

## Blessedness

<sup>1</sup> And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. <sup>2</sup> Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: <sup>3</sup> “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> Blessed *are* those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. <sup>5</sup> Blessed *are* the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup> Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. <sup>7</sup> Blessed *are* the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. <sup>8</sup> Blessed *are* the pure in heart, For they shall see God. <sup>9</sup> Blessed *are* the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. <sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup> “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:1–12)

The greatest sermon ever preached opens with nine statements of blessing. Blessed are the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the pursuers of righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted and the reviled. They have been named after the Latin word *beatus* which means happy or blessed, and giving us the title the Beattitudes.

It's a bit foreign to us, these “blessed are” statements. It's not how we are used to speaking. And in fact, this is not the first time they occur. In fact, when you total it up, this form of biblical speech occurs over 135 times in the Bible, either blessing God, or blessing some human.

Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him. (Psalm 2:12)

<sup>1</sup> Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, Who walk in the law of the LORD! (Psalm 119:1) <sup>2</sup> Blessed *are* those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him with the whole heart! (Psalm 119:2)

Mary was greeted by the angel Gabriel with <sup>28</sup> And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!” (Luke 1:28), and Elizabeth repeated a similar blessing when she saw Mary. Jesus blessed Peter <sup>17</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 16:17)

There are several others, Jesus blessing the disciples, speaking of the blessedness of believing without seeing, of obeying His Word. Revelation has several blessings:

<sup>13</sup> Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed *are* the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.” (Revelation 14:13)

They are formally known in Hebrew as *berachot*, and in Judaism, they are short sentence-prayers that thank God for almost every aspect of life.

On one level it is your state: happiness. The word blessed is the Greek word *makarios* which simply means happy, fortunate, privileged. To be blessed is to find yourself in that state of life which everyone in the world pursues. Think about it, no matter what someone is making his life's goal: wealth, power, fame, pleasure, it is because he imagines when he finally has the luxury, or that popularity, or that authority, that he will find himself in a state of happiness. People want family because they want happiness. People want safety because danger threatens happiness. People avoid pain and seek pleasure, for this is our very nature. We seek blessedness.

Jesus opens the sermon on the mount with a great promise to the seeking human heart, and a great appeal to the human heart: your pursuit of satisfaction, of joy, of pleasure, of happiness will be met here. This kind of person, this kind of life, this kind of approach will bring you the blessedness we all seek.

On second level, it is your character. To say “blessed are you”, does not only mean you are inwardly happy, it is a way of saying, you are commendable and praiseworthy. A blessed character is one who is a person others should admire, praise, and be thankful for. When Psalm 1 opens and tells us the man who meditate on God's Word and who does not fellowship with the ungodly, the Psalm is saying both this man is happy, but also this man is righteous, commendable, pleasing to God.

That should tell us that happiness and holiness are bound up together. Yes, there is a kind of happiness that people get through sin, but the Bible keeps telling us that such happiness comes with a bitter aftertaste of painful consequences. True holiness does not bring misery, but great joy, peace, and gladness.

It should also show us that the great source of this blessedness is God Himself. The Bible is full of statements saying “Blessed be the Lord”. That means God is the great source of happiness and delight, and happy in Himself, and it also means He is the source of the perfect character. When we bless God, we do not mean that we are improving Him, giving to Him, or adding to Him. Rather, we are thanking Him as the source. Praise God from whom all blessings flow, we sing.

So from this Fount of Every Blessing, comes both the happiness and the holiness, the comfort and the character. To be blessed is to have received the character from God as a gift, and with it the joy and gladness. That should clear up some misconceptions about these beatitudes.

First, Jesus is not laying out some saintly virtues to be achieved by the select few. He is showing what it looks like when a person is in living relationship with God. This is not the Roman Catholic doctrine of sainthood, or of clergy and laity. Jesus preached this sermon to the common people and expected the common people to respond to this.

Second, Jesus is not separating these virtues out into different types of people, as if some will be meek, and some will specialise in mercy, and some will be peacemakers. No, these are the parts of a whole, discrete descriptions of the character of a believer.

Third, none of these can be achieved through human effort. This is not about human achievement, it is about gracious blessing. When you are in a reconciled relationship with God, then this life is available to all. But all of it comes as a gift. It is from God and a gift from God.

In other words the Beatitudes are a description of what salvation is and does to a person. To receive the Lord Messiah as your life and atonement is then to enter into a union with Him by His Spirit. And in that union, you grow in humility, in repentance, in meekness, in righteousness, in mercy, in purity, in peace, in endurance. And in many ways, they even describe the transaction of receiving Him. To be saved, I must recognise my poverty of spirit, mourn over my sin, come meekly to God, hungering and thirsting for His righteousness, experience His mercy, a new purity, and a peace with God, that will even endure to the end.

This blessed life is a gift of grace for all believers. To all who come to God in Christ, there is a life of happiness and holiness found in being in union with His character.

### **Blessed are the Poor in Spirit**

<sup>3</sup> “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

We began looking at the beatitudes together the last time and saw a little about what this word blessed means. It means on the one hand, your state. If you live like this, your state will be one of happiness, joy, delight. On the other hand it also refers to your character. If you live like this, you

will be praiseworthy, commendable, a source of blessing.

