

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Matthew 5-7

Tuesday Bible Class

March 24, 2009

**Intro:** We are beginning today the study of the Beatitudes which were given by our Lord at the very first of what has been known as His Sermon on the Mount. It is the longest printed sermon that we have in the New Testament. The longest sermons are found in the books of Moses. The book of Deuteronomy is actually made up of four messages, given by Moses in one month's time, just before his death. We have in the four Gospels a huge amount of the Lord's teaching which the Lord gave in a comparatively short public ministry, but no single message surpassed in length the sermon on the mount.

It was a message given especially to our Lord's disciples, and therefore it is a message which they in turn were to pass on in part from time to time in their own ministries. And so it is a message which ought to be considered of the greatest importance to faithful preachers of the Word in every generation. There have been many wonderful sermons preached which are recorded for us in the Old Testament and the New Testament, and many which have been preached in the history of the church by thousands of different preachers, but we would all certainly agree that no sermon could surpass in importance a sermon preached by our Lord Jesus Christ. I think that Charles Spurgeon has been called *the prince of preachers*, and he was a great preacher. I have in my library over sixty volumes of his sermons. But I am sure that Mr. Spurgeon would be the first to say that our Lord was *the Prince of preachers*. One of the Puritans, Thomas Watson, said three things about our Lord as a Preacher. One was that He, being the Son of God, showed divine wisdom in speaking to people because He knew the hearts of men. He was powerful in His teaching. Never man spoke as He did. He was faithful in His preaching. We learned in our study of John 15 that the Lord said to His disciples at that time, "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15b). Our Lord ministers to people of all ranks. The one who has given us the full Sermon on the Mount was Matthew who before his salvation, was Levi a publican, employed by the Roman government to collect taxes from the Jewish people, and therefore hated by his own people. But how marvelously his life was changed by the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. On Saturday and Sunday we are going to ordain Pastor Will to the ministry, recognizing God's work of salvation in his life and that the Lord has set him apart for the ministry, having given him the wisdom and the gift necessary for the ministry of the Word. The Lord Jesus was ordained by God before the foundation of the world not only to give us the Gospel, but He came, as none of us could come, to be in Himself a revelation of the Father. Hebrews chapter 1 says that God who in the past had spoken at different times and in different ways, "hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. 1:2).

So we have in this great sermon a sermon of Christ. And it has all of the elements of a good sermon. And this was a sermon that the disciples were to preach. Jeremiah Burroughs, another Puritan said this about preaching: "For a minister to preach another man's sermons it is negligence, but for him to preach Christ's sermon, is faithfulness" (p. 1). I am sure that in the early church there were many times when many preachers read to their congregations the sermon which the Spirit of God had Matthew record for us in his Gospel, chapters 5, 6, and 7. And they wouldn't have done it because they had not taken time to prepare their own sermon, but because God burdened them to pass the message of our Lord on just as it was originally given.

I remember as a very young child, what I learned after what I am going to tell you happened, that our Pastor was going through a difficult time as the Pastor of our church, and one Sunday morning he got up to preach, but all he did for the entire time was to read one passage after another from different parts of the Bible, and then without comment he closed in prayer, and dismissed the people. I was probably 11 or 12 at the time, but I have never forgotten how quietly the people went out of the service that Sunday morning, and went home. There was none of the conversation that usually takes place after a church service is over. There is power in the

Word itself. As Hebrews 4:12 and 13 tell us,

12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

The Sermon on the Mount is a divinely inspired sermon, a claim which only the writers of Scripture can claim. But it is obviously the case in any sermon preached by the Lord. We know that it was primarily for the apostles, but it may be that it was heard by some other people because the Lord was always followed when He was in public by people, and often by many people. But the introduction given by Matthew in the first two verses of chapter 5 mean that it was directed especially to the disciples, or, we could say, the apostles. It was important for them, not only to hear it, but to receive it for themselves, to believe it all, and to act upon it in their own lives.

And the same is true for us. We must read this as though it was spoken directly to us and for us. Matthew wrote particularly for the Jews. All of the apostles were Jews. But as we see by reading through the whole Sermon, it was to give them greater insight into the Law of Moses which we can assume all of them were acquainted with. But their teachers were not teachers to follow. They were great about telling others what they ought to do, and many things had been added to the Law of Moses which the Jewish leaders taught as having authority equal with that of the Word of God. Furthermore, they were concerned merely about outward obedience, not obedience which came from the heart. That is why the Lord said what He did in chapter 5, verse 20,

20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And this is also why the Lord said what He said about the scribes and the Pharisees in Matthew 23 where the Lord brought so many denunciations against them. See Matthew 23:3:

3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

These words were spoken to the multitude, but also to the apostles. This is why everybody needs to hear the true Word of God. The only way people can know that they are hearing the truth is by being made familiar with the Word by faithful teachers of the Word. Now it is a great blessing that Bibles are available for everyone, but that was not the case when our Lord was here on earth.

Now not everyone who teaches the Word today believes that the Sermon on the Mount is for today. Some who are true teachers of the Word for the most part teach that we really don't get into the part of the Bible that is for us until we get into the Gospel of John. But the Lord did not indicate to His apostles that this was for a future time. I stand with those who believe that it is for today. Those who would apply it to a future time look at expressions like we have in the first beatitude where we have a reference to the kingdom of heaven. Some think that every time, or most times, the kingdom is mentioned in Scripture that it has to do with the millennial kingdom of God on earth. But that is not true. Sometimes the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, is a reference to our salvation. When we are saved, we are not only forgiven of our sins, but individually and as the people of God we are in the kingdom of God. As Paul told the Colossians speaking of what God the Father has done for us in our salvation,

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son (Col. 1:13).

This takes us back to the controversy which was raging among believers a few years ago, and which is revived occasionally even yet, the question as to whether or not when we are saved by Christ, He also becomes the Lord of our lives. Or we decide on making Him Lord later on. Romans 10:9 is one verse which gives us our

answer:

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved (Rom. 10:9).

See also 2 Corinthians 4:5 where Paul wrote these words:

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

Why should we read and study the Sermon on the Mount? Of course the main answer to that question is because it is a part of the Word of God. It is a part of what Paul was saying when he wrote that

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Now we are thinking particularly about the Beatitudes. That is where we need to start because that is where the Lord started in this amazing Sermon. Let me ask you: Is there any characteristic which Paul mentions which is inconsistent with what we read, for example, in the epistles of Paul? Don't the Beatitudes of our Lord actually remind you of what we have just studied as "the fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians 5:22-23. We may need some help in understanding what it means to be "poor in Spirit," and what our Lord had in mind about mourning. But there is really nothing here that we would not expect to encourage a true child of God to be. The Lord was speaking primarily to His disciples. Why would He say these things to them if they did not apply to them?

So I want to say at the outset that the Beatitudes describe a Christian. They describe a twenty-first century Christian. They describe what I should be, and what you should be. What would they mean to the apostles if the Lord was talking to them about the millennium, but not about them in the day in which they were living?

We know from the four Gospel records that the apostles had a hard time believing some of the things that the Lord told them even up to the time when the Lord died. They didn't see any sense in His death. They were determined to keep our Lord's enemies from putting Him to death. And even after He died, they had a hard time believing that He had been raised from the dead when they were told what had happened, and about the empty tomb. But they were going to learn that it would only be through the death of Christ and what it would mean in their lives, that that was the only way they could possibly claim the blessings which the Lord promised in the Beatitudes.

But Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said that they nothing could show them more clearly their need of salvation and for the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. Nobody can live like a Christian who isn't a Christian. The Lord did not intend for them to live like the Beatitudes encouraged them to live unless they had help outside of them-selves. This is only one of many places in the Bible where we are asked to be what we can never be without the help of God. And that help is given to us by the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit Who has come to dwell in us, and teach us, and to empower us to do what we could never do in our own strength.

But the Beatitudes teach us that Christians are to be happy people, and that the Christian life is *the* happy life. That is the meaning of the word "blessed." The Greek word is **μακάριοι**. And this blessing of true happiness is not just for a few, select people of God, but it is for all of God's people. The word **μακάριοι** is a plural, and you will notice that the plural is used all the way through the Beatitudes. Notice "their's" in verse 3, "they" twice in verse 4, "they" again in verses 5, 2x in verse 6, once again in verses 7, 8, 9, "they" and "their's" in 10. Plurals run all through 11, and the same is true of verse 12.

So multiplied blessings await all who fit the description described in each of the beatitudes. The blessing of God, and true happiness, is the guaranteed experience for all who qualify.

We go from Greek to Hebrew when we go from the NT to the OT, but the very way that the book of Psalms is arranged, instead of translation “blessed is the man” that way, we could translate it, and should translate it, “O the blessednesses, or O the happinesses of the man that walketh not . . . , but his delight is in the law of the Lord . . .” The plural translations are of Psalm 1:1 are true translations, but they are rejected by the dictionary. By that I mean that the joy and blessing that we have in the Lord is so far beyond any joy that the world can possibly offer us that it takes a special word to show that the blessedness, the happiness, that we have in God is so far superior to anything that the world has to offer, that it caused the Psalmist to use a special word to convey to us how great the happiness of a child of God really is. Everybody wants to be happy, but the majority of people in the world are looking for it in the wrong ways and the wrong places. So instead of joy, true joy, they find misery and regrets. You will remember that we read about Moses in Hebrew 11:24-26. The world would say that Moses was a fool to give up what he had to suffer reproach with the people of God. This is how it is stated:

- 24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;
- 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;
- 26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward (Heb. 11:24-26).

Thomas Watson said very bluntly, “Nothing on this world can satisfy” (p. 26). Then he quoted Ecclesiastes 5:10 which tells us, “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver.” The Lord is showing us at the present in our country that money is not the answer. Money does not satisfy. Money has its place, but the Lord never intended that we would find satisfaction in money. My Dad worked for a man who was a good man, and he was a successful business man back in the post-great depression days. But my Dad said that he was happy until he earned his first \$100,000 dollars (which was a lot of money in those day) because he was afraid all of the time that he was going to lose it. Quoting Watson again, he said,

If a man were crowned with all the delights of the world, nay, if God should build him an house among the stars, yet the restless eye of his unsatisfied mind would be looking still higher. He would be prying beyond the heavens for some hidden rarities which he thinks he has not yet attained to; so unquenchable is the thirst of the soul to it come to bathe in the river of life and center upon true blessedness (pp. 26, 27).

