forever; <sup>6</sup> To Him who laid out the earth above the waters, for His mercy endures forever; <sup>7</sup> To Him who made great lights, for His mercy endures forever— <sup>8</sup> The sun to rule by day, for His mercy endures forever; <sup>9</sup> The moon and stars to rule by night, for His mercy endures forever. <sup>10</sup> To Him who struck Egypt in their firstborn, for His mercy endures forever; <sup>11</sup> And brought out Israel from among them, for His mercy endures forever; <sup>12</sup> With a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm, for His mercy endures forever; <sup>13</sup> To Him who divided the Red Sea in two, for His mercy endures forever; <sup>14</sup> And made Israel pass through the midst of it, for His mercy endures forever; <sup>15</sup> But overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, for His mercy endures forever; <sup>16</sup> To Him who led His people through the wilderness, for His mercy endures forever; <sup>17</sup> To Him who struck down great kings, for His mercy endures forever; <sup>18</sup> And slew famous

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kings, for His mercy endures forever—<sup>19</sup> Sihon king of the Amorites, for His mercy endures forever; <sup>20</sup> And Og king of Bashan, for His mercy endures forever—<sup>21</sup> And gave their land as a heritage, for His mercy endures forever; <sup>22</sup> A heritage to Israel His servant, for His mercy endures forever. <sup>23</sup> Who remembered us in our lowly state, for His mercy endures forever; <sup>24</sup> And rescued us from our enemies, for His mercy endures forever; <sup>25</sup> Who gives food to all flesh, for His mercy endures forever. <sup>26</sup> Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven! for His mercy endures forever.”

Titus 3:5: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”

May God help us all to show mercy unto others just as He did, and just as His Son the Christ of mercy showed. Luke 6:36: “Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.”

Chapter 6  
**“Blessed are the pure in heart...”**

Tim Canup

Tim Canup was born in Galax, VA and is the youngest of five children of Jimmy and Mary Canup. His father is also a minister of the Gospel. He is a graduate of the West Virginia School of Preaching. He has done local work with churches in Statesville and West Jefferson, NC. He is an instructor at the Tri-Cities School of Preaching. They are new proud parents of a baby boy.

**“Blessed Are The Pure In Heart...”**

Tim Canup

**INTRODUCTION**

“And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying” (Matthew 5:1-2). The words that follow, which are recorded here by Matthew, fell from lips of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and comprise the greatest sermon ever spoken. Leslie G. Thomas noted: “The words of Jesus in this discourse present an ideal for human life, founded upon religious truths and moral principles, which has been and still is recognized as the highest standard of life yet conceived; and it is further regarded as the ultimate standard to which mankind can and must attain” (Thomas, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 2). This sermon was preached by the One who knows our hearts and thus knows that man, within himself, is not happy; he is not blessed. “We want to be happy, to be sure, but we also want to be able to name the conditions of our happiness—we want to be happy on our own terms” (Thomas, 11). Brother Thomas further noted, “It is when the question of sovereignty is settled that new sources of happiness begin to appear in our lives.... If we would indeed be happy, we must be used of God rather than endeavor to use him for our own ends” (Thomas, 11).

Thus, a study of the Sermon on the Mount is most beneficial to anyone who desires to follow Jesus, obtain an eternal home in heaven and to find true happiness. Every morsel of this sermon should be carefully dissected, ingested and digested by every truth seeker. Our attention, however, in this study will be limited to the first part of the sermon, the “Beatitudes,” and in particular,

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Jesus' pronounced blessing on those who are pure in heart.

### **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

The background setting for "The Sermon on the Mount," took place when Jesus "went up on a mountain..." (Matthew 5:1). The exact location of this mountain is not, nor needs to be, known. In the Gospel according to Luke, he records, "And He came down with them and stood on a level place {or plain in the King James Version}..." (Luke 6:17). While some view the discrepancy in the location as a contradiction in the Bible, there are several possible explanations. H. Leo Boles suggests that this sermon "may have been repeated a number of times and Luke gives a record of the sermon which was repeated at some later time than the record given by Matthew" (Boles, *A Commentary on The Gospel According to Luke*, 134). Many preachers have preached the same sermon at different times and at different locations, or even used the same analogy or illustration in more than one sermon. Could Jesus not have delivered this same sermon, or at least various parts of it, more than once? Brother Thomas commented that "...the question as to whether or not the records of Matthew and Luke are of the same sermon, or the same teaching on different occasions, is not of great importance. It is enough to know that the teaching is practically the same and that it was given by Jesus" (Thomas, 3-4). Also, one must consider that the term "plain" from (*topou pedinou*) simply means level place, and mountains certainly can have a "level place" or "plain" on them.

Context is of utmost importance in properly interpreting and understanding anything. Let us take just a moment to consider the context of the "Sermon on the Mount." Luke records, "Now as the people were in expectation {of the coming of the Messiah – TAC}, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not" (Luke 3:15). John clearly points out his position in the scheme of things by indicating that there is One coming after him who is mightier than himself. Having

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been baptized by John (Matthew 3:13-17), which was witnessed by the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 3:7), Jesus enters into the wilderness where He is tempted (Matthew 4:1-11). A short time later, after performing His first miracle (John 2:1-11), Jesus travels to Jerusalem for the Passover, where He cleanses the Temple for the first of two times in His life (John 2:13-22), which stirs strife with the “religious leaders” of His day, that is, the Pharisees and the Scribes. Sometime after this Passover, Jesus returns back to Galilee and teaches the people concerning the coming Kingdom. There, on one occasion, Jesus enters the synagogue, teaches the people and heals a demoniac man, which was against the **traditions** of the Pharisees (Mark 1:21-28). Some time later, Jesus forgives the sins of a paralytic man and then heals Him (in doing so claims to be God), thus further stirring controversy with the Pharisees (Mark 2:1-12). The tension only mounts when Jesus calls Matthew, a tax collector, which was considered the lowest of sinners, as a disciple and goes to his house for a meal (Mark 2:13-17).

The controversy with the Pharisees only grew more and more intensive when: they accused His disciples of not fasting (Mark 2:18-22), which was simply another of their **traditions**; when Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath (John 5:1-47); when they charged His disciples of plucking grain on the Sabbath day (Mark 2:23-28), which in essence was their corrupt interpretation of the law of Moses; finally, when Jesus healed a man’s withered hand on yet another Sabbath (Mark 3:1-6). By this time, Jesus had exposed the hypocrisy of these so-called “religious leaders,” and He and His disciples withdrew to a private place. However, the multitudes followed (Mark 3:7-12; Matthew 12:15-21) and there He delivered this great sermon.

The key verse to help in understanding Jesus’ teachings in this sermon is “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). Fenter Dee Northern wrote:

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The central theme in the Sermon on the Mount is to present: 1) the superior authority of Jesus' teaching to that of the scribes and Pharisees, 2) the character and happiness of those who would enter the kingdom of heaven and, 3) to inform all that it takes a superior righteousness to that of the Jewish traditionalists in order to enter the kingdom of heaven (Northern, *Grace All Sufficient*, 157).

The teachings of Jesus on the mount, although they went against the popular notion of the hypocritical religious leaders, were true and much needed to be a citizen in the coming Kingdom. Mr. Eddleman noted, "If the 'Teaching' of Jesus is not true, then it does not matter whether we study it seriously" (8). The "Teaching" of Jesus is true (both here in this sermon as well as any other place in the Gospel accounts) and thus should be taken with extreme seriousness. Jesus delivered it with authority (cf. Matthew 7:28-29). Eddleman noted that "Christ's Authority Stems from Five Factors":

(1) Truth. – What Jesus taught was true, and the people knew it. Truth cannot be gainsaid. If one of Jesus' sayings could be demonstrated to be untrue, his authority to command us would be dissolved.

(2) Compassion. – Jesus' teachings are helpful. He never did or taught one thing that hurt anybody. If one of his principles could be shown to be detrimental to mankind, then it would diminish his authority by that much. There is something indescribably compelling about One whose every deed and utterance benefits.

(3) Practicability. – Jesus' teachings actually work. No matter how loving, how true the teacher, if his principles are unworkable, he cannot hold us.

(4) Judgment. – The authority of Jesus lies ultimately in the fact that he is Judge.



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- (5) His own person. – Christ never prefaced his teaching with ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ The prophets did; and the scribes quoted the prophets as their authority. Christ’s authority depended not upon ‘external credentials’ but upon himself (Eddleman, *Teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5-7, 8-11*).

### **WHAT ARE THE BEATITUDES?**

“The Beatitudes” (from the Latin *beatus*, meaning blessed or happy) have been referred to as “Pentecost Pointers.” These are characteristics that followers of Christ are to possess. Mr. H. Leo Eddleman commented:

On seeing the multitudes Jesus “went up into a mountain” and taught. The Sermon (Teaching) on the Mount has ever since remained a formula for lifting {men – TAC} to higher ground. Its message bears all the marks of coming from above. Whether Christ delivered it from a peak with people sitting on the sloping ground before him or on a level place near the top as Luke implies in the word “plain” (Luke 6:17), this sermon comes from a high level—both figuratively and literally. It calls for the highest in ethics and the best in conduct.

No mere man could or would have formulated such principles. The first time you *read* them you feel sure they will not work; the first time you *try* them you know nothing else will work (Eddleman, 1).

He also noted:

The LAW began with a curse. . . . The gospel of the kingdom begins with “blessedness” or happiness. The center of gravity of the King’s subjects is in the moral realm, and no distortion of things physical can upset them. Like a gyroscope they retain an inward balance regardless of outward circumstances—a new type of manhood!

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The Beatitudes show how happiness is possible to those who ordinarily are not expected to be happy (Eddleman, 15).

