

Beatitudes

'Jesus opened His mouth and taught the disciples saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted. Blessed are the gentle for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful for they will obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when people reproach you, persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for great is your reward in heaven. That is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you"' (Matthew 5:2 to 12).

Beatitude means 'to be supremely blessed and happy'. Some of these sayings are hard to understand. If we take the nine Beatitudes of blessing one by one, we can see they cover many aspects of everyday life as a Christian. If we paraphrase the Beatitudes they could read like this; "When you hunger and thirst after God with a pure heart and righteousness, when you humble yourself and act gently, kindly, mercifully, bringing peace, or when you suffer grief, are persecuted or unjustly accused, for these things you will receive mercy, be blessed, rewarded, comforted, satisfied, inherit eternal life, see the Lord and live forever in the Kingdom of God."

The first and the third Beatitudes are almost the same. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven'. 'Blessed are the gentle for they will inherit the earth'. Poor in spirit means to be humble, meek, kind, unostentatious, unassuming or retiring. Gentleness is like meekness and such people have a quiet spirit. The grace of God can be seen in gentle, meek, humble people. 'Let your gentleness be known to all people, the Lord is at hand' (Philippians 4:5). We are told to live, walk and conduct ourselves with all humility and grace, all the time. 'Do not be contentious, be gentle showing all humility toward all people' (Titus 3:2). 'God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble' (James 4:6). If we humble ourselves, in God's time he will exalt us. 'Let your beauty be not outward ... but in the hidden character of the heart, in the incorruptible quality of a gentle and quiet spirit which is very precious in the sight of God ... Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God so He may exalt you in due time' (1 Peter 3:3 & 4; 5:6). Being humble and meek does not mean to lack authority. Moses was very strong and authoritative towards the children of Israel, but he was also humble and the meekest man on earth at that time and was very obedient to the Lord. 'Moses was very humble above all the men on the face of the earth' (Numbers 12:3). For Christians to grow spiritually, we must humble ourselves because if we do not, then the Lord will bring about situations that will humble us. 'Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted' (Matthew 23:12). We must be teachable. 'He will guide the humble in justice. He will teach the humble His way' (Psalm 25:9). 'The Lord takes pleasure in His people. He crowns the humble with salvation' (Psalm 149:4). Jesus was very strong but He was also very humble. 'Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest (relief, peace) for your souls' (Matthew 11:29). 'Jesus called a little child to Himself and set him in the midst of the disciples and said, "Most certainly I tell you, unless you become as little children, you will in no way enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever humbles himself as this little child, is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven' (Matthew 18:2 to 4). Kindness, gentleness, meekness and humility are evidence of our relationship with the Lord and are fruit or evidence of our good conduct due to the infilling of the Holy Spirit. 'The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, meekness, humility, self-control. Against such things there is no law' (Galatians 5:22 & 23). 'Walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, living with complete humility, meekness, gentleness, mildness, with patience, bearing with one another and making allowances because you love one another' (Ephesians 4:1 & 2).

Second Beatitude; 'Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted'. People who have lost loved ones, who are mourning or are going through any type of grief, will be comforted by the Lord in an amazing and supernatural way. When that happens, it is as though the Lord pours protective spiritual oil over our heart and brain and through the terrible grief we are able to feel thankful, we can worship the Lord and think clearly. The supernatural comfort God shows to us during times of heartache has to be experienced to be understood. People who do not know the Lord do not have that amazing sense of comfort and love, and they find it much harder to recover from deep mourning. 'You have turned my mourning into dancing for me. You have removed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness. To the end my heart will sing praise to You and not be silent. Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever' (Psalm 30:11 & 12). 'The Spirit of the Lord is on Me (Jesus). God has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the humble. He has sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted ... to comfort all who mourn, to appoint to those who mourn in Zion (Zion means both Jews

and Christians), to give to them a garland for ashes (a feeling of hopelessness), the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (sadness, depression) so they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord so He may be glorified' (Isaiah 61:1 & 3). 'The young woman will rejoice in the dance and the young men and the old together for I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and make them rejoice from their sorrow' (Jeremiah 31:13). '(In heaven) God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more, neither will there be any mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more' (Revelation 21:4).

