

**NINE PROMISES OF HAPPINESS**

Matthew 5:1-12

**Intro:** Most Christians who have known the Lord any time at all, have become acquainted with our Lord's Beatitudes. Undoubtedly they are among the most familiar and the most favorite of all of the words that the Lord ever spoke. But it is to wondered how many of the Lord's people have really entered into the truth that the Lord was teaching as He spoke these now familiar words.

We like to talk about the blessing of God. But when we learn that the Greek word for "blessed," μακάριος, or μακάριοι, as it is in these verses because it is plural, means *happy*, we like the beatitudes even better. We all want to be happy. When the word "blessed" occurs in the NT for God, such as in Eph. 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is a different word altogether. That is the word εὐλογητὸς which lit. means *to speak well of*, or *to praise*.

But if you think for a moment of these beatitudes, I think that you will see that they are promises. Each promise is introduced with the word "for." (Read through the Beatitudes pointing this out.)

Each of these promises is obviously given by our Lord's authority. So they are certain, and they are irrevocable. There aren't many things in this world that are certain, but the Word of God is absolutely certain. And, as is often the case when the Lord gave a command, or encouraged some characteristic, or was ministering to His people in some time of need, as is the case here, He used a promise to strengthen the faith of His people. Our faith is constantly in need of being bolstered, and there is nothing that will do that like a promise from God which is recorded for us in the Word.

So the promises of God are absolutely certain because they are God's promises, but also because they have been written down in Scripture under the direction of the Holy Spirit. But, as I sought to emphasize last Sunday, these words were spoken to His disciples. Many times a person who is not a Christian will seek to live by the Scriptures and feel that God is obligated to fulfill His Word to them. But God has not obligated Himself to people who do not know Him regardless of how sincere their attempts to please God may be. "Without faith it is impossible to please" God. There are promises in Scripture for the unbeliever, but not promises

of blessing, but promises of judgment.

One thing that is very apparent as we go through the Beatitudes, is that the world's idea of happiness is very different from the way the Lord described happiness. In the world we are continually told that happiness is dependent upon what we have, or who we are, or the pleasures that we can experience. I had a lady call me just this past week and she told me that I had won several nights in a vacation spot, with all expenses paid, and I don't know what else she very enthusiastically promised me. When I told her that I was not interested (I knew there was some kind of a trap), she said, "Can you tell me why you are not interested?" It seemed incredible to her that I would not be overjoyed with such an offer. But that is not where we find out happiness. Our Lord clearly indicated here that *our happiness as His people does not depend upon what we have, or upon what position we might attain, but our happiness depends upon what we are!* These politicians who have been wasting our time for several weeks now, telling us how great they are, and how qualified to be the president of the United States – they feel that happiness is to be the President of the United States. All of them are eliminated by the first of our Lord's Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Nothing about anything that I have heard any of them say has shown any interest in "the kingdom of heaven." I would suggest that a good verse for all of them to read, and to give a lot of thought to, is Prov. 16:18, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Well, let's look at these nine wonderful promises that the Lord gave to His disciples as to how to be happy.

### **I. PROMISE #1: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3).**

What does it mean to be "poor in spirit." The Greek word is πωχοὶ. It basically means a poor person, one who has nothing, one who is reduced to begging. But here the Lord was speaking about spiritual poverty, a synonym for humility. Bishop Ryle said that "humility is the very first letter in the alphabet of Christianity" (*Matthew*, p. 32).

And so immediately we are introduced to the grace of God. When a person abases himself before God, confessing that he is not worthy of any good thing from God, that is the first step on the road to true happiness. And this is what it takes for a person to become an heir of the kingdom of

heaven. The term, “the kingdom of heaven” here speaks of salvation, when as the Apostle Paul said, “Our citizenship is in heaven.” How hateful pride is in God’s sight! On the other hand, how precious in His eyes is a sinner like Lazarus, who cried out to God, saying, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner” (Luke 18:13).

And this is not only the way we enter into life, humbling ourselves before God, and seeking His grace in salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, but this is the way we are to continue in fellowship with Him. We begin and continue by humbling ourselves before God.