Jesus used the word “blessed,” which has the meaning of “spiritual prosperity” (Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 3: *Treasures From The Greek New Testament*, 20) or “blessed, fortunate, happy, free from daily cares and worries” (Rogers & Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, 8).

Brother Thomas Seals well noted:

In a study of the Beatitudes, the great interest that Jesus manifests in the moral life of the Christian community is vividly portrayed. According to the Lord, the righteousness of His disciples must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (cf. Matthew 5:20). And this righteousness is not a mere list of ethical duties. It is the total attitude of heart and mind, a particular kind of lifestyle. So, far from being passive and mild, these Beatitudes present a way of life that is in sharp conflict with the standards of the world. The world’s standards are things such as pride, pleasure-seeking, aggressiveness and compromise. The standard set forth by Jesus, however, are those qualities such as poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness and peacekeeping. These standards sharply clash with the standards of the world (Seals, *The Sermon on the Mount for Modern Living*, 5).

Clovis G. Chappell commented:

What an audience this is that faces the Master! The inner circle is made up of his special friends. Beyond them stretch acres of human faces. It is a vast throng. It is made up of all kinds and conditions of men. It is a cross-section of humanity. There are

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the successful and the failures. There are those who have conquered and those who have been defeated. There are the rich and the poor. There are the literate and the illiterate....

But as he looks into their faces, as he looks beyond their faces into their hearts, he sees that they are all out on the same quest. They are all seeking for the same thing. Most are seeking blunderingly {without aim – TAC}. They have been disappointed and are doomed to further and deeper disappointment. The pathos of their blind gropings lays hold on the Master's heart. It suggests to him a theme for the sermon of the hour. "Every heart here," he says to himself, "is in search of happiness. But they have missed the way, most of them. I can do nothing better than point out the way that they have missed" (Chappell, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 9-10).

The order of the Beatitudes is logically given, not haphazardly. Jesus built upon one another in order to have a complete, happy child of God. Happiness is not the result of any single given beatitude, but one leads to the other and the end result is happiness. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (verse 3). Jesus did not simply say, "blessed are the poor," meaning those deprived of material possessions. "To be poor in spirit does not mean self-contempt. Jesus never tells us to despise ourselves" (Chappell, 14). What Jesus did mean was the emptying of oneself of self-reliance, self-confidence, self-expression, and pride. "Being free of pride and vanity, the poor in spirit are aware of their spiritual poverty. Being conscious of it, they have a deep sense of need. This is the chief prerequisite for profound Christian experience" (Eddleman, 17).

Then Jesus said, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (verse 4), which does not

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necessarily refer to physical mourning, for example, over the loss of a loved one. It is not an outward, physical mourning; it is the inward, spiritual turmoil due to sin and the reality that we, in and of ourselves, can do nothing about it! Jesus then follows that with, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (verse 5). What does it then mean to be meek? The world thinks it is an individual who is void of courage and self-respect; of no use to himself or anyone else; the down-trodden and broken spirited. Meekness NOT weakness! It is power under control. Thomas Seals suggested, in this context, “Meekness is a state of mind which includes willingness to allow God to direct our ways, rather than choose our own way and then try to force God’s word to conform to that choice” (Seals, 15). This cannot happen, unless one is willing to recognize their spiritual poverty which should naturally cause them to mourn. Having said that, Jesus then states, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (verse 6). To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to actively seek God’s commandments, ordinances and laws (cf. Psalm 119:172).

Jesus next states, “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (verse 7). No man can be made right with God without a proper concern and compassion for his fellow man. What is mercy? It is compared with grace, yet not grace itself. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones commented:

Grace is especially associated with men in their sins; mercy is especially associated with men in their misery. In other words, while grace looks down upon sin as a whole, mercy looks especially upon the miserable consequences of sin. So that **mercy really means a sense of pity plus a desire to relieve that misery** (Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 99, emphasis added-TAC).

Mercy is more than just pity; it is pity plus action! Kind thoughts without actions are counterfeit! One who is

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merciful has pity on those in misery associated with the entrapment of sin and has a strong, active desire to help lead them out of sin. Because of sin and what it does, everyone is in need of mercy and Jesus teaches us that we must give mercy to receive mercy. Again, Mr. Lloyd-Jones noted: "What makes me merciful is the grace of God...So it comes to this. If I am not merciful there is only one explanation; I have never understood the grace and the mercy of God; I am outside Christ; I am yet in my sins, and I am unforgiven" (Lloyd-Jones, 105). Then Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (verse 8). This is where we will spend the rest of our time.

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE "PURE IN HEART?"**

When Jesus gave this Beatitude, He hit at the core of things; He went to very center or essence of the Christian religion: the human heart. He was not speaking of the blood pump; rather, He was speaking concerning the center of man's being, his mind. The heart to which Jesus refers is that with which man: reasons (Matthew 24:48); understands (Matthew 13:15); doubts (Mark 11:23); ponders (Mark 2:19); etc.

Notice that Jesus did not say, "Blessed are the pure in head..." referring to man's intellect. Intellect is important; we have it and God expects us to use it, but that is not what Jesus said. Neither did Jesus say, "Blessed are the pure in conduct..." referring to external actions. Jesus is concerned with the condition of man's heart, which determines conduct (cf. Matthew 12:34-35; 15:18-19; Mark 7:21-23). If a man has a problem with conduct or actions, it is a result of a heart problem! (Lloyd-Jones, 108-109, cf. Stevens, 44). The wise man wrote, "Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it *spring* the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). Mr. Lloyd-Jones commented:

The gospel of Jesus Christ is concerned about the heart: all its emphasis is upon the heart. Read the accounts which we have in the Gospels of the teaching of our blessed Lord, and you will find that all along He is talking about the heart. The same is true in

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the Old Testament. Our Lord undoubtedly put this emphasis here because of the Pharisees. It was His great charge against them always that they were interested in the outside of the pots and platters and ignored the inside. Looked at externally, they were without spot. But their inward parts were full of ravening and wickedness. They were most concerned about the external injunctions of religion; but they forgot the weightier matters of the law, namely, to love God and the love of one's neighbour. So here our Lord puts this great emphasis upon it again. The heart is the whole centre of His teaching (Lloyd-Jones, 108-109).

Let us turn our attention to this word "pure," which comes from the Greek word *katharos*. Other uses of this word in the Gospel accounts are: Matthew 23:26, 27:59; Luke 11:41; John 13:10, 11; 15:3, and is translated as "clean." In Acts 18:6 and 20:26, it is used with the idea of "clean from guilt, guiltless, innocent" (Perschbacher, 213). It has basically two meanings. The first is, "without hypocrisy, singleness of heart" (Lloyd-Jones, 111, cf. Stevens, 45). Again, Mr. Lloyd-Jones noted:

One meaning is that it is without hypocrisy; it means, if you like, 'single'. You remember our Lord talks about the evil eye later on in this Sermon on the Mount. He says, 'If therefore thine eye be **single**, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.' This pureness of heart, therefore, corresponds to 'singleness'. It means, if you like, 'without folds'; it is open, nothing hidden. You can describe it as sincerity; it means single-minded, or single-eyed devotion (Lloyd-Jones, 111, emphasis added).

In other words, it is to have singleness of purpose in our life that exalts God and gives Him the preeminence

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in all things! Also, it has to do with singleness of motive; our desire to obey God! You remember Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). When God gave the children of Israel the Ten Commandments, after instructing them to avoid false gods, He said, “you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God...” (Exodus 20:5). God will not accept our attention to be divided with any other person or thing. James stated it this way: “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and **purify your hearts, you double-minded**” (James 4:8, emphasis added). Notice Mr. Lloyd-Jones observations: “Now the pure in heart is the heart that no longer is 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 seems to say; ‘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” (Lloyd-Jones, 111).

The second definition is, “clean, having been cleansed or without defilement” (cf. Lloyd-Jones, 111, Stevens, 45). When man transgresses (misses the mark) the law of God, he sins (cf. I John 3:4). With sin in one’s life, he or she is separated from God (cf. Isaiah 59:1-2) and is in need of being cleansed. We must realize that we do not have the power within us to cleanse ourselves. The only way one can be cleansed is by being washed in the blood of Jesus the Christ (cf. Revelation 1:5). Paul said, “...Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word...” (Ephesians 5:23-24). This cleansing does not come through a monastic lifestyle; rather, by obedience to the gospel. Peter said, “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart” (I Peter 1:22). Later, Peter wrote, “There is also an antitype which now saves us; baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good

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conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Pet 3:21). Again, Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

Both definitions apply to Jesus' teaching concerning the pure in heart. The one who has humbly submitted to the commands of Jesus, which includes being washed by His blood in baptism, has become pure in heart. When one has been washed in the blood of Christ, they have become a new creature (cf. Romans 6:3-4; II Corinthians 5:17) and they now have a new focus in life, serving Jesus as Lord and Master and following His Word (teachings of the New Testament) as an authoritative pattern. Just as one cannot be pure in heart unless they have been washed of their past sins in the blood of Jesus, they cannot be pure in heart unless they maintain that purity, which one does by turning away from sin, wickedness and evil (cf. Psalm 1:1-3; 101:3; et al.). Paul instructed Timothy to "...**keep** yourself pure" (I Timothy 5:22 – emphasis added). John referred to it as "walking in the light" (I John 1:7). Jesus said: "...If you **abide** {continue – KJV–TAC} in My word, you are My disciples indeed" (John 8:31 – emphasis added) and "...No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62, cf. Matthew 6:24). James taught us that a person should "...keep oneself **unspotted** from the world" (James 1:27). No person can be pure in heart and follow after their own will (or the will of another) and the will of God. Emmet Fox noted:

Purity, in the Bible, means a very great deal more than physical purity.... In its full and complete sense, purity is recognizing God alone as the only real Cause, and the only real Power in existence. It is what is called elsewhere in the Sermon "the single eye,"



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and it is the Master Key to life. It is nothing less than the secret of escape from al [sic] sickness, trouble, and limitation; the overcoming or reversing, in short, of the Fall of Man. And so, our text might well be paraphrased something in this style:

Blessed are they who recognize God as the only real Cause, and the only real Presence, and the only real Power; not merely in a theoretical or formal way, but practically, and specifically, and wholeheartedly, in all their thoughts, and words, and actions; and not merely in some parts of their lives, but in every nook and corner of their lives and mentalities, keeping nothing back from Him, but bringing their own wills in every last particular into perfect harmony with His Will—for they shall overcome all limitation of time, and space, and matter, and carnal mind; and realize and enjoy the Presence of God forever” (Fox, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 38-39).

