

The Beatitudes

Chapter 1

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:1-3).

When we read, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," we understand that all who are poor in spirit are blessed because they may enter the kingdom of God.

The word "blessed" has sometimes been interpreted as meaning "happy", but it has a deeper stronger meaning than just being happy.

The person who is "blessed" is one who has received great benefits: who is most fortunate. The thought could then be stated, fortunate are we, when we are poor in spirit, because then we have the opportunity of entering the kingdom of God.

"Poor in spirit" means that we feel our own inner poverty. "In spirit" is the way we feel in our own mind, the way it is deep down inside of us.

Thus, the meaning of this beatitude could be expressed by saying "It is a very fortunate thing if our estimation of ourselves is a humble one." When we feel that we are not of much account, and that we are actually without things that we might have, we are most fortunate because now we have a chance to come into the kingdom of heaven.

The word "poverty" simply means "not rich." When we are rich we have things. We have whatever we need and more. We are never in want.

By contrast when we are poor we do not have it. We need a hundred dollars but we have only ten dollars. We need to lift fifty pounds but we can lift only five pounds. This is being downright poor.

Blessed are we when we recognize our own limitations so much that we feel our own emptiness and weakness. Blessed are we when we are humble about ourselves.

We must daily feel our weakness, and continually depend upon Christ Jesus for our strength. When we know that we are liable to collapse at any time, in the sense that we cannot do the things in the way that they should be done, then we are "poor in spirit."

In our own disposition we may feel that we are not as reverent nor as unselfish as we should be. We may be troubled at our lack of faithfulness to others and to our own given word.

We may feel our own sinfulness: our tendency to indulge ourselves, to seek to promote ourselves and to think only about what concerns us personally. Now actually in the sight of God, this is sin.

When we are conscious of all this and we admit the honest truth about ourselves, and we feel our inner poverty, we are most fortunate.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." Most fortunate are we when we feel our own shortcomings and know our need, and feel deep down in our hearts that we are not what we ought to be, because this is related to being repentant.

Repentance does not especially mean that we are sorry about something we have done. Perhaps we should have been. However just feeling sorrow is not repentance. The Apostle Paul says, "Godly sorrow leads to repentance."

Blessed are we, fortunate are we, when we see that the best we can do is not good enough, for then we are ready to receive Jesus Christ as our Savior.

We read in the Bible, "The Lord resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble." Actually, when we are full of our own importance, we feel we have no need of Him.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Feeling ourselves to be sinners does not mean that we have done everything bad that everyone else has done, it is just that we have not been what we should be. We have done the things we should not have done, and yet the kingdom of heaven can be ours.

The general term, "The kingdom of heaven," includes all that Christ brings in Himself to each one of us. We know what a king does when he rules over his kingdom. A king directs, he oversees, he guides and he decides.

When the Lord Jesus is the king of our hearts He overrules in our affairs and He decides. We no longer try to decide, He does!

When we are humble, repentant and honestly feel our need, Christ will direct, help and keep us. As our Lord and King He will do all this for us.

The phrase, "The kingdom of heaven" further refers to God and the things that come from God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the book of Matthew this phrase, "The kingdom of heaven" is used many times to refer to the general work of our Lord and King.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." All the help of the spiritual world will be ours. Almighty God Himself will be our Father and Jesus will be our Savior and Lord. We can never earn nor deserve these blessings. Everything there is in heaven is freely given to us. Heaven itself is a free gift and everyone can have it on this one condition: that we come humbly to the Lord. We only need to recognize deep down in our heart that we could be better than we are: that we are not what we ought to be.

Those of us who feel that we are pretty good, need to take time out for a little private truth session and admit our faults. The Lord Jesus Christ never comes to a proud heart.

When we know that what we have is worth nothing: we can pour it out, for when we are empty we can receive the Lord Jesus Christ.

If our hearts are full of self, the Lord will not be able to come into our hearts. He comes to comfort the broken hearted.

When our hearts are burdened and distressed because we are not good, we can look up and take courage. This is exactly what we need to receive the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the qualification we need to receive the blessing of God.

How wonderful to know that we may have God on our side when we know our own shortcomings and confess our sins to Him. This is the message the first beatitude holds for us.

Chapter 2

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:4).

Here our Lord is pointing out the real meaning of a godly frame of mind. As a man lives and thinks certain consequences follow. It is these results which give meaning to life.

Part of the truth of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is to bring light to shine upon our life, showing up the real meaning of our ways. That is one reason why we associate the word "truth" with the Gospel. It is not only that the Gospel in its message is true, but it is that the Gospel as an interpretation of life, reveals the truth of things.

By the time the Lord Jesus Christ was preaching, the people of Israel had long known something of the ways of God. These words, spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, were not spoken to people who were ignorant

of the God of Israel. Many to whom He spoke had some knowledge of the Old Testament revelation of God and in the history of Israel; some men had walked in the ways of God.