Happiness and holiness bound up together.

<sup>3</sup> “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

As we look at the very first beatitude, we see it is a study in paradoxes. We have the word poor, and we have all the riches of a kingdom. We have the word blessed paired with poor, and usually, these are not considered to go together. Jesus is opening His greatest sermon with sacred paradoxes, thinking that turns worldly expectation upside down.

So what is meant by poor in spirit?

Well let's eliminate what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean poor in physical goods. Jesus didn't say, “Blessed in spirit are the poor”. He said blessed are the poor in spirit. Being poor financially does not give you extra merit before God. Being poor may be just as much a liability to faith as being rich, depending on your heart. In fact, if being poor commended you to God, it would be bad to give to the poor, because you would be loading them with the stuff they need to get rid of in order to receive the kingdom of God. No, the Bible neither commends poverty nor condemns wealth. The Bible has the godly rich and the wicked rich, the godly poor and the wicked poor.

It also doesn't mean being poor in enthusiasm or generosity. Poor in spirit doesn't mean you are apathetic, passive, listless and devoid of ambition, zeal, or desire.

It also doesn't mean intellectually simple or lacking. The Bible is not here making it virtuous to be intellectually ignorant or slow.

Poor in spirit also doesn't refer to false humility or a poor self-regard. None of this is the idea.

So what does it mean? The word *spirit* tells us that Jesus is talking about the inner man, the place of the soul's loves, thoughts, decisions. This has to do not with money or personality, or attitude, but the heart, the affections.

The word for poor is a Greek word that emphasises being destitute. There are other words for poor in Greek, some emphasise being poor but sustaining yourself through work. This particular Greek word means poor enough to be reduced to begging. This is poverty where you are bankrupt, destitute, absolutely helpless and dependent, and need someone else's gifts, someone else's grace to even get by.

Now this is the idea. The person who is poor in spirit recognises that he or she is absolutely dependent on God. You see, I am a sinner, completely in need of forgiveness, and I cannot barter, trade or earn it, I can only beg it from God.

You remember the parable Jesus told that perfectly captures the poor in spirit versus the rich in spirit.

<sup>9</sup> Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: <sup>10</sup> “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ <sup>13</sup> And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ <sup>14</sup> I tell you,

this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9–14)

It begins to become obvious why this was placed first in the Sermon on the mount.

How can you make any progress in any other virtue unless you make room for God by admitting your weakness, helplessness, neediness?

<sup>2</sup> For all those *things* My hand has made, And all those *things* exist," Says the LORD. "But on this *one* will I look: On *him* who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word. (Isaiah 66:2)

"Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues hence, in the soul in which this virtue does not exist there cannot be any other virtue except in mere appearance. Do you desire to construct a vast and lofty fabric? Think first about the foundations of humility. The higher your structure is to be, the deeper must be its foundation."

"Should you ask me what is the first thing in religion, I should reply that the first, second, and third thing therein is humility"

God created the world out of nothing, and so long as we are nothing, He can make something out of us. Martin Luther

Jonathan Edwards:

All gracious affections that are a sweet odor to Christ, and that fill the soul of a Christian with a heavenly sweetness and fragranc, are broken hearted affections. A truly Christian love, whether to God or men, is a humble broken hearted love. The desires of the saints, however earnest, are humble desires. Their hope is a humble hope; and their joy, even when it is unspeakable, and full of glory, is a humble broken hearted joy, and leaves the Christian more poor in spirit; and more like a little child, and more disposed to a universal lowliness of behavior.

You realise, I am a creature, completely in need of provision, protection, life and health. It is not owed to me, I cannot demand it, I can only beg it as a gift. You realise, even as a child of God, I am completely dependent for the grace to live the Christian life. I don't have it in me.

So how do you get this humility?

One, confront yourself with the greatness of God. It is a sight of God that humbles us.

Two, recognise your trials as God's means to show you your poverty of spirit.

Now, to the person who admits his poverty of spirit, what does Jesus promise? The answer is the kingdom of heaven. That refers both to the ultimate experience of the kingdom which is future, but it also refers to the present experience of the kingdom, which is eternal life beginning now. A life of living in God's presence, of knowing God, enjoying God, loving God starts with poverty of spirit.

### **Blessed are They That Mourn**

Blessed *are* those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. (Matthew 5:4)

To be blessed means both a state and a way of life. It means on the one hand, your state. If you're blessed that way, Jesus means, your state will be one of happiness, joy, delight. On the other hand it also refers to your character. If you live like this, Jesus says you will be praiseworthy, commendable, a source of blessing. You are both happy and holy.

Happiness and holiness bound up together. But we've begun to see that Jesus is telling us that the way to this happiness and holiness is through a paradox. Jesus is opening His greatest sermon with

sacred paradoxes, thinking that turns worldly expectation upside down. A paradox is something which seem to hold opposite ideas at the same time. Like hot ice, or comfortable pain.