Is it really possible for a person to maintain this purity? After all, since we are not perfect creatures, from time to time, bad thoughts come into our hearts. How are we to deal with these thoughts? The best answer to this is found in the old adage: “You may not be able to keep a bird from landing on your head, but you can keep it from building a nest there.” You see, we can drive out the bad thoughts with good ones. Paul wrote, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, **whatever things are pure**, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy; **meditate** {think – King James Version} **on these things**” (Philippians 4:8).

An excellent example of one who desired to maintain this purity is seen in King David. After he had sinned with Bathsheba, he diligently sought forgiveness from God. He said, “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,

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And cleanse me from my sin” (Psalm 51:2). In verse 10, notice what he then said: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.” David understood the necessity of maintaining purity of heart. We are purified from our old sins when we are baptized into Christ; however, it is not the case that we are once purified, always purified, we must maintain that purity by godly living.

### **THE RESULTS OF BEING PURE IN HEART**

Jesus said those who are pure in heart, they “...shall see God.” What does this mean? Brother Foy E. Wallace commented:

The Expression ‘see God’ means to enter into the relation with God in the kingdom. Jesus said to Nicodemus, ‘except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God’—John 3:3. To see the kingdom meant to enter the kingdom, and to see God means to enter that same state. The sixth beatitude therefore refers to the heart that is single to the truth, unmixed with alien elements; an unclouded vision of the truth which vouchsafes obedience and brings one into the kingdom of Christ. So again it is impossible to separate this beatitude from the gospel of the kingdom, pointing to its establishment on Pentecost (Wallace, *The Sermon on the Mount and the Civil State*, 21).

Although Brother Wallace’s comments are good and true, to “see God” also carries with it a broader application, an eternal one.

Those who have been washed in the blood of God, which made them pure and then maintained that purity (faithfulness), they will be with God in heaven. Those who are not pure, have not maintained this purity, shall not see God. Why? God cannot look upon sin, wickedness and evil (cf. Habakkuk 1:13). Those who refuse to be purified by obedience to the gospel, Paul said, “These shall be

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punished with everlasting **destruction from the presence of the Lord** and from the glory of His power” (II Thessalonians 1:9). There is no way any person can stand before God without being pure in heart! Those in Revelation who are before the throne of God are pictured as wearing white robes (cf. 3:5, 18; 6:10-11; 7:9, 13-14). White is the color that represents purity. In Revelation 7:13-14, we read: “Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?’ And I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’ So he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’” Revelation 19:8 tells us that the white linen is the “righteousness of the saints,” or in other words, their obedience to God’s commands. Without such obedience, no one shall see God; we would be eternally separated from God because of our sin (cf. Isaiah 59:1-2).

To see God, the Almighty Creator, should be man’s greatest desire. We can only see Him by humble submission in obedience and faithful service. In John 14, as He was about to depart this world, Jesus spoke words of comfort to His apostles. He spoke to them of a place He was going to prepare. Thomas asked Him:

“Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him. Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us. Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (John 14:5-9).

To Jews who had become Christians and are now giving up Christianity and going back to Judaism (because

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of persecution of their fellow Jews), the writer of Hebrews encourages them to continue in the faith. He listed many examples of those who overcame and continued their service and obedience to God because of their strong faith (Chapter 11). Then in Chapter 12, after telling them that discipline is part of being a child of God, otherwise we are illegitimate (verses 6-11). Then the Hebrews' writer wrote:

Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be *dislocated*, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, **without which no one will see the Lord**: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled (Hebrews 12:12-15).

## CONCLUSION

Jesus demanded that those who would be citizens in His Kingdom must be pure in heart. Without a purity of heart, we cannot see God; we cannot enter into a relationship with the Father, be a citizen in the Kingdom or enjoy an eternal home in heaven. Jesus has not made a demand which cannot be met (cf. I John 5:3). God will not automatically purify our hearts with no efforts or acts of obedience on our part. He has, however, given to us what we need to obtain and maintain a pure heart. It is best seen in David's words, "With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden {treasured} in my heart, That I might not sin against You!" (Psalm 119:10-11).

The world is searching diligently for happiness, yet cannot find true happiness because they are not looking in the right place. Jesus gave these beatitudes for the good of mankind; so we can obtain true happiness. Jesus said, "Blessed *are* the pure in heart, For they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). May God bless us as we strive to be pure in heart.

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## Chapter 7

# **“Blessed are the peacemakers...”**

Nelson Brockenborough

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## **Blessed are the Peacemakers Introduction**

Peace is the one thing that everyone, at some point in time, will want in his or her life. In our society today, people go to great lengths in the pursuit of “peace,” only to find frustration and disappointment at the end of their quest. We expend great effort, time and money journeying to the far corners of the earth seeking to find peace, only to find temporal solutions for an eternal pursuit.

Conflict is the adversary to peace, and it has its origins in the Garden of Eden when man fell to the temptation of sin (Gen. 3). Peace was only made perfect when Jesus came to earth. The scriptures tell us of the angels that praised Jesus at his birth saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” At the cross, peace again became a reality -- Christ became our peace (Eph. 2:14). Today, there can be peace in the hearts of those who know Him.

In the future Jesus will come again, and His title will be “the Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). He will establish a kingdom of peace that will lead into an eternal age of peace. When Jesus spoke to the Jews in his Sermon on the Mount he said, “Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:9). Here he promises blessings (happiness) to those who make peace. The Jewish nation, God’s first chosen people, was in a time of turmoil and conflict economically, socially, and spiritually. Peace is what the Jews were seeking, and God

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met their need through Jesus. The Apostle Paul wrote, "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4, 5). Today by faith, Christians have the same peacemaking promise as the Jews of Jesus' day. By desiring to make peace, we too can have the happiness of Jesus. Paul spoke of this promise when he wrote, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

To understand the peacemaking promise, we must understand the concept of peace through the eyes of God and not man. Let us look at the Bible to understand what joyful blessings the Lord has for us through the peacemaking promise.

### **What is Peace?**

The Greek word for "peace" is "eirene," a beautiful word that is very rich in meaning. It paints a vivid picture by calling to mind mental images of "tranquility."<sup>1</sup> One could create the thought of a boat sailing on a calm sea. The word also conveys harmony and describes a song in which all notes and chords blend in perfect agreement. Peace expresses thoughts of a world absent of strife, calling to mind two people walking "hand-in-hand" along the road.

The English word "peace" comes to us from the Latin "pax," from which we get the word "pact." A pact is a treaty between two parties or governments. The Hebrew equivalent is the word "shalom." This word is also rich in meaning and was, for the Jew, the common word of greeting. It means, "All of what the above Greek word means, yet adds another dimension: "the absence of strife and evil," but also the positive, "the presence of all good things." Therefore, to wish "shalom" to another was in essence to say, "I wish for you not only the absence of all that may harm, but also the presence of everything that makes for a person's good."<sup>2</sup>



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The world we live in often applies different meanings to the word “peace,” and these meanings usually conflict with the godly view. Often, this is the source of frustration and even rebellion against God. One of the two views discussed is the “truce” peacemaker. A truce is, “a temporary respite, as from trouble or pain; a suspension of hostilities for a specified period of time by mutual agreement of the warring parties; cease-fire; armistice; or a respite from a disagreeable state of affairs.”<sup>3</sup> In making a truce, individuals mutually agree to stop the actions of conflict but not the cause of the conflict. We see during wartimes that “ceasefires” are agreed upon between governmental adversaries to allow one or both groups to observe holidays or other special observances. Yet, they are immediately back at war after the truce has ended. In this case, there was no true peace, merely a moratorium of the conflict. In searching for peace, these individuals fail to realize that conflict will continue to exist even if the action of conflict is removed.

The second consideration of worldly peace is avoidance. Avoidance is, “staying clear from; keeping away from; keeping out of the way of someone or something.” Often individuals or groups might say, “I/we will just stay apart or away from each other and we will have peace.” A good example of this is in the beginning and middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, when our country was in racial conflict due to the integration of minority groups into mainstream society. Black and white Americans had led segregated lives, for the most part, since the formation of this nation. In many cases, the black Americans were discriminated against by laws that denied rights to either a better life or the ability to attain equality through the conventional means of democracy. When equal rights laws were enacted, the southern states legislated “Jim Crow Laws.” They mandated “separate but equal” status for black Americans. In reality, this led to treatment and accommodations that were inferior to those provided to white Americans. “Although it was legally required that public facilities provided should be equal, they were not.”<sup>4</sup>

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Jim Crow proved to be an “avoidance” tactic of peace; yet when it was abolished and forced integration legalized, our country was in major conflict in the late fifties and sixties. Hostilities and violence grew among the racial groups, and it is still taking many years for the wounds of that struggle to heal.