So Moses gave up everything that this world has to offer in order to gain true happiness. Or, to say it another way, he gave up what was nothing in order to have everything. A rich man can be a happy man, but it is not because of his riches; it is because he has found true riches in his relationship with God and with Christ.

Jeremiah Burroughs said in his commentary that he thought that it was significant that the Lord preached this sermon, not in the temple, nor in a synagogue, but on a mountain. It was a high place, separated in a special way from the world below, where there would have been a minimum of distractions so that the apostles, and whatever people may have been with them, would be forced to pay attention to what He was saying. In a geographical sense He and they were away from the world, and above the world, because He was speaking of a blessedness that the world is incapable of producing.

Now this does not mean that the life of a child of God is all pleasant. The Lord did say when He was here on earth; in fact it was while the Lord spoke to His disciples on the way to Gethsemane,

33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

And earlier in that same Upper Room Discourse as it is called, the Lord had said this which we find in John 15:19:

19 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.

And the reason that the world hates us is because our way of life is totally different from the ways of the world. As you and I read out Bibles, whether in the OT or in the NT, we can't find a single child of God who had an easy life. On the contrary, we read of Saul of Tarsus who was the darling of the Jewish world, the rising star, until the Lord saved him, and then those who had been his closest friends wanted to kill him. Jesus of Nazareth was the best Man who ever lived upon this earth, but the world, even the religious world of the Jews, sought to kill Him, and eventually did, but only because that was why the Father had sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. But the amazing thing about our trials is that God uses them for our good spiritually even though it often appears that they are for our harm.

Take the letter Paul wrote to the church at Philippi from his confinement in Rome. You would think that everything in Paul's life was ideal. He was not calling upon them to do what they could to get him released from Rome. He had perfect peace in his heart, and he was calling upon the believers in Philippi to join with him in rejoicing in the Lord. The world does not have anything that can begin to compare with that. And there is much in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount that sounds the same note. They were not to worry about what they were to eat, or what they were to drink, or what they were to wear. Why? Because "your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." We all have our trials in this life, and the older we get the more they come, one after another. But so do the people of the world. The money of the richest man on earth cannot buy his freedom from sickness and death.

What a way this was to start a sermon! "Blessed . . . blessed . . . blessed, and so on. There are nine of them, all from God and from Christ, none from the world. And they end with the only commands that are found in the first twelve verses:

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matt. 5:12).

The world can do a lot to make trouble for us here on earth. According to tradition which seems to be reliable, all of the apostles died a martyr's death. But one thing the world cannot do: the world cannot nullify a single promise that God has given to us, His people, in the Word. Every "blessed" is both a statement of truth, and also a promise. We are to believe them, and then rejoice whatever may be our circumstance in this world.

March 30, 2009

Before we go on the first beatitude, let me point out a fact about God that is not only evident in the Beatitudes, but in all of Scripture. And it is this: God is a God Who loves to bless. And He not only loves to bless, but He prefers to bless. Creation itself is evidence of that. It is clear from the Biblical account of creation that although God created the heaven and the earth for His glory, He created it also for the blessing of man. And the Garden of Eden was in a special way for man's blessing.

When God called Abraham, a major part of what He had to say to Abraham was "I will bless thee . . . and thou shalt be a blessing, . . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:2, and 3). In Deuteronomy 28 as a part of Moses' last words to the nation were to set before them the blessings that God would give them if they were obedient to Him, but also the curses which they would experience if they disobeyed Him. And you could very well say after reading the curses that they were stated so that the nation would chose to obey the Lord so that they could have the blessings.

The first Psalm begins with the word, "Blessed is the man," and then the Psalmist went on to say, first of all, where they would *not* find the blessing of the Lord, and then where they would find God's blessing – by delighting in the law of the Lord. As I have said, everyone want to be happy. But one of the tragedies of our sin nature is that man is inclined to look for happiness in the wrong places. Spurgeon had this to say about the people of the world:

The general opinion is, Blessed are they that are rich, and great, and honourable in the world; they spend their days in mirth, and their years in pleasure; they eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and carry all before them with a high hand, and have every sheaf bowing to their sheaf; happy the people that is in such a case; and their designs, aims, and purposes are accordingly; they bless the covetous (Psa. 10:3); they will be rich.

Matthew Henry referred to Psalm 10:3 which says, “For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.”

Beatitudes are scattered throughout the Psalms, and also in the Proverbs. The book of the Revelation begins and ends with Beatitudes. First, in Rev 1:3,

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

And then in Revelation 22:14,

14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

While these Beatitudes were spoken primarily to the apostles, men who knew the Lord as their Savior, they also serve as a warning to unbelievers who may pick up the Bible, or a New Testament, and read them. If the Lord has opened their hearts, they could realize that they have been seeking happiness in the wrong places. The politicians are trying to show us that money is our problem, and that more money is the solution to our problems. *Nothing is farther from the truth.* Our problem is our disobedience to God, and nothing change that but obedience. The Beatitudes point out some of the major characteristics of a godly life, but to the unsaved they point out the need for the Gospel. Again, as I have said before, the only person who can live the Christian life is a person who is a Christian. The only person who can please God is the person who has been accepted in Christ, and that is how the Bible describes a Christian.

The Beatitudes come at the first of the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, not at the end. And there is probably a lesson in this simple fact for us as well. In these Beatitudes the Lord was indicating that it was to people that are characterized by these brief statements of blessing, and only to them, that these blessings are promised. The blessing of God in our lives depends upon what we are in His sight.

## **I. The First Beatitude.**

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:3).”

In Luke 6:20 we read, “Blessed be ye poor: for your's is the kingdom of God.” However, I believe with A. T. Robertson that the meaning is the same. But he seems to indicate that the poverty is material. That cannot be since in Matthew we have “the poor in spirit.” A poor man may also be “poor in spirit,” but one who is poor materially may be anything but “poor in spirit.” He may be very haughty and rebellious, believing that the world really owes him what he does not have. But “poor in spirit” is a spiritual quality, and can best be described in one word: *humility*. Whatever our position in life is, whether rich or poor, or somewhere in between as far as our material possessions are concerned, all of us who know the Lord are to be “poor in spirit.” And it is significant that the Lord mentioned this first as basic to Christian character, Christian living, and Christian service. True holiness is impossible apart from poverty of spirit.

The “spirit” in this verse is not the Holy Spirit, but the human spirit. We are body, soul, and spirit. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the young church in Thessalonica, he concluded his letter not only by telling them that he was praying for them, but he told them the burden of his prayer for them. We find this in 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24:

23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

We are body, soul, and spirit. Our bodies are what we can see of each other. But while the soul and the spirit are just as real as our bodies, yet they cannot be seen. But they are the living part of us. And our spirits especially reveal our true character. Sometimes the word “soul” is used in the Bible for both the soul and the spirit, but I believe that when we distinguish between the two, the soul is our life as human being, the spirit is what is regenerated when we are saved. And all three parts of our being are included in our ultimate glorification.

We were all born with proud spirits. This is the effect of sin. The soul and the spirit are alienated from God by nature. We didn't have to do anything to become sinners after we were born in sin. We were born sinners. But when we are saved, we become new creatures. We still have our sinful nature, but we have a new nature, a new life. And this is where we need the growth, in our spirits.

Now being “poor in spirit” really speaks of the way we consider our selves. We know better than ever that there is nothing which God considered good in us, and that that is the reason He saved us. We know that in ourselves we always have been and always will be “poor in spirit.” To put it another way in ourselves we are spiritually bankrupt. Paul said in Romans 7:18,

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

Now Paul said this as a Christian. He meant that He knew that he did not possess in himself, in his old nature, that which was necessary for him to become the man which God intended for him to be. In himself and by himself he was still spiritually bankrupt.

By why is it so important to know this, and to act upon it? Matthew Henry said it this way:

But this poverty of spirit is a gracious disposition of the soul (by which he meant that God gives us this desire), by which we are emptied of self, in order to our being filled with Jesus Christ (V, 48).

Now I am sure that Mr. Henry would never say that we are completely emptied of self. It is always there seeking to claim its former place of authority in our lives which it had before we were saved. But it means that denying ourselves, we seek to trust Christ Jesus Who since we were saved has been our life. Remember what the Lord told His disciples when He was revealing to them the truth that He was the Vine, and that they were the branches. He said, “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in Me” (John 15:4b). And then at the end of the next verse our Lord added, “For without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5b).

The Apostle Paul stated it this way in Colossians 2:6, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.” How did we receive Christ? By faith. We trusted in Him because we could not save ourselves. Then how are we to walk “in Him”? By faith. Why? Because just as we could not save ourselves, so we are unable to sanctify ourselves. Does this mean that we have no responsibilities in our lives as Christians? Yes, we do. But all we do we are to do trusting our Lord to enable us to be what He wants us to be, to do what He wants us to do, and to enable us to resist every temptation to sin. Christ is not only our Savior, but He is our Life!

And this is the Blessed life, the happy life! When self is in control, we cannot be truly happy. But when Christ is in control of our lives, we experience true happiness without any regrets.

Now no one has a perfect record of trusting the Lord. But our failures reveal just where it is that we need to trust the Lord more fully than we have been trusting Him. We never trust Christ as much as we need to, but we are always inclined to trust ourselves more than we should. What we need is to be “poor in spirit.” Humility is

the grace out of which all of the other graces grow. We start by humbling ourselves before the Lord, and that is the way we live before Him, before each other, and even before the world.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said in his book on the Sermon on the Mount, that being “poor in spirit” is not as evident in the lives of Christians today as it was, for example, in the days of the Puritans. Today the Church has its “stars” which are held in high esteem like the world glories in its stars. The ways of the world can be seen in our churches. Consequently, the Church has very little influence on the world. The secret of our power is not in us, but in Christ. We have no right to glory in men. We must glory in God, and in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit. And all of us as Christians must learn how helpless we are, but how mighty the Members of the God-head are. We do not produce fruit for Them, but They produce the fruit in us.

As amazing as it may sound, the greatest Example that we have of one who in this life demonstrated what it means to be “poor in spirit,” was our Lord Jesus Christ. On one occasion when He was speaking to “the Jews,” the religious leaders of the Jews, He said this which you will find in John 8:28-29:

28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

If any man who ever walked on this earth had the right to do as He pleased, it was our Lord. But He lived in His relationship with His Father the way that we are to live in our relationship with Him. To be “poor in spirit” begins in our relationship with God, not with men.

Now if sound like a life of drudgery and bondage to you, let me read to you words which most of you could quote from memory, words which speak of our Lord’s submission to the Father’s will. And interestingly it appears in Paul’s letter was emphasizing that we are to rejoice in the Lord always. I am speaking of what Paul wrote in Philippians 2:5-11:

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

And then after that grand statement of the poverty of spirit, the humility of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Paul added these words:

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13).

