

Matthew 5:1-12

Laws of the King: The Beatitudes

DRL Note: *The last section of this handout comes from the February 2011 issue of Christian Worker, a publication of the Southwest School of Bible Studies, located in Austin, TX. Questions for the quiz will come from that discussion of the Beatitudes. Should you like to subscribe to that publication, their mailing address is: 8900 Manchaca RD, Austin, TX 78748-5307. They can be reached by Email at: SouthwestATswsbs.edu .*

I. Summary of Matthew 5.1-12.

This introductory summary to the Beatitudes is from: The Beatitudes, by James M. Tolle, and was written in 1966. These are quotes from pages 5-10.

Matthew states that Jesus *taught* His disciples. The word “taught” in the Greek is in the imperfect tense, which describes repeated action in past time. We thus conclude that what Jesus taught on this memorable occasion is the substance of all that He repeatedly and habitually taught His disciples. It is no exaggeration to say that the Sermon on the Mount is the essence of the Lord’s moral and spiritual teaching and that the Beatitudes are the essence of the essence of this teaching.

It is not true, as some commentators have taught that Jesus advocated completely new and revolutionary teaching when He delivered the Beatitudes to His disciples. The Lord’s hearers may have thought the Beatitudes to seem strange and unusual because of the empty, formalistic religion that prevailed among the Jews of the time. But the basic principles they express are found in the Old Testament; e.g., Psalms 18.25; 37.11; 40.17.

However, Jesus did give new life, meaning, and significance to these great spiritual principles, presenting them in the context of the kingdom of heaven. Thus the Beatitudes have been variously designated as the charter of the Christian life, the Magna Charta of Christianity, the central document of the Christian faith, the living law of the new kingdom, and the code for Christian discipleship.

Scholars do not agree as to the number of Beatitudes, whether seven or eight. A reasonable explanation is given by David Brown: *“On these precious Beatitudes, observe that though eight in number, there are but seven distinct features of character. The eighth—on the “persecuted for righteousness” sake—denotes merely the possessors of the seven preceding features, on account of which it is that they are persecuted (2 Timothy 3.12). Accordingly, instead of any distinct promise to this class, we have merely a repetition of the first promise. This has been noticed by several critics, who by the sevenfold character thus set forth have rightly observed that the complete character is meant to be depicted, and by the sevenfold blessedness attached to it.”*

The word BEATITUDE is from the Latin BEATUS, meaning happy or blessed, thus the reason for its use to designate the moral and spiritual virtues taught by Christ that begin with the word BLESSED. In the Bible there are actually a full one hundred beatitudes, or statements that begin with the word BLESSED: Psalm 1.1; Revelation 22.14. Furthermore, the word BLESSED or BLESSING, or some similar word, occurs six hundred times in the sacred scriptures. The Bible is indeed a book of beatitudes, the heart of them being the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount.

The word BLESSED in the Beatitudes is translated from the Greek *makarios*, which in its older form was *makar*. ...

In the New Testament *makarios* is used to describe the state of spiritual and moral prosperity and blessedness, the highest possible happiness that men can enjoy in this world. ...

It is in Jesus Christ that men enjoy the *blessedness* of the *blessed* God (John 14.6; Ephesians 1.3; 3.14-19). Thus it is only as men surrender their lives to Christ that they can receive the benefits of the *blessed* life given by God, to incorporate the Beatitudes in their character. ...

...This emphasis in American life on a standard of living rather than on a standard of character in accord with the Beatitudes is a mark of decadence and decay, not of progress and advancement. ...

Men have vainly sought happiness in anything and everything but God, and they have only found enjoyment without joy, pleasure without peace.

It is a gadget-crazy world in which we now live, a world in which man has allowed himself almost to be completely dominated by technical values rather than by human values. ...

Modern society can well be designated as the Society of Anxiety. The physical plagues conquered by man have been replaced by a host of psychological plagues: anxiety, fear, tension, frustration, futility, insecurity, etc. ...

Jesus knew that the concept of true happiness contained in the Beatitudes would seem absurd to the world. Indeed, it was against the false standards of happiness and success of the world that Jesus threw down the Beatitudes as a gauntlet. The world believes that the truly happy man is the one who achieves outward success. It congratulates the man who has made a fortune, who has the praise of his fellows, who lives in a palatial mansion, who drives an expensive automobile, who eats sumptuously every day, who dresses fastidiously and expensively. ... **But Christ congratulates those who have surrendered themselves to Him, whatever the outward circumstance of their lives may be. He congratulates those who have incorporated the Beatitudes in their character** [emphasis mine, DRL]. ...

... *In the world, but not of the world*—that is the status of the Lord's faithful disciples. Is it your personal status? Do you seek for happiness through worldly means or through spiritual means? Are you seeking the lasting happiness that comes from incorporating the Beatitudes in your character or the superficial, temporary happiness that the transitory world has to offer?

II. Outline.

1. Poor in spirit (Matthew 5.3).
2. Those who mourn (4).
3. The meek (5).
4. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (6).
5. The merciful (7).
6. The pure in heart (8).
7. The peacemakers (9).
8. Those having these qualities can expect to be persecuted (10-12).

