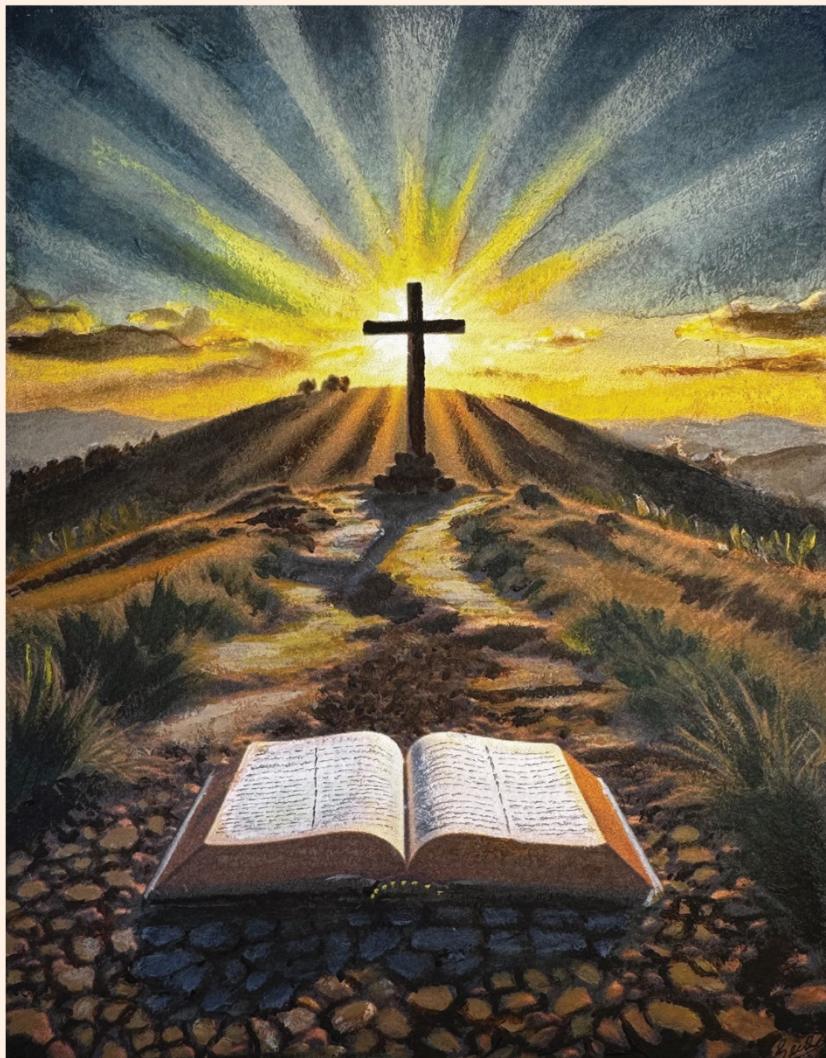


# The Beatitudes

Pursuing the Counter-Cultural Life  
Jesus Lived to Perfection



Ram Krishnamurthy

# THE BEATITUDES

*Pursuing the Countercultural Life  
Jesus Lived to Perfection*

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## **The Beatitudes**

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To The Only God and Savior Jesus Christ, who not only spoke the Beatitudes and lived them to perfection, but also issues this loving call:

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

—Matthew 11:28-30

## *The Valley of Vision*

LORD, HIGH AND HOLY, MEEK AND LOWLY,

Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision,  
where I live in the depths but see thee in the heights; hemmed in by mountains of sin  
I behold thy glory.

Let me learn by paradox

that the way down is the way up,  
that to be low is to be high,  
that the broken heart is the healed heart,  
that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,  
that the repenting soul is the victorious soul,  
that to have nothing is to possess all, that to bear the cross is to wear the crown,  
that to give is to receive,  
that the valley is the place of vision.

Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells, and the deeper the wells the  
brighter thy stars shine;

Let me find thy light in my darkness,  
thy life in my death,  
thy joy in my sorrow,  
thy grace in my sin,  
thy riches in my poverty  
thy glory in my valley.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Bennet, *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions*, Banner of Truth Trust, 1988, pp. xxiv.

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## Why This Book and Why Now?

Every generation faces its own challenges in following Jesus. For believers today, one of the greatest such challenges is the subtle—and sometimes not so subtle but always constant—pressure to conform to the world’s values rather than live out the values of God’s Kingdom. Yet this tension isn’t new. Throughout history, voices have risen that openly opposed the way of Christ.

One of the most well-known came in 1888, when the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche published a provocative and anti-Christian work creatively titled *The Anti-Christ*. In it, he asks and answers questions such as this:

- Question: “What is more harmful than any vice?”
- Answer: “Active sympathy for the ill-constituted and weak—Christianity.”

Nietzsche defined good as “all that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man,” and he defined bad as “all that proceeds from weakness.”<sup>2</sup> To him, strength, dominance, and the thirst for power were true virtues, while humility, compassion, and meekness were marks of weakness and failure.

Sadly, many in our modern world still echo Nietzsche’s thinking. Today’s culture prizes self-sufficiency, personal power, self-expression, and self-fulfillment, while weakness is avoided and humility dismissed as failure.

But then Jesus turned everything upside down in the opening words of perhaps the most famous sermon He preached—often called the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew chapters 5 through 7.

In these stunning words—known as the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12)—Jesus emphatically declares that it is *not* the proud, the powerful, or the self-sufficient who are blessed but rather the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, and the persecuted. In doing so, He calls

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<sup>2</sup> Douglas Sean O’Donnell, *Matthew: All Authority in Heaven and on Earth*, Preaching the Word Commentary Series.

us to a radically *countercultural* lifestyle, one that clashes with the values of the world and redefines what it means to be truly blessed.

In light of this, rather than absorbing the values of this world, Jesus calls us to stand apart and to reflect His character, His humility, and His heart in a world that prizes the opposite. That's what the Beatitudes are all about. They're not just high ideals or moral goals. They are the heart attitudes that shape the everyday lives of all who belong to His kingdom. They are the defining marks of a true disciple of Jesus, attributes that are shaped by grace and transformed by the Holy Spirit.

This book is written to remind us what it truly means to follow Jesus in a world that increasingly and relentlessly presses us into its mold. It's for such a time as this—a call to live the countercultural life Jesus invites us to pursue.

This book will help us slow down and truly listen to what Jesus says in Matthew 5:3-12, not just with our minds but with our hearts. It calls us to not rush past these “Blessed are” statements, but to sit with them, wrestle with them, and by God's grace, allow them to reshape the way you think, love, and live.

Each chapter focuses on one of the eight Beatitudes. Along the way, we'll explore how these countercultural attitudes challenge the assumptions of our world and reveal the kind of life that leads to true blessing both in eternity and here and now.