There was a command in verse 5, and there are commands in verse 12. But none of them would be possible if it were not for the promises in verse 13.

Oh, the blessings we miss because we don’t trust God to enable us to be “poor in spirit” that by our dependence upon Him we might, by His goodness and grace, show the happiness that can be ours by living in a humbling relationship with God.

But now we have the latter part of this verse to find out what the promise of God is. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, because their’s is the kingdom of heaven.” Luke used the words, “the kingdom of God.”

Obviously there are times when “the kingdom of God” and “the kingdom of heaven” mean the same things. Let me show you two verses here in the Gospel of Matthew where they are used synonymously. They are Matthew 19:23-24:

23 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.

The term, “the kingdom of God,” is used only five times in the Gospel of Matthew. But “the kingdom of heaven” is used thirty-two times in Matthew, and nowhere else in the NT. So “the kingdom of heaven” evidently have a special emphasis with the Jews because Matthew was written by a Jew and for Jews.

Now every reference to the kingdom does not refer to the time during the Millennium when the Lord will be reigning on earth. When our Lord spoke of the kingdom of God to Nicodemus, he obviously was speaking of salvation. And in Romans 14:17 Paul was speaking of the kingdom of God as salvation when he wrote, “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” This, too, is salvation. And even in Luke 17:20-21 when the Lord was asked by the Pharisees about the kingdom of God, Matthew recorded this:

20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

They were talking about the Messiah’s kingdom on earth, but the Lord indicated that He was using the same term to speak of salvation.

It is true that when we are saved, the Lord Jesus not only becomes our Savior, and our Lord, but also our King! We are under His reign, not outwardly, but from within our hearts.

So I would say that the expression, “for their’s is the kingdom of heaven,” basically means that they are giving evidence that they really belong to the Lord when they give show by their lives that they live in humble submission to God. But I believe that it also means that people can be described in this way are going to reap the benefits of salvation in their daily lives. There is no question in either the OT or the NT, but that a humble, loving obedience to the will of God, brings the blessing of God.

Of course the day is coming when Christ will return to reign upon the earth, and we will reign with Him. But it seems that the Lord used the terms “the kingdom of heaven” and “the kingdom of God” when He was here on earth to show that we submit to Him now as our King to show by our humility expressed in our obedience to God’s will, that we belong to Him now, and that He is reigning in our hearts day by day. On the other hand, disobedience is rebellion against God, and disobedience as a daily habit shows that those people may appear to be religious, they are not the possessors of true salvation.

I was speaking just this week with a man whose son is in the hospital because of alcohol and drugs. I knew that this man had been married and had children, so I asked about them. His father told me that he and his wife had been divorced ten or eleven years ago. But then this man told me that he had been living, unmarried, with another woman, but he hastened to tell me that she was a Christian lady. She had threatened to move out if this hospitalized son did not quit drinking. She obviously had a sense of what was right and wrong, but I don’t believe in any way that you could say from her life that *her’s was the kingdom of heaven*. The Apostle John said concerning salvation in 1 John 3:9-10:

9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

And our Lord said, right here in the Sermon on the Mount:

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:15-23).

**Concl:** In concluding our study on this first Beatitude, how do you rate yourself? You profess faith in Christ, but do you live by faith in Christ? Or is your life a frustrating and disappointing series of experiences where you are trying in your own strength to do what is pleasing to God? Do you think that you can obey God on your own? If you claim to be saved by faith, are you living by faith in God and in Christ, or in yourself? Do you consider yourself a humble person, totally unworthy of God's grace both in salvation and in life. May the Lord help each one of us to take a spiritual inventory of ourselves to make sure that *it is true that our's is the Kingdom of God.*

April 6, 2009

## II. The Second Beatitude (Matt. 5:4).

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”

I have greatly enjoyed reading Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' messages on The Beatitudes which are a part of his larger work on *The Sermon on the Mount*. I believe that he was absolutely right in saying that the Beatitudes were given to describe a true Christian. He believed that they present a picture of what a Christian is which certainly is not the idea that people in the world have, nor is it the idea that many church people have about a Christian. In fact, the term *Christian*, or its plural, *Christians*, is only found three times in the Bible – twice in the book of Acts (11:26 and 26:28) and once in 1 Peter 4:16. The connection of the word Christian to Christ indicates that in the early church it was used by the people of the world to show that the followers were related to Him, and who accepted His teaching. I heard the other day about a lady who called herself a Christian, but who did not believe that Jesus was Deity. I am sure that we could find a lot of people in the world who are just like that. But it is also the case that the professing church is responsible for giving the world a far different idea of the Christian and the Christian life than is portrayed for us in the Word of God. Or, since we are talking about the Beatitudes of our Lord, that both out of the church and in the church there are those who do not accept the clear idea given by our Lord, that the Beatitudes apply to people who really know the Lord in salvation. However, what we who really know the Lord need to be concerned about, is that we are looking to the Spirit of God to produce these characteristics in our lives. Notice again, if you have forgotten, that those to

whom the Lord spoke these gracious words, were the disciples. In Matthew 5:1 we are told that our Lord's "disciples came unto him, and in verse 2, "He opened His mouth, and taught them."

And, as I said in our study of "the fruit of the Spirit" on Sunday mornings about them, so I say the same about the Beatitudes: there is a divinely prescribed order in which the Lord presented the Beatitudes. "Blessed are the poor in spirit" is the starting point, the foundational truth upon which all of the other Beatitudes are built. It speaks of not financial poverty, but of spiritual poverty. All that we have that is pleasing to God, is what we have in Christ. And, as we go on to the second Beatitude this morning, the Lord continued to speak about those who recognized their total spiritual poverty. It was that kind of mourning that the Lord was speaking about. And, as it is with all of the Beatitudes, we need to apply them to ourselves first. As we have been learning in memorizing the Sermon on the Mount, we are hypocrites if we try to take the mote out of a brother's eye while we have a beam in our own eyes.

Now why would the Lord speak about mourning (m-o-u-r-n-i-n-g). Well, it begins with being "poor in spirit." Can we really say from the heart, as the Apostle Paul did, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18a). That was true of us before we were saved, and it is still true! Salvation does not change our old nature. It conquers it, but it remains the same. We did not seek the Lord; He was the One Who sought us. And He did not seek us because of how good we were, but because of how sinful we were. We may not have been the worst among sinners, but we were sinners with nothing that would recommend us to God. He did not save us because of what we were, but in spite of what we were. And we first experienced true spiritual mourning when we realized what the Lord Jesus suffered in order to atone for our sins and save us. I don't care how long a person has known the Lord, his, or her, heart is always going to mourn whenever the subject of the Cross is brought up. And I believe that the longer we know the Lord, the deeper our mourning will be because we will understand more about the awfulness of sin. My Dad was saved just shortly before I was born, but He had a hard time giving his testimony in a meeting of Christians without tears running down his cheeks. And this added to His poverty of spirit. How many times have we sung that word of that hymn which tells us,

But drops of grief can ne'er repay the depth of love I owe;  
Here, Lord, I give myself away, 'tis all that I can do.

I am sure that most of us have. I hope all of us have. It grieves me, and it must grieve all Three Members of the Godhead infinitely more to hear some Christians say that there probably is some other way for people to be saved from the sins apart from faith in Christ. The fact that God sent His Son into the world, born as a true human being, to die the terrible death that He died with all of the humiliation that He had to endure, should indicate to all of us that there was no other way for sinners to be saved from their sins but through faith in Christ. Such a perversion of the Gospel should cause all of us to mourn.

But there is another way in which we should be caused to mourn, and that has to do with the sins we commit after we are saved. The Bible gives us some illustrations of this. And we are not told about them to cause more shame upon them, but they come from Scripture as warnings to us. Consider those two terrible sins which David committed. They were not the only sins that he committed, but they were sins which he never forgot. I used to think that Psalm 51 was his psalm of confession, but in reading through the Psalms you will find several references he made to his sin of adultery with Bathsheba, and his sin of murder when he had faithful Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, put in the front line of battle where he would most certainly be killed, and he was! David had sinned against Bathsheba. He also sinned against Uriah. But he sinned against the men in the army when he made them partners to his sins. But when he confessed his sin, he said this:

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest (Psa. 51:4).

Obviously David's sins had affect many, but he was most conscious that his sins had grieved God, and, among all of the regrets that had, it was how he had grieved God that was the greatest source of grief to his own heart.

Some of the Puritans referred to this Beatitude as the Beatitude of repentance. Surely our sins before we were saved were what caused us to turn to Christ, but after knowing the Lord, and walking in fellowship with Him, it is the sins that that we have committed as His people that problem put us into the deepest mourning.

Remember Peter. There never really was any question about his love for the Lord. His love for the Savior was deep and true. And he really believed that he would die with the Lord before he would deny Him. But when the testing time came, he denied in the strongest terms that he even knew the Lord. Mark in recording this event said that Peter “wept.” But Matthew and Luke said that Peter “wept bitterly.” Both Matthew and Luke used the same word for “bitterly,” the Greek word **πικρῶς**, which means that what he had done was extremely painful to him. It would be hard to put in words how Peter felt when he realized what he had done.

Going back into the OT we have the experience of Isaiah when he was called to his prophetic ministry. So we would have to say that it was after he was saved. There certainly is nothing that can make us realize not only our nothingness, but our corruption, like seeing the Lord. Isaiah not only saw the Lord (which must mean that he saw the second Person of the Godhead), but he heard the seraphim in their adoration of the Lord, when they said, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.”

But how did Isaiah respond when he saw the Lord? He said,

5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts (Isa. 6:5).

This must have been a very painful experience for the Lord. Instead of feeling qualified to serve the Lord, he felt disqualified, and he felt the same way about the whole nation. It would have made Isaiah feel that there was no one qualified in the whole nation to convey the message of God to the nation. And thus it would have been a sad time, a time of mourning for him. And it is interesting that he felt that they were disqualified by their unclean tongues when that would be the instrument that a prophet would use. Although James had not yet written about the tongue, yet Isaiah must have understood that the tongue was “an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (Jas. 3:8). And also as James said in James 3:6:

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

We bless God and we curse God with the same tongue. If we were just to consider how the work could be done if we only had our natural resources, we all should be in tears.