III. Chronology Notes.

Bible Period: Life of Christ

IV. Quiz.

True or False

01. _____ The word BEATITUDE comes to us from Latin and means, "blessed."
 02. _____ In the parable of Luke 18.10-14 it was the Pharisee who was poor in spirit.
 03. _____ Meekness is sometimes confused with weakness.
 04. _____ It is the truth of Scripture that purifies our hearts.
 05. _____ The Beatitudes enable us, ultimately, to practice the golden rule consistently (Matthew 7:12).

MATCH the Beatitude with the Description Given

06. _____ ...they are the ones who will be receptive to God's plan for their salvation, rather than arrogantly forging through life following their own paths.
 07. _____ ...quick to forgive, does not hold a grudge, allows for second and third chances, and withholds judgment until all the facts are known...
 08. _____ ...sought after specifically for being a disciple of Christ, to be imprisoned, tortured, and put to death.
 09. _____ ...is very important because it will cause us to have compassion for the lost.
 10. _____ ...submission to others when submission is called for and submission to God when there is a higher calling.

Fill in the Blanks

11. Concerning verse 4, Tom Moore writes that the most probable meaning of this passage is _____ are those who have the _____ to mourn over _____.
 12. Mike Bonner tells us that the New Testament meaning of the word RIGHTEOUSNESS (v. 6), is _____ God's plan within a person's life.
 13. The blessing of a PURE HEART is that it _____ is able to maintain a _____ with the Lord.
 14. The spiritually-minded are given the _____ to _____ peace (Galatians ____:1-2).
 15. There can be no peace between you and your Savior as long as you _____ with the world—it is _____ with God (_____ 4:4).

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week's handout

ANSWERS to Matthew 4 Questions... ① True, Isaiah 42; ② True, 6; ③ False, 1; ④ False, 11; ⑤ True, 21; ⑥ b, 2; ⑦ c, 13; ⑧ c, 4,7,10; ⑨ a, 20; ⑩ c, 25; ⑪ stones, bread, 3; ⑫ if, 3,6,9; ⑬ put/cast, prison, 12; ⑭ Casting, net, sea, 18; ⑮ Teaching, preaching, healing, 24.

V. Seek-A-Word.

Y N I A T B O P E N E D V
 C S I F K F A L L N E H W
 V E D E S S E L B D T H C
 H L E P E R S E C U T E M
 N P L T D E T R O F M O C
 H I L I U K T M E R U P U
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 A S C E I M O U N T A I N
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 T D I N L C C D P V M D M
 H S O I U A U B G L B S C
 A A K U M E R C Y N S R N
 R K E E M P D E L L I F M
 N E V A E H U N G E R K U

BLESSED	CALLED	CAME
COMFORTED	DISCIPLES	EARTH
FILLED	HEART	HEAVEN
HUNGER	INHERIT	KINGDOM
MEEK	MERCY	MOUNTAIN
MOURN	MOUTH	MULTITUDES
OBTAIN	OPENED	PEACEMAKERS
PERSECUTE	POOR	PURE
RIGHTEOUSNESS	SAKE	WHEN

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"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

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THE BEATITUDES

Kevin Cauley

If we look at the Sermon on the Mount thematically, we see that Jesus is concerned about relationships—man’s relationship with God, man’s relationship with his fellow, and man’s relationship with himself. The material in the first part of the Sermon on the Mount, commonly known as the beatitudes, concerns the last of these categories: man’s relationship with himself. It is presented at the beginning of the sermon to emphasize the point that one cannot begin to deal with the other relationships until one has dealt with the inward man.

The word “beatitude” comes to us from Latin and means “blessed.” It correlates with the Greek word “*markarios*,” used at the beginning of each beatitude. Sometimes the word is translated “happy,” but this is not the “happy” that is used to describe the common feeling of momentary delight upon eating an ice cream or one’s favorite snack. Rather, the word refers to a deeper, abiding joy that one experiences as a result of making these attitudes one’s own.

The beatitudes take a special form. A blessing is pronounced; the attitude is described; and a promised result follows. The repetition of this form throughout the beatitudes emphasizes the need for their ongoing practice in the life of the spiritual person. The beatitudes are not a “rinse once or twice if desired” solution, but require constant attention in application and maintenance. At any given moment, our orientation towards others should reflect these inward ideals.

The beatitudes are somewhat paradoxical; they seem contradictory at first glance. Nevertheless, as

one contemplates the meaning of the statement, one realizes that such attitudes foster within the inward man a spirituality that cannot be contradicted. The result that one might expect to occur looking at the beatitudes from a physical/naturalistic perspective does not follow because one is not cultivating one’s physical/natural self, but one’s spiritual person. Consider the following chart that illustrates this thought.