It is always important for us to recognize the difference between a man's own personal choice, and the man walking obediently in the will of God. And at the time of the Sermon on the Mount, when the Lord Jesus was preaching, men needed to have the truths about their living and their acting and their choosing set forth. This is what was done by the preaching and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth and was compiled for us by Matthew in what we commonly call The Sermon on the Mount, which begins with these short statements that we call the Beatitudes.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Whenever the word "blessed" is used in the Bible, you have in mind such ideas as the notion of being fortunate. When you say that is a blessed man, you mean that is a man that has been given good fortune. Another significance of it is the very word "rich" when you say about any person that he is rich, then you can also say that he is blessed. Or we commonly today in our ordinary language speak of a person being well off. A man that is well off is a man that is rich, a man that is fortunate, and that is a man that has been blessed.

"They that mourn." Now that seems strange, doesn't it? You would ordinarily think that with blessing there should be laughter and happiness and gladness. Well listen to this, "Blessed are they that mourn." Now what happens in mourning? Of course we commonly think of people mourning when someone has died and we do, we mourn the dead. What do we do when we mourn about people that have been taken away in death? What do we mean when we say we mourn? Isn't it true we are just thinking about the loss that we have experienced? We are appreciating the reality of the whole matter. And to mourn is to recognize the dire facts of human existence. "Blessed are they that mourn." Blessed are the people, fortunate is the man who looks to the end of living and sees that so far as human beings are concerned, the future and the prospect is a sober and sometimes sad thing. Now these words are not entirely strange to the Scriptures. They are to our common language. Ordinarily people are inclined to think you ought to talk only about the things that are happy, only about the things that are glad, only about the things that make everybody feel good, whereas actually most of the living done by most people has in it some sorrow and grief.

Note some words from the book of Ecclesiastes in chapter 7, verse 2. "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart." "The house of mourning" of course you mean by that mourning for the dead. It is better to go to a house where someone has died and everyone is sad, than it is to go to the house of feasting because this dying that people do is the end of all men "and the living will lay it to his heart." "Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better" (Ecclesiastes 7:3). How can that be? Well, as human beings think about the results of living and the end toward which they are moving, they actually reconsider their ways. The psalmist prayed, "Teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

We read on in Ecclesiastes, "The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool: this also is vanity" (7:4-6).

What we have here in this blessedness, "blessed is the man" or "blessed are they that mourn", are those who recognize the dire facts of human existence. For instance they recognize the truth about themselves. They know in themselves that they are just not good, they are not good enough, and that leads them to repentance and that it is a good thing to repent. Again they recognize the truth about circumstances and the long view. Now you take living in this world, what is the truth of it? The truth of it is that at the end of all things is death, for sure the paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Now as you know people, isn't it true that some are selfish and unkind? And about this whole world, what one thing is really true about this world? Isn't it that it shall pass away? It is temporary, always changing. We read, "Here have we no continuing city" (Hebrews 13:14).

Recognizing that this is true, it makes one ready to turn to God for help, and this is fortunate. So why is a man fortunate who sees these things and thinks about these things? Because he will turn to God and in God each distress is taken away. It is true that he isn't any good, but he can be forgiven in Christ Jesus. It is true that his circumstances are not going to last and that death is the end of all things here, but God can raise the dead. It is true that people may not care, but God cares.

As far as the world is concerned, the world shall pass away. "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away" (Luke 21:33). And you see if a person sees these things, thinks about these things, recognizes these things, such a person will turn to God who is reliable and everlasting and they shall be comforted. How will they be comforted? In God. They will never be comforted in this world. There is nothing in the Bible that would lead you to feel that so far as you are concerned, that in this world you will ever be able to figure it out. There is nothing in the Bible that will ever show you how you can manage things in this world so that you can be fully and forever satisfied in this world. You are not supposed to be fully and forever satisfied in this world. God has made you in such a way that you will find your satisfaction only in Him. He is everlasting. He is eternal. You put your trust in Him and you will never lose. And it is a fortunate man who sees this world for what it is, can see it in its weakness and its shortcomings and then can turn to God to receive the blessing that God will give him. "Blessed are they that mourn" – who actually feel and see the limitations of the world and the sinfulness of themselves, "for they shall be comforted." Because in their mourning they will turn to God and God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that they can ask or think.

Chapter 3

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5).

In this you will see three words that contain all the thought in this sentence, "blessed", "meek" and then "inherit" the earth. Now we have already thought about the word "blessed" and as you will remember this means fortunate, rich or well off.

Now fortunate are the meek. This word meek is used in Scripture a good deal. We use it sometimes outside the Scripture, we speak about people having meekness and it is very commonly associated with the word "humility." I have often said that these two words, meekness and humility, might be considered as cousins. But they are not sisters, nor brothers. They are close together, yet mean two different things. Now they come from the same kind of a heart but they really mean two different things. Humility has to do with your opinion of yourself Meekness, however, has to do with other people and how we deal with them. Now we can come at it this way, we can say that when a person is meek they are not proud. Meekness would never prosper where there is pride. And they are not vain, because meekness and vanity would not come out of the same heart. They are not always thinking of themselves. A meek person is not particularly sensitive about himself and so it follows that a meek person is not selfish. Now you list those things and you can already, in a negative way, find out a number of things that a meek person is not. He is not proud, not vain, not egotistic, not selfish and what that means is this, that when a person is meek a person does not resent what other people have done against him. In other words, they do not hold resentment. If someone acts toward you in a way they should not act, resentment will be just as natural in you as it is to feel cold when the door is open and the wind blows in, but you will not hold on to this feeling, you get over it as quickly as possible.