Perhaps you will remember that concerning the book, or scroll with seven seals, that he “wept much because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon” (Rev. 6:4). How many of us who minister the Word feel like the Apostle John did about the opening of the Word. Tears play a vital part in the ministry of the Word. Cf. Psa. 126:5-6:

5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Notice that Psalm 126, verse 5, is an expression of Matthew 5:4 using different words.

I am sure that much more could be said about mourning and weeping, and the beneficial place that it has in the lives of the people of God throughout the Word of God. But another reason which we have for mourning and weeping as the people of God is not only for our own sins before and after we are saved, but it should give us a great cause for mourning when we consider either the sins of other Christians as well as the sins of people in the world. Often we criticize, or we stand off in indignation. But do we mourn over the sins of others, whether of Christians, or non-Christians. And how concerned are we that we in the professing church today are sending the wrong message to those who profess to be Christians in the church as well as to the world.

Years ago Dr. Mitchell used to say, “The church is becoming worldly, and the world is becoming churchy.” I wonder what he would say today. Dr. Lloyd-Jones has a lot to say in his chapter on this Beatitude about how the church has really lost its influence in the world because it has become so much like the world in its emphasis on pleasure and entertaining. Knowing God and carrying out our mission in the world is the main purpose in the church. It is a most serious work. There is nothing superficial or pleasure-seeking about it. Many who have written on this Beatitude have point out that our Lord Jesus Christ was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3). It is never said in Scripture that Jesus laughed. But it does tell us that He wept at the tomb of Lazarus, and that in the Garden of Gethsemane, “being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44).

The purpose of our salvation is that we are being made like Christ. He was never morose and offensive in His ministry. In fact, people followed Him probably more than people have ever followed anyone else among the people of God. They loved His ministry, His teaching. The way to reach people was demonstrated by our Lord especially by His humility and by His deep concern for people. He was harsh on the religious leaders who were misleading the people, but there was a solemnity, a dependence upon God in prayer, a holiness of life, and a dedication to the will of God that is missing in many churches and in the lives of many professing Christians today. True happiness is in being like the Lord, not in being like the world. It is in mourning over ourselves, over other believers, and over the people of the world who spent their time on things which can never bring true happiness. But only the Spirit of God can show them that in mourning is true joy.

Up to this point I have been speaking about, “Blessed are they that mourn,” mourning over ourselves and our failure to live and serve in ways that will cause our fellow Christians and those who know us in the world, that there is true joy in mourning over any departure from Christ and His ways, and this brings us to the last part of the Beatitude: “for they shall be comforted.”

The first part of this Beatitude (like all of the others) tells us what we are to do; the last part tells us what God, or what the other Members of the Godhead, will do for us. The word comfort is in the passive, meaning that this is done for us. “Comfort” means to encourage and to strengthen as well as to comfort. When we do the Lord’s work in the Lord’s way, there is not only blessing for us, but blessing in our ministry to others.

Let us review some of the people that we have been talking about:

- 1) How did God comfort Adam?
- 2) How did God comfort Abraham?
- 3) How did God comfort David?
- 4) How did God comfort Isaiah?
- 5) How did God comfort Paul?
- 6) How did God comfort Peter?
- 7) How did God comfort John on the Isle of Patmos?
- 8) How has God comforted you? Concerning your own needs and trials that you have faced in your life . Concerning the salvation of those you have prayed for? Concerning Christians you have supported in their times of need.

How thankful we can be that the days are coming when mourning are a thing of the past. We read in Revelation 7:9-17 about those who will come out of the Great Tribulation – and tears will be a thing of the past. See also Revelation 21:3-5.

April 27, 2009

**III. The Third Beatitude: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5).**

We have missed two weeks of classes because of our Spring Bible Conference and one time because of my human frailty, I want to spend just a few minutes reviewing the two Beatitudes which we have covered so far.

First, let me remind you that this is a sermon which the Lord preached. And it was preached on one of the high hills in Israel. That is why it is called, *the Sermon on the Mount*. The Beatitudes themselves portrayed in words for the disciples what He wanted them to be. And so we can say that they described what the Lord wants us to be. Many years have passed since the Lord spoke these words, and many things have changed during that time. Our Lord and the disciples did not speak the language that we speak. That is why the Bible had to be translated into our language. We don't dress like the people dressed in those days. We have customs that are completely different from their customs. But there are many things that have not changed. The Bible has not changed. God has not changed. Salvation has not changed. Nor has there been any difference in what the Lord wants His people to be, or how He expects us to live. Truth is really timeless. The truth may become clearer even as we go through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, but basically there is no change in the truth which God has given us in His Word. The doctrines which the people of God believed in ancient times, are the doctrines that we believe today.

So when the Lord Jesus said to His disciples (and others who were listening to Him as He spoke), "Blessed are the poor in spirit, or *Happy are the poor in spirit*, we are to take those words to mean the same today, *i.e.*, that true happiness is to be found among the people of God who are "poor in spirit." This does not refer to the Holy Spirit, but to our human spirits, what we really are down deep in the very center of our beings. It is equal to saying, "Blessed are the poor in heart." And "poor in heart," or "poor in spirit," speaks of humility, true humility.

Now pride is such a basic feature of our old, sinful nature, that it always requires afflictions, or trials, or failures of some kind to bring us down. And then it requires a steady stream of afflictions, some permanent, to keep us down. The term *proud Christian* is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. A person who is characteristically proud, probably is not a Christian. A Christian knows that pride is not Christ-like, and needs to be put in the category of sins. We are seeing in American society today the damage that has been caused by human pride. And many of those who are seeking to correct our ills, have the same problem, so they are not going to succeed in making things better. Chapter 11 in Jerry Bridges' book, *Respectable Sins*, is on pride.

"For their's is the kingdom of heaven." I take this as a synonym for salvation. This would mean two things. First, it would mean that a person who is truly "poor in spirit," not just occasionally, but day after day, is a person who can truly be called a child of God. Second, it is a statement of that person's security in Christ. "Is" is a present tense, so it means *is and continues to be*. It amounts to, *has, and continues to have*. This means that with all the difficulties and trials that we as the children of God may experience, nothing can take from us what we have in Christ. Trials make us more thankful for our Lord and His sufficiency in our lives. And we even learn to rejoice in trials because of what they do to us spiritually.

The second Beatitude is, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

No one is going to deny that trials in themselves are pleasant to experience. "Blessed" and "mourn" are two words which the world does not, and cannot put together. A Christian goes through the same kind of trials and suffering that the people in the world experience, from birth to death. But, in addition, the Christian experiences unique trials because he is a Christian. But there is one thing that causes a Christian to mourn more than anything else, and that is sin. A Christian grieves because of sin primarily because of how it grieves God. The people of the world may grieve because of sin, but just because of the trouble it brings into the lives. They don't call sin, sin, but they hate the consequences of what obviously in the light of Scripture is sin.

The Bible is very honest in what it tells us about the lives of people of God. It is a fact which we all recognize to our own sorrow, that it is possible for Christians to sin. If a person is truly a Christian, it is going to grieve him, or her, when after being saved, he or she sins. Notice that I did not say, after a believer sins, but when a believer sins. We know what the Lord Jesus experienced to save us from sin's penalty. He took our place at Calvary in order to save us from hell. We have repented of our sin, and have trusted Christ to save us. But usually after we are saved we learn that Christ died not only to save us from sin's penalty, but He died to save us from sin's power. And we learn also that some day, when we see the Lord, we are going to be glorified so that we will never be able to sin.

So this is the part of our comfort when we sin. But as I believe I pointed out the last time we were together, the Bible tells us how God comforted people we read about in Scripture when they suffered because of their relationship to God and to Christ, or when they mourned because of their own sin. You can see it in the life of Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, Paul, and the Apostle John on Patmos, just to name a few. And we can tell how the Lord has comforted us, when we have sinned, or when we have been persecuted in some way because we belong to the Lord and seek to be faithful to the teaching of the Word. So in all kinds of mourning there is comfort for us from God. "They shall be comforted," as in every other Beatitude, an irrevocable promise of God to all of His people. John Calvin believed that there is a close relationship between the first Beatitude and this second Beatitude. And we can probably say that each Beatitude is tied on to the preceding Beatitude, and lead to the one which follows.

Now we come to the third Beatitude: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Perhaps you remember that in our study of the fruit of the Spirit, meekness was the eighth characteristic that the Apostle Paul mentioned as the fruit of the Spirit. So we know that "meekness" is not natural for anybody. There is a close relationship between the "poor in spirit" and "meekness." And yet there is a difference. The Greek word for "meekness" means speaks of a person with a mild disposition. It includes gentleness and patience.

We might say that meekness is no respecter of persons. By that I mean that it has to do with our relationship with God. It has to do with our relationship to each other as the people of God. And what may be the hardest of all, it has to do with our relationship to the people of the world, people who have no respect for God or His people. Meekness has to do with what is going on in our hearts, but it also is going to be seen in our prayers, in the way we speak to each other, and in the way we respond to people in the world who may ridicule us, or actively seek to hurt us, or who belittle us to other people. And the way the Spirit of God teaches us meekness is by allowing us to go through difficult circumstances over which we have no control so that we will learn to trust the Lord when we see that we do not have the natural resources to react as we know that believers in Christ should react.

Bishop Trench in his *Synonyms of the New Testament* (pp. 152, 153) explained meekness in this way:

This meekness, however, being first of all a meekness before God, is also such in the face of men, even of evil men, out of a sense that these, with the insults and injuries which they may inflict, are permitted and employed by [God] for the chastening and purifying of His elect.

And then Dr. Trench cited David's reaction to Shimei who threw stones at David as he was fleeing from Jerusalem to escape from Absalom when he led a revolt against his father. See 2 Samuel 16:11.

It takes a humble person to show meekness. The Lord Jesus is our perfect example of meekness. Remember His words in Matthew 11:28-30:

28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 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.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Trench also said:

It is that temper of spirit in which we accept [God's] dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing and or resisting (p. 152).

It takes both humility and meekness to believe and accept Romans 8:28. We need to exercise meekness when prayers go unanswered when we can't see any reason why they should not be answered. Meekness requires patience as we await God's time and way for answering our prayers.

I think that we all can see that in order to be meek we need a strong faith in the sovereignty of God. Even today when we see things going on in our government which are against all reason, and when sin seems to be destroying our nation, we need to remember that God is in control and that He is working out His purposes in our lives even though we may be seeking to do all that we can to please Him.