(Continued on page 10)

The Beatitudes

The Beatitudes	
Kevin Cauley	1
Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit	
James Gravelle.....	3
Blessed Are They that Mourn	
Tom Moore	4
Blessed Are the Meek	
Don Prather	5
Blessed Are They That Hunger and Thirst...	
Mike Bonner	6
Blessed Are the Merciful	
Trent Kennedy	7
Blessed Are the Pure in Heart	
Cody Westbrook	7
Blessed Are the Peacemakers	
Kris Groda	8
Blessed Are They that Are Persecuted...	
Matthew Gibson.....	10
30th Annual Southwest Lectures	11

Attitude	Physical Expectation	Spiritual Result
Poor in Spirit	Poor, Without Possessions	Possessors of the Kingdom of Heaven
Mourn	Sadness, Depression	Comfort
Meek	Low, Humiliated, Degraded	Heirs of the Earth
Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness	Empty, Meaninglessness	Filled
Merciful	Taken Advantage of, Used, No Justice	Obtain Mercy
Pure in Heart	Unfulfilled, Not Authentic, No Physical Satisfaction	See God
Peacemakers	Lose in Battle, Will not Prevail	Called the Children of God
Persecuted for Righteousness Sake	Suffer Pain, Personal and Financial Loss, Die	Possessors of the Kingdom of Heaven

Cultivating these inward attitudes best facilitates one's relationship with God and one's fellow man, both of whom are spiritual beings. They enable us, ultimately, to practice the golden rule consistently (Matt. 7:12). It is in this final state, when one's relationships with one's fellow have been cultivated by spiritual truths, that one may find the joy the beatitudes promise to those seeking spirituality in their lives (Phil. 4:4).

This issue of the *Christian Worker* explores these beatitudes. It is our hope that those who study it will come out with a deeper desire to cultivate the spiritual self by focusing on and developing these attitudes within one's heart. The heart of man is where the battle for truth lies; what we believe today will affect the actions we take tomorrow (Mark 7:21). May we cultivate our hearts so as to live lives that obtain beautiful consequences.

CW

BARKER-CAULEY DEBATE

Human persons who intend to minimize harm are moral.

Affirm: Dan Barker (atheist)
Deny: Kevin Cauley (Christian)

Human persons are obligated to behave morally only if God exists.

Affirm: Kevin Cauley
Deny: Dan Barker

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Kevin Cauley ----- Editor
Editorial Address: 8900 Manchaca Rd., Austin, TX 78748

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“BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT”

James Gravelle

As Jesus and His disciples journeyed from Jerusalem to Galilee, Jesus defended the disciples for plucking grain on the Sabbath. On a subsequent Sabbath, as Jesus was teaching in a synagogue, He healed a man's withered hand. These perceived “Sabbath breakings” aroused the anger of the Pharisees. Even though the truth of Christ's teaching and God's approval of His actions were proved by the miracles that He did, Jesus incurred the wrath of the Pharisees who plotted to kill Him. Having full understanding of the Pharisees' intentions, Jesus withdrew with His disciples from this place to the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

A great multitude that had heard of the wonderful things done by Jesus followed Him, and Jesus healed their sick. Three days later, Jesus went into the mountains and, after spending a night in prayer, called His disciples to Him. It was at that time that Jesus chose twelve men whom He named “apostles.” Jesus rejoined the multitude, which was anxious to hear His teaching. In this mountain setting, Jesus began to teach His disciples. His first words in this context recorded by Matthew are found in chapter five, verse three: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

These words begin what is now called “The Sermon on the Mount.” In Matthew 5:3-11 we find nine “blessed” or “happy” sayings, known collectively as “The Beatitudes.” Most of these sayings consist of paradoxes—truths that are opposite of what would be seen from a worldly viewpoint. Jesus says that those who are “*poor in spirit*” (Matt. 5:3) are blessed or happy. How could this possibly be true?

The word “poor” means to be lacking or destitute of something. That “something,” Jesus says, is “spirit.” This phrase speaks of those who are destitute of the prideful, arrogant spirit that was seen in the Pharisees.

In the parable recorded in Luke 18:10-14, Jesus contrasts the arrogant spirit of the Pharisee with the humble spirit of the tax collector. Both went to the temple to pray. Verse 11 states, *“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself...,”* indicating that his concern was self-centered rather than upon God or his fellow man. He prayed, *“God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this*

publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” Compare the attitude of the publican who, *“standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner.’”* The point of this parable is driven home by Jesus' words in verse 14, *“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”* The tax collector was truly *“poor in spirit.”*

How can anyone possibly hope to possess the spirit of Christ when he is already full of the spirit of the world? There is not room for both. One must first be poor of spirit, emptying himself of arrogant, prideful, worldly characteristics. It is at this point in life that one can be receptive to the Gospel. In Luke 4:21, Jesus said that the prophecy made by Isaiah (61:1) was being fulfilled by Him as He *“preached the gospel to the poor.”* In answer to John the Baptist's inquiry about who Christ was, Jesus answered in part, *“the poor have the gospel preached to them”* (Matt. 11:5). It is the poor who have need. It is the poor who have a desire to be filled. It is the poor who have a willingness to drink the sincere milk of the Word.