Fourth Beatitude; 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they will be filled'. When we genuinely hunger after righteousness and thirst for the Lord, He satisfies our spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst with His presence. "I AM the Bread of life. He who comes to Me will not be (spiritually) hungry and he who believes in Me will never be (spiritually) thirsty' (John 6:35). We do not live by eating food alone, but we exist to serve God and listen to His Word. 'Know that mankind does not live by bread only but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God' (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4). Jesus said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work' (John 4:34). 'As the deer pants for water so my soul pants after You, Lord. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God' (Psalm 42:1 & 2). "The water I (Jesus) will give you will become in you a well of living water springing up to eternal life" (John 4:14). 'They will never be hungry or thirsty any more' (Revelation 7:16). The thirst for God has to be our desire. God will never force His will onto us so we must go to Him. 'Those who are thirsty let them come. They who desire to, let them take the water of life freely' (Revelation 22:17).

Fifth Beatitude; 'Blessed are the merciful for they will obtain mercy'. This is very serious. If we show mercy we are blessed and the Lord shows us mercy. If however, we do not show mercy, God considers us wicked, we will incur the wrath of God and He will turn us over to the devil to teach us a lesson. Jesus told this parable. 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like a certain king who wanted to reconcile accounts with his servants. When he had begun to reconcile, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents (about \$6,000,000). Because he could not pay, his king commanded him to be sold with his wife, his children and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant kneeled before him saying, 'Lord, have patience with me and I will repay you all!'

The king being moved with compassion released him and forgave him the debt. But that same servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him one hundred denarii (about \$20). He grabbed him by the throat saying, 'Pay me what you owe!'

His fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you!' He would not but went and cast him into prison until he should pay back what was due. When his fellow servants saw what was done they were exceedingly sorry and told their king all that was done. The king called him in and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not have mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you?'

His king was very angry and delivered him to the tormentors (the devil) until he could pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father will also do to you, if you do not forgive your brother from your hearts for his misdeeds' (Matthew 18:23 to 35). 'Judgement is without mercy to him who has shown no mercy, so mercy triumphs over judgement' (James 2:13). 'I love the Lord because He listens to my voice and to my cries for mercy' (Psalm 116:1).

Sixth Beatitude; 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God'. A pure heart can only be obtained by faithfully walking closely to God and seeking His will for our lives. Unrepentant people cannot have a pure heart. 'Who can say, "I have made my heart pure. I am clean and without sin?" (Proverbs 20:9). Only people who have a relationship with God can stand in His presence. 'Who can ascend to the Lord's hill? Who can stand in His holy place? Those who have clean hands and a pure heart, who have not lifted up their soul to falsehood and have not sworn deceitfully. They will receive a blessing from the Lord, righteousness from the God of his salvation' (Psalm 24:3 to 5). A pure heart and good conscience comes from standing on the scriptures and not listening to nonsense. The Bible says, 'Command certain men not to teach a different doctrine (from the scriptures) neither to pay attention to myths ... but the goal of this command is love out of a pure heart, a good conscience and unfeigned faith from which things some people have sinned and have turned aside to senseless talking' (1 Timothy 1:3 to 6). We are told to fellowship with people who have a pure heart. 'Pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart' (2 Timothy 2:22). If we maintain a pure heart, one day we will see our God.

