

Beatitudes--Their Significance And Meaning

They are simply stated, but are profound in meaning. They guide. They point. They teach. They show us the values that Christ cares about. These values if followed, can not only bring a believer into a state of peace and happiness, but also right into the Kingdom of God after our journey on this earth is over.

The Latin word for blessed is beatus, from which we get the word beatitude. The beatitudes are found at Matthew 5: 3-12

**Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

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

**Blessed are the meek,
for they shall possess the earth.**

**Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice,
for they shall be satisfied.**

**Blessed are the merciful,
for they shall obtain mercy.**

**Blessed are the pure of heart,
for they shall see God.**

**Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called sons of God.**

**Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

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As you read about each of the beatitudes you might look into your own heart and examine your feelings towards them. Are you trying to follow each one of them? I think you will find that you need a rather humble, almost a childlike attitude towards each one of them if you are to be successful in following them. In fact Our Lord mentioned many times about how we needed to become more like children in our attitude and in our thinking towards many of the things in this life. Two verses in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew are good examples.

**Matthew 18:3** "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."

**Matthew 18:4** "Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child, will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

## **The First Beatitude**

**Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

The meaning of the word "poor" in Greek means one who has nothing and is completely empty. Was Jesus saying the economically poor are blessed? No, for there is no spirituality in poverty. Poverty in itself is not blessed, because the poor can be as arrogant and as ungodly and as lost as the rich. So what does it mean to be poor in spirit? It means that the poor are those who realize that they can never achieve salvation on their own and instead put their complete faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

The poor in spirit are those who are not self-assertive, self-reliant, self-confident, self-centered, or self-sufficient. The poor in spirit are not baptized in the waters of self-esteem. They do not boast in their God given characteristics such as their birth, their family, their nationality, their education, their physical looks, their race, their wealth, or their culture. None of that matters. **The poor in spirit are those who are conscious of their sins and know in their hearts that they are completely unworthy of the grace that a most holy and loving God pours down upon them.** They realize that all their righteousness is, as Isaiah said, like filthy rags before a holy God.

So poor in spirit means that we come to God, conscious of our sins and our utter lack of righteousness. It means that we profess that we are totally unqualified to commune with, and have fellowship with God, and that we do not deserve any of the gifts that God is trying to bestow upon us. The poor in spirit realize that all our assets are actually liabilities before God, and that we should view these assets as Paul viewed them--as loss, as garbage, as rubbish.

It means that we have absolutely no hope of salvation without Jesus Christ. It means to realize that we are full of sin and in desperate need of God's grace and righteousness, and the poor in spirit realize that these can only be obtained by faith in Jesus Christ.

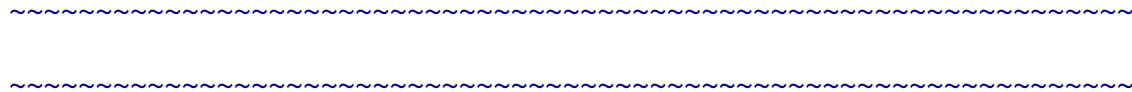
In Luke 15 we see how the prodigal son became poor in spirit. In his pride and arrogance he left his father's house, wasted his inheritance and fell into great need in some far away country. During a severe famine, this son had no job and nothing to eat. At that point, the text says, he came to himself. He went back to his father and said, "I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:21). That is being poor in spirit.

We also see an example of being poor in spirit illustrated again in Luke 18 in the account of the Pharisee and the tax collector. It is the story of a man who was confident of his own righteousness and who looked down on everybody else. Jesus told this parable: Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed this about himself: God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of what I get.

The tax collector stood at a distance. He felt he wasn't even worthy to look up to heaven, so keeping his eyes on the floor he said, "God, please have mercy on me, for I am nothing

but a lowly sinner." (Luke 18:9-14). That is being poor in spirit. What was the result of the prayers of these men? The Pharisee went home condemned, while the tax collector went home justified.

Only the poor in spirit will enter into the kingdom of God. Why? Because they come to God having full knowledge of their own lostness and their own sinfulness. They readily confess that they are full of guilt and are totally unqualified to enter into the kingdom of God. The poor in spirit are the ones who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.