The Lutheran commentator Lenski reminds us that in this Beatitude our Lord was actually quoting Psalm 37:11 which says, "But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." And then he went on to say that "when [believers] are wrong and abused they show no resentment and do not threaten or avenge themselves" (Matthew, p. 188). What Peter said about our Lord at the time of His suffering and death gives us the best definition of meekness that we could possibly have. He was addressing Christians who were servants. And this is what he said:

18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls ( Peter 2:18-25)

The context of this passage does not teach us that we are to be passive in our relationship with others, whether Christian or not. Our main purpose in life is to please God. However, this often gets us in trouble with people. When it does, we are not to give them what they give us, but to do like the Lord did. He persisted in doing the will of God even at a great cost to Himself. The world by nature is hostile toward God and toward Christ. And the world will naturally be hostile to those of us who belong to Christ, and who seek to please God. But that is when we need to trust the Holy Spirit to respond in a spirit of meekness.

What is the promise of this Beatitude? "And they shall inherit the earth."

Some expositors take this as a promise of the millennium. But it seems to me that the Beatitudes have to do with present circumstances which are followed by promises we can expect to see fulfilled in our lives today. Of course the Lord's purposes are all going to be fulfilled eventually, so if you think that is the application, you can be sure that God will be faithful to all of His promises.

But let me tell you what I believe is the teaching of this Beatitude. I believe that it has to do with evangelism, preaching the Gospel to every creature in every generation around the world. Where we as Christians often face

our greatest opposition is when we seek to speak to others about Christ. Even today it is not the politically correct thing to say that Jesus Christ is the only Savior from sin, that there is no other way to go to the living God except through Christ. In fact, we are not supposed to say that there is just one, trust God – the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So our tendency is to keep quiet about the Gospel to avoid trouble, or, on the other hand, to delute it in such a way that there will be no offence to the Gospel. Now both of those ways are wrong. We have a divine commission to go into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature. There is not one Gospel for America, and another Gospel for Mexico, and still another Gospel for Japan. There is just one Gospel –period! And we have to say that there is. There is only one Savior. His Name is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the eternal Son of God Who became a Man in order to save human beings from the judgment of a holy God. Sin is the human problem. If we are to pay for our sins, it means that we go to hell. But Jesus Christ died to save sinners from going to hell. And no one can go to God, to find Him willing to accept sinners, unless we go in dependence of the sacrifice of Christ which He offered to God for us when He died on the Cross.

Now this is not a popular message. This is not how to win friends and to influence people. Sometimes it starts an argument. I was speaking to a lady yesterday on the telephone. For months she has been witnessing to her father. Her father finally told her that he *never* wants her ever to speak to him about Christ again. And I could tell that she was in tears as we talked on the phone. I know of another young married lady, a dear Christian, who was in tears on the Lord's day, grieving because her parents are not interested in the Gospel. I personally have prayed for over twenty years for a young lady who had heard the Gospel over and over, and yet to this day has no interest in Christ or in salvation. And I will have to admit that many times I have had bad feelings toward the Lord because He doesn't do something to save this young lady.

I am sure that most of you could men the names of those you have been praying for, for years, and they are still unsaved. This Beatitude ought to give us some encouragement. And I know when I speak to you I am speaking to people who love the Lord. You wouldn't take the time out of your busy lives to come to a mid-week Bible class if you didn't love the Lord. But let me give you some advice from this Beatitude where it speaks of the meek. And I will have to say that I have been rebuked in thinking about this little four-letter word, "meek." You see, if our Lord had not been meek, we would not have any salvation. I read to you about what Peter had to say about the Lord as He faced the Cross. If the Lord had been only a Man, the attitude of the Jews and Gentiles would have sent Him back to heaven without dying for anyone. But their opposition did not turn Him away. Instead, as He looked out over that wicked crowd, He spoke to the Father with these words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Now here is the word of encouragement I have for all of us, for myself as well as for you. And it is found in the last letter that Paul wrote which was to be a part of the Word of God. And he wrote it to his younger brother and fellowservant of Christ. This is what he said. I am reading from 2 Timothy 2:24-26:

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

We are all servants of the Lord. When someone tells you not to speak to them about Christ any more, you have to do what they say. But don't stop praying! They can't keep you from talking to God. We never know, as Paul said, "if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." But the important thing for us is not to be resentful, but to be "gentle . . . patient . . . in meekness . . ." The Lord may enable you to inherit that part of the earth upon which your loved one stand, and to see him or her come to Christ. Don't be angry with God. Start by showing meekness toward Him. Look in your own heart to see what all of

this may mean for you, that is, what the Lord is seeking to do in your heart, or mine, as we wait for prayer to be answered. I say this for myself, and you can apply it to yourself if the Lord leads you to do so. Often the key to what we want the Lord to do for us, is to let Him do what He wants to do in us first.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

**IV. The fourth Beatitude: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6).**

These Beatitudes all belong together. The first leads to the second. The second leads to the third. And now we are about to see that the third leads to the fourth.

We have been learning that those who believe in Christ are happy when they are “poor in spirit.” We have also learned that believers are happy when they mourn, especially when they “mourn” over their sins and their many failures to please God. And from the third Beatitude we learn that believers are happy when they are “meek.” To be meek means to accept God’s dealings with us as good, and that even our trials are designed for our greater happiness. This led the Lord to speak of hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

A person who is hungry and thirsty is a person who is in great need. It may be an indication of poverty. It surely speaks of a person who cannot, or has not, either taken care of the basic needs of his life, or who has been unable to meet his, or her, basic needs. We are all familiar with people who stand at the entrance or exit of a freeway holding signs saying that they are hungry and need money. I think that men are very inclined to say, particularly when they have been out for a round of golf, or have spent an afternoon working in the yard, to say, “What’s to eat? If I don’t get some food I’m going to die!” We don’t die; we just think that we are going to. But it is just a false alarm.

But there are times when it is not a false alarm. There are people in this world of ours who are literally hungry and thirst for food. And we want to help them if we can. But if you were to express what you are the most hungry and thirsty for, what would it be?

Now in the Beatitudes we have been talking about our spiritual lives, humility, grieving over our sins, being meek like our Lord Jesus Christ. But spiritually are you really hungry and thirsty? And I ask myself the same question that I am asking you. Why are you here this morning? Is it just to learn more about the Bible? If so, what are you going to do with what you are learning? Would you say that professing Christians are spiritually hungry who are satisfied just to go to church once a week? What does it say about Christians today when churches have shut down their evening services and discontinued the Wednesday night prayer meeting? I know that many cannot join us on Tuesdays because they are working, or because they have children to take care of, but we have to face the fact that for most people who profess to be Christians, once a week is enough for them. I can remember in my younger days when a Bible Conference in our churches meant two weeks, morning and evening, of services. And in years past there have been times when the Lord’s people met every day for teaching and worship and prayer. I thank the Lord for each of you because I know you all have other things that you could be doing, but you are here.

And what about Bible reading? Do you know why churches are doing so many crazy things these days? It is because people don’t know enough truth to know what churches are supposed to do, and so they are doing all kinds of things that they shouldn’t be doing. And how much praying do you suppose the average Christian does every day. Do you remember that when the Apostle John wrote out the Lord’s letter to the church at Ephesus, the Lord commended them for several things, but then He said that He had somewhat against them because they had left their first love. I think it is the Weymouth translation that renders that statement of the

Lord's, that "you don't love Me the way you used to love Me." The world is in a terrible mess today. It's no wonder that we are experiencing the judgment of God. But the Church is in great need also. In these days when our nation needs a strong Church, the Church has become like the world in many ways, and we are more concerned about entertaining people than we are in proclaiming the Word for the edification of those who do believe in Christ.

April 28, 2009

When we look at the world today, we don't see much of this, do we? With all of the problems that we have both as individuals and as a nation, hungering and thirsting after righteousness almost seems to be non-existent, doesn't it? This is not the kind of thing that makes headline news. We know that here and there, there are those who are deeply convicted of their need for righteousness, but it is the exception, not the rule. What is it that our Lord was talking about?

"Righteousness" is a word inseparably related to the Gospel. For example, when Paul was just beginning the writing of his epistle to the Romans, he said this which is recorded for us in Romans 1:16-17:

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Another great verse on righteousness is 2 Corinthians 5:21:

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Men have come up with many ideas throughout history concerning their relationship with God. Most of the time it has to do either with a denial of their guilt of sin, or some way in which they think that they have successfully earned, or are earning, an acquittal before God. That means that all charges against them in the court of heaven have been dropped. But the truth concerning man's acceptance with God has been explained by one commentator with these words:

No man, however wise and powerful, has ever discovered a way to turn a guilty, sinful soul into a righteous one. Men justify and declare themselves righteous, but this amounts to no more than the criminal's denial of his crime and never stands before the court which has the full evidence of his guilt. But what is beyond all human ability is brought about by Christ Who by His holy life and sacrificial death met the demands of God's norm of right, met them in our stead, and now transfers His perfect righteousness to us through faith and thus wins our pardon and acquittal before the divine judgment bar (Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 189, 190).

And so the Apostle Paul could write, and did write, under the direction of the Holy Spirit these amazing words which are found in Titus 3:3-7,

3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

7 That being justified (which means to be declared righteous) by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Again quoting Paul from Romans 3, after listing some of the charges of sin against all mankind, he said this in Romans 3:19-27:

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

- 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.
- 21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;
- 22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:
- 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
- 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
- 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;
- 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

So the question is not, Are we guilt sinners? That is evident beyond all question. The question is, Are we trusting in Jesus Christ Who died taking our penalty upon Himself that by faith alone in Him we know that all charges against us are forever dropped?

But now let me point out some interesting facts that are in this fourth Beatitude.

The word “do hunger” and “do (understood) thirst” are in the present tense in the original Greek. This means that true believers in Christ have had their basic hunger and thirst for righteousness satisfied when they trusted in Christ, yet they continue to experience a life-long hunger and thirst that the righteousness of Christ might be increasingly evident in their lives. This is brought out many places in Scripture, but let me read to you from what the Apostle Paul wrote in his Ephesian epistle. You will find these words in Ephesians 4:17-24:

- 17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,
- 18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:
- 19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.
- 20 But ye have not so learned Christ;
- 21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:
- 22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;
- 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
- 24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

So the evidence that we have been declared righteous by God will be seen in a growing righteousness in the way we live. “Shall be filled” is a present passive in Greek as it is in English. This means that the evidence that we are righteous before God will not be produced by us, but will be the result of God’s work in us through the Holy Spirit as we walk in obedience to the Lord and grow in our likeness to Christ.