## **II. PROMISE #2: “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4).**

Now it is true that God is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, Who comforts us in all of our tribulations. He comforts us when we love a loved one in death. He comforts us in all of the discouragements of life. He constantly is restoring our souls. But I think that there is general agreement among expositors of the Word that what the Lord was talking about here, in context, is mourning over sin. The longer we know the Lord, the more we grieve over sins of the past, sins which we committed before we were saved. But also sins we have committed since we have been saved. He comforts us by the amazing forgiveness that we have in Christ. We are comforted to know that even though we keenly remember many of the sins we have committed, yet God will remember them against us no more. He forgets what we remember, and He permits them to remember our sins to humble us even more, and as a preventive against the repetition of our sins. What joy all of this brings to us, and yet sometimes the realization of the awfulness of our sins sweeps over just like we had just committed the same sin again. It pleases God when we mourn over our sins, and it pleases Him even more when He comforts us and assures us of His love, His never changing love.

But let us go on to:

## **III. PROMISE #3: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5).**

Meekness is often looked down upon by people in the world, identifying it as weakness. But actually it is a characteristic of great strength. The Lord Jesus said that He was “meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29). He

demonstrated His meekness when He did not retaliate against those who jeered at Him when He was hanging on the Cross. Instead, you will remember that He said, “Father, forgiven them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). A meek person is a submissive person. He accepts God’s dealings with him as right even when they may not make sense to him.

Quoting Ryle again,

He [Christ] means those who are of a patient and contented spirit. They are willing to put up with little honor here below; they can bear injuries without resentment. They are not ready to take offense (p. 33).

They will inherit the earth. It is impossible for the world to see how meekness could accomplish such an amazing feat, but that is the promise of God. The meek person often wins by losing. Our Lord may have been looking forward to millennial blessing. The world thinks that those with the greatest army and with the most terrible weapons will conquer the earth. But the Lord says just exactly the opposite, and He is going to prove it!

#### **IV. PROMISE #4: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteous: for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6).**

When a person is hungry and thirsty, he wants food and water more than anything else in the world. And he desires this because he knows that without food and water he will die, and so anything else would be worthless. And so hunger and thirst are used to describe what a person desires more than anything else because anything without righteousness is meaningless and worthless. This is why the Lord said that His disciples should lay up treasure in heaven. Treasure on earth can be lost; treasure in heaven is eternally secure.

The promise is that “they shall be satisfied.” How many people do we know who are really satisfied? What about ourselves? We need to measure ourselves by each of the beatitudes, and this one is especially important. As we look into our hearts, what is it that we want more than anything else, and without which nothing else could make us happy. We obviously need food and clothing and a place to live. And the Lord knows that we have those needs. If you go to church just once a week, or if you are spasmodic in reading your Bible, or if your best friends are non-

Christians, do you think that you are really hungering and thirsting after righteousness. If you would rather be entertained when you go to church than to be edified, where are your hunger and thirst direct?

“For they shall be filled.” What does this mean? It means complete satisfaction. Puritan Nathanael Ranew said, “The true Christian must grow all his lifetime” (*Solitude Improved by Divine Meditation*, p. ix). You are daily satisfied by your pursuit of righteousness, but you never stop pursuing it. It just spoils you from making anything else your chief objective in life.

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

Mercy is God’s answer to human misery – and we live in a world which is full of misery. A merciful person does not wait to show mercy or to relieve suffering wherever he finds it, but he takes the initiative in doing all that he can to meet the needs of others, whether a person has brought it on himself, or he is the victim of what others have done to him.

Barnes has this to say in his comments on this verse:

Nowhere do we imitate God more than in showing mercy. In nothing does God delight more than in the exercise of mercy, Ex 34:6; Ezek 33:11; 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9. To us, guilty sinners; to us, wretched, dying, and exposed to eternal woe, he has shown his mercy by giving his Son to die for us; by expressing his willingness to pardon and save us; and by sending his Spirit to renew and sanctify our hearts. Each day of our life, each hour, and each moment, we partake of his undeserved mercy. All the blessings we enjoy are proofs of his mercy. If we, then, show mercy to the poor, the wretched, the guilty, it shows that we are like God. We have his spirit, and shall not lose our reward. And we have abundant opportunity to do it. Our world is full of guilt and woe, which we may help to relieve; and every day of our lives we have opportunity, by helping the poor and wretched, and by forgiving those who injure us, to show that we are like God.

In other words, there is great joy to be found in ministering to the needs of others. The Apostle Paul was combining meekness and mercy when he wrote to the church at Rome about how they should treat their enemies. Here are his words found in Rom. 12:19-21:

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:19-21).

The parable of the Good Samaritan is an excellent example of showing mercy. Cf. Luke 10:30-37.

## **VI. PROMISE #6: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8).**

At the end of this chapter we have the Lord’s words about loving our enemies, and this illustrates what it means to be “pure in heart.” See Matt. 5:44-48:

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

And isn’t this what God has done for us? These words are a perfect expression of the Gospel such as we have in Romans 5:

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (Rom 5:7-10).