Blessed or happy are the poor in spirit because *“theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* This is the case because they are the ones who will be receptive to God's plan for their salvation, rather than arrogantly forging through life following their own paths. The poor in spirit will hear the Word of God, will understand their lost condition (Rom. 3:23), and will do their utmost to love and obey Jesus (John 14:15). They will humbly submit to Christ's Word by repenting of past sin (Luke 13:3), confessing His name before others (Matt. 10:32), and being baptized (Matt. 28:19-20). It is this humble group that God will add to the church (Acts 2:47). The church of Christ is the kingdom of God (Matt. 16:18-19). And it is the kingdom that will be delivered to heaven (1 Cor. 15:24).

“Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” (James 2:5).

CW

“BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN”

Tom Moore

Jesus declared, *“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted”* (Matt. 5:4). It is indeed a very impressive paradox to say, “Happy are they that grieve,” but such is truly the intention of our Lord’s declaration. This is not a mourning associated with the normal losses and pains of life. If that were what He meant, Jesus would have no need to mention it, because all suffer from that kind of mourning. It is obvious He refers to a spiritual mourning. This mourning is something that goes beyond the normal experience of emotion.

The most probable meaning of this passage is “Happy are those who have the ability to mourn over sin.” There is lasting benefit that comes to those who have the ability to mourn over sin. This mourning would and should involve mourning over our own sins, as well as the sins of others. Why? *“The wages of sin is death”* (Rom. 6:23). Sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:1-2). As a result, Jesus is saying fortunate are those who can be touched and are deeply hurt to see souls in a spiritually lost state. We must be aware of and be touched by our and other’s spiritual poverty. This “mourning” of sin is essential to the Christian’s life in two ways.

First, the mourning over sin is important because of the prerequisite that Paul puts on repentance. *“I now rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye were made sorry unto repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might suffer loss by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death”* (2 Cor. 7:9-10). Paul says that without our mourning over sin, we cannot come to true repentance. And notice, that Paul says *“godly sorrow produces repentance”* (2 Cor. 7:10, NKJV). Simply being filled with sorrow is not repentance. Thus, if we are happy or content in our sinful state, we will never seek the divine consolation that can only be found in Christ. We should mourn for our sins because of the knowledge of where these sins will send us (Rom. 6:23) if the blood of Jesus has not covered them (Rev. 1:5). If our sins are not covered by the blood of Jesus, which we contact in baptism (Rom. 6:3-4), and stay in contact with as we walk in the light (1 John 1:7), then we will spend an eternity in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8). Beloved, that is something to be mourned!

Again, it is imperative that we truly understand that our mourning over sin is not that which removes sin, but is only the first step. We use this state of mind, mourning for our sin, to lead us to repentance (to change our mind in respect to sin for the better) and obey the commands of God, which instructs us as to where true comfort for this mourning can be found.

Secondly, mourning over sins is very important because it will cause us to have compassion for the lost. Unless we really care about the lost, little effort will be put forth to rescue them from their dying state. When Jesus came to the city of Jerusalem, He *“wept over it”* because of their lost state (Luke 19:41). Thus, Jesus demonstrates His compassion for the lost. Our Lord’s whole purpose for coming to this earth was to *“seek and save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10). Today, we need to demonstrate this same type of compassion for the lost and dying world in which we live. We need to go *“into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15).

We must mourn because of the state of the whole world—a world drowning in sin. What applies to each of us individually in regard to sin is multiplied by the thousands and millions who share in the guilt of sin before God. Anyone who sees the true condition of himself and the world is forced to experience the tremendous burden of loss and pain, suffering a terrible state of mourning.

When is the last time you sorrowed over the situation of the world? When is the last time you sorrowed over your own sins? Only those who mourn are in touch with the reality of sin and its destructive force in their lives. Mourners are ready for a solution to sin – they will be open to the Lord’s prescription, the only thing that will provide lasting comfort.

CW

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“BLESSED ARE THE MEEK”

Don Prather

Building on Old Testament instruction and toward more New Testament instruction about the quiet submission to God that is visible in a gentle disposition, Jesus said, *“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”* (Matt. 5:5). Two promises are attached to meekness in this Beatitude. Blessedness, the soul-deep satisfaction that transcends every fulfillment of the flesh, and the promise of inheriting the earth (Psa. 37:11).

According to the Old Testament, *“The Lord lifteth up”* lowly souls (Psa. 147:6); *“he will beautify the meek with salvation”* (Psa. 149:4). Those who humbly submit to God *“shall increase their joy in the Lord”* (Isa. 29:19); their *“heart shall live forever”* (Psa. 22:26). In addition to these poetic references, concrete details regarding meekness are found in Psalm 137. In the presence of *“evildoers”* (v. 1) and *“wicked devices (brought) to pass”* (v. 5) the meek *“Fret not”* (v. 1) *“Trust in the Lord, and do good”* (v. 3) and *“Commit (their) way unto the Lord”* (v. 5). They *“Cease from anger and forsake wrath”* (v. 8) *“delight(ing) themselves in the abundance of peace”* (v. 11).