One who is meek does not take offense. Now he may be offended, but it is one thing to be offended and it is another thing to take offense. When you take offense, this means you actually pick up the offense you feel and you hold it. You just hold it against that other person. A meek person does not hold a feeling of resentment or of being offended.

This leads us to say that a meek person does not retaliate, does not try to get even. You could not be meek unless someone had done you an injustice. If someone had acted toward you in such a way that you would be perfectly justified in getting angry, now you have a chance to be meek. What does that mean? You do not allow yourself to indulge yourself in anger. Now you might be angry, but you do not hold onto it. You are slow to anger, you are quick to forgive, that kind of thing belongs to meekness. The main thing about meekness is that you just simply do not take offense when someone mistreats you. It is a case of treating other people who have done you wrong as if they had not done you wrong so far as that particular thing is concerned. You see to be gracious when you are greatly favored has little significance. You know what I mean by that? If people have been nice to you and you are nice, why anybody would be like that. But to be gentle, when people have been harsh, now that is significant. To act toward people as if they had not done wrong to you, when actually they have done wrong to you, that is a really big thing. And that is a case of being meek.

You might say, "Well who could be like that?" Let me draw your attention to several people in Scripture. I am sure you all know the story of Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob. You remember Joseph was sold by his brothers as a slave down in Egypt and while as a slave he was lied about, thrown into prison, and while in prison he was forgotten. Now that man, Joseph, was raised up by the providence of God from prison to become the chief man in the nation of Egypt. There came a day when his brothers came down to Egypt because they were short of food. There was famine in the land and they heard there was food in Egypt, and there was because of Joseph's good management. So they came down to Egypt in order to get food to live. Now you will remember that Joseph treated them as if they had never mistreated him. In other words, he treated them fairly and openly, kindly and graciously. You will recall that afterwards they were afraid that he would get even with them, but he never tried to get even with them. Now when you do not try to get even with anyone, that is being meek.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Moses was like that when he was criticized by Aaron and his sister Miriam. It says about Moses that he was the meekest man on the face of the earth. The biggest thing in that story when you read it is you find that he took no offense.

Hannah was like that when she was falsely accused by Eli. You remember when Hannah was praying and Eli thought she was drunk and accused her of being drunk. That would be a very disturbing thing. If you were in church and earnestly praying for blessing and someone came along and accused you of being drunk, wouldn't you feel like you could take offense? Well Hannah could have probably felt like she could take offense, but she did not.

So let me use those as illustrations of this thing that I am talking about, this matter of being meek. Now who could be like that? The Lord says here, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." And right now, we ask, who could do this? How could you do it? In a given situation when you have been mistreated, how could you possibly treat other people without any idea of getting even with them or retaliating at all? And the answer taken from such persons as Joseph, Moses and Hannah is that you trust God. Now what does it mean, how will they be blessed? "Blessed are the meek", those who are trusting God about their human relations and refusing to get even with people, refusing to retaliate with people, how are they going to be blessed? They shall inherit the earth.

Now when it says, "they shall inherit the earth," I want to emphasize to you that this does not mean the local real estate. This does not mean that if you are a meek person you are suddenly going to become rich. I will tell you what it does mean. It means that according to the Scriptures taken from the Old Testament, from away back in the first books of the Bible – and this was spoken at a time when the children of Israel were moving from Egypt into the land of Canaan (and the word "earth" in the Hebrew and the word

"country" and the word "land" are all the same word) – they shall inherit the land. What land? The promised land. And for you and for me that is the land of promise, the promises of God.

What is really meant here is "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the promises of God." They will come into the very things that God has prepared for them and that is a very fortunate thing. They shall enter into the promised land – the land of the promises, the promises of God. They shall receive the benefits of God's bounty. If it should be that you find a person who is meek, you can have in mind that even though in this world people will impose on them, they are blessed and fortunate because God will make sure that His promises are fulfilled. By the way, again someone might say, "Well, who in the world can be meek?" So let me tell you that meekness is one of the fruits of the Spirit. You read in the book of Galatians 5:23 that one of the fruits of the Spirit is meekness. You will remember how that reads "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." So actually meekness is fruit of the Spirit. But just now for your thinking you can have this in mind, that insofar as you are disposed to be meek, take courage and be comforted in your heart because you are going to inherit the promises of God.

Chapter 4

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled (Matthew 5:6).

What a wonderful promise is given to us here. The word "righteousness" is not a common word but its meaning is right-standing with God; to be in His will. To be right with God, the inward desires of our hearts must be right.

Not everyone has this desire. There are many desires that are common to all men. Almost everyone wants to be successful, to be rich and in good health and not grow old. We yearn for good days and to have our business prosper.

Hungering and thirsting after righteousness is not the thing that people ordinarily think about. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." This is not a case of wanting to be perfect in everything we do. The thought in our text is, that in our innermost heart we must want to be right with God. We can receive the blessing of God only when we sincerely desire that which is right in His sight.

Some of us want things that are not good. Still, if we wish with all our heart to be different, such a desire is in itself a sign of spiritual blessing.