At the end of each chapter, you'll find:

- Discussion questions (a shorter and longer version) to help you apply what you've read.
- A Scripture verse for meditation and memorization.
- A short list of hymns and songs to help you praise God in response.

This book is intentionally written to be adaptable for various uses. You can use it for personal devotions, small group studies, and one-on-one discipleship. Pastors may also find it useful when preaching through the Beatitudes.

You can also share this book with someone who is not yet a Christian but who is open to exploring faith. And if that's you, I'm especially glad you're reading. My prayer is that this study helps you see both the beauty of the life Jesus calls you to and the impossibility of living it in your own strength.

As you study this book, I hope you will see how only Jesus lived this way perfectly. That's why He invites you not only to imitate Him but also, first and foremost, to trust Him by turning from your own sinful way of living and surrendering your life to Him in repentance and faith.

*But you don't have to wait till the end of this book to respond to Jesus' loving invitation. Even now, you can come as you are, in faith. You can experience the true forgiveness He offers for all your sins through His death and His glorious resurrection.*

You too can begin to pursue this countercultural life through the powerful working of the Holy Spirit, who comes to live within all who truly come to Jesus on His terms: in sincere repentance and faith.

And whether you are exploring faith for the first time or have followed Jesus for many years, the heart that pleases Him is the same: a humble, dependent heart that longs to live as He lived.

You don't need to be a scholar or a spiritual giant to benefit from this book. All you need is a heart that simply says, *"Lord Jesus, I want to live like You."* My prayer is that these pages would awaken that desire more deeply within you, and that as you journey through the Beatitudes, you would not only understand them more clearly but live them more intentionally through the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you. And above all, may your love for Jesus grow richer and stronger with every step.

As we turn the page and prepare to walk through each Beatitude, let's first pause to reflect on a few key truths that will help us approach these words of Jesus with understanding and humility.

*Please note:* This book is not copyrighted. No author credit is needed. You're welcome to use, adapt, or share its contents freely—however the Lord leads you.

May the Lord use it as He sees fit to build His Kingdom, bless His people, and draw many hearts closer to Him.

For His glory and your joy,

*Ram Krishnamurthy*

## INTRODUCTION

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# Approaching the Beatitudes—A Few Key Truths to Consider

**B**efore we consider several key truths for interpreting the Beatitudes, it may help us to read Jesus' words afresh once more, slowly and attentively, to hear their life-changing call.

## The Life-Changing Words of Jesus — Matthew 5:3-12

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

<sup>4</sup>Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.

<sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.

<sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.

<sup>10</sup>Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

<sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

These are not merely poetic words. They are the powerful, life-transforming voice of our Savior. They are words of blessing spoken to those who seek to live by the values of His Kingdom.

## A Foundational Truth to Remember

At the very outset, it's vital to grasp these foundational truths:

- The Beatitudes are not given to describe *how* to earn salvation.
- They describe the lifestyle of those *already saved* by God's grace.

The Bible clearly affirms that we are saved only by grace and through faith in Jesus Christ.

*Ephesians 2:8-10 – For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*

*Titus 3:5-6 – He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.*

If salvation is something we could earn, then Jesus' death on the cross would have been unnecessary. It would deny the clear testimony of Scripture that salvation comes only through faith in Christ.

*Acts 4:12 – Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.*

From Genesis onward, the Bible consistently declares that sinners are saved by faith through the shed blood of a substitute—ultimately pointing to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18–19).<sup>3</sup>

So no, the Beatitudes don't teach the way of salvation.

However, the Bible also repeatedly declares that those who are truly saved by grace through faith will *inevitably* live changed lives.

*Matthew 3:12 – Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.*

*Ephesians 2:10 – For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Those who have been granted new hearts will increasingly display new attitudes. These new attitudes represent an inner change that overflows in outward behavior. True

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<sup>3</sup> See also Genesis 15:6, Romans 3:25-26, and Hebrews 9:11-14, 22; 10:1-4, 10-12 to name a few.

godliness on the inside produces godly character on the outside. Changed hearts inevitably lead to changed lives.

That's where these Beatitudes come in. According to Jesus, those who belong to Him will be marked by a growing transformation in their heart attitudes—evidenced in the way they live.

Of course, we will never live out the Beatitudes perfectly. Only Jesus did. And in His perfection we rest. Even on our best days, we stumble and fall. Yet, when we fail (and sadly, we often do), Jesus invites us to return to Him in repentance, receive His cleansing, and continue running the race—by His grace.

**1 John 1:9** – *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

## The Beatitudes as Mirror and Motivation

It may help to think of the Beatitudes as both a *mirror* and a *motivation*.

As a *mirror*, they show us the reality of our hearts. They help us examine whether our faith is genuine or whether we've deceived ourselves into thinking we follow Jesus when we do not.

Jesus Himself warned at the end of the Sermon on the Mount:

**Matthew 7:21** – *Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

As a *motivation*, they call us to lovingly pursue a lifestyle fueled by grace that reflects the growing likeness of our Savior. They remind us that while perfection is impossible, the *direction* of our lives will increasingly show a deepening desire to live as Jesus describes, reflecting the heart of those who truly belong to Him.

As the late Bible teacher Haddon Robinson insightfully observed:

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*God is more interested in the process than the pinnacle itself. Going after the goal becomes its own reward.<sup>4</sup>*

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Understanding this foundational truth keeps us from turning the Beatitudes into a checklist of works. Instead, they become a portrait of grace at work in the believer's life.

So let's remember: The Beatitudes are not a *prescription* for earning salvation but a *description* of those already transformed by God's grace.

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<sup>4</sup> Robinson, Haddon. *What Jesus Said About Successful Living* (Function). Kindle Edition.

They describe the *fruit*, not the *root*, of our salvation. They offer us a vision of what true success looks like in the Kingdom of God. They reveal the very heart of Jesus, who embodied each one perfectly. And they call us to a *countercultural* way of life that aligns us with God's purposes rather than the world's.

Having seen what the Beatitudes are—and what they are not—let's now look at how Jesus structured them. Each follows a distinct three-part pattern of blessing, character, and reward.

## The Structure of the Beatitudes

It's been said that the Beatitudes are the "Beautiful Attitudes" that reflect the heart of a true disciple. There are *eight* in total. (While verses 10–12 use the word "blessed" twice, they describe one central idea: enduring persecution for righteousness' sake.)

Each of the Beatitudes follows the same three-part pattern:

1. A *Blessing*—"Blessed are..."
2. A *Character Trait*—"the poor in spirit," "those who mourn," and so on.
3. A *Reward or Promise*—"for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," "for they will be comforted," and so on.

This is not a random list of virtues. Together, they form a spiritual progression. The first Beatitude begins with humility, recognizing our deep need for God (*poor in spirit*), and the final one ends with persecution for righteousness' sake, a natural outcome when we live out these Kingdom values.