New Testament writers add even more detail. Paul associated meekness with *“temperance”* (Gal. 5:23) *“longsuffering”* (Eph. 4:2) *“kindness [and] humbleness of mind”* (Col. 3:12). He enjoined Christians to be meek especially as they *“instruct those that oppose themselves”* (2 Tim. 2:25). James taught that true wisdom and knowledge are found in *“receiv[ing] with meekness the engrafted word”* (James 1:21) and demonstrated in *“a good conversation...with meekness”* (James 3:13). Peter spoke of this disposition as existing in *“the hidden man of the heart...even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit”* (1 Pet. 3:4).

Defined by the Company It Keeps

Meekness is often confused with weakness, but biblical meekness is defined by the company it keeps and is quite different from back-pedaling cowardice. For instance, *“Moses was very meek”* (Num. 12:3), and Jesus described himself as *“meek and lowly in heart”* (Matt. 11:29). Moses and Jesus confronted power-brokers of this world saying, *“Let my people go”* (Ex. 5:1) and overthrew twisted religious traditionalism saying, *“My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves”* (Matt. 21:13). Neither man

was timid. Instead, they were empowered to remarkable boldness by their trust in the Father.

Evident in Two Relationships

Perhaps this definition helps us appreciate all that is involved in biblical meekness: meekness is (1) submission to others when submission is called for and (2) submission to God when there is a higher calling.

Meekness as submission to others intertwines with many other Bible teachings. *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way”* (Psa. 37:23). This ordering *“suffereth long, and is kind...vaunteth not itself...is not puffed up...is not easily provoked...Beareth all things...(and)...endureth all things”* (1 Cor. 13:4-7). Christians delight in *“preferring one another”* (Rom. 12:10) and in *“follow[ing] after the things which make for peace”* (Rom. 14:19) knowing that *“the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace”* (James. 3:18). Demanding our own way, resisting the preferences of others, or possessing a gruff and aggressive manner are totally out of keeping with meekness.

Meekness in the presence of God is a unique blend of submission with boldness. The human mind insists on a dominant personality that is more one thing than the other, in the case of meekness, more fearful and faint-hearted than anything else. But *“God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”* (2 Tim. 1:7). And when God directs us to do a thing, we should, together with Christ, *“ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness [with] arrows sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies”* (Psa. 45:4-5). Perhaps it is the contrast between our typical soothing gentleness and our occasional bold defense of the faith *“with meekness and fear”* (1 Pet. 3:15) that makes our arrows seem so sharp.

CW

**“BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH
DO HUNGER AND
THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS”**

Mike Bonner

Having the proper physical appetite is essential if one's body is to develop properly. As a matter of fact, having a balanced diet is just as important. It is one thing to have a great appetite, but to satisfy it with unhealthy food is just as damaging as not having an appetite at all. Spiritually speaking it is the same way. Jesus expressed Himself clearly when speaking of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. He stated in Matthew, *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”* (5:6). Notice the result of hungering and thirsting after righteousness—they shall be **filled!** It is God's will for us to be filled to the fullest with His righteousness.

Because the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God are so awesome, there are many ways to approach this subject (Rom. 11:33). Jesus emphasizes the word “blessed,” which literally means to be happy or to be congratulated. Happy is the one who has that **desire** and **longing** for righteousness. But what is righteousness? [**Editor's Note:** The Greek word *dikaiosune* contains the notion of behavior that fosters good relationships with one's fellow man. It came to be identified with the qualities within an individual that would generate such behavior. The New Testament extends this usage to God as well. Thus the New Testament meaning of the word refers to an individual who is faithfully implementing God's plan within his life. In the beatitudes, Jesus uses the word to convey the attitudes and actions that result in good relationships with God and men.] Righteousness is used differently, depending on the context. For example, *“seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matt. 6:33). In this context Jesus is speaking of man's relationship with others: God and men. Another point to consider is in Romans chapter one, *“for therein is the righteousness of God revealed.”* Here Paul is speaking about God's system for man's salvation (1:17).

Previously we referred to having a desire and longing for righteousness. This approach from the Lord Jesus wasn't accidental in any way, for He was fully aware that if a person was going to fulfill the works

of God, one must have the desire to do so. Notice Paul's prayer in Philippians chapter one, *“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment”*; his desire was for them to truly **love** knowledge and discernment (1:9). The same language is used in Colossians 1:9, *“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”* Notice the longing Paul had for the church. This was exactly the Lord's desire for man while speaking on the mountainside and it should be ours as well.

Having a hunger and thirst for righteousness has many benefits which are worthy of our consideration. For example, it helps us to remember to hide the Word in our hearts that we might not sin against God (Psa. 119:11). It aids us in repenting when we fall short of God's glory and grace. And because we're longing to live spiritual lives, the Word of God continues to prick our hearts, thus leading us to change our minds and lifestyles (2 Cor. 7:9). Even when we become discouraged (which is normal at times) the hungering and thirsting challenges us to remember the home that awaits, thus catapulting us through the discouragement. We can have the mindset of Jeremiah who wanted to quit but said, *“But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay”* (Jer. 20:9). Brethren and friends, we must be hungry and thirsty for the righteousness of God.