Seventh Beatitude; 'Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God'. Peacemakers are people who bring peace to others. They know how to speak a right word at the right time and use tact. Their speech is 'seasoned with salt'. They do not cause strife, they do not gossip or slander, they do not speak evil

of others and they edify the body of believers with their words. 'Be eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:3). 'Let us follow after things that make for peace and things so we can build one another up' (Romans 14:19). 'The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace' (James 3:18). 'Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt ...' (Colossians 4:6). 'A perverse person stirs up strife. A whisperer (gossiper, slanderer) separates close friends' (Proverbs 16:28). We need to speak words of peace and not be argumentive. 'The beginning of strife is like breaching a dam, therefore stop contention before quarrelling breaks out' (Proverbs 17:14). 'Behold, how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!' (1 John 3:1).

Eighth and ninth Beatitudes; 'Blessed are those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when people reproach you, persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. That is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you'. We are blessed when we are persecuted in any way for the sake of righteousness. If we walk in righteousness and evil people see that and react wickedly, we will inherit the Kingdom of God. If family, friends, neighbours or strangers reproach us because of our dedication to God, we will be rewarded in heaven. The Old Testament prophets gave their lives to bring us the scriptures and the New Testament apostles gave their lives while spreading the Gospel. Most of us will never be persecuted to death but all who choose to live righteously will at some time face persecution. 'Yes, all who desire to live Godly lives in Jesus will suffer persecution' (2 Timothy 3:12). Some people have had their spouses leave or family have made them choose between them and God. Some people who have had a Christian logo or sticker on their car have been abused, spat at, harassed, attempts have been made to run them off the road, their children have been bullied at school. Persecution takes many forms and it is dreadfully unpleasant, especially if the persecutor lives nearby or worse, in the house. Some people have been hounded out of their homes, mocked, murdered, made destitute, afflicted and ill treated, but in the end, when they get to heaven they will be greatly rewarded. 'People were tortured, not accepting their deliverance so they might obtain a better resurrection (reward). Others were tried by mocking and scourging, by bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned. They were sawn apart. They were tested. They were slain with the sword. They wore sheep skins and goat skins, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, persecuted, people of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts, mountains, caves and holes in the ground' (Hebrews 11:35 to 38).

When we in the safe Western countries suffer incessant persecution and feel like we cannot take any more, we need to spare a thought for Israel who has evil neighbours all around; neighbours who want to destroy the whole country; neighbours who do not want peace but who are determined to remove Israel altogether. The Jews can never truly relax. If it were not for the Lord's hand of protection, Israel may have been destroyed but the Lord will never allow Israel to be overrun again and they will always be a nation. Persecution will never destroy Israel. We must keep praying for the peace and safety of Israel and the people who live there, for the Jews will always be God's chosen people and we have to help them every way we can. The persecution we face in the West is minor compared to the persecution Israel faces all the time. Blessed are we, all of God's people, both Jews and Gentiles, when we are persecuted or when people tell lies about us. The Lord will destroy those who lie about us (Psalm 5:6; Revelation 21:8). 'They (the persecuted believers) overcame him (the devil and the fear of death) because of the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. They did not love their life even when facing death' (Revelation 12:11).

The Lord blessed Abraham and promised him those blessings would flow through his descendants Isaac, Jacob and the children of Israel. Then through his Anointed Descendant Jesus, the blessings were given to the Jewish and Gentile spiritual children of Abraham throughout the world if we live by faith and obedience. 'I (the Lord) will bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you. In you (meaning through Abraham's Descendant, Jesus) will all of the families of the earth be blessed' (Genesis 12:3). 'All these blessings will come on you (the children of Israel) and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God' (Deuteronomy 28:2). 'You are the children of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our forefathers saying to Abraham, "In you will all the families of the earth be blessed"' (Acts 3:25). 'The Scripture, foreseeing God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham saying, "In you all the nations will be blessed"' (Galatians 3:8). Because of Abraham's obedience and the willing sacrifice of Jesus, every person on earth has the opportunity to be blessed, if they choose to live by faith and obedience. Jesus put those words of blessing into the delightful Beatitudes to strengthen, encourage and guide us.

Amen and God bless you.

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