In other words, the Beatitudes trace the journey of a growing disciple from humility *before* God to boldness *for* God.

Having seen the structure of the Beatitudes, let's look at what Jesus meant by the terms "*blessed*" and "*Kingdom of Heaven*."

## The Meaning of "Blessed"

The word *blessed* comes from the Latin *beatus*—from which we get *Beatitudes*. The Greek word used by Matthew is *makarios*, a term that has led some to call these sayings of Jesus "macarisms," meaning "declarations of blessing."

Most English translations render *makarios* as "*blessed*," though some use "*happy*."<sup>5</sup> While not necessarily wrong, "*happy*" may tend to miss the depth of what Jesus is saying.

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<sup>5</sup> Examples would be the Christian Standard Bible, 2017 edition, Good News Translation (Today's English Version), 1992 edition.

New Testament scholar D. A. Carson—among many who prefer the term *blessed*—explains why it is the better translation:

*Those who are blessed will generally be profoundly happy; but blessedness cannot be reduced to happiness...To be “blessed” means, fundamentally, to be approved, to find approval. When God blesses man, he is approving man...Since this is God’s universe there can be no higher “blessing” than to be approved by God.*

Carson then adds this searching question:

*We must ask ourselves whose blessing we diligently seek. If God’s blessing means more to us than the approval of loved ones no matter how cherished, or of colleagues no matter how influential, then the Beatitudes will speak to us very personally and deeply.<sup>6</sup>*

In addition to Carson’s insight, there are at least two more reasons to prefer *blessed* over *happy*:

1. “Blessed” points to divine approval, not human emotion. Happiness, especially in our culture, is typically understood as a subjective feeling, while Jesus is making an objective declaration: God Himself approves of and delights in those who embody these heart attitudes.
2. “Blessed” is grounded in divine purpose, not changing circumstances. Happiness often depends on outward conditions, but biblical blessing flows from God’s promise to those who display the attitudes He values.

These blessings are not random; each corresponds to a particular character trait: only the mourners are promised comfort and only the merciful receive mercy. The blessing is “always correlated with the character.”<sup>7</sup>

So, for these reasons, this book uses the word *blessed* throughout. But whether you think of it as *blessed*, *fortunate*, or *joyful*, the heart of Jesus’ teaching remains the same: God’s approval and favor rest upon those who live according to the values of His Kingdom.

Having seen what it means to be truly *blessed*, it’s worth pausing to understand another key phrase that frames these Beatitudes: “the kingdom of heaven.”

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<sup>6</sup> Carson, D. A.. Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World: A Study of Matthew 5-10 (p. 19). (Function). Kindle Edition.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

## A Brief Explanation Concerning the Kingdom of Heaven

Notice that Jesus begins and ends the Beatitudes with the same promise: “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (vv. 3, 10). This repeated phrase acts as bookends—an *inclusio*—a literary device that frames a passage by repeating a key phrase at the beginning and end.

This repetition is significant because it highlights a central truth:

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*The Kingdom of Heaven is the heart of this entire passage.*

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### *Future Blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven*

The Kingdom of Heaven Jesus refers to here is primarily *future*—post-consummation<sup>8</sup>—at the renewal of all things, when He returns in glory as the Sovereign Ruler of all creation. While many passages in the Bible point to this reality, a few key examples include Daniel 7:13-14, Matthew 24:29-31, 2 Peter 3:10-13, Revelation 20:4-6, and Revelation 21:1-4.

### *Present Blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven*

However, Jesus also uses the present tense—“is”—in the phrase, “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This may indicate that He is also referring to the *present* spiritual blessings experienced by believers living under His rule. These blessings include forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13-14) and freedom from sin’s power (John 8:36; Romans 6:17-18, 22).

*(Note: The scope of this book does not allow for an in-depth discussion of every issue related to the Kingdom of Heaven. My purpose here is simply to remind and encourage readers to faithfully pursue the Beatitude way of life—no matter the cost—trusting that when King Jesus returns to establish His sovereign rule over all the earth, every sacrifice made in obedience to Him will prove eternally worthwhile.)*

## Summary and Encouragement

In this chapter, we’ve laid a foundation for understanding the Beatitudes.

- We’ve seen that they describe the lifestyle of those already saved by God’s grace, not a way to earn salvation.
- We explored the intentional three-part structure of blessing, character trait, and promise.
- We reflected on the deeper meaning of *blessed* as God’s approval rather than mere happiness.

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<sup>8</sup> D.A. Carson, *Matthew*, Revised Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Kindle edition.

- And we recognized the central focus on the Kingdom of Heaven, which frames these truths and calls us to live as citizens of that Kingdom today.

May the Lord use this study, not simply to help us admire these qualities, but to *pursue them*—not in our own strength, but through the power of the Spirit of Christ living within us.

*“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”* May that be the reward we long for the most.

## Discussion Questions

### 1. *A Foundational Truth to Remember*

The Beatitudes are not a way to earn salvation but a description of the life produced by God’s grace.

- How does this truth protect us from both pride and despair in our Christian walk?
- In what ways does understanding grace motivate genuine obedience rather than complacency?

### 2. *The Beatitudes as a Mirror and a Motivation*

Jesus’ words both reveal and inspire.

- How have the Beatitudes acted as a *mirror* in your own life, showing areas where God is still shaping your heart?
- How can they serve as *motivation* to pursue Christ-like attitudes day by day?

### 3. *The Structure of the Beatitudes*

Each Beatitude follows a pattern of blessing, character trait, and reward.

- How does this pattern help you understand that the Christian life is both inward and outward, a transformation of heart that bears visible fruit?
- Which of the eight Beatitudes do you find most challenging to live out and why?

### 4. *The Meaning of “Blessed”*

Jesus’ use of *blessed* speaks of God’s approval rather than fleeting happiness.

- How does this definition reshape your understanding of what it means to live a successful or meaningful life?
- What are some common ways our culture defines “blessing,” and how do those differ from Jesus’ definition?

**5. *The Kingdom of Heaven: Future and Present Blessings.***

The Kingdom of Heaven is both a *future reality* (when Christ reigns in glory) and a *present reality* (experienced by believers under His rule today).

- How does this dual perspective encourage you to live faithfully now while waiting for Christ's return?
- What present blessings of the Kingdom (such as forgiveness or freedom from sin's power) are you most grateful for in this season?

**6. *Closing Reflection: Living the Beatitude Way.***

The chapter ends with the reminder that every sacrifice made in obedience to Him will prove eternally worthwhile.

- How can keeping an eternal perspective help you persevere when obedience is costly?
- What might faithfulness to the Beatitude way of life look like in your relationships, work, or ministry today?

## Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit

*Matthew 5:3 – Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

### Our Spiritual Condition Before God

**B**ankruptcy. Simply hearing that word can evoke feelings of failure, shame, and embarrassment. It means you couldn't pay your debts, and let's be honest, no one (at least not in their right mind) goes around bragging about filing for bankruptcy.