Peace and conflict are opposites, like light and darkness. The two cannot exist in the same space. The world will try to create peaceful situations while living in the center of conflict, only to realize that they fall deeper into conflict. Greater frustrations, discouragements, increased hatred and resentment are the consequences of a worldly scheme of peace. Peacemakers are those who follow Christ’s formula for peace. Jesus said we can have spiritual rest, tranquility, and refreshment in our lives if the labor-weary and the heavily burdened would just come to Him (Matt. 11:28).

Therefore, as we analyze Jesus’ declaration of the blessings upon peacemakers, we understand that unity, tranquility and agreement are brought to those who accept Jesus’ words. His wish is for us to have lives of blessing, joy, serenity and stillness, even in the presence of calamity. The very essence and example come from Christ, who is our greatest example of peace. He was betrayed the night before His death, He was falsely accused, He was spat upon, and ultimately hanged on the cross until His death. Yet in all of this, Jesus asked His Father to, “Forgive them (his persecutors) for they know not what they do” (Lk. 23:34). Jesus demonstrates true peace even in the midst of turmoil and persecution. Consider some of the following scriptures:

“He was oppressed and He was afflicted,  
Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb  
that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep  
that is silent before its shearers, So He did  
not open His mouth” (Isa. 53).

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“And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting {Himself} to Him who judges righteously” (1 Pet. 2:23).

Jesus is our greatest example of peacemaking; and if we look to his example, we too can have the same peace that he demonstrated, even at the most difficult times in our lives.

### **Peacemaking is Active**

The Beatitude promise is to "peacemakers" and not to the "peace lovers." The idea here is that peace is not only in your mind, but it also has to be followed by an action. Many people believe that God's people are passive. Peacemaking is not passivity. Peacemaking involves a working relationship with God first and then with your fellow man. It is an action word, implying that the Christian is actively seeking peace. Paul wrote, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace" (Rom. 14:9). In the context of this verse, there were Christians persecuting other Christians over personal-preference issues (opinions). These non-scriptural issues eventually became doctrinal and led to division. Paul said that, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:17)." Paul here leads the Christians at Rome to a peaceful relationship with God and their fellow man.

There are many who love peace but few who work for it. The world we live in today is full of conflict and strife, yet our call as Christians is a call for peace. In order to know how to go about establishing peace, we need to first know why individuals are at odds with themselves. In the Roman church, food was not the major conflict. Consider what the writer James says, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel (Jas. 4:1-2)."

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People are at war with their neighbors because they are not at peace with themselves. They are not at peace with themselves because they are at war with God. The word says, “the mind set on the flesh (world) is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:7).

The heart of the peace issue is the spiritual condition of the human soul. Jesus calls us to peace by way of love. His love is complete. It includes patience, grace, mercy and forgiveness that all lead to peace. Jesus’ peace is made perfect because all hatred and hostility have been put aside in Him, thus making peace with God first and then fellow man. If the scriptures teach that the hostilities which exist in the world are the result of the strife between God and His creation, then it is logical to believe that it is this aspect of peace that concerns Jesus in the Beatitude. Peace-breakers are those who do not follow the word of God. It is impossible to “know peace” if you do not “know God.” He is the only source of peace.

Just consider all of the people in the world that do not know God but seek peace. Many of them have thriving careers, financial prosperity, and loving relationships, but these things are only temporal solutions to peace. Eventually, the unsure foundation of substandard worldly material will come crashing down, and there will remain nothing. Using Christ as your foundation for peace, you will be solid and have eternal prosperity. Jesus said:

“Therefore whosoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

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And the rain descended, and the floods came,  
and the winds blew, and beat upon that  
house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it”  
(Matt. 7:24-27).

We see how Jesus helps us to understand the division of good and evil. It might sound like a hard line of division, but it is true. The temporal will never sustain peace. It cannot because it is susceptible to corruption. God’s children are promised a peace that is beyond this world. Jesus’ peace survives through all the challenges we will face here on earth ... death, suffering, poverty, broken heart, disappointments and the like. Listening and following Jesus can allow us to have the peace that Paul told the Philippians about, “the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7).” Peacemaking has a three-fold blessing:

1. It blesses you (Matt. 5:9);
2. It blesses others; and
3. It pleases God (Hebrew 11:6).

How wonderful it would be with a world full of peacemakers!

Now, if peacemaking were easy, everyone would be doing it. It takes effort to be a peacemaker. The disciple, Barnabas, (son of consolation) was a peacemaker. He showed his desire to have peace in the church when a strong contention existed between Paul and John Mark (Acts 15). Barnabas took John to another area to work instead of leaving him at home alone to do nothing. John could have become discouraged or hostile towards Paul due to the contention; but instead, the result was peace and unity among the brothers. Paul wrote to the young preacher, Timothy, saying, “Pick up (John) Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service (II Tim. 4:11).” We see how Barnabas was blessed to have

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success in his encouragement of John Mark. Barnabas was blessed to make peace between the brothers. John Mark was blessed by being encouraged. Paul was blessed to receive the help of a brother who might have fallen away or who might not have wanted to work with him any more. God was pleased because His word was followed. The Bible says, “be(ing) diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). Everyone in this situation received a blessing. Blessed are the peacemakers!

Our battle for peace today is the same as it always has been: to follow the word of God. The nature of the Beatitudes is spiritual and personal, not political and global. Because of these facts, Christians today should not be concerned with entangling themselves in political protest and revolt, even in the face of corruption. Our role in politics is to effect change through civic duty but never to engage in conflict with our authorities (Rom. 13); rather, we ought to pray that we can live in peace.

Consider the words of Paul, “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, [and] giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and [for] all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (1 Tim. 2:1-2). We see an example in the scriptures where the high priest came to arrest Jesus in Gethsemane. Peter took a sword and cut off the servant’s ear, but Jesus healed the man. Shortly after, when Jesus was standing before His accusers, He answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom was of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm” (Jn. 18:36). Jesus’ people do not have to fight the physical battles of the church today because we have different weapons, spiritual weapons. Our weapon is prayer. Prayer is the start of leading a quiet and peaceful life. God’s people, “sons of God,” will be known to be prayerful people.

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Striving to be a peacemaker is not always going to be easy because the godly will suffer persecution. However, God's promise to us is peace, and the promises of God are true. Therefore, let us take comfort in the words of Jesus when He says, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33).

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## Chapter 8

### **“Blessed are they which are persecuted...”**

Steven Canup

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### **“BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE”**

**Matthew 5:10**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Jesus instructed in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 5:10). It is generally agreed that verses 11 and 12 are an elaboration of this beatitude, and perhaps an application of its truth and message. As noted time and again, the Beatitudes abound in paradoxes. When we listen to what Jesus instructs for us to do to be happy in this life, His reply at the same time puzzles and confuses us. He tells us to “be poor, be meek, be hungry and thirsty for righteousness, and to be in mourning.” But the last instruction is perhaps the most paradoxical of all, which is to “be persecuted.” Not only are you to be persecuted, but accept such because you have done something right.

What do Christians do that seems to invite trouble into their lives? We must consider that persecution refers not only to physical viciousness and violence, as many Christian martyrs have endured through the ages, but every type of action, verbal or otherwise, that punishes Christians for being Christians. Nobody likes being informed that they are in the wrong, that what they might believe and understand is not according to the truth found in God’s Word. When we stand for and speak the truth, we will make enemies! Any diligent student of the Bible will realize that God’s people all throughout the ages have been persecuted in various ways due to their stand for

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what is truth. Recall Paul's words to the Christians at Thessalonica who were enduring persecution from their own countrymen

For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us: and they please not God, and are contrary to all men (1 The. 2:14-15).

Jesus' own disciples faced persecution because of their staunch and unwavering stance upon the rock of truth. We must always bear in mind the words of Peter as he stood before the Sanhedrin council; *"We ought (must, ASV) to obey God rather than men"* (Acts 5:29). No matter the cost or sacrifice we must be willing to give all to the cause of Christ and accordingly, persecution in some form is almost always inevitable. Paul instructs of such in 2 Timothy 3:12 when he stated, *"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* Then he reminds us in the next verse, *"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived"* (2 Tim. 3:14).

We live in a society today which sadly follows after Satan and the "pleasures of this world" (Eph. 2:1-3). The majority of those in the world today seek after the fleeting, corruptible things that will not endure and do not want to accept or understand the penalty of doing such. Unfortunately, those who strive to do the will of God, and to follow the commandments given in His Holy Word, comprise the minority. But we must not be a silent minority! Because of the attitude and position we take, as well as the sanctified lives we live, the world does not want to accept or tolerate our stance on morality. In the "me" society of today, where everyone is looking out for number one, many do not want to tolerate the Christian's attitude of "doing unto others as you would have others do unto you" (Mat. 7:12). They do not want to hear or tolerate the virtuous attitudes that Christians maintain toward such sins

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of today as fornication, drunkenness, pornography, drugs, homosexuality, and abortion. Christians certainly invite persecution by their advocacy of Biblical values and principles that should be apparent in their daily lives. This is the example that was set by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is what He lived during His time on this earth. Yet, Jesus was faced with negative emotions, misunderstanding, envy, scorn, rejection, and finally even death. We can certainly count on the same in our lives if we strive to follow Christ's example.