**The Second Beatitude**  
**Blessed are they who mourn,**  
**for they shall be comforted.**

The person that mourns is the one who recognizes that he is a sinner before God. Such a person mourns over his various sins because he recognizes that not only do his sins greatly hurt our heavenly Father, he also realizes that he is empty of righteousness, and does not even begin to deserve salvation and the joys of heaven. This miserable, but repentant sinner, realizes that only through the grace of God does he have forgiveness and salvation. Jesus says such a person is blessed, and there is no greater blessing than to receive such divine approval. Those who are blessed in this way by God will see God and dwell with him forever.

Do you mourn for the many sins you have committed? No one mourns unless the Holy Spirit convicts him of sin and reveals to him that he is a violator of the laws of God. We must also realize that as believers we all have violated God's law but only true Christians, under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, will realistically declare that not only are they spiritually bankrupt, but they are completely lost without Jesus Christ living in their lives. And only Christians will declare that they are by nature enemies of God, acknowledging that to sin means to set oneself against a holy God. The unbeliever on the other hand feels that this is nothing but foolishness, and he has no time for any of it. For the wicked refuse to take down such barriers to God as pride and arrogance. **Psalm 10:4** "The wicked are to proud to seek God; God is in none of their thoughts."

Thus, the mourning of Christians referred to in this beatitude is not because of financial loss, terminal sickness, the death of loved ones, loneliness, a divorce, or some rejection being experienced. Christians mourn because they realize that they have sinned against a holy God and have brought dishonor to his name. And this dishonor of God's very name brings great mourning to the true believer. The true believer mourns when he sins because he knows that the sin just committed brings great pain and sorrow to God. And this mourning by the true Christian is the kind of mourning recorded by Paul in **Romans 7:24**, where he says, "**What a wretched man I am!**"

It is also the kind of mourning that brings unbelievable joy and hope to the believer. Paul wrote about this in **2 Corinthians 7:10** "For sadness in a Godly way makes for

repentance that leads to salvation".

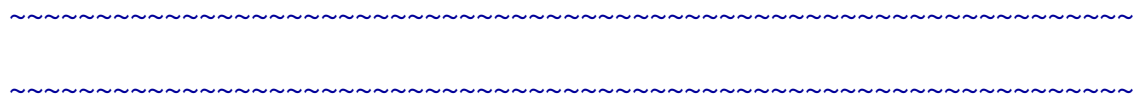
That's right, it is Godly mourning and sorrow that leads to repentance which brings salvation to those experiencing it. Godly sorrow causes us to loathe, despise, and repudiate sin, and this leads the believer to sincerely repent of those sins. Those who experience Godly sorrow truly forsake sin and turn to the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. These are the necessary steps to eternal salvation.

What is the promise to those who mourn? They will be comforted. Who will be comforted? Only those who mourn, meaning only those who repent. Only those who grieve over their sins under the conviction of the Holy Spirit and cry out to God, saying, "Woe is me! I am a sinner. I am unclean. I have sinned against heaven and against you. I have sinned grievously. My sin is so great". They will be the ones who will be comforted. Why will only such people be comforted? Because they alone know that Jesus Christ came to seek and save that which is lost. They alone look to the cross of Jesus Christ and realize that Christ died for their sins.

Using the prodigal son once again as an example, it tells us in Luke 15 of this young man who became very dissatisfied at home, and looked to the world for answers. This man left his father's house to go to a far country to experiment and find pleasure with sin, but soon the fun was over. He became famished, lonely, brokenhearted, and rejected by all. But by God's grace this young man came to himself, became sober and began to think clearly and Godly.

In verse 20 of Luke 15 we see this young man going back home. He was now a poor, wretched, miserable, naked specimen of humanity, but he was going home to his father. He mourned and wept as he walked, and when he reached his father, he said, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I am not worthy to be called your son. Just make me a servant of yours at the lowest rank, for I need to be comforted. Save me, for I am lost."

How did the father react to his son? He cried out in joy and then comforted him. The father hugged and kissed him and gave him a fine garment to wear. He told the servants to put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. He ordered a great celebration with music and feasting. And when the other son questioned why the father was doing these things, the father said he had the greatest of all reasons: "**This son of mine was dead but is now alive**; he was lost but now is found" (Luke 15:24). What awesome comfort this son now had.