In conclusion, God wants everyone, especially His children, to long after righteousness. If the Lord is going to consider us blessed, it must begin with our love for Him. When asked what is the greatest commandment, Jesus replied in this manner, *“Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, all thy soul and all thy mind”* (Matt. 22:37-38). Righteousness begins with God and should continue in our hearts and minds, which will result in man being BLESSED! Righteousness was abundant and available in God's Word. We will all be filled with it if we diligently seek it and make application of it within our lives. *“Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled”!*

CW

“BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL”

Trent Kennedy

As you read through Matthew 5-7, Jesus' first recorded sermon and the New Testament reader's first introduction to the Savior's preaching; it is no wonder they called Him the Master Teacher. His words, as we would certainly expect, were rich and deep and able to sustain the thirsty soul (Psa. 1:2-3). When He spoke, those who heard marveled at His tenor (Matt. 7:28-29).

This great sermon, preached as Jesus sat on the mountainside to a great multitude, begins with statements of blessings that we so often refer to as “the beatitudes.” These attitudes, accompanied by their respective actions (poor in spirit, mourning, merciful, etc.), bring forth dual blessings: one is axiomatic and temporal in nature and one is a promise from God that will yet be fulfilled. For example, Jesus said, “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*” (Matt. 5:8). Certainly we understand the eternal aspect of having pure hearts and leading pure lives, which shall result in an eternal crown. But there is also a temporal, earth-bound sense in which this verse is accomplished. Those of us who have pure hearts will see God every day. While we will not see Him literally, our pure eyes will see past color, economic status, and personality to the very soul of human beings with which we come in contact. Result: we see God Who made each person in His image.

The dual nature of the beatitudes may be seen in Matthew 5:7, “*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*” Consider the nature of a merciful person: quick to forgive, does not hold a grudge, allows for second and third chances, and withholds judgment until all the facts are known, and even withholds due punishment within a reasonable context. Is this the type of person whose spouse might easily be forgiven by a spouse overspending at the mall? Is this the type of person a coworker could easily forgive for failing to keep a promise? Is this the type of person who could quickly reconcile with friends whose feelings were hurt? Yes, and this is the type of person we want to be (Matt. 7:12), because there are so many times we desire the temporal mercy of others. We could even call this a proverb and teach it to all those around us, starting with the person in the mirror: Those who show mercy have more mercy shown to them on a daily basis.

Without doubt, Jesus' teachings have real, tangible benefits to our lives on this earth. When those words of life direct our steps, our lives will be blessed, our minds will be content, and our souls will find God's happiness. However, we cannot limit the blessings of this verse (or any of Jesus' teaching for that matter). No one is more merciful than our heavenly Father. He is the very definition of mercy. Though our sins have separated us from Him (Isa. 59:1-2), He provided us a pathway back to His good graces (John 14:6). If we follow this path, being led by our Savior (Heb. 12:1-2), we will not meet the judgment of God that our sin deserves (Rom. 6:23). Instead, God offers us hope, salvation, eternal life, a crown, victory, an inheritance, and an everlasting dwelling place. This is why the inspired apostle could rightly say, “*but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses made us alive together with Christ*” (Eph. 2:4-5). Our responsibility, then, is to do good works (Eph. 2:10), those works which our God has prepared for us, and that make us look more like Him. If we do this, we will truly be blessed, in this life and beyond.

CW

“BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART”

Cody Westbrook

God has always called His people to a life of purity, sanctification, and holiness. Throughout Scripture we see the refrain, “*Be ye holy for I am holy*” (Lev. 11:44, 19:2; Deut. 14:2; 1 Pet. 1:15-16). The manner of life that is prescribed for us is for our own benefit (Ex. 19:5-6; Deut. 11:26-28, 1 Pet. 2:4-12). The blessing of a pure heart is that it alone is able to maintain a proper relationship with the Lord. Because of His holiness, no sin may approach unto Him (Hab. 1:13). Therefore, without a heart of purity, no one can dwell in His presence. As Jesus said, “*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God*” (Matt. 5:8).

Purity of heart is found, not in the outer workings of the flesh, but in the sincere actions of inward piety. Those who are pure in heart are those who are clean and sincere

(Continued on page 8)

(Pure in Heart, continued from page seven)

in every aim and intention, and who hate everything that is vile and pollutant to the soul. In Matthew 5:8 and in other passages true purity is contrasted with the scrupulous self-righteousness of the Pharisees, which they pointed to as a sign of purity and holiness. Jesus referred to them in Matthew 15:8 when He said, *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”* The Pharisaic attitude of self-righteousness is seen in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican in Luke 18:9-14 and is condemned by Jesus in Matthew 23: 28 as those who *“outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”*

It is the truth of Scripture that purifies our hearts. Peter explains that you (Christians) *“have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit”* (1 Pet. 1:22). Peter also stated that our hearts are purified by faith (Acts 15:9). Of course it requires action on my part. James implied this when he exhorted us to *“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded”* (James 4:8). The heart is not purified directly by the Holy Spirit Himself, but rather it is when I understand and faithfully apply the teachings of Scripture that I become clean (John 15:3) and sanctified (John 17:17).