The apostle Paul exhorted besieged Christians to *"be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might"* (Eph. 6:10). He further details the "Christians armor" which we are to use to prepare and fight this inescapable spiritual war. *"Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand"* (Eph. 6:13). As Christians we are to stand when our morals and convictions are being tested. As Christians we are to stand when our employment is being threatened, when we are socially ostracized, when our financial security is endangered, when our family members misunderstand, and especially when we wonder whether we have the strength to take any more. We must STAND!!! Thus to endure such abuse that those of the world would dish out we must continually rely on the promise of that "great reward" which Jesus made. He plainly and pointedly stated *"theirs is the kingdom of Heaven,"* and *"great is your reward in Heaven."*

Let us now consider in some detail the instruction Jesus gave in Matthew 5:10, *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."*

### **"BLESSED ARE THEY..."**

The first century Christians needed these words of encouragement and hope in a time when it was needed most. In His divine wisdom, Jesus realized this, being a time of great persecution as well as doctrinal error. Although the people of Galilee enjoyed more liberality in their religion than the people of Judea, the Jewish religion as a whole was oppressed by a narrow, rabbinical

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leadership which was headed up in Jerusalem (Shepard, p. i). Jesus' authority was very apparent to the people of the times as He *"taught them as One having authority, and not as the scribes"* (Mat. 7:29). As such this authoritative teaching was threatening to the Pharisees, as well as other religious leaders of that time. Consider Christ's condemnation of these Pharisees as found in Matthew 23:13, *"But woe unto you, scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."* Our Lord's teaching and manner of life certainly stirred up enmity and antagonism, which became more and more apparent, until it brought Him to the cross of Calvary.

The word "blessed" is translated from the Greek word *makarios* meaning "happy, fortunate, in a position of favor" (Strong's 1513). Many today misuse this word due to a lack of understanding of what it truly indicates. Brother Wheeler stated

One must understand that blessed is an inward condition and not determined by outward circumstances. True happiness cannot be found in the material things of the world. It was said that a man sought to find the secret to happiness; so he typed in the words "true happiness" in the internet search. The computer search came up empty, meaning that true happiness cannot be found among the worldly things (p. 229).

Unfortunate is the fact that so many, especially in today's society, strive to find happiness in the material things of this life. They mistakenly think that blessedness and joy can be found in fleeting, corruptible things such as riches, houses, cars, electronic toys, large bank accounts, vacations, and so forth. Yet, they do not understand that true happiness is found only in God, and in doing His will. To truly find happiness we must search, not some internet search engine, but God's Holy, inerrant Word. The psalmist instructs *"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of*

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*sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doeth he meditate day and night*" (Ps. 1:1, 2). We will be truly blessed when we delight in the Law of the Lord and consider and contemplate the riches found therein. But not only are we to contemplate on the truth of God's Word, we must make the appropriate application of such truths to our lives. When we do such we will truly be blessed.

**"...WHICH ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE..."**

We live in a time, and a society, in which we face very little persecution for our belief in the Gospel. Especially in comparison of what the first century Christians, and even those who lived before that time, faced and endured for being followers of God. Yet there is so much apathy concerning religion and religious belief in our nation today. So many do not care what you believe, as long as you do not infringe into their "personal space" with such beliefs and doctrine. Even within the Lord's church there is a general attitude of complacency and apathy among the members at large. This is indicative indeed that Satan is alive and working!

Consider what Peter instructed Christians in 1 Peter chapter 4. In verse one Peter states *"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin."* We are to have the same mind as Christ, the same attitude, which is to be meek, humble, and gentle. When we have the correct attitude, it will enable us to face any trial or tribulation that the world and Satan may throw at us. Peter goes on to state, *"Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you"* (1 Peter 4:4). When we remove ourselves from sin and strive to live godly, those of the world will take notice, and they will verbally persecute you. There are examples in the New Testament of Christians who removed themselves from such. Consider the sinful life the Corinthian Christians were involved in prior to obedience to the Gospel and yet Paul tells them, *"And such were some of you: but ye are*

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washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11).

Peter also warns *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy"* (1 Peter 4:12). Why would we think it strange when such persecution comes upon us? Did not Christ clearly warn us that such would come upon us if we followed after Him? As a Christian, we should know and understand because of the spiritual warfare that we daily fight, we will face those fiery trials in life. The statement "fiery trial" would indicate to us persecution that is very intense, painful, and hurtful. Jesus warned His followers of such, *"And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved"* (Matt. 10:21-22). The apostle Paul reminds us, *"Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer"* (2 The. 1:5).

Let us consider some things in relation to the persecution we will face. Jesus did not say, *"Blessed are those who are persecuted because they are contentious."* He did not say, *"Blessed are those who are persecuted because they are objectionable."* Also, He did not say, *"Blessed are those who are persecuted because they are being difficult."* Or *"Blessed are those who are persecuted because they are lacking in wisdom and are really foolish and unwise in what they believe and proclaim."* But Jesus did state, *"Blessed are those who are persecuted...for righteousness sake."* We can bring unnecessary suffering and unnecessary difficulties upon ourselves when we have the wrong attitude about why we are suffering and are being persecuted (cf. Lloyd-Jones, p. 130). Oftentimes, such persecution cannot be blamed "for righteousness

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sake.” We sometimes fail to realize and understand the difference between being offensive, because of our own personal and particular disposition and temperament. Paul wrote, “*But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters*” (1 Pet. 4:15). “A person cannot suffer as a Christian if he is guilty of a criminal act and breaking the law. God ordained governments to punish the evildoer” (Wheeler, p. 230).

Accordingly, think of the implication that can be made from this Beatitude. Consider that being righteous and living righteously really means being like our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, we are blessed when we are persecuted for being “Christ-like.” And even further, we will always be persecuted in some form for being like Him. Recall what Christ Himself stated,

*If the world hate you, ye that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also* (Jn. 15:18-20).

Let us consider some examples of persecution found throughout the Bible. We begin with Abel, who offered a more perfect sacrifice, and was persecuted by his own brother Cain. Moses received grievous persecution, at the hands of the Israelites, God’s chosen people, and yet he led them into the Promised Land. David endured grave persecution from Saul, especially after God rejected Saul and had chosen David to become the next king of Israel. And let us not forget prophets such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah, who suffered greatly at the hands of the people. All were persecuted not because they were difficult, contentious, or objectionable, but because they were righteous! God’s servants of the Old

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Testament suffered trials of *“torture...others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings...of bonds and imprisonment...they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented”* (Heb. 11:35-37). Then you fast forward to the New Testament and call to mind the persecution endured by John the baptist, who was beheaded by Herod for speaking the truth. Recall in Acts chapter seven, how Stephen was stoned to death by the angry Jewish mob, for standing for the truth. Did anyone suffer more than the apostle Paul? He was stoned at Lystra because the unbelieving Jews persuaded the people that he was teaching things contrary to the Law of Moses. Consider all that Paul endured for righteousness sake,

*Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren: In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness (2 Cor. 11:23-27).*

It is not surprising that Paul wrote that *“all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”* (2 Tim. 3:12). The apostle Paul had certainly known and experienced persecution first hand as he wrote, *“Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.”* (2 Tim. 3:12). And yet Paul was able to say, *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal*



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*weight of glory*" (2 Cor. 4:17). Paul called all things that he endured but "light affliction!" He certainly had things in perspective! Consider the words that he wrote to Timothy near the end of his life, "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished by course, I have kept the faith*" (2 Tim. 4:7).

We should not overlook the greatest example of suffering persecution as noted in the life and especially the death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Isaiah prophesied by inspiration hundreds of years prior of the great suffering that our Lord would endure

*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:3-5).*

When we observe the perfect life, His gentleness and meekness of which Isaiah also stated "*a bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench*" (Isaiah 42:3). There has never been anyone so gentle or so kind and think of the fact that the world rejected Him and put Him to death. Even Christ warned of the persecutions we will endure for following Him

*And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved...Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me;*

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*and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that looseth his life for my sake shall find it (Mat. 10:22, 34-39).*

But by whom are the righteous persecuted? As you study through the scriptures, in the history of the church, you will find that persecution is not only perpetrated by the ungodly of the world, but sometime persecution comes even from nominal Christians. Who were the primary persecutors of Jesus Christ? Was it not the Pharisees, Sadducees, the scribes and the doctors of the Law? Some of the most grievous and horrific persecution suffered by the first century Christians has been at the hands of supposedly religious people. The early Christians were persecuted most vigorously by the Jews themselves as persecution will come from those who purport to be religious. Many who embrace erroneous ideas and views will vigorously persecute those who are trying to follow the truth of the teachings of the Bible. Paul often warned of "grievous wolves" who would enter in among the first century congregations "not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29).

**"...FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."**

A point of interest that we must note is that the promise attached to this beatitude is the same as the promise attached to the first one, "*...theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.*" It is not surprising that you begin with the kingdom of Heaven and you end with the kingdom of Heaven in the beatitudes. It is highly possible that Jesus began and ended with this specific promise in order to impress upon His listeners that the important thing was membership of the kingdom of Heaven. It is unfortunate that the Jews of that time had a false idea about the kingdom of Heaven, thinking that it would be an earthly, physical kingdom here on earth, with a fleshly, physical king. And it is so unfortunate that so many today do not fully grasp the significance of the kingdom of Heaven. Countless individuals falsely believe that Christ will return

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to this earth to set up an earthly, fleshly kingdom, and reign as its earthly fleshly king. But we know that such is not true. As Jesus standing before Pilate stated, *“My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence”* (John 18:36).

We must consider the great rewards that will come to those who endure the fiery trials of this life. Paul gave great words of comfort and encouragement to Christians when he wrote, *“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins”* (Col. 1:14-15). There are many encouraging passages found within God’s Word that will sustain and encourage Christians during the darks hours of persecution. James gives Christians hope in their time of trial when he wrote, *“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him”* (Jas. 1:12). The apostle Paul after stating that he had “finished his course” and “kept the faith” goes on to say *“Henceforth there is laid up of me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”* (2 Tim. 4:8). Peter also informs us of the *“crown of glory that fadeth not away”* when Christ shall appear (1 Pet. 5:4). Christ himself in speaking to the church at Smyrna, encouraged them *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried: and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”* (Rev. 2:10). The crown of life is the final, great reward we will receive for all eternity for our faithfulness to God and His Word. That reward is heaven, the eternal place of rest for those who endure to the end as Jesus promised to us *“And, behold, I come quickly: and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be”* (Rev. 22:12).