But let us ask ourselves, When I look at my own life, or what is even more important, when God looks at my life, does He see that I hunger and thirst for righteousness above everything else? To be filled means to be satisfied. God has put in every human heart a desire, or better, a deep longing for satisfaction. The trouble is that because we are sinners, we look in the wrong places for satisfaction. It is not to be found in money. It is not to be found in pleasure. It is not to be found in gaining some position. It is not to be found in ourselves nor in any other person. *It can only be found in Christ! We start by trusting Jesus Christ as our Savior, and we continue to experience that satisfaction by walking in fellowship with Him.*

*“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6).*

May 4, 2009

**V. The Fifth Beatitude: “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7).**

One thing that impresses me about this Beatitude is that all of us are on both sides of it. There will be times in our lives when we will need to exercise mercy, and there will be other times when we will need to receive mercy from others. Of course, all mercy given or received is from God, and this applies both to believers and unbelievers. It is a part of what God is doing to meet human needs.

Luther pointed out concerning all of the Beatitudes that “faith is presupposed as the tree on which all the fruit of blessedness grows” (from Lenski on Matthew, p. 191). Even unbelievers often demonstrate mercy, but we know that this is one of the evidences that man has been created in the image of God. But normally those who do not know the Lord do not seek their happiness in being merciful. A believer seeks opportunities to be merciful to others knowing that this is one of the many ways that we seek to please God, and that what pleases God, is what produces happiness in our hearts.

What is mercy?

Mercy has many synonyms. It is kindness. It is compassion. It is a willingness to help. It is doing something for someone else which we may not be obligated to do. It is usually help that is undeserved. In fact, it often means doing something for a person who has not been kind to us, or even one who is our enemy. When the Lord told His disciples to “love their enemies,” He was calling upon them to have mercy upon their enemies.

Mercy is closely related to grace. It has often been said that grace has to do with our guilt, but that mercy has to do with our misery.

One commentator has said that “mercy and its derivatives always deal with what we see of pain, misery, and distress, the results of sin; and grace always deals with sin and guilt itself. With the believer “grace” often means enabling strength to deal with the trials and afflictions of life. Grace brings forgiveness; mercy, relief.

Mercy is an attribute of God. When the Lord gave Moses the ten commandments on the second stone tablet, we read in Exodus 34:6, 7,

6 And the Lord passed by before [Moses], and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and sin . . .

And many feel that when David wrote Psalm 103:8 that he was thinking of what the Lord said to Moses:

8 The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

In the seventeenth verse of that same Psalm, David added, “But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children’s children.

While the greatest evidence of God’s mercy is reserved for His people, the Word indicates that even unbelievers experience the mercy of God in many ways. For example, right here in the Sermon on the Mount the Lord spoke of the way all men experience the mercy of God. It is recorded in Matthew 5:45 that our Lord said, speaking of God, that “He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” Life itself on the earth would be impossible if it were not for the mercy of God.

This Beatitude indicates that we live in a world that is characterized by afflictions and trials of various kinds

which come in a steady stream into our lives. That is why the Lord indicated that we need to be prepared to show mercy on others, and to expect those times when we will need to be the recipient of mercy from others.

Our needs make us sympathetic for the needs of others. John Calvin said about this verse,

Christ says that those are *happy* who are not only prepared to endure their own afflictions, but to take a share in the afflictions of others, – who assist the wretched, – who willingly take part with those who are in distress, – who clothe themselves, as it were with the same afflictions, that they may be more readily disposed to render them assistance (*Matthew*, pp. 263, 264).

One of the greatest examples of mercy in the OT was displayed by Joseph in his attitude toward his brothers. His story begins in the book of Genesis, chapter 37. His father did a very unwise thing in letting the family know that Joseph was his favorite. And to show his preference he gave Joseph a special coat. This caused his brothers to hate him, and they had a hard time even speaking kindly to him. But the Lord gave Joseph two dreams in which God revealed to Joseph that the day would come when the members of his family would bow down before him. Two dreams indicates the certainty that the dreams would be fulfilled. Well, Joseph made the mistake of telling his family about his dreams. This made his brothers hate him even more.

Well, the time came when the Joseph's brothers had been sent away with the family sheep to seek pasture for them. Evidently they did this each year. Well, Jacob got concerned about how they were doing, and so he sent Joseph to find out. When he finally found his brothers, and before he actually got to them, they realized that they had a perfect opportunity to do away with Joseph, and so they planned to kill him. Reuben intervened on his behalf, but while Reuben was away from them, some Midianite traders came by on their way to Egypt, and Joseph's brothers sold him. The traders took him to Egypt and he was sold to Potiphar who was the captain of the guard in Pharaoh's army. This meant that he was the chief executioner for Pharaoh. This was the first time when Joseph could have been very bitter toward his brothers.

Potiphar took Joseph into his home, and he soon found that Joseph was so dependable that he put all that he had under Joseph's supervision. Everything was fine for a while until Potiphar's wife was attracted to Joseph, and tried repeatedly to seduce him. Finally, one day when Joseph was working in the house and he and Potiphar's wife were alone, she tried to force him to commit adultery with her. Joseph fled out of the house, but he left his coat which he had taken off, and so Potiphar's wife told her husband that Joseph had tried to force her into a relationship with him. As a result, Joseph went to prison, and probably was thankful that he was not put to death. So he could easily have been bitter against Potiphar's wife.

In prison two of Pharaoh's servants had been put in prison, apparently because one or both of them had been charged with trying to kill Pharaoh. They had a dream in which God revealed that the butler was going to be restored to his position, but the baker would be put to death. They didn't know what the dreams meant, but Joseph was enabled by God to interpret the dreams for them. When the butler left to go back to his job, Joseph asked him to appeal to Pharaoh for him. But the butler forgot him, forgot him, as the Bible says, for "two full years" (Gen. 40:23; 41:10).

At that point in his life Joseph had another opportunity to be rebellious and resentful. But finally Pharaoh had a two dreams which he could not understand, and the butler then remembered Joseph and he told Pharaoh that Joseph would be able to explain Pharaoh's dreams to him. He did, and he told Pharaoh that there would be seven years of plenty, and then seven years of famine. Pharaoh exalted Joseph to a position of being second in all of the land of Egypt as a reward, and Joseph began to prepare for the famine..

Joseph was about seventeen when his brothers sold him. He was thirty when he became second in command over Egypt. And after the seven years of plenty, most of you will remember how Jacob sent his sons into Egypt

to get food because the famine was also in Canaan.

When Joseph's brothers came into Egypt approximately twenty years had passed since they had sold him. They thought that Joseph had probably died by that time, but they had no idea that he held the position that he had. Joseph did not immediately reveal himself to them, but eventually he did. When he did, they were, the Bible says, "troubled at his presence." Joseph was in a position to put them to death. Now I want to read about what happened when Joseph revealed himself to them from Genesis 45:1-11.

Years later when Jacob died, the brothers of Joseph were again fearful that Joseph would take revenge on them. This takes us to the last chapter of Genesis. I want to read from verse 15 down through verse 21. (Read.)

Now I don't know when Joseph first came to this merciful attitude toward his brother, or how he forgave the butler, or when he ceased feeling resentful toward Potiphar's wife. But I know that it was a merciful God Who poured out his mercy upon Joseph, so that Joseph could look back over his whole life and see that God was being merciful to him through all of those difficult years, and had made the heart of Joseph overflow with mercy toward his brothers.

If we had more time, I would take you to the life of David, and there also we see how the mercy of God was upon Him.

But, in closing, let me remind you of the greatest display of God's mercy. It is to be seen many places in Scripture, but the one I have chosen to read to you came from the heart and pen of the Apostle Paul as he wrote to Titus. Listen as I read Titus 3:1-8. (Read.)

May 11, 2009

## **VI. The Sixth Beatitude: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God (Matt. 5:8).**

King Solomon, according to the great wisdom that was given to him from God, said a very comprehensive thing about the heart which is recorded for us in the book of Proverbs. It is this: "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). What did he mean by this? He meant that the heart is the source of everything that we do, everything that we say, everything that we think. To "keep" is means that we are to guard it. We are to keep constant watch upon it. But what is the heart? Was he speaking about that organ in our bodies which pumps blood to all parts of our bodies to keep us alive. No, that was not his idea. It is good for us to do what we can to protect our physical hearts by getting proper food, rest and exercise. And we do have responsibilities in that direction. But that is not what Solomon had in mind here.

I have enjoyed reading much of what Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has written on the Beatitudes, and I found what he had to say about the heart as Solomon used the word in the verse I have given to you from Proverbs, and it is the same way in which the Lord was using it when He said to his disciples, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Here is what Dr. Lloyd-Jones said:

According to the general Scriptural usage of the term, the hearts means the center of the personality. It does not merely mean the seat of the affections and the emotions. This Beatitude is not a statement to the effect that the Christian faith is something primarily emotional, not intellectual or pertaining to the will. Not at all. The heart in Scripture includes (all) three. It is the center of man's being and personality; it is the fount out of which everything else comes. It includes the mind; it includes the will; it includes the heart. It is the total man, and that is the thing which the Lord emphasizes. . . It is the center of their being, and the source of their every activity (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, Vol. One*, pp. 109, 110).

We can say that “the heart” refers to the real you, your inner being, all that distinct from your body. It is that which exercises power over the body. This is what Solomon also had in mind when he wrote, “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). The Pharisees were men who emphasized man’s outward behavior, but their outward behavior was not a true reflection of their hearts. And so the Lord called them hypocrites. And it is a known fact that there is a lot of hypocrisy in all of us.

From the Garden of Eden on down to the present day, man’s main problem has been spiritual heart trouble. The prophet Jeremiah was speaking of man’s basic need when he wrote in Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” When Isaiah was pronouncing judgment upon the nation of Judah, He said this in Isaiah 29:13-15:

13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?

Notice that they pretended to be something outwardly which God knew that they were not inwardly (and they knew it too). The trouble was in their hearts. And you will see that in Matthew 15:7-8 the Lord quoted Isaiah 29:13 indicating that the problem in Isaiah’s day remained unchanged in His day, and it remains the same today.

Let me add to those two statements from the prophets of the OT, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ along this same line. The disciples were being criticized because they did not ceremonially wash their hands before eating, and the Lord pointed out where real defilement comes. You will find our Lord’s words in Matthew 15:18-20:

18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

John Calvin, in his commentary on Matthew, said that the people of the world don’t believe that happiness is found in the pure of heart. And he says this in spite of the fact that

*Purity of heart* universally acknowledged to be the mother of all virtues. And yet there is hardly one person in a hundred, who does not put craftiness (he means deceit) in the place of the greatest virtues. Hence those persons are commonly accounted *happy*, whose ingenuity is exercised in the successful practice of deceit, who gain dexterous advantages, by indirect means, over those with whom they (do business) (*Calvin’s Commentaries, Vol. XVI, p. 264*).