And when that word is used in the moral sense, it carries an even deeper stigma. To say a person is morally bankrupt is to say they are utterly devoid of decency. It's one of the strongest condemnations you can make, like comparing someone to history's most evil figures.<sup>9</sup>

And yet, the Bible declares that this is precisely our moral condition before a holy God! The Apostle Paul, quoting several Old Testament passages<sup>10</sup> writes:

*Romans 3:10-12 – As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

No one righteous, no one who understands, no one who seeks God, all have turned away, have together become worthless, no one does good, not even one—that's how a holy God sees all of us in our natural, unredeemed condition.

### A Picture of Sin's Grip

Henry White, a 19th-century minister in East London, was called to pray over a dying thief. The man, barely forty, had minutes to live. As Henry knelt by his bed to share the

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<sup>9</sup> Adapted with changes from Jerry Bridges' book, *Transforming Grace* (Kindle edition).

<sup>10</sup> Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20.

gospel and pray, he noticed the thief's eyes fixed, not on heaven, but on the minister's gold watch chain.

The minister still prayed earnestly as the thief's wife wept nearby.

When he rose, the man was dead, his lifeless hand clinging to the gold watch chain. In his final moments, with eternity before him, even as the minister was praying to God to forgive him of his sins, the thief reached, not for mercy, but for gold. The grip of sin held tighter than the hope of grace. That's the power of sin!<sup>11</sup>

None righteous, not even one! Left to ourselves, we, who by nature are slaves to sin, don't have the spiritual resources to get right with God. We are all spiritually bankrupt with nothing good to offer. In our fallen condition, even our "righteous acts," Isaiah says, are like "filthy rags"<sup>12</sup> before a holy God (Isaiah 64:6). If that's how God sees our best efforts, how much more serious must our sins—both in our thoughts and actions—appear to Him?

The truth is, we all carry an enormous debt of sin that we could never repay. In every aspect, we stand as spiritual failures!

### **The First Beatitude: A Shocking Declaration**

And it is to such people held by sin's powerful grip that Jesus opens His magnificent sermon with a stunning declaration: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5:3). In a world that prizes strength, self-sufficiency, and pride, Jesus' words here is a radical declaration that runs countercultural to the world's view. It goes entirely against the grain of the world's thinking. Yet, that's what Jesus declares in this verse.

### **What Does It Mean to Be "Poor in Spirit"?**

The word for "poor"<sup>13</sup> used here referred to someone completely destitute, who had *no* material resources whatsoever and, as a result, was utterly dependent upon someone else for basic survival. It's the image of a beggar with his head covered, crouching with his face close to the ground, ashamed even to look up, yet stretching his hand upward in desperation.

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<sup>11</sup> Adapted with changes from Ron Prosise, *Preaching Illustrations from Church History* (pp. 202-203)

<sup>12</sup> The term "filthy rags" used here refers to a garment stained by menstruation (see NASB 1995 footnote). The term highlights the idea of impurity and the ineffectiveness of human righteousness in the sight of God.

<sup>13</sup> This same word for "poor" was used to describe the beggar, Lazarus, in Luke 16 and verse 19, who lived at the gate of a rich man, utterly destitute and completely dependent on the leftovers from the rich man's table.

But Jesus adds a crucial qualifier: “in spirit.” That makes it clear that He’s not talking about material poverty but spiritual poverty—a complete lack of spiritual merit or strength (see Revelation 3:17-18). Both the materially rich and the poor are *equally* spiritually bankrupt apart from Christ. Both utterly lack the resources to live a life acceptable to God. The need for both is to recognize this truth and turn to Jesus who alone can provide what they need: a right standing before God, having all their sins forgiven.

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*But There is Good News for the  
Spiritually Bankrupt.*

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The Bible describes salvation—the forgiveness of sins—as a free gift from God, not a reward for good deeds as no one is perfectly righteous (Romans 3:10-12). It is God’s grace—His undeserved favor—freely given to those He awakens to see their true condition. By His grace, they recognize they have no way to earn His approval. Forgiveness comes only as they turn to Jesus in humility and repentance, turning away from sin and trusting wholly in Him.

It means believing that Jesus lived the perfect life we couldn’t, died in our place to bear God’s wrath for our sins, and rose again to prove His sacrifice was accepted. This is the heart of the gospel, the good news for those who are spiritually bankrupt. Only by faith in Jesus can we be forgiven.<sup>14</sup>

So, to be poor in spirit is to say, in full conviction, something along these lines:

*Lord, I have nothing in me that can meet Your standard. I can’t live the life You’ve called me to on my own strength. I need You completely. Without You, I am nothing—I am spiritually bankrupt.*

*I believe You lived the life I could never live, died in my place for my sins, and rose again. I turn from my sinful ways and trust in You alone for the forgiveness of my sins. Please have mercy on me and save me.*

Admitting our spiritual poverty and total dependence on Jesus may seem radically countercultural. Yet, according to Jesus, *only* those who embrace this posture of humility are truly blessed.

### **Poverty of Spirit: A Parable from Jesus**

One of the clearest illustrations of being poor in spirit—the attitude of those who inherit the Kingdom—comes through a parable Jesus Himself told, often called the *Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector* (Luke 18:9-14).

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<sup>14</sup> Romans 3:23; 4:25; 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 1 Peter 2:24

The self-righteous Pharisee was so proud of his own spiritual achievements that he was utterly blind to the fact that he was a sinner in need of forgiveness. Notice how he prayed, or rather “informed,” God about his spiritual achievements: “God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get” (vv. 11-12).

One can plainly see the spiritual pride that comes from doing a few outwardly good things, the pride that leads to utter spiritual blindness, preventing the Pharisee from seeing himself as spiritually bankrupt.

On the other hand, the tax collector saw nothing but his sins against a holy God and, as a result, kept beating his chest and crying out, “God, have mercy on me, *the sinner*” (Luke 18:13, NASB). He didn’t try to negotiate or present credentials; he just kept begging.

And Jesus emphatically declared that it was the repentant tax-collector who embodied the truth of what it truly means to be poor in spirit and not the self-righteous Pharisee who went home that day *thinking* he was justified before God. Jesus said, “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted” (Luke 18:14). This is what it means to be poor in spirit! That’s what it means to go home justified!

Imagine this today: One person standing proud in the pulpit, boasting of spiritual strength. Another broken in the back pew, quietly begging for mercy. *Who is truly blessed?*

The point is clear: As long as we proudly think we are spiritually sufficient and have what it takes to be right with God, we won’t turn to Jesus for forgiveness or receive eternal life. But when, by God’s grace, we recognize our spiritual emptiness, we will, in humility, turn to Christ and find forgiveness, eternal life, and a place in God’s Kingdom.