How often people say, "If only I were what I am supposed to be. If only I could do what is right."

Our answer to them is, "Thank God that you have the desire to be right. " "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Another way to be right is in our conduct. For instance, we agree that it is right to go to church. Yet how often our mind wanders to: sports, next week's activities, or some problem, instead of Christ Jesus and His word.

Being in church becomes right when we seek to know what God has in mind for us. We are right when we obey God's will for us. When we do that which God would have us to do, our conduct becomes right.

If our hearts are not inclined to please God, there is no way in which we can force ourselves to change. We must repent, turn completely around. Then our conduct, our every desire, even our thoughts will seek to be according to God's revelation in His word.

We read in God's word, "There is none righteous, no, not one . . . They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Romans 3:10-12).

These words from the Bible clearly bring to our minds the truth that none of us is good. Since the general meaning of "righteousness" is doing everything that we ought to do and being everything that we ought to be: we can see that we can never have such righteousness.

However there is something that we can have. We can have a sincere hunger and thirst after righteousness. We can be one of the fortunate and blessed ones if the longing of our innermost heart is to be right with God. Then the promise of this beatitude is for us: "For they shall be filled"!

This word "filled" does not have the idea of being filled with right acts and right conduct. It does not mean satisfied with ourselves. In our text the word "filled" is used to illustrate the way a hungry man is satisfied, when his thirst has been quenched and his hunger has been fed.

When our hunger and thirst after righteousness has been met we shall be satisfied. This does not mean that we shall reach a place in this life when we are all that we would like to be.

When we are genuine Christians we know that we are not all that we ought to be. We will be the first to admit this. We will not claim to be something extra, something special. The Bible tells us that there is no man that sinneth not. That is why such an admission is not surprising. It is actually the mark of a mature Christian.

When people in the world hear us say that we are Christians, they expect us to be perfect. This would not be the truth. The real truth of the matter is that we trust our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for our full salvation. As Christians we are not good of ourselves, but the Lord Jesus is good and He is our partner. We are not doing right but the Lord Jesus has done right, and He is our Savior.

This must never make us careless in what we do and say. This very beatitude brings this out. "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness." Someone may say, "Well why do they want to do right if the Lord Jesus is being right for them, and living out His righteousness for them?"

We would answer that because our Lord Jesus Christ is living out His righteousness in us, our hearts are affected in such a way that when we look upon Him, we desire to be more and more like Him. We look upon Him and it becomes natural for us to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

We become ambitious to be well pleasing in the sight of God: to be what we ought to be and to do as we ought to do.

God's word tells us that when we hunger after righteousness we shall be satisfied. This blessing does not depend on our own good works and our own good deeds.

It is a basic truth that what a man sows that shall he also reap. Thank God that for us this also includes reaping what Jesus Christ has sown. When the Lord Jesus Christ gave His life for us He sowed something. He is reaping this: that His righteousness can righteousness might be found in us This righteousness can never be completely ours in this life but we are not limited to this life and to this world.

We know from God's word that when we come into His presence we shall be without spot and without wrinkle. We shall be clothed in the fine white linen of Christ's righteousness.

We who trust God and sincerely long to be right in His sight, can face the future with comfort and assurance. The day is coming when our hunger and thirst for His righteousness will be filled. Then we will be what we ought to for we will be in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 5

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7).

"Blessed are the merciful." This is to say, blessed are we if we practice mercy in our personal relationships with other people.

To fully understand this passage we need a closer look at the word "mercy." It might seem to us that anyone could be merciful at any time. Actually not everyone can show mercy. Only if we have power over someone can we show mercy. If we do not have authority over a man, we cannot be merciful to him.

Supposing we were in a police court, before the judge's bench, listening to our traffic violation. We certainly could not show him any mercy, but he could show us mercy, because he has authority over us.

For example, if we have injured another person, he would have the right to deal with us according to the law, or he could show us mercy.

In our study of another beatitude, we considered the word "meekness." Meekness is the way we feel. Merciful is the way we act.

We have the right to punish a culprit who has wronged us. If we forego just punishment as a concession to the helpless person, we are showing mercy. So actually we can only show mercy to someone when we are in a position to punish him.

When we do not personally punish the culprit, nor invoke the law upon him, which we have a right to do, we are showing mercy. It is in the exercise of judgment that we can show mercy.

There are a number of instances in the Bible that will help us to understand our text better.

In a former study we spoke about Joseph in relation to his brothers. They had done him a terrible wrong and he was in a position to mete out justice. He had the opportunity to punish them.

Joseph had control over all the food in the country. His brothers had come to him to buy food which they needed to live. He could have dealt with them on the basis of their wrong doing. He could have brought punishment upon them.

Joseph knew that his brothers had deliberately wronged him. He told them this, and yet he refused to punish them. He showed mercy to them in spite of the evil they had done.

The story of David and Saul will further illustrate the word "mercy." After David had killed Goliath, king Saul asked him to come to his court. David knew that eventually he would be king, for God had sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint him as the next king.

When Saul learned of this he tried to kill David. He wanted his son Jonathan to be king after him. He pursued David all over the country to kill him.