Those who are pure in heart are said to be blessed. This is because only the pure in heart *“shall see God”* (Matt. 5:8). This is a two-fold blessing. As we faithfully navigate this life, we see our Lord through the blessings which He gives us. All spiritual blessings in Heavenly places are found in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3). But as we *“follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth”* (Rev. 14:4), we arrive where He is, in heaven. If our hearts are pure, then we have the assurance of being with our Lord eternally. For *“We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is”* (1 John 3:2).

What is the state of your heart? Is it pure or is it defiled? Does your heart’s spiritual nourishment come only from your weekly attendance of the worship service or are you striving daily to be cleansed by the Truth? If we make a show of our Christianity, hoping to impress those around us by our seeming righteousness, then we are living lie. We shall be pure in heart only when we have devoted our heart to a sincere application of the

truth in service to the King. May we ever pray the words of the song we often sing, *“Purer in heart o God, help me to be.”*

CW

“BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS”

Kris Groda

Nothing says “Christian behavior” quite like the beatitudes in Matthew chapter five. Jesus was teaching a way of thinking and behaving that poses a lofty challenge to disciples of any age. While the end result causes one to truly be blessed or happy, the Christian also should seek the joy in the process of becoming what God wants him to be as a citizen in His Kingdom. As a disciple of the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6), there are a number of areas in which we can make peace.

Peace between you and your fellow man.

Being a peacemaker is the opposite of a troublemaker. Christians serve the LORD, Who is *“God of Peace”* (1 Thess. 5:23). Peacemakers seek to calm hostile attitudes and defuse potentially violent confrontations. *“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger”* (Prov. 15:1). James counsels us to control the tongue and adds, *“For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work..... And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace”* (James 3:16-18).

Especially among brethren, we may not be neutral in our efforts to make peace in the midst of turmoil. Our human lusts are a stumbling block to spiritual success. The Lord has put a reconciliatory system in place that will remedy conflicts among us. Jesus teaches: *“If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift”* (Matt. 5:23-24). *“When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses”* (Mark 11:25-26). *“If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between*

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(**Peacemakers**, continued from page eight)

thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" (Matt 18:5). The spiritually-minded are given the responsibility to restore peace (Gal. 6:1-2).

Peace between you and your family.

Satan, the home-wrecker, will do what he can to give birth to strife between a husband and a wife. Paul instructed, *"And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife"* (1 Cor. 7:10-11). There are only two options given to resolve the marital conflict: remain unmarried or be reconciled to the spiritual goal. Again, someone has to be spiritually mature and willing to work with the situation. Most marriage problems are rarely one-sided. Peacemakers have a quiet and calculated disposition. Peacemakers aren't mouthy or quarrelsome. When Jesus, *"was reviled [hated, detested], reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously"* (1 Pet. 2:23).

This is not easy; it takes discipline, especially if you are already divorced and have a hostile ex-spouse. Perhaps mastering the goal of "peacemaker" in your family will keep you from experiencing this displeasure.

Peace between you and your Savior.

Be assured, if you have believed and obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine (Rom. 6:17), God says your sins and iniquities *"will I remember no more"* (Heb. 10:17). *"Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness"* (Rom 6:18). Our baptism is *"an answer of a good conscience toward God"* (1 Pet. 3:21).

Is your guilt so immense you don't feel worthy of salvation? Is your conscience hurting so that you can't enjoy the promised blessing of having a clean record before God? Perhaps it is because you haven't completely turned your back on sin. There can be no peace between you and your Savior as long as you maintain friendship with the world—it is enmity with God (James 4:4). One day, time will end; therefore, *"be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless"* (2 Pet. 3:14). *"Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it"* (1 Pet. 3:11).

Peace between others and your Savior.

The sons of God must take the "Gospel of peace" (Rom 10:15) to the world. Paul wrote, *"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God"* (2 Cor. 5:18-20). To be reconciled to God is to be at peace with God and to win souls is to make peace between others and your Savior—Jesus Christ.

CW

SOUTHWEST YOUTH LECTURES

*Championing Christ:
Called Unto Conviction*

Saturday, April 9, 2011

3:00 p.m....*Confessing Christ Today*
.....Russell Haffner

4:00 p.m....*Convictions?.....*Wayne Jones

5:00 p.m....Activities and Complimentary Dinner

These lectures will be especially beneficial to young people in Grades 6-12. Parents are welcome! The **30th Annual Southwest Lectureship** Commences at 7:00 p.m. We would consider it an honor to have you join us for the entire lecture series. Please notice the schedule on page 11 of this publication.

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“BLESSED ARE THE PERSECUTED”

Matthew Gibson

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 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 are Christians today who choose not to engage in the work of the Lord—evangelism, edification, and benevolence. Perhaps volumes could be written as to the cause(s); however, for our purpose, let us consider two of them. The foremost reason, when all layers are peeled, is no respect for the Word of God and His authority. We simply ignore or rebel against that which is commanded. For the faithful, do not beat yourself up wondering what can be done to help brethren in this position. There is absolutely nothing that can be accomplished until a contrite, penitent heart is manifested in an erring brother or sister. No amount of money, time, or energy can be expended on apathetic or ignorant Christians to win them over to faithfulness. Brethren, this may seem harsh and mean, but it is the Truth. Our efforts must be concentrated in prayer, study, rebuking, and reproving for the heart to be pricked and acceptable to the Truth with gratitude (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Romans 1:2ff clearly depicts characteristics of an unthankful person. Such are many in society today, including some of our brethren. There is much work to do!