### **Poverty of Spirit Is Not a One-Time Event—But an Everyday Posture**

Now, this heart posture of spiritual poverty doesn’t stop with conversion. Jesus says, “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit.” Not “*were*.” That means poverty of spirit is not just the entry point into the Kingdom; it must be the *lifestyle* of those who have entered it!

Even after conversion, we cannot live the Christian life in our own strength. Jesus Himself said, “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). We are to continually depend on Him for strength, guidance, and grace. The same humble and dependent spirit that led us to Christ at conversion must define our daily walk with Him.

Sadly, we often fail in this area. We’re like the kid who learns to ride with training wheels but hastily removes them, thinking he’s “got it.” Too often, we believe we’ve “got this” and try to live without God’s help—only to crash badly, not to mention grieve the Lord in the process and stir up His displeasure!

The story of King Asa in the Old Testament illustrates this aptly. Asa began well by doing “what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD” (2 Chronicles 14:2). When outnumbered against a foreign army, he turned to the Lord in prayer: “Help us, LORD our God, for we rely on you” (v. 11). And God granted him victory: “the LORD struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah” (v. 12).

But later when threatened by another army, he relied on human alliances instead of God (2 Chronicles 16:1-9). As a result, the LORD rebuked him, “Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the LORD...you have done a foolish thing...For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are *fully* committed to him” (vv. 7-9).

Asa's story warns us that past faithfulness doesn't automatically guard us from relying on our own strength in the future. It teaches us that even seasoned believers must stay watchful, continually depending on the Lord. We never outgrow our need for Jesus. There will *never* come a time when we don't *need* Him—a time when we are self-sufficient and have all it takes to live the Christian life. We will *always* be needy people—those who *continually* need Jesus!

### **Poverty of Spirit—A Mark of True Believers**

Jesus isn't just describing a virtue here; He's describing a mark of true believers. The Kingdom belongs to the poor in spirit, and to them alone. The last part of this verse, “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” could be better translated as, “for theirs and *theirs alone* is the kingdom of heaven.”

And this blessing has a *present* dimension (theirs *is* the Kingdom of Heaven) and a *future* dimension (when Jesus returns to establish God's Kingdom in fullness). True believers—marked by a continual poverty of spirit—can *now* enjoy the blessing of eternal life and walking with Jesus under His rule through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Yet an even greater fulfillment awaits when King Jesus returns in glory to establish the Kingdom defined by righteousness, peace, and joy.<sup>15</sup>

So, to be poor in spirit is to live with the daily awareness that we bring nothing. Christ brings everything. We come to Him empty. In that emptiness, we are blessed, not by the world's standards, but by heaven's. He fills us. We receive the Kingdom we could never earn. We receive Christ Himself. Even now, we can live with the deep assurance that we belong to Him, echoing the words of the old hymn: “I am His, and He is mine.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See “A Brief Explanation Concerning the Kingdom of Heaven” in the Introduction section of this book.

<sup>16</sup> George Wade Robinson, *Loved With Everlasting Love*.

## How Can We Cultivate Poverty of Spirit?

So, how can we cultivate this “poor in spirit” mindset in our daily lives? Here are 4 ways:

### 1. *Cultivate a Life of Diligent Prayer*

Prayer is a tangible expression of our poverty of spirit. It is how we acknowledge our need for God in temptation, struggle, and every moment of life. The more we pray, the more aware we become of our sinfulness and deep dependence, which in turn drives us back to Him in humble and heartfelt confession.

As J.C. Ryle pointedly said:

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*A praying Master can have no  
prayerless servants.<sup>17</sup>*

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A prayerful life is the foundation of a heart that recognizes its spiritual poverty. As someone once said, and rightly so, “*All our failures are prayer failures.*”<sup>18</sup>

Let prayer, then, be our first response, not our last resort.

### 2. *Obey God’s Will Above All*

A young boy was once asked by his teacher at school if his obedience was motivated by fear of his father. The boy quietly replied, “It’s not because I’m afraid of punishment. It’s not even because I’m scared of getting caught. I obey because I *love* my dad. I don’t want to hurt him.”

Like that boy, we must also obey God, not merely out of fear of duty, but out of *love* for Him. Even when obedience is costly, love makes it willing. We can trust that God’s will and His ways are always for our good and for His glory.

### 3. *Reject Self-Exalting Thoughts*

Pride begins in the mind. Self-glory, the craving for recognition, and boasting in achievements all spring from self-exalting thoughts. Scripture warns us: “The LORD detests all the proud of heart” (Proverbs 16:5) and again, “Those who exalt themselves will be humbled” (Luke 14:11a).

In contrast, the poor in spirit take to heart Jeremiah’s warning to Baruch, his secretary, “Should you then seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them.” They echo the humility of John the Baptist, who declared of Jesus, “He must become greater and greater,

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<sup>17</sup> J.C. Ryle, from his sermon titled, “A Praying Savior,” <https://www.jcryle.info/2015/10/a-praying-savior-by-j.html> (last accessed on May 3, 2025).

<sup>18</sup> John R. Rice as quoted here: <https://enjoyingthejourney.org/my-favorite-prayer-quotes/> (last accessed on October 30, 2025)

and I must become less and less" (John 3:34, NLT). They understand that everything they have is a gift (1 Corinthians 4:7). And they trust in Jesus' promise: "Those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Luke 14:11b).

Poverty of spirit and pride cannot grow simultaneously in the same soil—only one will thrive! So, let us actively resist pride by renewing our minds through God's Word (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 6:17) and by relying on the Holy Spirit to put to death every thought that exalts self (Romans 8:13).

#### ***4. See Trials as Opportunities to Depend on God***

Trials, though painful, are often God's tool to deepen our dependence on Him. Paul wrote of his intense suffering, saying, "This happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:8-9). Even his "thorn in the flesh" drew him to deeper prayer and greater reliance on Christ (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

Those who are poor in spirit learn to view trials, not as punishments, but as God's gracious means of teaching us to lean more fully on Him, the One who has promised never to leave or forsake us and who walks with us even through the darkest valleys (Hebrews 13:5; Psalm 23:4).

### **Jesus: The Perfect Example of Poverty of Spirit**

Now, to keep us from falling into despair or drawing a wrong conclusion, we must remember this: none of us can live out this Beatitude—or any of the Beatitudes—perfectly. Only Jesus did, the very One who spoke them!

However, when we speak of Jesus as the perfect example of being "poor in spirit," we must remember that His poverty of spirit was not the result of sin or spiritual bankruptcy, as it is with us. He was—and is—completely sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). His poverty of spirit was the voluntary posture of perfect humility and total dependence upon the Father. Though He was equal with God, He did not cling to His divine privileges but "took the humble position of a slave" (Philippians 2:7, NLT).