## **CONCLUSION**

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Our goal is heaven! We can only obtain that goal if we overcome in this life and we can only overcome and have the victory by our faith. John wrote, *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”* (1 Jn. 5:4-5). For us to overcome and to have the victory over Satan and the persecutions we face in this life, we must maintain, uphold and persevere in our faith in Christ Jesus. Consider the instruction given by Paul, *“It is a faithful saying: For it we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us”* (2 Tim. 2:11-12). Yes, we will face those hardships, difficult times and even persecution for following Jesus Christ and striving to exemplify His teachings and His life. But if we overcome and stay the course the reward promised for His children is far greater and will outweigh any difficulties we will face. *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God”* (Rev. 2:7).

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Chapter 9

**“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile  
you...”**

Doug Frazier

Doug Frazier was born in Aiken, SC in August 1980. He graduated from Ridge Spring Monetta High School in 1999. He attended the Central Carolina School of Preaching and graduated in October of 2004.

He interned at Warners Chapel church of Christ for 9 months. He began preaching full time at the West Jefferson church of Christ in November of 2005, where he and his wife Jessica are currently laboring.

**and persecute you, and say all manner of evil  
against you falsely, for my name sake.”**

Matthew 5:11

When we look at persecution it is something that is not pleasant, for all manners of persecution hurt whether it is mental or physical. To be persecuted for the cause of Christ is truly a great blessing and honor. The true test of remaining a faithful Christian is one who endures persecution and overcomes, Revelation 2:10,

*“Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.”*

One of the most important words in the book of Revelation is overcome. It derives from the Greek word *nikao*, which means to overcome. There is nothing that we cannot overcome without the help of the Lord. In Revelation 2:7 we read,

*“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.”*

We will face many obstacles in life and it is up to us to depend on the Lord. We can have courage in the Lord

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for He is mighty and strong. When we are serving God, we should not allow anything to deter us from that. We have comforting words from the writer from the book of Hebrews. Hebrews 13:6,

*“So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper I will not fear: What shall man do unto me?”*

We should have great courage in the Lord no matter what happens to us in this life. In the book of Psalm the Psalmist wrote a beautiful verse which will help us to have courage in God. Psalm 46:1,

*“God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.”*

The Lord is our helper and strength. We have a helper that is mightier than other forces known unto man. The Lord is always there to help us when we are in need. We should not fear man and persecution that he may bring upon us but we should fear the Almighty God. In Matthew 10:28 we are warned not to fear what man may do unto us but rather to fear that which God can do unto us.

*“And be not afraid of them that can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

Man can never take our souls. This body in which we have will one day decompose and return to dirt. When man harms us he is only harming the outer shell. The inner part of man, his soul, is something man can not take nor kill. No matter how much our outer body is damaged by persecution our soul can never be killed by man. The physical body in which we have is only temporary.

As we look at the subject of Matthew 5:11, there are many valuable points we can draw from this wonderful verse. This is a verse that we can draw strength from in our time of need. Being a Christian is often hard while living in this perverse and wicked world because of the constant struggle of reproach and persecution. The word reproach means a cause or occasion of blame, discredit, or disgrace. There are so many ways in which people reproach us and discredit us.

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Jesus prepared His apostles for the persecution that they would be receiving, Matthew 10:16-22,

*“Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they deliver you up to council, and in their synagogues they will scourge you; yea and before governors and kings shall ye be brought for my sake, for a testimony to them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your father that speaketh in you. And brother shall deliver up brother to death, and the father his child: and children shall rise up against parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.”*

Jesus was letting His servants know that they were going to endure persecution and to be ready for it. Jesus was simply getting the mindset of the apostles that He was going to send out prepared for those things which were to come. We are no different than they were. The apostles were often persecuted for the name of Jesus. We should never feel ashamed of being persecuted nor having our name reproached for the cause of Christ. If we take a look at the life of Jesus many people reproached his name and tried to discredit Him because they rejected Him. Jesus was persecuted by many here on earth. We will be persecuted also as we live life here on earth. In Matthew 10:24 we read,

*“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his lord.”*

If men reproached the wonderful name of Jesus, we can be sure that our name will be reproached if we live our life as Christ did. Our name will be smeared by many for the



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very reason of being a true follower of God. Our name will also be reproached because of what God has said through His word. People think you are strange when you go by the complete word of God by not adding to nor subtracting from it.

When we look at the life of Jesus and His attitude throughout His life here on earth, He truly lived the beatitudes. Jesus possessed every one of these characteristics. We should strive daily to be like Christ and let these characteristics be seen in our life. Jesus told the apostles in John 13:15,

*“For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you.”*

Jesus is our example and we should strive to live as Christ did.

Men often slandered the name of Christ and spoke evil of Him. In Luke 7:31-34 Jesus was called a gluttonous and a winebibber,

*“Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation, and to what are they like? They are like unto children that sit in the market place, and call one to another; who say, We piped unto you, and ye did not dance; we wailed, and you did not weep. For John the Baptist is come to eating no bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a demon. The son of man come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold, a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of the publicans and sinners!”*

Jesus attended social functions and gatherings and many people were looking for any reason to slander the name of Jesus. They reproached His name by calling Him a winebibber and glutton. John the Baptist on the other hand refused to attend such a function and they said he had a demon. These people were determined to find any reason to slander the name of Jesus and anyone who followed Him.

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There were also many men who called Him a blasphemer and also reproached his name. In John 10:30-33 we read,

*“I and the Father are one. The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from the Father; for which of those works do ye stone me. The Jews answered him, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.”*

The Jews called Jesus a blasphemer. The Jews were foolish in this charge. The name of Jesus was trampled on by many. Our name will also be trampled on when we are Christ like and stand for the cause of Christ. Many will reproach our name and say evil things about us but we must remain standing for the cause of Christ.

The Lord was also railed on. The word railed here means to be mocked. There were those who mocked Jesus and the things He said. In Mark 15:29-32 we read,

*“And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ha! Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross. In like manner the chief priests mocking him among themselves with the scribes said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reproached him.”*

While Jesus was hanging on the cross in pain and agony there were those who walked by wagging their heads, mocking and blaspheming His wonderful name. They taunted Him to come down from the cross and to save himself.

Jesus was not only spoken evil of but he was also falsely accused by many. The people tried to discredit the miracles and works of the Lord. Jesus was accused by the Pharisees of having the power of Satan because He cast

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out demons from a man. Jesus was accused of being in the league with Satan. The Pharisees tried everything they could to discredit Jesus. Matthew 12:22-24,

*“Then was brought unto him one possessed with a demon, blind and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the dumb man spake and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed, and said, Can this be the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This man doth not cast our demons, but by Beelzebub the prince of the demons.”*

Being reproached is a verbal persecution although it does not hurt physically; it does hurt mentally to be spoken evil of. Sometimes words seem to be like rocks that are thrown and when they hit, they hit hard. Being spoken evil of is never fun but we shall overcome by the strength of the Lord. It hurts when we are spoken evil of or even called names. The Lord was called many names but he did not allow it to keep Him from doing the will of His Father. We have work to do and we can not allow it to stop us from working for the Lord. Christ is our example and we are to follow Him. We are told in the New Testament that we are to follow our example who is Christ, 1Peter 2:21,

*“For hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps.”*

The Lord was not only persecuted mentally; he was also persecuted physically by others. If Jesus was persecuted physically then those who follow Him will also be physically persecuted. The Lord was scourged, mocked and even slapped. People also spit upon the Lord. In Mark 14:65, we read of one account where Jesus was spit upon,

*“And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the officers received him with blows of their hands.”*

He was even crucified which was one the most painful ways to die. Being crucified is a very slow and painful

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death. They people who were crucified often died of suffocation.

There were many servants of Christ that were persecuted physically for being a follower of Christ. Living in America we have the freedom to worship God by not being molested by the government. The first century Christians faced persecution and all kinds of adversity. We should be ashamed of ourselves when we receive persecution and complain about it. When we receive persecution, it is not near as bad as those in the first century. The Lord's disciples were often persecuted physically. Many of these men were faced with being harmed by others and at times even put to death.

The Disciples of Christ faced many obstacles in their lives and persecution was one of them. Paul was a follower of Christ and was persecuted physical on several occasions for proclaiming Jesus. In Acts 14:19-21 we find the account of Paul being dragged out of the city and stoned;

*“But there came Jews thither from Antioch and Iconium: and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. But as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and entered into the city: and on the morrow he went forth with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch.”*

Here is a man who was stoned by an angry mob but did not stop preaching the word of God. After being stoned he preached the next day. How many of us would do the same? Paul loved the Lord and it can be seeing through his actions. He could have easily given up, denied the work that needed to be done, but instead he pressed on to the goal. The apostle Paul did not allow persecution to deter him from living and doing the work of the Lord. Paul stood tall and faced persecution and so should we. In the letter, which he wrote to the church at Corinth, he

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explained to them the persecution and obstacles in which he received as a child of God. 2 Corinthians 11:24-27,

*“Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered ship wreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in peril in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labor and travail, in watchings often, in cold and nakedness.”*

Paul received one hundred and ninety five stripes from the Jews. He was also beaten three times with rods and stoned once. Paul was truly persecuted physically. Once again I ask, how many of us would continue to stand for the cause of Christ if faced with the persecutions that Paul faced? Many of us find it hard to make it to all worship services because we are too busy with our life to give a little time to the Lord and thank Him for all that He has given us. I wonder what kind of stand we would take if we felt our life was actually in danger for coming to worship?

