

A BEATITUDE FOR THE NEW YEAR

Psa. 40:4

Intro: Whenever we speak of beatitudes, we think immediately of those found in Matthew 5:1-12. There you will find nine beatitudes. In fact, the dictionary defines a beatitude as "as of the eight or nine declarations . . . made in the Sermon on the Mount . . . , beginning "Blessed are" (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, p. 92).

But there are beatitudes in other parts of the Bible as well. In the Psalms alone there are as many as 20!

We think of a beatitude as a verse which begins with the word, "Blessed." It is a promise of blessing, blessing which produces true happiness. Some have suggested that we could translate the Beatitudes, "Happy are the poor in spirit," etc.

Psalm 40 gives us one of the Beatitudes which is to be found in the Psalms—a promise of blessing, a signpost pointing the way to true happiness. And this is the promise:

Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust,
and respecteth not the proud,
nor such as turn aside to lies.

A very similar Beatitude is given to us in Psa. 34:8:

O taste and see that the Lord is good:
blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

The familiar greeting that we give and receive over and over again at the beginning of each year is, Happy New Year! I like to have people say that to me, and I like to say it to them. I sincerely hope that for all of you 1989 will be the happiest year your lives.

But what do people usually mean when they say that?

In some cases it might be just a formality, but with those who are sincere they probably mean that you will remain healthy, and, if not wealthy, at least that you will have enough to meet your needs. It probably means to some people that your relationship with your family and friends and other people generally will be such that it will bring you a great deal of happiness.

Now all of those are worthy wishes. Those are all things that we like, and they do bring us happiness. We can be very thankful for all of the blessings that the Lord gives us.

But, we need to ask the question—are these the things that make for true happiness? What if any one or all of the blessings that I have mentioned is missing, does it then mean

that we cannot be happy? How would you answer that question? How does the Bible's description of happiness differ from that of the world?

Well, if you think about the Lord's Beatitudes in Matthew 5, you will remember that He made it clear that you and I can be "poor in spirit," and still be happy. We can "mourn," and still be happy. We can be persecuted for righteousness' sake, reviled, ridiculed, and still be happy. This is certainly not the world's idea of a happy new year. What is the big difference between what the Bible says, and what the man on the street has in mind when he says, "Happy New Year!"?

One great difference is that the world believes that things have to go just right in order for us to be happy. But the Lord in His Word clearly teaches that things can be going wrong, and yet there can be real happiness, real joy, in our hearts. On the other hand, a person can be healthy, wealthy, and have things going his way, and yet be most unhappy. Or there can be a kind of happiness. He may be having a good time. But down in his heart there is an emptiness which makes him realize that he has not found the meaning of real happiness.

One thing is clear. God wants us to be happy. When He placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He made every provision for their happiness. You would not find all of the Beatitudes in Scripture if God did not desire our happiness. Some day He will wipe all tears from the eyes of His people. Some day there will be no more sorrow of any kind, no more sickness, no more death. The Psalmist said about this about being with the Lord:

Thou wilt shew me the path of life:
in thy presence is fulness of joy;
at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore
(Psa. 16:11).

And when our Lord was together with His disciples for the last time before His death, He said,

These things have I spoken unto you,
that my joy might remain in you,
and that your joy might be full (John 15:11).

The Lord wants us to be happy. I did not say that He wanted us to be without troubles and trials. But I do say that the Lord wants us to be happy even though we will have our troubles and our trials.

However, the whole point of what the Word of God tells us about happiness is that we must seek happiness in God's way, not our way. We all know that the things we feel will bring us happiness are usually very disappointing, and other things that do make us happy can so quickly change.

How can David help us?

Let us look, first of all, at:

I. HIS PAST CIRCUMSTANCES (Psa. 40:2, 3a).

Notice the expressions "an horrible pit" and "the miry clay."

Perhaps this could be illustrated by what happened to Jeremiah, the prophet. He had been accused of treason, was cast into the dungeon of Malchiah, let down into a pit, and then we are told in Jer. 38:6b,

And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire:
so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.

With those two expressions David was describing an ancient prison: "an horrible pit . . . the miry clay." Both the pit and the miry clay speak not only of David's confinement, but of his inability to escape. That was the purpose of the "miry clay."

Personally I do not believe that David was actually cast into prison, but he was imprisoned in his circumstances. He was in a situation, or situations, from which he could not get out. He was helpless, and he felt hopeless. He called it "an horrible pit" because he felt desolate, deserted, all alone, perhaps ruined. It describes the deepest kind of depression that had settled down upon him. He felt that even the Lord had forsaken him.

But notice what he said about this "horrible pit" and "miry clay." Read all of verse 2 and the first part of verse 3.

The Lord had brought him up. The Lord had set his feet on a rock, not "the miry clay." And the Lord had "established" his "goings." God had wondrously met his need. His fears were never realized. The horror of that experience had been replaced with, as he said, "a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God."

What a wonderful thing God had done! Perhaps this was the time when David was saved. Perhaps it was some miraculous deliverance from a great trial after he was saved. We do not know what it was. I am inclined to think that it was the latter because of what he said in verse 1.

What did he say there? He told us:

II. HIS BEHAVIOR DURING THE TRIAL (Psa. 40:1).

He prayed. He waited. He waited patiently--"FOR THE LORD"!

His circumstances were such that he knew that he could not get himself out. His friends were not able to help him. His only hope was that the Lord would help him.

How often the Lord puts us in circumstances where we learn that He is the only One from Whom we can expect help.

How long did he wait? We do not know. We cannot put time limits on the Lord. If he had told us, you and I might be inclined to think that we will always have to wait as long as David waited, or certainly not any longer. But we cannot say. We must wait, and by His grace wait "patiently" until the Lord comes to deliver us.