The other reason for lack of work in the Lord's church is we continue to experience a mindset caused by culture, social reform—no, wait a minute, an abandonment of God's Word that causes people not to want to deal with what is good and right. Anyone who speaks against this is an oppressor and radical extremist. We simply do not even begin to know and maybe even to understand what oppression is for the most part. The faithful are not oppressors; rather, they are ones with soul-saving Gospel in their thoughts, words, and actions that can remove oppression from workers of iniquity.

Those receiving the persecution described in Matthew 5:10 are sought after specifically for being a disciple of Christ, to be imprisoned, tortured, and put to death. Oh, there are people that will fuss and fight, and we must stand our ground lest we lose what we have;

but do we completely understand what it means to be oppressed? I am sure I do not want to have empathetic feelings in this regard. For an idea of oppression, consider English historian Christopher Hill's words concerning the Church of England:

Everyone had to attend services in his parish church every Sunday, and was liable to legal penalties if he did not. He had to pay tithes, one-tenth of his produce or his profits, to a clergyman whom he had no say in choosing, and of whom he might heartily disapprove. He was liable to the jurisdiction of Church courts, which punished him not only for “heresy,” nonattendance at church, or sexual immorality, but also for working on Sundays or saints' day, for nonpayment of tithes, sometimes even for lending money at interest. (*The Century of Revolution* [New York: W.W. Norton 1961] 75-76)

After several infractions, one could be put to death. Imagine being “oppressed” for not going to services, giving, and sexual misconduct! Sadly, many people do not have the wisdom to understand they are being oppressed until it reaches a climax of war.

Jesus does not advocate for His disciples to seek trouble so we may rejoice and be exceedingly glad. We learn in Matthew 10:34-39 that Truth will separate even the strongest of bonds on this earth. Because not all people will accept Truth as intended by our Lord, we can expect to be persecuted. The thought is not to be overcome with burden; rather, calmly and collectively accept such with happiness, for this has gone on for centuries. One could consider they are pricking the hearts of souls. While our prayer is the same as God's desire that all men be saved (1 Tim. :4), we know this will not happen, for “*wide is the gate that leads to destruction and many there be that find it*” (Matt. 7:13).

Our attitude must be to speak the Truth in love (Eph. 4:15), while continuing to do the Lord's work. Brethren, whether we are oppressed or not, we must “*be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*” (1 Cor. 15:58).

CW

THE 30th ANNUAL SOUTHWEST BIBLE LECTURES

April 9-12, 2011

Championing Christ: Called Unto Conviction

Saturday, April 9

- 3:00 p.m.... Youth: Confessing Christ Today Russell Haffner
- 4:00 p.m.... Youth: Convictions?..... Wayne Jones
(Followed by an activity and complimentary dinner, which will be served in the SW annex)
- 7:00 p.m.... Is There a God?..... Branyon May
- 8:00 p.m.... Christianity and the World's Religions John Grubb

Sunday, April 10

- 9:30 a.m.... Living as Christians Perry Cotham
- 10:30 a.m.... The Jesus of History..... Rick Brumback
- **Congregational Noon Meal**
.....
- 5:30 p.m.... **Congregational Singing**
- 6:00 p.m.... No Doubts!..... Jeff Archey
- 7:00 p.m.... Connecting Christ to Morality and Ethics Phil Sanders

Monday, April 11

- 9:00 a.m.... The Bible and History John Moore
- 10:00 a.m.... How the Bible Speaks Jeff Archey
- 10:00 a.m.... **Ladies:** Christianity and Moral Purity Renita Archey
- 11:00 a.m.... The Church and Contemporary Culture Phil Sanders
- 1:30 p.m.... Inspiration and the Word of God B. J. Clarke
- 2:30 p.m.... Nurturing New Christians John Grubb
- 6:00 p.m.... **Introducing Southwest! Seminar**
- 6:30 p.m.... **Congregational Singing**
- 7:00 p.m.... Challenges Facing Our Youth Brad Harrub
- 8:00 p.m.... How We Got the Bible Sam Dilbeck

Tuesday, April 12

- 9:00 a.m.... God and the Origins of Life Brad Harrub
- 10:00 a.m.... Boldness Amidst Skepticism..... Don Walker
- 10:00 a.m.... **Ladies:** Fortifying Our Youth Renita Archey
- 11:00 a.m.... Modern Science and the Bible Stan Crowley
- 1:30 p.m.... The Unique Jesus Michael Light
- 2:30 p.m.... The Reliability of the Bible Sam Dilbeck
- 4:00 p.m.... **30th Annual SWSBS Alumni and Supporters' Dinner**
- 6:15 p.m.... **Congregational Singing**
- 7:00 p.m.... Absolute Truth Today Bob Stapleton
- 8:00 p.m.... The Church and Denominations B. J. Clarke

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