**The Third Beatitude**  
**Blessed are the meek,**  
**for they shall possess the earth.**

The Greek word for meek, praus, was used to refer to domesticated animals. The word does not refer to a wild, unruly animal; it refers to a strong and powerful horse or an ox

that was trained and disciplined so that it could be controlled by a human. The word meek used in Matthew 5:5 refers to a strong person who is under control--a God controlled person. A meek person is a man or woman of God whose strength is controlled by God. He or she is controlled by God in thought, word, will, emotion, and action. The meek man is one who submits, not to his own will or to the will of the world, but to the great and gracious will of God.

A meek man is not a weak man. He is not wishy-washy, effeminate or timid. He is not someone who you can walk all over. A meek man is not passive and spineless. In fact the meek man is just the opposite. The one who has put their faith and their trust in Jesus Christ will be meek before God, but mighty and bold before the world and before satan. **To the sinful world and to satan the meek person will be far stronger than they are.**

What makes a person meek? **They see God. And they see God in everything.** No one becomes meek unless they can see this infinite, personal, almighty, all-wise, all-holy God, and when they see God they are immediately humbled. When we are able to see God by faith, then that is the time when the Holy Spirit allows us to become meek. Thus the meek person does not rely on himself, saying, I can do all things. I have confidence in myself. After all, I am strong and able. No, the meek person says, I see God, and he is able and willing to help me. I can do all things through Jesus Christ who strengthens me.

A meek person is the one who by faith sees God as great, and himself as nothing. And because of that, he submits to the righteous will of this great God. A meek person is the one who proclaims, "Not my will but Thine will be done." He submits to the will of his heavenly Father and does not argue with the Holy Scriptures where God's will is clearly revealed. Therefore, the meek believer that is being led by God is having this quality of meekness constantly being produced within him.

In Psalm 37:3 it says, ""Trust in the Lord and do good." Faith is trust. The meek person trusts the Lord, meaning he rests in God by entrusting his whole life to him. His whole being is resting upon the sure foundation of the almighty God. The meek man knows that his past, present and future rests in God. He has heard the gospel proclamation which says, "Come unto me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." The meek person who comes to Christ and trusts in him for his salvation is always at rest in God. Jesus Christ is his rest, no matter what circumstances he is facing.

A meek man is patient. He has a long view of life, knowing in the end it is not the wicked who win, but the meek. How can he be sure of this? The meek person knows that in the end God wins, and if God wins then the meek win. God himself tells us that the meek, not the wicked, will inherit the earth. The wicked may indeed possess the earth for a short time today, but the Lord tells us that when he comes back, the meek shall possess this earth. **Psalms 76:9** "Then God arose to judgment, To save all the humble of the earth".

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### **The Fourth Beatitude**

**Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for Righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.**

To help us understand this beatitude we first have to ask ourselves, what is meant by righteousness? And righteousness means being in complete accordance with what is just, honorable, and Godly. **Righteousness are those things that are upright, virtuous, noble, morally right, and ethical.** You could say that righteousness is a life style that is in complete conformity to the will of God. It is a lifestyle that Jesus not only finds pleasing, but one that he approves of.

Jesus Christ is the one leading the righteous person through life. It is Jesus who is making the decisions that the righteous person will follow. For the righteous believer, all his daily actions, everything that he thinks about, every decision that he makes, everything that he reads and looks at, will be done the same way that Our Lord would have done them. The true believer will know immediately whether something is right or wrong, just or unjust, godly or ungodly. How could the true believer not know that something is wrong when the Son of God is living within him?

Jesus Christ who is dwelling within the righteous person is **communicating constantly with the person's heart, conscience, soul, and spirit.** The Lord is not going to let the believer just wander into sin? Jesus Christ will be talking to the believer long before the sin is even thought about. And while this is going on the Holy Spirit will be hard at work doing his guiding and his warning. This is why when a righteous believer sins, it winds up being extremely painful, usually leaving the sinner with great sorrow. Sin for the righteous believer is never worth the pain and dishonor he knows that he has brought upon the Lord.

For the true believer, righteousness saturates every single aspect of his life. And every Godly believer knows that he has Jesus Christ living on the inside of him leading and guiding him. **Psalms 11:7** "For the Lord is righteous; He loves righteousness; And the upright will behold His face".

Hunger and thirst are appetites that return frequently and they require that they be met often during the day. Similarly the true believer calls for constant meals of righteousness to do his daily Godly work, just as the living body calls for its daily food. When a believer hungers and thirsts after righteousness he becomes a new man and this new man now bears the image of God. This new man greatly desires to do the will of God for he now has great interest in Christ and all that Christ said and promised.