The disciples had been raised under the scribes and Pharisees who were

excellent in demonstrating God-like characteristics outwardly on some occasions, but none of it came from their hearts. They were hypocrites, but God is not a hypocrite. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. Cf. 1 Sam. 16:7. So notice that the Lord again speaks of what a person is inwardly.

What did our Lord mean by the words, “for they shall see God.” Ryle explained it this way: “He that is most spiritually minded will have most communion with God.” Seeing God is an expression also which means *knowing God*, which amounts to the same thing as fellowship with God. Perhaps the Lord also meant that those who are pure in heart will see evidence of the presence and blessing of God in their lives. The whole purpose of our salvation is to make us like God, and like our Lord Jesus Christ. The only kind of purity that is pleasing to God, is the outward purity which is an expression of inward purity. Holiness produces happiness. The truly happy Christian is a holy Christian.

But let us move on to:

## **VII. PROMISE #7: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”**

Moses’ attempts at peacemaking between two men of Israel who were having trouble with each other, backfired because the day before he had seriously grieved the Lord when he killed the Egyptian who was mistreating an Israelite slave. But his objective was right. The child of God is always for a peaceful settlement of any situation, but it has to be peace according to the will of God, not “peace at any price,” which can be no peace at all.

When the Lord died on the Cross, His object was to establish peace between a holy God and the sinners for whom He died. He is “the Prince of peace” (Isa. 9:6). For our Lord, peace for us with God was very, very costly. It cost Him His life.

We live in a world of strife. People are not concerned about God, nor about what is pleasing to Him. Solomon gave us a wonderful verse about how we can have peace with others. It is found in Prov. 16:7: “When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.”

Peacemaking is so rare that when even the people of the world see a person who is a peacemaker, they call him a child of God.

Adam Clarke pointed out that the Gospel is called “the Gospel of peace” (Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15) because it is designed primarily to bring us into peace with God, but it is also the basis upon which believers are at peace with each other. No other peace can really be called peace. Nations engage in warfare. The war comes to an end. A so-called peace is established, but it is not long before there is war again. Man is good at saying, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.” True peace is only through Christ.

But now we come to the last two promises, and we can combine them in our discussion of our Lord’s words because they both have to do with persecution.

### **VIII. and IX. PROMISES 8 and 9: (Matt. 5:10-12).**

Only the Lord would think of telling us that there is happiness to be found in persecution. Persecution always is unpleasant. It involves suffering of some kind, either mental distress, or physical suffering, or even death. How can it be a means of happiness?

Look for the word “for” because that is where we find our answer. And you will see it in verse 10, and again (and finally) in verse 12:

1) Verse 10: “for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.”

2) Verse 12: “for great is your reward in heaven.”

The first has to do with the present, and takes us back to our Lord’s words in verse 3. The second has to do with the future.

But we must be careful as the Apostle Peter warns us that we are not being persecuted for any wrongdoing. Our Lord, and Peter, were talking about persecution because we belong to the Lord and are seeking to live for Him and to please Him.

Why can persecution be a blessing? For two reasons, as we learn from verses 10 and 12. The first is because persecution causes us to draw upon the resources that we have in our salvation, resources that are ours in God and in Christ, and, I can add, in the Holy Spirit. This is the idea in the words, “for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.” But the second reason is this: It makes us look forward to heaven. You see that in the words, “for



great is your reward in heaven.” We don’t think about heaven, nor do we talk about heaven, like we should, do we? And part of the reason why we don’t is because we don’t like to think about being separated even temporarily from our loves ones, nor do we like to think about how we might have to go if the Lord does not come before we die. But persecution is designed to make us long for heaven, not just so we will leave all of our troubles behind, but because we will see the Lord, will be like the Lord, and will be with the Lord forever. If persecution breaks out for us here in America, all of us are going to do a lot more thinking and talking about heaven.

And so one blessing of suffering persecution is that we will “rejoice, and be exceeding glad” because we know what is ahead.

**Concl:** Now what we all need to do is to take time, and lots of it, to go back over these beatitudes to see how we measure up to the truth that the Lord gave in them. Combined they give us the first good portrayal in the NT as to what Christians should be, and how we should live. Meditate much on the words of our Lord in these three chapters. There is much blessing for us here. We have a responsibility in each beatitude, and God has promised us blessing that will follow. The Lord wants us to be happy. The Bible in many places makes that very clear. But we need to seek that happiness in His way, not in the ways that most people are looking for happiness today. Let us all remember that the way to be happy is by being holy.