The Lords disciples were also killed because of what they believed and taught. In Acts 12:1-2 we read,

*“Now about that time Herod the king put forth his hands to afflict certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with a sword.”*

James was violently killed by Herod with a sword. James lost his life serving God, which truly is a blessing in its self. On day in America we may be persecuted physically and even have our lives threatened for being followers of God. We must stand for the cause of Christ never backing down to those who want to inflict harm upon us. A child of God must be fearless when it comes to serving God. Revelation 21:8

*“But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars,*

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*their parts shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.”*

Being a servant of the Lord means we can not be cowards when it comes to serving Him. Just think of our military for a moment. Where would our freedom be if they were cowards? We would have no freedom if our military were afraid to fight. Our military is fearless when it comes to fighting for America. A Christian is in the army of the Lord and we are at war with Satan. We must not be fearful, we must stand fast and strong with God as our leader. We have been equipped to fight the battle. In Ephesians 6:10-17 we find the armor that we need to war against the devil,

*“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the word of the Spirit, which is the word of God: with all prayer and supplication praying at all season in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints,”*

To win the war, we must take the whole armor of God. Being equipped with the armor of God we are able to

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withstand all persecution whether it is mentally or physically.

We can see how important it is for us to be fearless when it comes to persecution. It was once said what is to fear but fear it's self. We should never have fear because God is with His servants. Our souls are important and when it comes down to persecution we can not denounce God or the way of Christianity. The very fear of persecution may cause one to deny Christ. In Matthew 10:32-33 we read that we must confess Christ before men or Christ will not confess us before the father.

*“Everyone therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is heaven.”*

From this verse we can see that it is better for one to confess Christ before men than to denounce Him because of persecution. The people who deny the Lord because of persecution are not true children of God. The soul of man depends on whether they are truly converted to Christ. One who is simply going through the motion is not truly following Christ. Confessing Christ is what we should be doing everyday in which we live here on earth. We can not allow persecution to cause us to forsake the Lord and his Kingdom. May we all strive to pronounce the name of Christ to everyone that we come in contact with.

## Chapter 10

### **“Rejoice and be exceeding glad...”**

Michael Jordan

Michael Jordan was born in Texas. He finished high school in Memphis, TN in 1973. He attended Memphis School Of Preaching from 1973-1975, Freed-Hardeman College from 1975-1976. Other educational background includes Magnolia Bible College in Mississippi, Itawamba Community College, Northeast Mississippi Junior College, Northwest Mississippi Junior College, and Southern Christian University where he received his B.A. in 1997.

He began full-time preaching in 1992 and has preached in Mississippi and North Carolina. He is currently laboring with a congregation in Marion, VA. He married Jewel (formerly Attebury) in 1977. They adopted 2 children in 1994, Deborah and William. Deborah is married and lives in Mississippi. He has one granddaughter. Has conducted Gospel Meetings and Lectureships in MS, VA, NC & SC.

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## REJOICE AND BE EXCEEDINGLY GLAD

*Matthew 5:12*

I am honored to be here once again at the Back to the Bible Lectures. Seems like coming home to be here at West Jefferson. My thanks to the directors of the lectureship and all those who have and had a part in making this a reality.

My subject to discuss with you this year is "*Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad*" – **Matthew 5:12**. Sometimes we need to be refreshed about the beatitudes. I appreciate the theme this year "The Beatitudes." I believe we forget about them except for just a few verses. I've been so enthralled with the beatitudes for the last couple of months because I've heard Brother N.B. Hardeman, Brother Hugo McCord and Brother Franklin Camp; all these men who are dead and gone, but I've been listening to them on tape discussing the beatitudes. Friends we are living in a time where we need to look at the beatitudes. We need to see where there's some comfort for us, some promises to us that can and will be fulfilled. Let's look at **Matthew 5:10-12**.

This is the very end of the beatitudes. **Matthew 5:11-12** are generally thought of as elaborating, explaining or bringing out verse **10**. It seems that it is applied more directly to the disciples than to you and me. "*Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness sake.*" This beatitude seems to be different. When you think about its characteristics not so much as that it's what happens to one that makes him happy or makes him better, but about the other characteristics that Jesus has been talking about from verse **3** through verse **10**. Have you noticed that in this verse that it is called "*Blessed are the peace makers.*" "*Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called the sons of God*" (**Matthew 5:9**) and



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*“blessed are them that have been persecuted for righteousness sake” (Matthew 5:10).* I want you to notice from the very first to the very end of this beatitude it is talking about an individual possessing a type of attitude that is supposed to be in the kingdom. It is supposed to be in the church. Now the greatest thing that you and I could think about today is being in the kingdom, which is the church. Becoming a part of the church is greater than paying off the mortgage and having a mortgage burning. Becoming a part of that kingdom is even better than meeting your spouse. Now some might say about meeting your spouse, especially those about to be married, that’s the best thing that has ever happened to me. Friends, the best thing that ever happened to you or to me is becoming a part of the Lord’s church. You know, when we become a part of that church, it’s the best thing that ever happened to us spiritually, but there are some things that you and I are going to face. You see I can say that my wife is the best thing that ever happened to me in this life; but, there are some things I’ve had to face that I wouldn’t have had to face if I hadn’t have married her. Think about it. You could probably say the same thing as well. Think of one of the beatitudes that we can relate to marriage. Men, who is going to tell you your shortcomings? Now I know you women don’t have any. Now you wouldn’t know how good you are if you had never married, right? That took a little while to soak in, right? Now think about being in the kingdom of heaven. The Lord tells you and tells me of our shortcomings, what we ought to be doing. But yet on the other hand He tells me, “you’re a child of mine.” “You have the greatest place in my inheritance because I have gone to prepare a place for you.” We need to think about it. The best thing that ever happened to you is becoming a member of the Lord’s church.

Now let’s look at what we’re talking about in verses **10-12**. I think it’s more relevant that we need to think that persecutions have not all passed. For you see, when you and I stand for something people are going to be angry. People are going to be upset. People are going to quit talking to you. Have you ever had anybody quit talking to

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you about the Bible because you pointed something out to them that they didn't really agree with? We don't always agree on everything that the world agrees on? They don't always agree with everything that we agree on but you and I agree on God's Word because if we hadn't, you and I never would have been obedient to Christ in baptism. Now there are some things you and I disagree on but we are of the attitude and the character that we'll sit down and we'll talk these things out. We're living in a land that's free; there are Christians, my friends, in other areas of the world who are persecuted because they believe what they believe. Peter talks about this and he understands this because of what is recorded by him in ***1 Peter 4:17*** that "*there are going to be some great fiery trials*" that we're going to come under attack. Have you ever been attacked? Have you ever faced a great fiery trial? If you have it wasn't pleasant was it? If you haven't, don't look forward to it. Now I think it's very important for us to understand this verse.

We need to answer the question, "What is the meaning of blessed are they that have been persecuted?" Let's begin with some negatives. Jesus is on a mountain talking to a group of people, above everybody where His voice can carry. When He gets to the last one He does not say "Blessed are they which are persecuted because they are objectionable." I don't read in this passage where He says, "Blessed are they which are persecuted because they are being difficult." I don't see in this passage where it says, "Blessed are they which are persecuted because they lack wisdom and common sense." I believe some today are persecuted; they suffer because of their own fault, their own misunderstanding of God's word. Now watch what He's saying in this verse. "*Blessed are they which are persecuted for*", see the next few words, here's why you're persecuted, "*for righteousness sake.*" You see there's a vast difference between being offensive and causing offense because of righteousness. He doesn't say, "Blessed are they which are persecuted because they are fanatical." Friends, we're not fanatical, we're not a cult, and we're the children of God. Those who do not want to

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be children of God, those who do not want to see what the Church is all about are the ones who are being fanatical. They are the ones who say we are a cult because they are happy with the way they want to be. We are happy because we are following Christ. When someone calls us a cult next time remember this verse. We're doing what Christ wants us to do. Notice again, He does not say, "Blessed are they which are persecuted because they are over zealous." Those of you who work secular jobs have you ever condemned someone for wanting to work overtime? Have you ever condemned one for wanting to go that second mile, stay that few minutes over to finish whatever their working on? We don't go over there and grab them by the arm and say, "Get out of here, I don't want to see you until your shift starts again." No, you welcome those Friends. Jesus is not saying we'll be persecuted for being over zealous. Some are persecuted because they're too forward. Remember what Jesus said in **Matthew 10:16**, "*Behold I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves therefore be wise as serpents and gentle as doves.*" I want you to get the picture. We were watching National Geographic and I've always said there are only 2 types of good snakes. You know what they are? One is dead. The other one is miles away from you. Anyway, we were watching the National Geographic channel and this snake was placed out there with a bunch of squirrels and squirrel bins. You know those squirrels are smart. They talk to each other. They were wagging their tails. They had a robo-squirrel. Every time it would wag its tail a certain way the rattlers would rattle their tails. They were communicating with each other. Have you ever watched how a snake slithers? It is on top of you before you know it unless it is rattling. But a dove is peaceful. What do they usually do? When peace arrives in a country, they let out the doves don't they? See what Jesus is telling us here? We're supposed to be wise as serpents but gentle as doves. If we are blessed and persecuted for being right what are we doing wrong? Watch what He said here. We're persecuted for doing what is right. Now that doesn't seem normal does it? Usually when you do right