On one occasion when Saul and his armies were closing in on David, he and his men hid in a cave. Later that night Saul entered the same cave and laid down to rest. David's men urged him to kill Saul. Since Saul was making war on him, this would have been a just act. Everyone would have said that Saul deserved to die. He had set out to kill David and now David had the advantage and could turn the tables on him.

David was in a position to deal with Saul, according to the justice of the situation. Instead he showed mercy to his enemy. He refused to lift up his hand against Saul. At such times we read that the Lord was pleased with David.

We will now consider for a moment an example of mercy set forth for us by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is found in the account of the woman taken in adultery. The attitude of Jesus Christ in such a situation is brought out most vividly in this story.

This woman was brought before the Lord Jesus Christ by her accusers. According to the law she would be stoned to death. Those who brought her asked Jesus what should be done with her. Jesus answered them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." At these words all of her accusers left one by one.

Jesus turned to the woman and asked, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man Lord" and heard Him say, "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more." How wonderfully Jesus showed mercy to this woman.

We particularly want to stress once more, that mercy can only be shown to the guilty who deserve punishment.

Someone may ask, "Why is it so important that we do not invoke punishment but show mercy instead?" The answer to this most important question is found in our text, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

When our hearts have been touched by the grace of God, we have the disposition to be merciful. God Himself has promised that He will then deal with us in mercy. Most fortunate are we when we are thus favored by Him.

Many people might accept the general idea expressed in this beatitude, but few will put it in practice right where they live. Being merciful would include being merciful not only in our home, but also with people in the community and in business. This does not imply that we let people get away with everything. It does not mean that we let people take advantage of us. It just means that we do not pay them off in their own coin, for the wrong they have done us.

We must be willing to harbor no resentment. In an attitude of true meekness we will not take personal offense. We may be tempted to do otherwise, but we are pleasing to God when we do not retaliate in kind.

As we live and move and have our being in the presence of God, we need His mercy daily. If God were to deal with us in justice we would be ruined. It is a wonderful thing to know that God deals with us not in justice but in mercy.

God does not pay us off for being merciful by granting us His mercy. Rather He blesses our soul for our attitude and for our disposition to show mercy when we are motivated by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts.

Chapter 6

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8).

"Blessed are the pure in heart." Again, remember that the word "blessed" means most fortunate. It refers to a person on whom rests the favor of God. Blessed, most fortunate, favored of God are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

Let us consider this expression, "pure in heart." Primarily this phrase means sincere in heart and single-minded as over against insincere, two-faced and double-minded. It contains the idea of being genuine. The pure in heart are those who are inwardly genuinely sincere.

We know what is meant by double-minded. When we, at one time want to do right, and at another time want to please ourselves, we are not single-minded. If at one time we would do things, that are pleasing to God and the next time, the things that would get us ahead, we are not sincere. Usually when we do the things that would promote our interests, we are not doing the will of God.

When we speak of the "pure in heart", we do not imply that such a person has never had an impure thought. If that were the case we would be filled with dismay and misgivings. Take heart! Living in a sinful world no one can completely escape the sinful thoughts that pass through the mind. The thoughts that pass through our minds can be likened to the odors that pass through our nostrils. On a certain

occasion you might smell something foul. The fact that you smell it is no indication that you enjoy it. It just means that this odor is around you.

So it is with reference to your thinking. You may have a bad thought, an evil thought, that you are unhappy about. These thoughts are not entirely your fault. Evil is in the very air all around us. This does not make you impure in the sense that "pure" is used in this beatitude.

When we speak of the "pure in heart" we are not necessarily referring to the pure in mind. There is a difference here. A person who does not have impure intentions, who does not dwell on the impure, would be pure in heart.

Now the expression, "pure in heart", does not mean that we have not made mistakes. It does not imply that we have never sinned. Notice that it does not say, "Blessed are the pure in conduct" because there is no one whose whole conduct is pure.

Therefore the words "pure in heart" must refer to the intent, the will and the desires within the heart. No one is born inwardly clean. No one is free from wrong motives and intentions.

It is true that some people are vulgar and crude, and others are refined. However, this does not mean that the precious promise of God's favor is especially reserved for the refined in disposition and nature.

We do not usually associate the word "pure" with the word "unselfish", nor the word "impure" with "selfishness." Yet when we consider every aspect of the word "pure", we must conclude that selfishness is as impure as any action of ours can be, and all of us are prone to selfishness and self-seeking.

Again we say, "Take heart!" There is help for us when we remember that "pure in heart" has also the idea of "purified" in it. This idea expresses a fundamental fact. The only way for us to be "pure" is to be "purified." "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7).

When a Christian says, "Blessed are the pure in heart," he actually means, "Blessed are those who have been purified by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ." Blessed are all who have been cleansed by Him. They are the purified ones. This is the will of God for each one of us. Doing God's will means discipleship. We read: "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself." So far as we are concerned self-denial must come at the very out-set of discipleship. When we have learned to deny ourselves, to put self out of the picture, we are no longer selfish. We no longer seek to please ourselves. With singleness of purpose we desire to respond to Almighty God. All this is involved in being pure in heart, having passed through the necessary blessing in our own soul.