And this humility marked His entire life. He prayed constantly (Hebrews 5:7), obeyed fully (John 6:38; Matthew 26:39b, 42b), and endured every trial steadfastly, even when it led Him to the cross. In Jesus, we see what true spiritual poverty looks like: not false humility or weakness, but the strength of complete surrender to the Father's will (John 5:19).

That's why our acceptance before God rests *not* on our performance but on Jesus' perfection. It is only through Him that we are made right with God. And by His Spirit, Jesus continues to transform us from the inside out, making us more like Himself (2 Corinthians 3:18).

## Embrace the Countercultural Path

The world prizes pride, power, and self-sufficiency. Jesus, however, values weakness, dependence, and humility. He smiles upon all who, without shame and despite their shortcomings, lift empty hands and continually cry out, *"Lord, I need You. I can't make it without You. Help me."*

And He promises to such as these—those who live this counterculture life—these sweet and comforting words:

*Blessed indeed are you who are poor in spirit...you who are utterly dependent on Me for everything...for yours, and yours alone, is the Kingdom of Heaven—a place of eternal peace and joy!*

Tragically, others will one day hear the same Jesus say these chilling words on Judgment Day:

*Cursed are you who are proud in spirit...you who think you have what it takes to reach heaven on your own ... you who chase after the pleasures of this world ... for yours, and yours alone is the kingdom of darkness—a place of eternal suffering and torment.*

The stakes are eternal—heaven or hell, joy or judgment. *What will you choose?*

Dear Reader: Perhaps you're carrying a heavy burden, hidden sins, guilt, a deep ache in your soul. As you've read this chapter, perhaps the Holy Spirit has stirred within you a longing to be made right with God. Please don't suppress that prompting.

Find a quiet place. Come just as you are. Speak honestly with God. Confess your sin. Admit your need. Acknowledge that your own goodness won't save you—only Jesus can. His mercy is greater than your deepest sins. He died for all sins and rose again to offer forgiveness and new life to all who are willing to turn from their sins and trust Him alone.

The peace you crave can only be found at the cross, where mercy flows freely, and the precious blood of Jesus washes away every sin and guilt. God's Word promises:

*Romans 10:13 – Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

So call out to Jesus without delay. Turn from your sins and turn to Him. Receive the forgiveness He alone can offer. Rest in His grace for the rest of your life.

That's true greatness in His eyes!

## A Word to the Weary Believer

If you already belong to Christ but have wandered or feel weighed down by sin, guilt, or spiritual weariness, come back to Him. The same grace that saved you is the grace that will restore you. Jesus never tires of welcoming His children home. He stands ready to forgive, to cleanse, and to renew your heart once again.

Return to the cross. Lay down your shame and let His mercy lift you up. The Savior who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it (Philippians 1:6).

## Scripture Verse for Memorization -----

*Matthew 5:3 – Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

## Prayer -----

*“God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Amen.*

## Discussion Questions (Shorter Version) -----

1. What does it mean to be “poor in spirit,” and how is that different from being spiritually weak or emotionally low?
2. How does the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14) help us understand what it looks like to be poor in spirit?
3. Can you remember a time when you felt your deep need for God? What did that experience teach you?
4. Why is it important to rely on God instead of ourselves? What happens when we try to live independently of Him?
5. Why do you think Jesus began the Beatitudes with being poor in spirit? What does that tell us about life in the Kingdom of God?

## Discussion Questions (Longer Version) -----

1. In your own words, what does it mean to be “poor in spirit”? How is this different from being materially poor?
2. Read Luke 18:9-14 (The Pharisee and the Tax Collector). How does this parable illustrate what it means to be “poor in spirit”? Who do you relate to more and why?
3. Why do you think Jesus began the Beatitudes with this one? What does that teach us about entering the Kingdom of God?

4. Can you think of a time when you became aware of your deep spiritual need before God? How did you respond?
5. Why do you think pride and self-sufficiency are such dangerous attitudes in the Christian life?
6. Where in your life do you find yourself relying on your own strength instead of trusting God?
7. How would living daily with the belief, "Without Jesus, I have nothing," change the way you face challenges or make decisions? What is one practical step you can take this week to deepen your dependence on Him?
8. How would embracing poverty of spirit affect your prayer life, your relationships with others, and your overall perspective on life?

### **Hymns/Songs-----**

1. Just As I Am
2. Take My Life and Let it Be
3. Lord, I Need You
4. All I Have is Christ
5. Leaning on the Everlasting Arms
6. His Mercy is More
7. Surely Goodness and Mercy
8. Come Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy

## Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

*Matthew 5:4 – Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.*

**O**n my way to work, an advertising billboard by a bar reads, “Happy hour every hour!” That statement aptly captures the essence of what people worldwide pursue. Repeatedly, we are told that life is all about having a good time. *What's in it for me? Will this make me happy?*

One writer captured this prevailing mindset well:

The ‘pursuit of happiness’ has become a central theme ... a right ... to almost everyone around us... People are asking, ‘What’s in it for me? Will this make me happy?’ ... People regularly abandon marriages and get a divorce if they think they can be happier married to someone else.<sup>19</sup>

He then adds this sobering observation:

Most people would be more than content to have this epitaph written on their grave: *He had a happy life.*<sup>20</sup>

How tragic that the highest goal for so many is simply *personal happiness*—even if it comes at the expense of holiness, truth, eternal life, true joy, and genuine love for God.

And it is into this *self-centered, pleasure-chasing world, one restless for happiness yet empty of true joy*, that Jesus speaks a shocking paradox in the second Beatitude: “Blessed are those who mourn.” Not “Blessed are the happy,” but blessed are the mourners! In other words: “Happy are the unhappy.”<sup>21</sup> What Jesus declares here is not just startling; it is utterly countercultural.

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<sup>19</sup> Duguid, Iain M, *Hero of Heroes: Seeing Christ in the Beatitudes*. Kindle Edition.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> John Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, Logos edition.

As theologian D.A. Carson rightly puts it:

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*The world does not like mourners;  
mourners are wet blankets.<sup>22</sup>*

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Yet, Jesus insists only mourners receive God's blessing and comfort! He calls us to a radically different life—one marked by mourning, not superficial joy.

### **Mourning Is Not Joylessness or Hopelessness**

In this Beatitude, Jesus is not calling us to live in gloom or despair. On the very night of His betrayal, He said to His disciples, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete" (John 15:11). Paul, writing from a prison cell, said, "I always pray with joy" (Philippians 1:4).

Joy is not optional in the Christian life; it is commanded:

***Philippians 4:4 — Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!***

***1 Thessalonians 5:16 — Rejoice always.***

This tells us that biblical mourning and joy are not opposites. They can—and must—co-exist in the life of a believer. True mourning is not the same as self-pity or self-condemnation. It's not walking around in hopelessness, constantly beating ourselves up—as Martin Luther did before discovering the freedom of the gospel.