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someone will come up and pat you on the back, shake your hand, hug you or give you a raise or something, right? But that's not the way it is in the religious world. Some are persecuted, not for righteousness sake but because they cannot keep their mouth shut and their noses out of other peoples business. You ever noticed that? When they start meddling when they're not supposed to be meddling they usually get reprimanded. Friends, that's not persecution. That's being corrected. If you don't want me to know something about you, all you have to do is tell me. I'm not going to open my mouth. I'm not going to stick my nose into your business and then you fuss at me and say, "Oh, I'm persecuted!" That's not it. But some people will do this and they'll say, "Oh, I'm being persecuted because someone fussed at me." In this verse He does not say that they had been persecuted for a cause. Of course two may become one, but not always. There are many times people have been persecuted as they say that does not fit this text. Some people have what is called in the psychological world, a persecution complex. They are basically looking for persecution. They do what they can, as we would call it to "ag" it on. Then when it hits them they are happy because they're persecuted. Friends, that's not what this verse is saying. There are some people who think just because they are part of a religio-political thing, this is "Religious persecution." Religio-political is basically, mixing religion with politics. "I'm a democrat!" or "I'm a republican!" or "I'm an independent!" "You disagree with me. I'm being persecuted!" No, that's not what He's saying either. It does not say again, "Blessed are they that are being persecuted for what is good." We've already talked about that. You see the world admires someone who is "good" and "noble". So then, what is He really saying? It means being persecuted for being right, for practicing righteousness, for being like Jesus. Now, you and I know a lot of people who say they are religious. There are some things they do religiously that Christ does not condone. Jesus said in **John 15:18-20** *"if the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you and if you were of the world the world*

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*would love its own.*” If you’re acting like the world, the world isn’t going to hate you. They’re going to embrace you and say, “Hey you’re just a part of us.” “But I chose you out of the world therefore the world hates you.” There’s a different type of action. There’s a different type of character. There’s a different type of lifestyle that you and I are commanded to live according to **John 15**. We cannot qualify what we do that Christ does not command us to do and say this is persecution. This is how Paul put it in **II Timothy 3:12** - “*Yes and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*” Can you see two different things here? If I’m in the world and I’m acting like the world, I’m not going to be persecuted by them. But if I’m of Christ and I’m living the way Christ wants me to live the world is going to hate me and the world is going to persecute me.

Now if you think you are the only ones being persecuted, let me give you some examples. Think about Abel. Abel was persecuted to the point as recorded in **Genesis 4:8** it cost him his life. Moses, in **Exodus 5** and **Numbers 12**; he was persecuted because he married an Ethiopian woman, someone not of the Hebrew race. Saul persecuted David. Remember when David killed the giant and as they stated that Saul has slain his thousands and David has slain his ten thousands; he was on the run because Saul was out to kill him, because of jealousy. He was jealous. Jeremiah suffered persecution. We can read about this in **Jeremiah 15 & 20**. Remember the man young man Daniel, how he was thrown into the lion’s den for what he believed? John the baptist in **Mark 6** was persecuted to the point he lost his life by being beheaded. He told Herod it was wrong for him to have his brother’s wife and it cost him his life? **John 16:1-4** Jesus told the apostles that they would suffer persecution. When was the last time you read **II Corinthians 11:23-28**? Paul says, “*Are they ministers of Christ I speak as a fool I am more.*” He’s not bragging. He says, “*In labors more abundant in stripes above measure in prisons more frequently in death more often.*” What about these friends who talk about how they really suffer for Christ? They don’t really know what

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suffering is. Let me show you what it is. He says, “*from the Jews five times I received 40 stripes minus one.*” Five times! Have you figured that up? It was 195 stripes. When was that last time someone beat you like that? Now we’re not talking about switches like Granny used to use. We’re not talking about that razor strap, good ole’ “peach tea tree”, we’re talking about leather that had metal on the end of it. Have you ever heard in your history study about the cat of nine tails? Have you ever been beaten with one of those? “*Three times was I beaten with a rod?*” Now friends we’re not talking about these cane poles you would use in fishing. We’re talking about these poles like you see that clothes are hung on, anywhere from 2 inches and bigger in diameter. “*Once I was stoned,*” not little pebbles little kids throw at you. We’re talking about stones that it takes two healthy men to pick them up and throw at you. “*Three times was I ship wrecked,*” “*A night and a day I’ve been in the deep.*” Some of you who are in the military have probably thought about this when out on the ocean. Paul continued to express his persecution for the Lord’s sake, not for bragging rights. Think about the supreme example of the Lord Himself. In spite of His utter absolute perfection, people criticized Him. He was persecuted even though **Isaiah 42:3** says “*He would be gentle*”. In **Matthew 12:19** we see about His gentleness. “*He will not quarrel or cry out nor will anyone hear His voice in the street.*” Jesus was so gentle but look what happened. By whom are the righteous persecuted; from within and without. **Mark 14:1**. Who were His greatest persecutors? Those who knew the law, the chief priests and the scribes. That’s why I believe that he said in the early beginning of his ministry in **Luke 4:24** that a prophet is not accepted in his own country.

Why are the righteous persecuted? Because they are different. That makes a whole lot of sense doesn’t? If I’m the same as everybody else I’m not going to be persecuted. This is how it was with Jesus and the Pharisees. His purity exposed their hypocrisy. He didn’t say a word. Just His actions made them unhappy. People started looking at them and they found fault in Jesus

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because of what they saw, not what the scriptures said, and they crucified Him.

Let's go back to **Matthew 5:10** for just a minute. Consider some general conclusions from verse **10**. 1) Verse **10** demands a reevaluation of our concept of Jesus Christ, his person, and his deity, who he really was. Have you ever thought of Jesus as one that was really admired? Do you ever really think about Jesus as one who people really stood up and applauded what He said? It was right opposite. That's why it demands a reevaluation of you and me when we call ourselves Christians. It's about our idea that a Christian is really like a nice "Joe." He's really nice. He's very popular. He's a harmless fella'. He wouldn't hurt a flea. He wouldn't offend you no matter what. That's what we think a person should be, don't we? Listen to what Jesus said in **Luke 6:26**. "*Woe to you when all men speak well of you for so did their fathers to the false prophets.*"

There's rejoicing in tribulation. There are three principles I need to mention to you. That will emerge from **Matthew 5:11-12**. Number one. The Christian is unlike everybody who is not a Christian. This will help us understand and explain persecution. We criticize and persecute those who are different. We criticize those who are from a different ethnic background. We'll talk about and persecute those who have more education. We'll talk about those who have more money than we, but friends that's not what he's talking about. There's a difference in that culturally. What he wants us to see is there is a difference, because you see a Christian has dedicated his life to serving the Lord. Watch what is said in **Matthew 5:11**. This persecution is endured for MY sake. Who's doing the talking here? Jesus. It's not because I have a lot of money. It's not because I am from a different ethnic background. It's not because I have more education. It's that I'm suffering, I'm being persecuted because I'm obeying Christ. Paul wants us to see in **Romans 14:8** that the whole object of the Christian's life is for Christ's sake. It's not for Michael Jordan. It's not for my wife. It's not for my child. It's not for the congregation here but it's for

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Christ's sake. That's what persecution is all about. This is why Jesus says in **Matthew 5:12** "*rejoice and be exceedingly glad*". Why should I rejoice and be exceedingly glad when I'm being persecuted. Read on. "*For great is your reward in heaven.*" Friends, there's no amount of money that I could be given to turn my back on my Lord. Yet there are people that are selling out every day because they will not stand for what Christ has commanded us.

In **Matthew 5:11** are the forms of persecution. When they "*revile you persecute you and say all manner of evil against you FOR MY SAKE.*" (emp mmj) Now if they are saying, I don't like the way your hair is parted or I don't like the color of your dress or your perfume gives me allergies, that's not persecution. That's a matter of opinion. I may like the way your hair is parted. I may like the color of your dress. I may like the perfume you wear. Criticizing things like this doesn't give you the right to say, "I'm being persecuted."

Consider **Hebrews 11:10**. Abraham waited for the city with foundations whose builder and maker is God. The Hebrew writer says all these friends died in faith not having received the promises but seeing them afar off embraced and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth. In **Hebrews 11:16**, they desired a better country. We want America to be better don't we? But friends, I'm longing for heaven. That's the country I want to be in forever. **Hebrews 11:26**, that Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater than riches that the pharaoh could give him. Can you see the difference between followers of God and others? These verses suggest the forms that persecution takes. It may take the form of violence, prison, and concentration camps. Are we familiar with those? No. Let me give you some we are familiar with. Losing our job for what we believe. I don't like this law and I'm not going to get off on this. But I don't like this law that tells me when I'm at work I can't talk about my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Whoever made that law that says I can't do that needs to think again. When people will sneer at me, when they will laugh at what I



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believe. "I won't work on Wednesday night because I'm going to Bible study." Now see, there's a difference friends in telling you that you have to work with no other choice and volunteering to work. There are two different things. We've known people, who have gotten into a whispering campaign, haven't we?

Let's notice how we are supposed to react to persecution. Look at **Matthew 5:11-12** with me; especially verse **12**. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad. Do you see in there where I am supposed to retaliate? Do you see in there that I'm supposed to strike back at someone because I'm being persecuted? Do you see in this verse where I am supposed to feel resentment because this person is making fun of me for who I am? There are some people that will actually loose their temper and not control their tongue or they will even strike with the fist to someone who makes fun of them for who they are and who they're serving. This verse tells me that I'm supposed to rejoice and be exceedingly glad because I have proof of where I'm going for serving Christ. Look at it. There it is in verse **12**. There it is. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for GREAT is your reward in heaven. Paul said in **II Corinthians 4:17-18**, - "*For our light affliction of which is for but a moment is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight in glory while we do not look at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen for the things which are seen are temporal but the things which are not seen are eternal.*" Are you rejoicing and being not glad but exceedingly glad because your reward is in heaven because you are living the way Christ has commanded you? Look at what He went through. Look at what Paul went through. It will make your life a whole lot easier. How is your life? Are you in the world but not of the world? Does the world see a difference in you? If not, why not? Only you can answer that question for you. Only I can answer that question for me. If your life is not that of which Christ is well pleased why not make it right?

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