Now our thoughts turn to the phrase, "They shall see God." This is not a matter of observation. We could not see Him with our eyes as though He were like a cloud or a mist or a vapor. For us to see God, is to understand His ways, and to have fellowship with Him. The original idea points to the fact that "seeing God", includes being conscious of God. We are blessed when we know God, not only as Lord and Judge, but also as gracious and merciful Savior.

For many years I felt an inward fear when I thought about God, because of my own sense of sin. I thank Him for the day when I found that God is my Saviour who will not punish me for being a sinful human being.

Now when we think of God as our heavenly Father, we also think about our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us that we might have everlasting life. We receive this kind of understanding about God when our inward hearts are single-minded toward Him. When we are genuinely sincere we see God in what He is, in what He does and in how He takes care of us.

A good illustration that will help to bring this truth more clearly to our mind is to think of a window pane. We know that when we look through a glass window we see something. If by chance we look through a glass that has a flaw in it, like a ripple in the glass itself, things on the other side appear twisted and distorted.

If our hearts are like a clear genuinely flawless window pane, through which we can see clearly, we are blessed of God. However, if the window panes of our hearts are warped with ripples in them or spattered

with mud, we could not see through them clearly. The thing we would have to do is to cleanse them. If we would be pure in heart our inward emotions, intentions and values must not be defiled with selfishness.

We have all had the experience of looking through tinted glass. Some of us have sunglasses that are colored to protect us from the full rays of the sun. Because our glasses are tinted with color we do not see things exactly as they are. Certain colors in the landscape are eliminated because of the tint in our glasses.

So it is with our hearts. If our hearts are colored in any way by a selfish motive we will not be able to see God exactly as He is.

"Blessed are the pure in heart." Blessed are we who have been cleansed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we genuinely and sincerely respond to God, we shall come to understand Him. We shall see Him as He is.

Chapter 7

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God (Matthew 5:9).

This portion of the Scripture which we call the Sermon on the Mount, actually contains nine promises that are set forth in nine beatitudes. These promises are sure. They are statements of fact from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here He points out to us the kind of person who is acceptable to God. In each of the nine beatitudes we find the description of a different trait of personality and character that is pleasing to God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers." When we say "blessed" we remember that this means most fortunate, most favored of God. We would say, "He is a person who has received the rich favor of God."

We will now take a closer look at the word "peace" in order that we may understand it more fully. We feel sure that peace is something which almost everyone wants. We speak of having peace when conflict and strife is ended. When we have been in a struggle or fight of some kind and it is over and past, we have peace. In this sense peace is also a relief from tension.

Some people have the idea that when they have nothing to do and are resting, they have peace. Now rest is one aspect of peace. Rest is a more common word which probably sounds better. The words "rest" and "peace" are mutually involved but they are not exactly the same. We speak of having rest from our burdens. When the burden we carry becomes too heavy and we lay it down we have rest. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give your rest" (Matthew 11:28). These words also mean, "I will give you peace."

We may feel that we have a thousand things to do in a given day. At such times we would be very happy to have nothing to do but rest. In a sense such rest would spell peace to us.

Everyone will agree that this kind of rest would give happiness for awhile. However if we think that having nothing to do gives us peace, we are badly mistaken. Such an idea could only mean that we have not thought things through because peace is not found in inactivity.

We need only to watch people who are unemployed. When they have nothing to do, most of them are more miserable than when they are working. They know from experience that being inactive does not bring peace. No, peace does not mean inactivity, the kind of thing that you have in a cemetery. The sober words, "Rest in peace" are a wonderful thought for the dead. That is not the kind of rest or peace we are going to have in this world where there is activity.

The word "peace" also means harmony. In this sense, discord is opposite of peace. Being active, doing things together when there is goodwill, means harmony. A family is a good example of this.

Now I had the privilege of growing up, as it were, with my children who were all pretty much the same age. I can tell you right now that when the six of us sat down at the table for a meal that this was not a time of absolute stillness and quietness. There was a good deal going on at all times. There were moments when as father of the family I would need to speak loudly or even harshly. At such times a dead silence would follow my words. Scarcely anyone seemed to breathe. It was not at all a good feeling. Under these circumstances we had quietness that was not peace.

I am glad to remember that most of the time there was a happy hubbub of activity when we sat down to the table. Sometimes two or three wanted to talk at the same time. The only problem was to give this one or that one the right to speak. Everyone had something that needed saying. In spite of all this we had real peace in our family because goodwill and harmony were present in our group.

When things work as they should, we can have peace in the midst of much physical activity. We can, for instance, work in the yard, straining every muscle and perspiring and yet feel perfectly at rest in heart and soul. In other words we can have peace in spite of hard work.

If a home is happy, if a wife has every reason for happiness and contentment she can have peace in the midst of much activity. She can go about her daily work with a song in her heart, and peace in her soul.

"Blessed are the peacemakers." Peacemaking is quite different from peace talking. If someone were to tell you, "Don't bother about the sliver under your fingernail," we would say, "That is foolish talk." To remove the bother of that sliver, a peacemaker will say, "Take out the sliver, remove the thing that is bothering you."

Anyone saying, "Don't let a toothache bother you, don't worry about it," is a peace talker. The thing to do is to have the tooth attended to. Making peace includes removing the cause of the conflict.