In all of these passages “the heart” is mentioned. So, if it is the pure in heart that will see God, and it is, then every man has a problem because “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecc. 7:20).

The first step in seeking purity before God is to seek it from God. Sin has defiled the whole human race. Man was not created a sinner, but when Adam sinned, his very nature was changed, and from that day to this every person who has been born into this world has been born a sinner – and sinner by nature, and a sinner by choice. Sin has become man’s master, and he is unable to deliver himself. When King David confessed his sins of adultery and murder, in his prayer of confession, he said this:

4 Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned , and done this evil in Thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest.

5 Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me (Psa. 51:4-5).

From man's point of view, his condition is hopeless. Being born in sin we were born under the judgment of God. And "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Isaiah the prophet wrote this prophecy long before Jesus Christ was born, but predicting that He would come, and what God would do to Him,

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6).

The Apostle Paul clearly stated what God has done about the sinfulness of man in many places in his epistles, but one of the clearest is found in 2 Corinthians 5:21:

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

The Apostle John said in 1 John 1:6-9:

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

To be pure before God requires that God do two things for us: We need to be justified, and we need to be sanctified. It is by God's grace and through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that we have both. In 1 Corinthians 1:30 we read,

30 But of Him are ye in christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

When we believe in Christ we are declared righteous before God. That is our position before God. But also when we believe we are made holy which is a work of God through the indwelling Holy Spirit and based upon the work of Christ on the Cross, by which we are being sanctified, or to state it another way, being made holy, pure in God's sight. The Apostle Peter expressed it this way in 1 Peter 1:14-16:

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Let me give you one more passage. This one is found in 1 John 3:1-3:

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

I give you this last passage to show you that we have responsibilities in our purification. As the children of God, we are no longer under the mastery of sin. But we are to mortify our sinful members, to separate ourselves from sin and sinners, and to walk in obedience to the Word of God. We are not to live like we lived before the Lord saved us. We are not to be conformed to this world, but we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we can prove that God's will is good, perfect, and acceptable. The all requires daily reading of the Word and prayer, as well as fellowship with others who know and love the Savior. We find that in the ministry of the Church.

Now in what sense will we see God? I think there are two ways in which we will see God. Probably the

main way in which we will see God, is when we are finally with the Lord in heaven. I have been asked many times through my life, "When we get to heaven, will we just see God, or will we see just Christ?" My answer is that we will see all Three Persons of the Godhead. We don't know what the eternal conditions will be like, but we know that it will all be perfect, and then we will worship the Father, our Lord, and the Holy Spirit in total perfection in every way. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Our assurance that some day we will see our Lord, is one of the greatest incentives we have to keep ourselves pure from sin.

But there are ways now in which we see God, not as we will see Him in heaven, but as we see evidence of His presence and power and wisdom as He works continually in our lives. We can't see the Holy Spirit now but we are conscious of His presence as He teaches us, and guides us, and protects us, and strengthens us. And the same is true of our Lord. He has promised never to leave us, nor forsake us. Obviously, though now we don't see Him personally, yet the evidence of His presence is manifest in many different ways. How blessed we are to be the people of God.

## **VII. The Seventh Beatitude: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9).**

It is very important for all of us to realize that sin and peace do not go together. On the other hand, purity of heart is what leads to peace. When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, and before they sinned, we have the closest example of what it will be like in heaven when it is no longer possible for us to sin. Before our first parents sinned, there was perfect fellowship not only with God, but with each other. But when Adam sinned it immediately turned him against, not only God, but also Eve. When God asked him why he had sinned, Adam responded by saying, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the fruit, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:12).

What is peace? Peace is a state of tranquility, of inner calmness and quietness of heart. It is a state of harmony in our relationship with God and with other human beings. Peace means freedom from fears, from agitating passions, and from moral conflicts.

In Jeremiah 6:14 and 8:11 the prophet spoke of those who were saying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." In Isaiah 48:22 and 57:21, we have the word of the Lord and of God that "there is no peace . . . to the wicked." Every person of every nation has a desire for peace, but sin has blinded our minds to the fact that there can be no personal peace, nor peace with other people, unless first of all there is peace with God.

God is called "the God of peace." Two of the greatest verses on peace in the Bible are Hebrews 13:20 and 21 where we read,

20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

God has taken the initiative in establishing peace with man. Sin has rendered man incapable of seeking God. We have learned in speaking of "the pure in heart" that purity before God, which leads to peace with God, was God's purpose in sending His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ into the world. Purity before God is only possible through the justifying work of God, followed by the sanctifying work of God, which our Lord accomplished for all who believe by His sacrificial death on the Cross followed by His bodily resurrection from the dead. And so Paul could write, as he did, in Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is impossible for us to be true peacemakers unless, first of all, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

But even though we are justified by faith, and that this justification is once and for all time and eternity, yet in our daily lives we also need “the peace of God.” And it is very significant that the Apostle Paul wrote about “the peace of God” when he was a prisoner of Rome in Rome. This is what he wrote to the Philippian believers which we find in Philippians 4:6-7:

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Often the words, “Be careful for nothing,” are translated, *Don't worry about anything*. How is such a life possible? It is only through daily fellowship with our Savior. The Apostle John expressed it this way in 1 John 1:6-7:

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Our fellowship with each other is maintained by walking in fellowship with the Lord. Our relationship of peace with each other is dependent upon our fellowship with God.

From the time that Isaiah wrote his prophecy, the people of God in Israel, and then the people of God in the Church, have depended upon what Isaiah had to say about peace in our daily lives. Of course I am referring to Isaiah 26:3-4:

3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

4 Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

To have peace with God is justification; to have the peace of God is sanctification. To have our minds stayed upon the Lord, is to have our minds and hearts stayed upon God as He is revealed in the Scriptures. And when I say “stayed upon God,” I mean stayed upon God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. To have our minds “stayed” upon the Lord means that we are leaning upon the Lord, we are trusting in the Lord, we are being propped up, strengthened by Him through His Word.

We must not overlook the fact which is brought out by the writers of the NT epistles that we have a daily need, all day long in each day, of God's grace and God's peace, as is mentioned many times in the NT epistles. In Romans 1:7, for example, Paul wrote to the believers at Rome, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” We are strengthened by God's grace, and peace in our hearts is the result.

The enmity that has long been apparent between Jews and Gentile has been done away when Jews and Gentiles are united with each other in Christ. Paul was speaking of saved Jews and saved Gentiles when he wrote in Ephesians 2:14-18:

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

But what does all of this have to do with our Beatitude, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”? This is the only time that the word “peacemaker” is used in the Bible. But there is a verse in the epistle of James that comes very close to it. It is found in James 3:18, and it reads like this: “And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

For many years the United Nations has been trying to bring about world peace, but they are just as far from it as they ever have been – and maybe farther. President Obama thinks that he can negotiate peace by talking to our enemies. But he is going to find out that that doesn't work either. I read a few years ago that there never has been a period of time in all of world history when there has not been a war some place in the world. The Lord Jesus Christ, when He spoke on earth about the end times He said that right up to the end there be wars and rumors of wars among the nations of the earth. And when we break this down to cities and families and individuals, there is only one way that people can have peace, and that is through the transforming power of the Gospel. Peace is not going to come to this world until Jesus Christ, "the Prince of peace," is reigning upon the earth. But peace, true peace, lasting peace, is a personal matter. Peace is an individual matter. It always has been, and it always will be. And it is only possible through the Gospel.

This is how we are peacemakers; by the spread of the Gospel. Peace can only be found through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His redeeming work on the Cross. Only through Christ can there be peace because only through Christ can our sins be forgiven. And so by our lives, and by the testimony of our lips, can people experience peace with God, and the peace of God. And as people are drawn to Christ, they will know that the people who brought the message of salvation to them, have to be the children of God. That is what we will be called because that is what we are.

The word translated "children" in this Beatitude is actually the Greek word for *sons*. which Thayer says is used in Scripture of those who resemble God.

May 18, 2009

#### **VIII. The Eighth and Last Beatitude:**

**10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.**

**12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matt 5:10-12).**

There seems to be, among the commentators that I have consulted, that verses 10, 11, and 12 of Matthew 5 constitute the eighth and last Beatitude. The main part of the Beatitude is verse 10. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones expressed it this way:

It is generally agreed that verses 11 and 12 are a kind of elaboration of this Beatitude, and perhaps an application of its truth and message to the apostles in particular. In other words, the Lord has finished the general portrayal of the characteristics of the Christian man by the end of verse 10, and He then applies this last statement in particular to the disciples (*Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 128).

I think that he got this from the fact in that in all of the preceding Beatitudes our Lord spoke as He did from the beginning, like He did in the first Beatitudes, like, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," and, "Blessed are they that mourn," and so on. But when we come to verse 11 He said, "Blessed are ye," speaking to the apostles. It was for their information and encouragement. But that does not mean that it is not for us. The people of God down through the years from the day the Lord spoke these words to our day, have profited as much from verses 11 and 12 as from verse 3 through 10. But verse 10 must have been something of a shock to the apostles, especially coming after, "Blessed are the peacemakers" in verse 9. In spite of all that the apostles might do to make peace with the people in their day, they needed to know that they were being sent into a world that was hostile to God and to Christ, hostile toward the Gospel, and hostile to the people of God. But in spite of the world's hostility, even when the apostles (or we) face the opposition of the world, it was to be a time of happiness and rejoicing.

This must have been very close to the beginning of our Lord's ministry that these words were spoken. Toward the end of His ministry, in what we call, The Upper Room Discourse, the Lord said this to them as His earthly ministry was coming to a close:

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 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.

20 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 (John 15:18-20).

To persecute is a word which speaks of active opposition. Carried to the extreme it can mean physical injury, or even death. Its purpose is to silence the message that the apostle's were commissioned to carry to the world. It must have been very strange to the ears of the apostles for the Lord to say that this would be happy experience for them. We will get to the reason why in a moment, but first let me point out that the Lord did not promise happiness if the apostles would purposely be offensive in the delivery of their message. Often Christians who very little wisdom in approaching others with their message. Maybe they persist when the people they are talking to do not want to hear what they have to say.