To hunger and thirst after righteousness can only be perceived by persons spiritually enlightened, and who have our Lord Jesus Christ living and dwelling within them. This child of God not only has an earnest desire to fervently seek righteousness and thus lead a Godly life on a second to second basis, but he wants to be possessed by righteousness, he wants to constantly live in it, to be totally absorbed into it, to be completely saturated in righteousness, for he knows that this way of life is the Godly way of life. And a righteous life is what also fills the true believer with peace and joy. And because of their spiritual



enlightenment they realize that nothing can be more perfect, more pure, and more pleasing to Our Heavenly Father than living a life that he totally approves of.

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**The Fifth Beatitude**

**Blessed are the merciful,  
for they shall obtain mercy.**

**Mercy** is love toward those that are miserable, those that are wretched, and those that need some type of help or assistance.

**The merciful** are those that are tender hearted and who truly feel in the deepest parts of their beings the pain and the suffering of those who need mercy. But most importantly is the fact that the merciful are those special individuals **who go out of their way and make the effort to help**. Having compassion on the those that are in any way hurting is only the first part of having mercy. Doing something about it, is the all important second part.

We as believers must show mercy to all men and we are to do this by both sympathizing with them and by taking care and tending to their needs. And we must do this with readiness and gladness, with affection and tenderness, always ready to give and to forgive. Our Lord instructs us to show the same type of mercy to others that he shows to each of us. He talked much about showing mercy and a good example is found at **2 Corinthians 1:3-4** "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God".

Therefore, to be merciful as a Christian does not mean to perform isolated, occasional acts of charity. A Christian is to be habitually merciful, and all acts of mercy should be done in a thankful and cheerful manner. Just imagine how absolutely wonderful God would feel if in the act of being merciful he heard you say, "Praise be to you God for this opportunity that you have given me to help someone else in need. Thank you Father for letting me be of some assistance to another human being." So doing an act of mercy in a thankful and loving manner has to make God our Father just beam with joy.

The merciful are indeed those special people who love all men as themselves: The merciful truly believe that whatever mercy they desire from God, they in turn will show to all men everywhere. The merciful are the ones who realize that our Heavenly Father demands that we be merciful, and they also realize that our acts of mercy will be repaid a thousand fold. Mercy is extremely important to Jesus Christ and much of the Bible either directly or indirectly deals in some way with mercy and kindness shown to others.

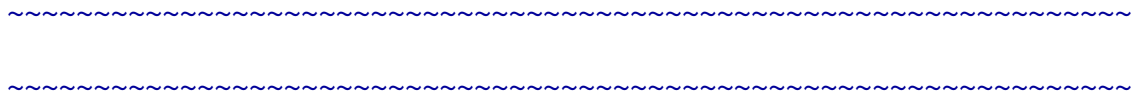
This beatitude is also very concerned with mercy through the act of daily forgiveness. Of forgiving offenses that have been inflicted upon you, and in which you show mercy towards everyone who wrongs you regardless of the reasons and regardless of the

circumstances. Our Lord demands that we forgive one another just as he is constantly forgiving you. **Matthew 6: 14-15** points this out so very clearly. "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses".

Many ask why should Christians be merciful? Well for one thing, God shows us mercy, not when we are good, but when we are miserable, helpless, wicked, ungodly, and powerless. He shows us mercy when we are his enemies and we are disobedient, unrighteous, dead in trespasses and sins, foolish, ignorant, suffering, and miserable due to the consequences of our sin. Yet God looks upon our misery and wretchedness and truly feels our pain and is very happy to extend his mercy to each of us. So instead of pouring out his just wrath upon us, he is compassionate toward us. He freely justifies us, forgives our sins, extends his mercy upon us, and fills us with his own righteousness. And that is one reason why we ought to be merciful every day to the miserable, the helpless, the wretched, and the needy.

Secondly, each one of us needs the mercy of God each and every day. We need to be aware that we are still miserable sinners, and because of that, we are still in need of God's mercy every single day. If we are honest and examine ourselves in the light of God's Word, then we will realize that indeed we do sin daily. And because we sin daily, we need God's forgiveness and mercy daily, and if God is willing to give us his mercy every day then we in turn should be happy to extend mercy to others also on a daily basis.