If that's the case, what is it?

### **True Mourning Is Grief That Leads to Grace**

The mourning Jesus describes is *spiritual mourning over sin*—not grief over circumstances, but the deep, personal sorrow that comes from seeing our sin before a holy God. And it's not a momentary emotion. The verb "mourn" is in the present tense, implying something ongoing: "Blessed are those who are *continually* mourning." This speaks of a lifestyle, a heart that doesn't grow numb to sin, but consistently feels its weight.

The Greek word for "mourn" expresses the deepest kind of grief—the kind people show at funerals (Mark 16:10). Here, it refers to a heart-wrenching, broken response to sin. James 4:9 uses the same word: Grieve, *mourn*, and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. In context, James is clearly talking about mourning over sin.

There's also a powerful connection between this second Beatitude and the first:

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<sup>22</sup> Carson, D. A. *Jesus's Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World: A Study of Matthew 5-10*. Kindle Edition (italics mine).

- “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3), refers to our *intellectual* recognition of sin—knowing that we are spiritually bankrupt.
- “Blessed are those who mourn” refers to the *emotional* response, feeling the sorrow and weight of that spiritual poverty.

One sees the debt; the other feels the burden. Genuine conviction of sin always leads to holy contrition over it! Both go hand in hand. What God has joined, let no one separate!

As John Stott wisely observed:

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*Some Christians seem to imagine that, especially if they are filled with the Spirit, they must wear a perpetual grin...How unbiblical can one become? <sup>23</sup>*

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Puritan preacher, Thomas Watson, put it this way:

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*A woman may as well expect to have a child without pangs as one can have repentance without sorrow. He that can ... repent without sorrowing, suspect his repentance. Martyrs shed blood for Christ, and penitents shed tears for sin. <sup>24</sup>*

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This holy sorrow isn’t joyless despair. It doesn’t crush us. It humbles, softens, and draws us closer to Christ. Even in our mourning, the Holy Spirit produces joy within us, because we believe that Jesus has fully paid for our sins, including the very sin we are genuinely grieving. So, in a sense, we are “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2 Corinthians 6:10).

Yes, it is a paradox. But it’s also the reality of life in Christ. Our joy doesn’t come from the absence of mourning, but from God’s presence within it. In other words, we don’t rejoice *instead* of mourning—we rejoice *through* it. Why? Because it ultimately leads to the profound comfort Jesus promises—the deep assurance of God’s grace, forgiveness, and nearness. That’s what makes it blessed.

But it’s important to recognize that not all sorrow over sin is the same. Scripture draws a crucial line between two very different kinds of mourning.

## **Godly Versus Worldly Mourning: The Sorrow That Leads to Life Versus the Sorrow That Leads to Death**

2 Corinthians 7:10 draws a sharp distinction:

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<sup>23</sup> *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, Logos edition.

<sup>24</sup> *The Doctrine of Repentance*, p. 19 (The Banner of Truth Trust).

*Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.*

Godly mourning is **God-centered**. It grieves sin because it has offended a holy God and leads a person back to Him in repentance.

Worldly mourning, by contrast, is **self-centered**. It may include guilt and shame, but it does not lead to true repentance or reconciliation with God.

We see this contrast clearly in the lives of Judas and Peter. Both failed Jesus. Judas felt remorse (Matthew 27:3), but he never turned to Christ. His sorrow was consumed with despair and self-pity, ultimately leading to his destruction. Peter, on the other hand, “wept bitterly” (Luke 22:62). But his grief was rooted in love for Jesus and sorrow over his sin. His godly mourning brought him to repentance, restoration, and renewed intimacy with Christ.

This difference is still evident today.

Imagine two people caught in adultery. The first feels bad, mostly because he got caught. He offers a public apology, but in private, he justifies his actions and blames his wife for pushing him away. That’s worldly sorrow, focused on consequences and reputation, not on offending God or desiring true change.

The second person is broken. He confesses not only what was discovered, but everything he had hidden. He makes no excuses, blames no one, and grieves over the sin itself because it dishonored God and harmed others. He pleads with Christ for mercy. That’s godly mourning, repentance flowing from a heart grieved by sin’s offense to a holy God.

Godly sorrow says, “I have sinned against You, Lord, and I’m coming back to You for cleansing.”

Worldly sorrow says, “I feel bad—but I’ll handle this myself.”

One leads to grace and eternal life.

The other leads to ruin—and eternal destruction.

## **When Godly Mourning Is Missing: The Danger of Feeling Nothing**

Sadly, much of today’s mourning—even in Christian circles—resembles worldly sorrow. It’s often nothing more than disappointment over unmet desires or a damaged reputation. Rarely is it genuine grief over rebelling against a holy God (Revelation 3:17).

Ask yourself:

- When was the last time I truly grieved over my pride or selfishness?

- When did I feel ashamed of my constant craving for the praise of others?
- When was I heartbroken over my harsh or careless words?
- When did I mourn—not merely over the consequences of my sin—but over the sin itself?

A flippant young man once asked a preacher, “I don’t feel the weight of sin. How heavy is it? Ten pounds? Eighty?” The preacher replied, “Would a corpse feel a 400-pound weight?” The young man answered, “No. It’s dead.” The preacher concluded, “Exactly. If you feel nothing, it’s because you’re spiritually dead” (Ephesians 2:1).

## Mourning Our Own Sin: Where True Repentance Begins

But believers are no longer dead. We’ve been made alive.

*Ephesians 2:4-5 — God ... who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.*

And when God gives us new life, we begin to feel what we once didn’t: the weight of sin and the sorrow that comes with it. Mourning over sin is one of the marks of new life. But when there’s no mourning at all, we must ask: *Did the new birth really happen?*

Sometimes we treat confession lightly; we just want to *rush through it* rather than truly repent. Other times, we avoid mourning altogether because we’re not yet ready to give up the sin. And sometimes we mourn only the sins we no longer find tempting. But godly mourning grieves even hidden, cherished sins because they offend God.

Godly people in Scripture didn’t take sin lightly. Consider David:

*Psalm 38:4 — My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear.*

*Psalm 38:18 — I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin.*

*Psalm 51:3 — For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.*

Culture might call David negative or self-critical. But God called him “a man after my own heart” (Acts 13:22).

Even Paul, after decades of faithful service to Christ, wrote, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am [not ‘I was’] the worst.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> 1 Timothy 1:15

Scottish preacher Alexander Whyte once told his congregation that he had discovered the name of the wickedest man in Edinburgh. He leaned forward and whispered, “His name is Alexander Whyte.”<sup>26</sup>

Godly mourning over one’s sin isn’t weakness, nor is it self-loathing. It’s honest humility—not despair, but Spirit-prompted sorrow that longs for deliverance. It’s a mark of genuine godliness that begins with seeing our own sin as worse than the sins of others.