There was a period of waiting, but finally the answer came. God does hear us, you know, and He still answers prayer. "Patiently" means that David went right on living, he continued to do what he could do and to meet his responsibilities. He persevered in the will of God as he knew it, patiently, peacefully waiting for the Lord. And he did not wait in vain!

This leads to what David had to say about:

III. THE RESULTS ON THAT OCCASION (Psa. 40:3b).

I say, "on that occasion," because God does not always work the same way. But perhaps, to some extent, this is always a result. **"Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."**

Notice the word, "see." He did not say many shall hear what I have to say. He said, "Many shall see (it), and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

What did they see? They saw a man suffering. But they saw that man praying, waiting, hoping, and finally rewarded. They saw in David's life that God was a great reality to him. They saw the joy and peace that a person can have in the midst of his troubles when he is quietly, patiently, expectantly waiting for the Lord. They saw that faith is not mere fantasy, but a link with God that cannot fail.

And isn't it interesting that they did not praise David, but they trusted in the Lord. Oh, to suffer and to pray and to wait so that people "see" and realize what a great

and mighty and faithful God we have!

And so, by divine inspiration, David has given us:

IV. THE BEATITUDE (Psa. 40:4).

Read it.

I want to say today, as the beginning of this new year, that it will be happy for us if we learn and believe and act upon this Beatitude. The happy man is the child of God who "maketh the Lord his trust," instead of turning to the proud and mighty, the great ones of the earth, and instead of trusting in those things of earth which seem to be what we want, but people only find to their dismay that they are "lies." The Lord is the truth, not a lie! Trust Him, and you will be happy. Trust in anyone or anything else, and you will be disappointed. Living a life trusting the Lord is the life of true blessedness, true happiness.

And then David spoke of:

V. THE REPETITION OF GOD'S GOODNESS IN HIS LIFE (Psa. 40:5).

He had not had such an experience only once, but "many" times! Trusting in the Lord day by day he had seen the hand of the Lord in his life so many times that he had lost count.

We glorify God when we trust Him. We please Him when we trust Him. The trials He gives to us (and they will come to all of us in 1989) are not because He likes to see us suffer, but because He wants to keep us trusting Him, and He wants our lives to be changed so that we will trust Him more and more.

Concl: Let me mention two more things before I close. And I say this by way of conclusion to Psalm 40.

The first is this: Keep in mind that this is not only a Psalm of David, but it is a Psalm which speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Heb. 10:5-7 you will find the words in verses 6-8 applied to our Lord Jesus Christ. This does not mean that they did not apply to David in a limited sense, but David's trials in their severity pictured the greater sufferings of our Lord. The Lord learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and the Lord has the same purpose for our trials.

The second and last thing that I want to mention is that, as you read the latter part of this 40th Psalm you can see that

David was in the midst of another trial. He gives us two hints as to what they were. In verse 12 we see that he was troubled about his sins. In verses 14, 15 he was disturbed by His enemies and their desire to destroy him.

AND SO WHAT WAS HE DOING IN THIS PSALM?

HE WAS THINKING BACK ON THAT ONE GREAT DELIVERANCE THAT HE HAD EXPERIENCED WHEN THE LORD HAD LIFTED HIM OUT OF THAT HORRIBLE PIT AND FROM THE MIRY CLAY, AND THE "MANY" OTHER TIMES THAT HE HAD SEEN THE LORD WORK. AND SO THE PSALM ENDS AS IT BEGINS, WITH DAVID CRYING OUT TO THE LORD, WAITING AND TRUSTING, AND HOPING THAT THE DELIVERANCE WOULD COME SOON.

When will our trials be over? Not until we get to heaven. But remember God always has a gracious purpose for them. What He wants us to do is to trust Him, and to wait for Him, and to wait patiently for Him, knowing in depths of our souls that He cannot and will not fail us.

Illus: A dear little Swiss lady that the Lord brought to Portland and to us at a special time of need in our lives. She knew that we were going through a hard time, and she prayed for us, and talked with us, and later wrote to us. But over a period of many, many years she had learned to walk with the Lord, and to trust Him. Somehow her confidence in the Lord never seemed to waver.

But just before she left Portland to go back to Switzerland to be with her twin brother who was not well, she was forced because of her own health problems to cancel her plans to return when she intended to, and wanted to. It was a real disappointment to her because her brother really needed her. But she said this to us. I can't remember her exact words. But it went something like this: "Brother Dwight (she called me), I have known the Lord so long, and have never had Him fail me, AND I KNOW THAT HE IS NOT GOING TO FAIL ME NOW."

And He didn't! She recovered enough to be with her brother for his last days. And then it wasn't too long afterwards that the Lord took her home.

I will never forget what I saw in her life—her trust, her hope, her absolute assurance in the greatness and the sufficiency of her God.

And so I say, as my message to you, on this New Year's Day,
 Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust,
 and respecteth not (turneth not)
 to the proud (the mighty),
 nor such as turn aside to lies (false hopes).
 May you have a blessed new year, trusting the Lord, as the

hymn writer has expressed it so beautifully in these words:

Simply trusting ev'ry day,
Trusting in a stormy way;
Even when my faith is small,
Trusting Jesus, that is all.

Singing if my way be clear,
Praying if the path be drear;
If in danger, for Him call;
Trusting Jesus, that is all.

Trusting as the moment fly,
Trusting as the days go by;
Trusting Him whate'er befall,
Trusting Jesus that is all.

This may be the year that the Lord will come. If it is, may
we go right into heaven trusting Jesus, that is all.