Another reason for having continuous mercy is that being merciful is a test of our Christianity. If you are not constantly being merciful then there is only one explanation. You have not understood the grace and the mercy of God and you are outside of Jesus Christ. We who have received God's rich mercy are merciful because the grace of God makes us that way.



**The Sixth Beatitude**  
**Blessed are the pure of heart,**  
**for they shall see God.**

**Psalms 119:9** "How can a believer keep his heart pure? By keeping it according to The word of God".

Out of the hearts of men come all kinds of evil things. Everything from evil thoughts and greed, to slander and arrogance. All these evil things come from the inside of man, from his heart, and this evil from the heart is what makes man unclean. Two very good examples of verses that show the evil of the heart are below.

**Mark 7:20-23** "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within the man, and



they defile the man."

**Jeremiah 17:9** "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked".

Therefore, one of the most important questions that we can ask is how can we be truly pure in our hearts and clean of filth and sin? How can we be pure in our imaginations, in our thoughts, in our words, in our decision making, and in our desires? How can we think what God thinks, will what God wills, desire what God desires, hate what God hates, and love what God loves? In other words how can our hearts be pure hearts, free from sins like pride and envy, free from evil thoughts and evil deeds?

The truth is we can't do any of these things on our own. We can't reform ourselves. We can't self clean ourselves. Many people have tried to clean themselves. Some have tried to do this through asceticism or leading a life of complete self denial, or by other methods such as by going away from the world and living in solitude, or permanent silence, or by beating their bodies with whips and clubs, even by inflicting upon themselves all forms of degrading and unpleasant acts, even going so far as castrating themselves. They have tried to cleanse themselves through celibacy, fasting, and prayers. But such asceticism is not biblical and it will not result in purity of heart.

So the first point we must be aware of is this.

**The path to a pure heart begins with the realization that we have impure hearts.** The entire Bible revolves around the central theme that the Lord looks at the heart of the person and not at their external appearance, their behavior, or their achievements. The Lord does not acclaim education, intellect, business success, or social position, as the world does.

And the second point we must be aware of is this.

**God must clean us.** God alone is able to make rotten people pure in their imaginations, thoughts, words, deeds, and desires. The pure in heart are those who are free from evil desires and evil purposes. So if God is the only one who can cleanse us, then how does he do it? Well the Bible tells us that God has a plan to deal with the problem of sin infected hearts. God has a plan to save us and make us holy in thought, word and deed. And the plan is found in many places such as in Romans 8:29. Here God tells us that he wants "to conform us to the image and likeness of His Son". Thus God's plan is to make us like his own Son, like Jesus Christ. His purpose is nothing less than that we be pure in heart just like Jesus Christ is.

How does God clean and purify us? First of all, when we become born again and we completely surrender ourselves to Jesus Christ and put our entire faith and trust in him, God will supernaturally regenerate us and give us a brand new nature, a new self. We become a brand new creation. He tells us what he is going to do to us at **Ezekiel 36:26-27**. "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **And I will put My Spirit within you**".

And this all happens the very moment when you are saved, because when you are born again you indeed become a brand new person. A brand new person who is walking arm and arm with Jesus Christ on a road to spiritual purity, spiritual growth, spiritual maturity, and spiritual strength.

The Bible tells us that once we are saved and become born again then we are no longer living our lives by ourselves. **Galatians 2:20** tells us, "It is no longer I that live, but it is Christ that is living in union with me". Now both you and Jesus are living your life together, and it is at this point that a number of very marvelous things occur. First of all you have a brand new spotless heart, one that is no longer saturated with sin. You also have Jesus Christ dwelling within you and you are united with Jesus Christ. You now believe fully and completely in our Lord Jesus Christ. You have also pledged your love, trust, and obedience to the Lord. And something else extremely important has occurred and that is the Holy Spirit has decided to move in and take up residence within you. The Holy Spirit is the one who's going to guide you and teach you and show you exactly what to do and how to do it, in order for you to become pure in heart. All the believer needs to do is constantly and continuously keep their focus on Jesus Christ.