We saw that the very first beatitude is a paradox. We have the word poor, who a truly rich, with all the riches of a kingdom. And now we come to the second beatitude and it is similarly a paradox.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Here is a paradox: happy are the sad! The word for *mourn* here is a strong word that means to grieve, to wail in sadness, to lament, mourn. Now those who mourn, Jesus says, they will be comforted. They will be “parakaleo'ed” They will be strengthened, comforted, helped, encouraged.

Now of course, Jesus doesn't mean that everyone who ever experiences mourning and sadness qualifies for this promise. No, the beatitudes are to be taken as a whole: describing those people who hear the Words of Jesus, and build their lives upon that rock. This is not just any mourning; this is the mourning of those who hear the Word, and do the will of the Father. These are descriptions of a believer, of the life of faith, of someone who receives the Gospel, and lives in it.

So in what way is mourning part of the life of a Christian, and in what way will the comfort come?

Part of the answer comes from a slight variation on this verse found in Luke 6:21

Blessed *are you* who weep **now**, For you shall laugh.

There the emphasis is on timing. A believer mourns now, but will laugh in the future. Something about the mourning has to do with our present condition, and it brings grief, sadness, regret, sorrow. But that sorrow is not permanent, for it will be replaced.

Well, a believer is not supposed to mourn his lack of material possessions, or mourn that she isn't taller, or that he isn't more famous. When it comes to how God has made you, what God has given you, to mourn over this is what the Bible calls ingratitude. To be ungrateful, unhappy, and discontent with your portion is a very serious sin. It is rebellion against what God has given. This is the kind of thing that the unrighteous mourn over.

What then is specifically righteous mourning? Paul tells us : <sup>10</sup> For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (2 Corinthians 7:10)

Godly mourning is over our sin. We are saddened by what we have done, what we do, what we are capable of doing, and the pain and regret it has brought. We grieve over sin and its consequences. We do not delight and rejoice in evil, we are saddened by it. We look at sin as a failure, a deviation from God's perfect standard, a warping, corrupting, defacing of the beauty God intended.

<sup>2</sup> To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, <sup>3</sup> To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.” (Isaiah 61:2–3)

<sup>20</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. (John 16:20)

<sup>9</sup> Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. (James 4:9–10)

<sup>4</sup> And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:4)

We are apt to think, Blessed are the *merry*; but Christ, who was himself a great mourner, says, Blessed are the *mourners*. There is a sinful mourning, which is an enemy to blessedness—the *sorrow of the world*; despairing melancholy upon a spiritual account, and disconsolate grief upon a temporal account. There is a natural mourning, which may prove a friend to blessedness, by the grace of God working with it, and sanctifying the afflictions to us, for which we mourn. But there is a gracious mourning, which qualifies for blessedness, an habitual seriousness, the mind mortified to mirth, and an actual sorrow. 1. A penitential mourning for our own sins; this is *godly sorrow*, a sorrow according to God; sorrow for sin, with an eye to Christ, Zec. 12:10. Those are God's mourners, who live a life of repentance, who lament the corruption of their nature, and their many actual transgressions, and God's withdrawals from them; and who, out of regard to God's honour, mourn also for the sins of others, and *sigh and cry for their abominations*, Eze. 9:4. 2. A sympathizing mourning for the afflictions of others; the mourning of those who *weep with them that weep*, are sorrowful *for the solemn assemblies, for the desolations of Zion* (Zep. 3:18; Ps. 137:1), especially who look with compassion on perishing souls, and *weep over them*, as Christ *over Jerusalem*.

Now these gracious mourners, (1.) *Are blessed*. As in vain and sinful *laughter the heart is sorrowful*, so in gracious mourning *the heart has a serious joy, a secret satisfaction, which a stranger does not intermeddle with*. They are *blessed*, for they are like the Lord Jesus, who *was a man of sorrows*, and of whom we never read that he laughed, but often that he wept. They are armed against the many temptations that attend vain mirth, and are prepared for the comforts of a sealed pardon and a settled peace. (2.) *They shall be comforted*. Though perhaps they are not immediately comforted, yet plentiful provision is made for their comfort; light is sown for them; and in heaven, it is certain, *they shall be comforted*, as Lazarus, Lu. 16:25. Note, The happiness of heaven consists in being perfectly and eternally comforted, and in the *wiping away of all tears from their eyes*. It is *the joy of our Lord; a fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore*; which will be doubly sweet to those who have been prepared for them by this *godly sorrow*. Heaven will be a heaven indeed to those who go mourning thither; it will be a harvest of joy, the return of a seed-time of tears (Ps. 126:5, 6); a mountain of joy, to which our way lies through a vale of tears. See Isa. 66:10.<sup>1</sup>

***Our attitude toward our sins (vv. 4–6).*** We mourn over sin and despise it. We see sin the way God sees it and seek to treat it the way God does. Those who cover sin or defend sin certainly have the wrong attitude. We should not only mourn over our sins, but we should also meekly submit to God<sup>2</sup>

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1 Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1629). Hendrickson.

2 Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [\*The Bible exposition commentary\*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 21). Victor Books.