"For righteousness' sake" has to mean in the presentation of the Gospel because "righteousness" is the fruit of the Gospel. This is justification. This means total and eternal acceptance with God. People are declared righteous before God simply by true faith in Jesus Christ. The disciples would not be selling anything. They were offering the gift of salvation. But people are not naturally interested in salvation. They don't like to be told that they are sinners under the judgment of God. That is why the apostles needed to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16). They were going forth "as sheep in the midst of wolves." The Lord Jesus would be the prime Example of how He and His message would be treated in the world. His enemies were not satisfied until they saw Him hanging on the Cross. We need to speak the truth in love as Paul told the Ephesian church in Ephesians 4:15, but in spite of how we do it there always has been and always will be what Paul called "the offence of the Cross" (Gal. 5:11). And said that the preaching of the Cross was the reason that he suffered persecution. The apostles were to deliver the message; it was up to God as to how the Word would be used to bring conviction and faith into the hearts of those He intended to save.

But why and how could this be a happy situation? There are several reasons.

First, it would a confirmation of their own salvation: "For their's is the kingdom of heaven." "The kingdom of heaven" is a synonym of salvation. As was the expression "the kingdom of God" which the Lord used in His conversation with Nicodemus. For many years the professing church has sought to use various methods to get people to listen to the Gospel. We use the world's kind of music to get sinners into the church. We tell them stories to make them feel good. The Lord never said anything like we are doing today to get people saved. It is the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. That is the message that needs to be proclaimed. And when we do, and find the same kind of reaction from the world that the Lord did, this is added confirmation that we preach what the Lord preached. "For their's is the kingdom of heaven." Do you remember that this was the promise that the Lord gave with the first Beatitude? For Him to use the same words here in the eighth Beatitude is like the Lord was binding all of these together to describe the character of a true child of God. When people tamper with the Gospel in any way, we need to wonder what they know about the Gospel themselves! We are not to love the world, or the things that are in the world. We are not to be conformed to the world in our way of living, or talking, or dressing. The Lord uses His Word to draw sinners to Himself, but the Gospel has never been popular or acceptable in the world, and it never will be! If the response generally that we get from the world is like the response that the Lord got from the world, it is evidence that we are on His side, preaching what He preached. And remember that the greatest opposition that the Lord got to His message

was from the Jewish religious leaders of His day. Just as the preaching of the apostles showed where they were spiritually, so the opposition of the scribes and Pharisees showed where they were. “The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”

Another reason that people are happy who preach the Gospel, is because we know that this is what pleases God. It is what pleases our Lord Jesus Christ. It is what pleases the Spirit of God. Nothing can bring us true happiness which is not pleasing to God. There may be temporary pleasures in sin, but sin never produces true happiness – never!!!

There are lots of things that are wrong in our country today, probably more than at any time in our nation’s history. But if you and I say that our greatest problem is that we as a nation have turned our back on God, on Christ, on the Word of God, and upon the true Church, we will be laughed out of town, and treated like we are a bunch of simpletons. But that is our problem. And let’s not be afraid to say it. We are thinking in this last Beatitude about righteousness. “Righteousness” is the product of the Gospel. It not only means justification before God, but it means changed lives before men, before the world. Things can never be right in any nation if they are not right with the one, true God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul prayed for the Colossian church that they would live lives in which they were seeking to please God. “Unto all pleasing” is the way it is expressed in our Bibles. It means pleasing God in every detail of our lives – everything! What is the greatest thing that we can do for our country? It is to know God, and then to live to please Him. How do we know what pleases the Lord? It is all in the Bible. Don’t add to it, nor take anything out of it. Take it like it is.

But let us move on to verse 11 where the Lord addressed the apostles by saying, “Blessed are ye”! You know, I think that we ought to take this as said to us too. It is easy to read the Bible to see what has been said to others, but we need to learn that God still speaks through His Word, especially to those of us who are His people today. It is one thing for the Lord to say, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,” but it ought to wake us up when He says, “Blessed are ye”! It was like the Lord was saying, “I am not talking to people who aren’t here; I am talking to you!”

This is an addendum, a supplement, to what He had already said. He was making it very personal with the apostles. Let’s pay careful attention to what the Lord said to His apostles because He has preserved it for us in His Word, so let’s imagine that we were sitting to the Lord, and that He was speaking to us.

He was talking about what people would do to us. Lenski says that the three verbs that the Lord used in this verse to describe the opposition that the apostles would face, were really going to happen.

What does the word “revile” mean? It means to abuse you verbally, to disgrace you, to say bad things about you, and to be doing it in such a way that you don’t know what all they are saying.

To persecute means that they keep saying the bad things that they have been saying, and sometimes it may advance to physical harm. And it did with the apostles.

And then the Lord went on to say that their enemies would make all kinds of charges against the apostles, serious charges which you are not really aware of. But people who hate the Gospel will say anything to discredit the Lord’s people in the hope of proving that there is nothing to the message that they preach.

Those three verbs, “revile,” “persecute,” and “say all manner of evil,” indicate that the opposition for the apostles against the Gospel, started with verbal abuse, would continue with physical abuse which could lead even to death, and then go on to the most wicked charges possible.

But now I want to make sure that we all see the word “falsely.” The Apostle Peter has given us a good word here. It is found in 1 Peter 4:12-16:

12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

13 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.

14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

15 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.

16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

And then Peter added at the end of that chapter:

19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator (1 Peter 4:19).

May 19, 2009

John Calvin likened this to excommunication from the church, and to the way in which the Jews in our Lord's day were put out of the synagogue because they would not renounce Christ. So trouble has come for the Lord's people, and for the apostles in particular, from the very people they might expect the greatest support.

Luke's version of this is found in Luke 6:22:

22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.

We all need to understand that the Lord Jesus Christ is the issue. He always has been, and He always will be. Even today there are those who consider themselves evangelicals who say that there may be some other way to heaven except through faith in Christ. This is blasphemy and totally against the teaching of the Word of God. When I was ten years old my folks, along with more than three hundred people, left one of the largest churches in Tacoma because the Pastor was kicked out for two reasons:

1) He preached the Gospel.

2) He believed that if you claimed that Jesus Christ was your Savior, you ought to live a life that showed your separation from the world.

I remember the hatred that was so evident in those days against a man whose only crime was that he loved the Lord and believed in preaching the Gospel.

When Mark Wilks was installed as the Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Chehalis, I met another pastor who had supplied the pulpit occasionally at First Baptist in Tacoma, and he told me that that church which used to have hundreds attending each Sunday, not has about fifty attending on Sunday mornings.

The Lord did not want His apostle to be under any illusion as to what was ahead of them as His servants. But let us be sure to notice not only the word “falsely” here in verse 11, the words “for righteousness' sake” in verse 10, and “for my sake” also in verse 11. We must be careful that the trouble that we face is not the result of our own failure, or our own sins. Remember these three verses come after seven other statements in which the Lord instructed His apostles that they needed to be “poor in spirit,” should mourn over their own sins, should be meek, should hunger and thirst after righteousness in their own lives, should be merciful, should be pure in heart, and should be “peacemakers.” But Dr. Lloyd-Jones made a very important point when he said that the world does not hate us because we are good, but because we are different.

*But why would the Lord tell His apostles, and us, to rejoice when we face such opposition from the world, and*

*often from the professing church.* The answer is very simple. It is because opposition such as the Lord was describing causes us to realize that we are not sufficient in ourselves, but that we need to put our trust in the Lord, and then to keep it there. We are not super saints who can face any kind of opposition, and triumph over it in our own strength. We need to trust the Lord. He is our Strength. He is our Shepherd. He is our sovereign Lord.. We need constantly to be learning to cast all of our care upon Him. We need to know and believe and rest in His promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Our troubles of all kinds are meant to drive us to our knees in prayer. Remember Philippians 4:6 and 7. (Quote it.) According to Romans 5 we are to glory in our tribulations because of the way the Lord uses them to change us. His grace is made perfect in our weakness. So, although we do not seek opposition, and there are always many things about opposition that are hard for us to take, yet we must look at what the Lord is doing with us that we might become even more effective as His servants.

But let me say a word or two about verse 12 before we close.

If anything, this may be the strongest verse of all telling us to be happy in the Lord because our Lord said not only that we are to rejoice, but that we are to “be exceeding glad. That verb could be translated, *exult!* It is an old English word which we don’t hear very much today, but we as Christians need to know what it means, and then, by the grace of God, to do it, and to do it constantly, especially when we are faced with the opposition of the world. It means “to be in high spirits, to rejoice in triumph; to glory, as in victory.” It even means to leap for joy. David was exulting when the Levites brought the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem from the house of Obed-edom. Let me read to you what is recorded in 2 Samuel 6:13-15 that David did as they brought the ark back to Jerusalem:

13 And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.

14 And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.

15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

David was exulting! His wife didn’t like it, and despised David for what he was doing. She probably thought that it was un-kingly, unbecoming to a king to act as he did. So she fell under the judgment of the Lord.

In Acts 3 when Peter and John healed the man who had been lame from birth, we are told this which the man did after he was healed. You will find this in Acts 3:6-9:

6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God:

This man was exulting.

In Acts 5 when the apostles were arrested by the Jews for their preaching, Gamaliel intervened for them with the Council saying that if what the apostles were doing was just a work of men, it would die. But if it were a work of God, they should not doing anything to oppose them. They we read this in Acts 5:40-42:

40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Notice that they did not go underground. They continued doing what they had been doing, knowing the consequences, but willing to take them if that was the price for preaching the Gospel. This was a form of exultation.

But let me point out one more reason why the apostles could rejoice in their sufferings and count themselves happy in a superlative way even though they might die for doing the will of God. It is found in the words, “for great is your reward in heaven.” When things get tough for us here on earth, it makes us think more about, and look forward to, heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are strangers and pilgrims here on earth. The Lord has left us here on earth to grow spiritually, and to bear witness to the Gospel. The world in particular hates the latter, preaching the Gospel. But the apostles knew, and we should know, that our best days are still ahead (if I may refer to them as “days”). We are to be “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). We don’t know when He is coming, but we know that He is coming. But if we should die before He comes, we know that to die for those of us who know the Lord, “to depart, and to be with Christ . . . is far better” (Phil. 1:23). This truth is what kept Paul happy even when he was a prisoner of Rome, and even though he did not know what the outcome of his imprisonment might be.

We are not to look for a utopia here on earth. Things take place in our country every day that we are greatly concerned about. That is why we need to keep our thoughts on the Lord in heaven. That is one of the many good things that trials and tribulation are designed to do for us.

Let me close by reading to you the first four verses of Colossians 3:

- 1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
- 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
- 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
- 4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

– The End –