This beatitude tells us if we are pure in heart then we will see God. The reward for this beatitude is truly marvelous because when the believer becomes pure in heart, not only will they see God as they pass into heaven immediately upon their death, **but they will see God right now**, not with their natural eye, but through their spiritual vision, through their faith in Jesus Christ. For the pure in heart will see God in all his glory in every single thing that they see. To the pure in heart, God will become extremely visible.



### **The Seventh Beatitude**

**Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they shall be called sons of God.**

The peacemakers are those children of God who not only have great love for God, but also have love for all of mankind and they attempt to do everything possible for the advancement of peace everywhere. The term "peacemakers" includes all who make peace between men, whether as individuals or as communities. **It includes even those who endeavor to make peace even though they fail.**

The peacemakers are those who have a peaceful disposition because to make peace is to have a strong and hearty affection for peace. It is to love, desire, and delight in peace. The peacemakers also want to preserve the peace and when the peace is broken, then the peacemakers have a great desire to recover it as quickly as possible. The peace that God bestows upon his believers is in turn shared by the believers with the rest of mankind, so that the peace-receivers are transformed into peace-givers. **Romans 14:19** tells us, "So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another".

One would imagine a person of this amiable temper and behavior and who strives for peace would be the darling of mankind. But our Lord well knew it would not be so, as long as Satan was the prince of this world. We must realize that not only is Satan a troublemaker, but all those who follow him are troublemakers. They all are enemies of God, opposing God in their thoughts, their wills, and their actions. The devil and his followers can be considered the true enemies of peace.

Many will tell you that the world's greatest need is for peace. But it appears that much of what man does today ends up in discord, dissension, and factions. Neighbors kill neighbors, complete strangers kill each other, brothers murder brothers, religious factions try to wipe each other out, tribes exterminate neighboring tribes, whole nations try to eradicate other nations, and on and on it goes. These horrible examples of hate all begin with the absence of love and having no desire for peace. And thus it seems as if hate in some form or another is the world's pastime and that peace is the last thing many people want. The children of this world love to fish in troubled waters, but the children of God are the peacemakers, they are the quiet in the land.

However peacemaking does not mean seeking peace at any cost, for the peacemaker realizes that peace at any price will usually end up in complete and total destruction. So a peacemaker is not an appeaser. He's not one who smiles a lot and doesn't take a position on anything. He is not one who has an easygoing personality and who is nice and flabby and can easily be shoved around. He's not a doormat. A peacemaker is one who through strength and Godly knowledge endeavors to establish a right relationship between estranged parties based on truth and righteousness.

The peacemakers realize that there is only one way that this world can have peace, and that is by trusting in Jesus Christ. What Jesus did on the cross was bring peace between not only God and man, but also between man and man. Christ's death tore the barrier of the veil at the entrance of the Holy of Holies from top to bottom and opened a way for us to have access to God, so that we can now come into the very presence of God and have peace with our Father. And when we are at peace with God, we will be at peace with all men.

By his death Jesus also destroyed another barrier, that dividing wall of hostility between man and his fellow man. **Ephesians 2:14** "For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall".

The reason we can love other people and have peace with them, including our enemies, is because Christ destroyed the hostility between man and man when he died on the cross. **Colossians 1:20** "And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross".



**The Eighth Beatitude**

**Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

In this beatitude Christ pronounces a blessing on those who are being persecuted. But the persecution that they are suffering is not for misdeeds or evil acts, their persecution is for doing righteousness.

No, not for any crimes they have done, and not for being unrighteous and committing the acts of those who practice evil such as murderers, thieves, and all other acts of wickedness, but on account of their righteous and Godly conversation and Godly actions which in turn brings upon them the hatred and enmity of the men of the world. For by living righteously the believers separate themselves from the world and profess themselves not to belong to the world. **The Godly life of true believers places a brand upon them that distinguishes them from the rest of the world.**

There is much evidence that proves that more Christians around the world have been martyred for their faith in this century alone, than in the combined previous nineteen centuries of the church's history. In many countries today it is a crime to be a Christian. If you live in the United States, you may think that the idea of persecution of Christians is not very relevant today. We are not experiencing any real persecution here in this country. But as you look around in this country, you can't help but see many great evil inroads that have been made into destroying anything having to do with Jesus Christ, the Bible, or the laws of God. The greatest assault against Christianity have been the many laws that have been passed recently, all with the idea of suppressing Christianity in all areas of society.