When we rebel at "giving in" and "giving up", we are not peacemakers. The Apostle Paul writes, "As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). Those who are willing to suffer wrong if necessary to keep the peace receive the blessing of God.

In I Corinthians the Apostle Paul writes to the Church of Corinth that was troubled with much quarreling, "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" (I Corinthians 6:7).

When we carry out this idea, the way to peace is very clear and very easy. Just let the other fellow have what the quarrel is about. If we are unwilling to do this, we are unwilling to be peacemakers. We might ask, "Why would anyone want to make peace at such a price?" The answer is, "Because you love folks, because you trust God." It is a proven fact that a Christian who trusts God will find out that he can "give in" and "give up" and lose nothing. This is the heart of the message of this beatitude, for Christians everywhere.

Chapter 8

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:10).

This beatitude is not as well known as some of the others, yet it holds for us a most important message. Blessings, riches, good fortune and good health are all reasons for being happy.

In our study of this beatitude we will see that we can be truly happy when we are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Persecution of itself is something no one could feel good about because it brings with it sorrow, and grief and trouble. Only when we are persecuted for righteousness' sake, can the results be good and bring blessing.

The Apostle Peter makes it very clear that when a man suffers for his own faults, he cannot expect to receive an advantage.

Some of us are just not thoughtful in our dealings with other people. It is our own fault when we are treated harshly because we do thoughtless things.

Some of us are selfish in our dealings with other people. Although we may not be conscious of it, we are actually seeking to get something out of what we are doing in a particular situation.

Other people do not appreciate us when they observe what we are doing and they will treat us accordingly. Any trouble that follows would be our fault.

This is not the sort of thing we are talking about in this beatitude. Here we are thinking about people that have trouble brought upon them. These people endure suffering which is inflicted on them because they were doing the right thing. These people are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

The word "righteousness" refers to the right things we do because we are in the will of God. We are right when we are obedient to God, in the way He has revealed Himself to us in His Word. We are right as it were by faith.

Trusting God and believing His Word makes us right. Now this has an influence on our conduct. If we are inwardly right with God, we will act in a way that is right. People who are not right with God will resent this.

For instance, when we are right with God we want to do the things that are pleasing in His sight. We will read the Bible to learn more of God's will. We will be interested in the Bible, and we will discuss it and talk about it.

There are some people who do not particularly like this. When we read the Bible it makes them nervous. When we talk about the Bible it makes them feel awkward and embarrassed. They would rather not be around where we are.

It usually happens that they will criticize us. Under certain circumstances they may tell us not to read or talk about the Bible. They may be unpleasant to us because we do it. They may even despise us. This is what we mean by being persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Should we read our Bible aloud, people would leave us alone. They would ignore us and no one likes to be forsaken. When someone deliberately acts in a way that will hurt us because we read the Bible, we would be experiencing persecution.

Praying can also cause ill will. Sometimes a mother will want her children to learn to pray. So in her home she starts teaching them to pray. Her husband, for some reason, may not want to have anything to do with God. When he sees his children praying, he will become very unhappy and dissatisfied. He may tell her to stop it. Under these circumstances this particular woman could have trouble. Her husband might not treat her very well. He might be sarcastic and sneer at her attempts to teach her children to pray. He might become particularly abusive if she were to pray for herself. However she knows that she has a responsibility, and will continue to do what is right.

It could be that a young boy, that has always offered prayers to God, leaves to go to a summer camp. In summer camp he is in the dormitory with a bunch of other boys. They watch him as he kneels to pray. They make fun of him because he is doing what he feels in his heart is right with God.

To be laughed at is not easy when you are one of the boys. The next day they make sport of him in various ways and some of them will leave him alone. They no longer want to be friends with him. They no

longer want him for a pal. Why? Because he prays. This boy is experiencing persecution for righteousness' sake.

Our text tells us that everyone who is persecuted for righteousness' sake will be blessed for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

There are many other ways in which we could bring this kind of trouble on ourselves. For instance, we may have the feeling that the Sabbath should be honored. Because we respect the Lord's day there are some things we will not do on Sunday. Our friends may come along and ask to do certain things. They may ask us to go to a show on Sunday and we decline because we do not think this would be the thing to do. It could follow that they mistreat us in some way. It could also be that they will have nothing further to do with us. They may no longer invite us to their home or come to visit us, because we did not go to a picture show with them on Sunday.

We did not go on Sunday because we felt it would not be the right thing to do. It could be said that now we are suffering for righteousness' sake.

The same is true in the matter of our speech. There are some people who cannot get along with us unless we use profanity. We will lose friends if our speech is clean. Some people will despise us for it. They will have nothing further to do with us. In a way, that is suffering. That is persecution for righteousness' sake.

The same thing is true of our conduct outside. Let us say that we believe in keeping the traffic laws. We stop at stop signs and hold to the speed limit. Suppose there is someone behind us who wants to go faster and is unhappy with us. He will show his displeasure because we are staying within the posted speed limit. He will honk his horn and may actually cause us trouble, because we want to do what is right.

When we are ridiculed because we keep the law and meet our obligations, we are most fortunate.