Persecution in the United States at this time, frequently comes verbally, via the tongue, usually in the form of cruel mockings and reproachful language, or by deeds such as confiscation of goods, banishment from a group, or even in the workplace where one may be fired, demoted, or spoken against because of one's Christian faith. In today's society to tell others that you are a born again Christian who has put his entire faith and trust in Jesus Christ, is to bring on smirks and laughs, rude and disgusting comments, and alienation and retaliation.

If you doubt this then tell a group of your friends what the Word of God says about the homosexual lifestyle, and that God says that it is horribly wrong, and then tell them what the Bible says is going to happen to those who engage in it. Or tell a few of your fellow workers what the Bible says about murdering unborn children and that God considers it nothing less than an abomination. Then observe the response from these friends and fellow workers. I think you will see most of the time the seeds of verbal persecution beginning to form.

But why is their such persecution in the world, and why is God so offensive to so many? Because the Word of God is a stumbling block to ungodly people. The unbelievers that don't know Jesus enjoy sinning, in fact they revel in it. They enjoy partaking in as many sins as possible. Sinning is what gives them pleasure. To sin is to enjoy life. The reason why ungodly men persecute Godly men, is because of the spirit that the creator has placed within each one of us. When the unbeliever sins, the Holy Spirit is convicting the spirit of that sinner and this causes the sinner to know that he is doing wrong and that his actions are against the laws of God.

Of course this is all foolishness to the non-believing unrepentant sinner, but still the unbelieving sinner feels guilty and doesn't like that feeling, so it is rather easy for him to lash out at the believers of God, blaming them for making him feel bad. That is why the things of God and the beliefs of God are constantly being ridiculed and made fun of. The

unbelievers are constantly attempting to destroy anything that has to do with God in a desperate attempt to do away with the source of their feeling bad. Throughout human history blaming someone else for their troubles has always been a very easy way out for a great many groups. So the sinner is an enemy of God and he is trying to fight back against God. And since the sinner can't get at God, he does the next best thing - he goes after those that follow God. Jesus told us in **John 3:20** that, "Everyone who does evil hates the light," and in **John 7:7** he declared, "The world hates me because I testify that what it does is evil." This can all be summed up by another verse in the Book of John. **John 15:20** "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."

The world hates Jesus because he is light, righteousness, and truth. They hate him because he reveals the wickedness of the people of the world, and they hate him because he exposes their evil. Jesus also told his disciples that they were his servants, and he told them just as he is telling us, that if the master is hated, then the servants of the master will also be hated. It's like someone who hates someone of a different race. Usually that person will also hate all others in that entire race. Or if a man hates his neighbor, he will usually also hate the man's wife and children. In fact it is sad to say but he will many times even hate those who come and visit that neighbor.

If you are not being persecuted, you should ask, "Why?" And the answer just may be that you are not living a Godly life. It is our Godly life that causes the other person to get heated up, upset, and unhappy. The truth is, everyone who lives a Godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. If no one is persecuting you, it is because you are not living the Christian life and shining as lights in the world.

In **Luke 6:26** Jesus said, "**Woe to you when all men speak well of you**, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets."

When the world applauds, appreciates, and commends you instead of persecuting you, you can pretty well figure that you are no longer a true prophet of the Lord. When the world chuckles right along with you and pats you on your back, you can pretty well deduce that you are, in fact, a false prophet who always speaks smooth things created from your own subjectivity without hearing from the Spirit of the living God. Sadly, if you have no persecution in your life then that is probably just another way of saying that **you have been absorbed into the world.**

It is very true that persecution is the cost of being a Christian, because the believer must reckon upon hardships and troubles much more than other men. At first glance persecution looks to be a truly horrible experience. But even though persecution usually isn't pleasant, it does have a great many rewarding advantages, for when persecution comes into our lives then we must conclude the following:

- That we have put our complete faith and trust in Jesus Christ.
- That we can truly call ourselves Christians.
- That we belong to the kingdom of God.
- That we are righteous.
- That we have been chosen by the Father and the Son.
- That ours is the kingdom of God now and in the future.
- That Jesus is truly our Lord and that is why we are being persecuted.
- That our salvation is sure and certain.

That we are not false prophets.  
That we are not worldly for the people of the world are not persecuted.  
That we are in the very good company with many other saved Christians.  
That we can know that we are truly born again.  
That eternal life is ours.

## A Reflection on the Beatitudes

by unknown

I came across this modern day 'Beatitudes' and thought that they would match up nicely with the original lesson taught to us by Our Lord during the Sermon on the Mount. The more detailed description of the 'blessed' is helpful I think, though the language is not as beautiful.

Matt. 5:1

When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him.

Matt. 5:2

He began to teach them, saying:

Matt. 5:3

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who are convinced of their basic dependency on God, whose lives are emptied of all that doesn't matter, those for whom the riches of this world just aren't that important. The kingdom of God is theirs.

Matt. 5:4

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Matt. 5:5

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are those who know that all they are is a gift from God, and so they can be content with their greatness and their smallness, knowing themselves and being true to themselves. For they shall have the earth for their heritage.



Matt. 5:6

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are those who wear compassion like a garment, those who have learned how to find themselves by losing themselves in another's sorrow. For they too shall be satisfied.

Matt. 5:7

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the merciful, those who remember how much has been forgiven them, and are able to extend this forgiveness into the lives of others. For they too shall receive God's mercy.

Matt. 5:8

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are those whose hearts are free and simple, those who have smashed all false images and are seeking honestly for truth. For they shall see God.

Matt. 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are the creators of peace, those who build roads that unite rather than walls that divide, those who bless the world with the healing power of their presence. For they shall be called sons and daughters of God.

Matt. 5:10

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those whose love has been tried, like gold, in the furnace and found to be precious, genuine and lasting, those who have lived their belief out loud, no matter what the cost or pain. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 5:11

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me.

Matt. 5:12

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

## ON THE BEATITUDES

**"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."**

"Poor in spirit" means to be humble. Humility is the realization that all your gifts and blessings come from the grace of God. To have poverty of spirit means to be completely empty and open to the Word of God. When we are an empty cup and devoid of pride, we are humble. Humility brings an openness and an inner peace, allowing one to do the will of God.

It is pride, the opposite of humility, that brings misery. For pride brings anger and the seeking of revenge, especially when one is offended. If every man were humble and poor in spirit, there would be no war!

**"Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted."**

Gregory of Nyssa taught that the Beatitudes built one upon another. Thus if we are humble and appreciate that all of our gifts and blessings come from God, we grow in love and gratitude for Jesus Christ our Savior. But this can only produce mourning and regret over our own sins and the sins of this world, for we have hurt the one who has been so good to us.

**"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."**

A person who is meek is gentle and kind, and exhibits a docility of spirit. Obedience and submission to the will of God are certainly not in vogue these days, but they will bring one peace in this world and in the next.

**"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."**

A continuous desire for justice and moral perfection will lead one to a fulfillment of that desire - a transition and conversion to holiness.

**"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."**

Love, compassion, and forgiveness towards one's neighbor will bring peace in your relationships. And your Heavenly Father will be merciful with you! Jesus reminds us that whatever "you did to the least of my brethren, you did it to me [Matthew 25:31-46]." Here are the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy:

### **The Corporal Works of Mercy**

- 1 Feed the Hungry
- 2 Give drink to the thirsty
- 3 Clothe the naked

- 4 Shelter the homeless
- 5 Comfort the imprisoned
- 6 Visit the sick
- 7 Bury the dead

### **The Spiritual Works of Mercy**

- 1 Admonish sinners
- 2 Instruct the uninformed
- 3 Counsel the doubtful
- 4 Comfort the sorrowful
- 5 Be patient with those in error
- 6 Forgive offenses
- 7 Pray for the living and the dead

### **"Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."**

To be pure of heart means to be free of all selfish intentions and self-seeking desires. What a beautiful goal! How many times have any of us performed an act perfectly free of any personal gain? But an act of pure and selfless giving brings happiness to all.

### **"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."**

Peacemakers not only live peaceful lives but also try to bring peace and friendship to others, and to preserve peace between God and man. Gregory of Nyssa pointed out that by imitating God's love of man, the peacemakers become children of God.

### **"Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."**

Jesus said many times that those who follow Him will be persecuted. "If they persecute me, they will persecute you [John 15:20-21]." But the Lord promises his disciples that their reward will be the Kingdom of Heaven!

### **Questions to answer:**

1. How can living the Beatitudes bring happiness?
2. Which beatitude do you believe is the most essential for the world to practice? Why?
3. Which beatitude is the most difficult for you to practice? Why?