Let us consider one more example. We may, for instance, feel that the right thing to do is to speak kindly of everyone. We know that we ought to be thoughtful of others and treat them as though they were our own family.

Now suppose someone comes to you and begins to talk about someone else. These people will not like us if we do not join in and gossip. We can actually be left out of a circle of friends if we do not listen to gossip and contribute our share by telling something we know. We will be shunted away from other people for having done nothing in the world but this one thing: we do not do what they do.

It is not that they find us personally unpleasant. By refusing to refuse we make them feel guilty and they resent this. They will have nothing more to do with us. In this sense they will make us suffer.

Blessed are we when we are persecuted, when we actually suffer affliction for the sake of doing right. When this happens to us we are most fortunate: we can have fellowship with the kind. We can walk with God.

Chapter 9

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 (Matthew 5:11-12).

These verses are the last of the Beatitudes.

Each of these nine Beatitudes begin with the word "blessed." Some people have just interpreted this as saying "happy," "happy are ye." But it is a little more than that. You might say you have cause to be happy, you are fortunate, you are rich, you are favored, you have a real benefit on your side. You are going to be, as it were, favored of God.

"When men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." Did you notice that word "falsely?" At times, some of us act in such a way, that if people told the truth about us they would be saying evil because what we do is not good. Or men revile us because we have not done the right thing, or they persecute us because we have done wrong, or they say all manner of evil against us truthfully, now they should not do it but still if they go ahead and do it, we haven't anything to cover us at that point. But if they say these things against you falsely, "for my sake", that is the important thing. If they are actually opposed to you because you are walking with the Lord, then you are a fortunate person. What the Lord is bringing out here is that it is a common experience with those who trust in God.

People who obey God sometimes offend other people. Because they offend other people, they suffer the wrong treatment. Christ Jesus would say they are fortunate, because that is the way it was with the prophets and they have been blessed. I want you to notice with reference to this blessing that this does not mean that you are going to be rich in this world's goods. This does not mean that you are going to be very prominent.

Remember the prophets? Now we honor the prophets, we think they were great persons, but in their day and time people did not honor them. When you mention a man like Elijah, we would be inclined to think, "Oh he was a wonderful man"; and he was but if you had lived in that day and time you know how you would have seen him? As a country preacher, because really and truly he did not live in a king's house by any manner of means. You remember for part of the time he was hidden out up in the mountains and a raven came and fed him by the brook Cherith, and yet he was blessed. You see they persecuted the prophets and the prophets were blessed.

Blessing has more to do with being favored of God. God will have fellowship with you, and He will see to it that you will never suffer for the things that you are now being deprived of, on His account. So if you are obeying the Lord and having trouble because of it; if you are confessing the Lord, you openly admit that you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ above everything else and you have trouble because of that, you can be glad.

Now let me illustrate what some of those things will be. For instance, take this very matter of going to church, which is so very important in your religious life. Someone will say, "Well if you are going to church, you are going to church." That is not quite the way it is. A person can go to church and not go to church for Christ's sake at all. You can go to church for your own sake. For instance you could go to church because that is the easiest way to get along with people you are living with. They make such a fuss about it if you do not go to church, so you just go to church. You go to church on their behalf, but that is not on the Lord's behalf.

Someone will say, "Well I am a church-going person." Well how often do you go? "Oh, whenever it is convenient." That is not good enough. If you are a church-going person you will want to join in the public worship of God at every opportunity. If you are doing this thing for Christ's sake, Christ is there. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst." And if a prayer meeting is being held in your church and you are not there, you are not meeting with the Lord because the Lord is there with that group that are meeting for prayer. The same thing is true with any other activity of the church.

Your attitude even about going to church is so important. It honors the Lord to be regular in attendance. It will glorify Christ Jesus if you come early and be in an attitude of worship and prayer. Taking part in the responsive reading and the singing will honor Him. It may be true that you will be criticized by some. Remember, you are doing this for the Lord and as such you will be blessed. "Blessed

are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against your falsely, for my sake."

The same is true with reference to other activities around the church for His sake. For instance, if they have a visitation program in the church and you go and share in it; if they have a missions program in the church and you give to it; if you are always doing these things as unto the Lord, then certain persons will criticize you and revile you. They will say things about you; you are neglecting your home, you are neglecting your family, you are neglecting your business; relax, God will bless you.

There are other ways in which you would do things for Christ's sake. For instance, you may be the kind of person who doesn't praise men. If in some given situation people are fortunate and blessed and are providentially given favor, you give thanks to God. They give thanks to men. You think God is to be praised and only God. Now that irritates some people. They will not like you for it and they will treat you accordingly. You can be glad. You will do what God wants you to do, not what men want you to do. This may show up for instance when you are sharing in any kind of worship with other people.

Remember that it is the special persecution and trouble that comes to you for Christ's sake, "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." If you are going to walk with the Lord and genuinely and sincerely praise Him, you will encounter scoffing. There will be people who will belittle you and they will say things about you. They will accuse you of certain things which will not be true, and as they do this, you can understand clearly that the Lord is actually taking pleasure in your testimony among these people. Well you can be very very fortunate because "so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" and the prophets have their names high in the record books of God. You can belong to Him in that way. And so we have been considering these various promises of God wherein God will bless those who walk with Him.