### **Mourning Others’ Sins: Grieving What Grieves God**

The Bible doesn’t stop at calling us to mourn our own sins—it also calls us to mourn the sins of others. The true mourner, as one writer put it, “mourns that there are so few mourners.”<sup>27</sup>

When the Corinthian church tolerated blatant sexual immorality, Paul didn’t just call them to confront it—he rebuked them for not grieving over it:

*1 Corinthians 5:2 – Shouldn’t you rather have gone into mourning?*

The world often responds to others’ sin with condemnation or indifference. But believers are called to something different—to grieve. That’s the consistent pattern we see throughout Scripture:

*Psalm 119:136 – Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed.*

*Jeremiah 13:17 – If you do not listen, I will weep in secret because of your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly, overflowing with tears, because the Lord’s flock will be taken captive.*

*Philippians 3:18 – For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.*

Even Jesus—the One who spoke this very Beatitude—mourned for the sins of others. He had no sin of His own to grieve, for “He committed no sin” (1 Peter 2:22). Yet Luke tells us, “As he [i.e., Jesus] approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it.” (Luke 19:41)

Imagine that. Jesus wept for the very people who would soon crucify Him. Their rebellion and the judgment it would bring them broke His heart.

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<sup>26</sup> Ron Prosise, *Preaching Illustrations from Church History* (p. 200).

<sup>27</sup> Carson, D. A.. Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World: A Study of Matthew 5-10. Kindle Edition.

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*If Jesus mourned for the lost and rebellious, how can we, His followers, remain unmoved?*

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This kind of mourning doesn't lead to harsh judgment, but to prayer, compassion, and a longing for repentance and restoration. It reflects the very heart of God—a heart broken over sin because of what it does to people He loves.

So let's take Jesus' words seriously: God blesses only those who continually mourn both over their own sins and the sins of others.

And what is the blessing?

### **The Comfort of Christ: Grace That Meets Our Grief**

*Comfort.* That's what Jesus promises to the mourners: "They will be comforted."

Not *everyone* will be comforted—only those who mourn. And Jesus does not leave mourners in despair. He offers what the world cannot: true comfort both now and in the life to come.

The word translated "comforted" carries the sense of someone coming alongside to strengthen, encourage, and sustain. That's exactly what God does:

- He is "the God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3).
- Jesus is our Comforter (1 John 2:1—where the word is also translated Advocate).
- The Holy Spirit is *another Comforter* (John 14:16) sent to dwell within us.

David believed this deeply. That's why he wrote, "The LORD is close to the broken-hearted" (Psalm 34:18).

Think of Peter. After denying Jesus—not once, but three times—he wept bitterly, crushed by guilt and shame. But when the risen Christ met the broken-hearted Peter on the shore, He didn't condemn him. He restored him—gently, personally, three times over (John 21:15-19).

Peter's godly mourning led him to receive the very comfort Jesus promised in this Beatitude. Divine grace had once again conquered human failure.

And an even greater comfort is coming—the final, perfect comfort of heaven, where:

*Revelation 21:4 – He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.*

But that promise is not for everyone. It's for those who, in this life, pursue a lifestyle of mourning over sin, and in doing so, find the very heart of God.

### **Mourning Now, Joy Forever**

Many Christians have fallen for the lie that following Jesus guarantees a pain-free, smile-filled life. Yes, God "richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment" (1 Timothy 6:17), and indeed, "a joyful heart is good medicine" (Proverbs 17:22, ESV). But when joy becomes all we seek, we can numb our capacity to grieve sin.

Is life really just about seeking comfort and avoiding sorrow? Have we become so obsessed with entertainment and distraction that we've lost our ability to feel grief? Have we indulged in so much pleasure that we've lost touch with what truly matters?

If our answer to these questions is yes, then we need to be reminded of Solomon's words, which tell us otherwise:

*Ecclesiastes 7:2-4 – It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart. Frustration is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.*

Both Solomon and Jesus tell us the same truth: Pursue mourning. Why? Because God blesses those who continually mourn over their own sins and the sins of others!

But if we ignore this and laugh off sin—refusing to mourn—Jesus gives a sobering warning:

*Luke 6:25 – Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.*

There is a coming reversal:

- Weep now over sin—comfort forever.
- Laugh now at sin—weeping forever.

What we cry over—and what we laugh about—reveals the true condition of our hearts.

Jesus didn't speak these words just to inform us, but to *transform* us. His warning isn't cold; it's merciful.

So let's take it seriously. Let's ask Him to teach us what it means to cultivate holy mourning—the kind that leads to eternal joy.

## How to Mourn Well: Reflect and Run

If we are to pursue holy mourning as a way of life, remember two words: Reflect and Run.

### 1. Reflect

To cultivate a lifestyle of mourning over sin, we must learn to *regularly reflect on our spiritual condition*. That means taking time to ask ourselves hard, honest questions like:

- Do I entertain sinful thoughts?
- Do I explode in anger when I don't get my way?
- Do I resent correction?
- Do I feel jealous when others succeed or crave constant praise from people?
- Do I judge others with a self-righteous spirit or use my words to wound?
- Am I discontent with what God has given me and quick to complain?
- Do I look at things I should not see?
- Do I keep chasing things I know God is calling me to leave behind?

We must, in a sense, place ourselves on the witness stand and allow the Holy Spirit to cross-examine our hearts. At the same time, we plead with God to expose our sin:

*Psalm 139:23-24 – Search me, God, and know my heart... see if there is any offensive way in me.*

As the Spirit reveals our sin, we begin to feel its weight—not just mentally, but emotionally. That weight leads to genuine mourning, not just shallow regret, but deep grief that says:

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*These very sins nailed my Savior to the cross. He was spat on, whipped, pierced, and crowned with thorns because of what I've done—and still do.*

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When we see our sin that way, we can't help but cry out in brokenness:

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*Forgive me, Lord. Not only do I sin, but I don't even mourn my sin as I should. Even my repentance is so shallow. Help me repent of my repentance.*

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But we can't stop there. We cannot stay stuck in sorrow or wallow in guilt.

## 2. *Run*

That sorrow must drive us to run, not away from Jesus, but to Him for comfort. Our great Savior, with arms always open and a heart always willing, will never turn away a mourning, repentant soul (John 6:37; Matthew 11:28-30).

We don't need to remain hopeless in misery. We can come clean and find cleansing:

*1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

There's an old story about a college freshman who brought his dirty laundry to the dorm washer. Embarrassed by how filthy it was, he bundled it all up inside a sweatshirt. He never opened it—just shoved the whole bundle into the machine.

When the cycle ended, he threw it into the dryer. But later, when he opened the bundle back in his room, he found the clothes still stained and smelly. They had gotten wet... and then dry, but they weren't clean.

That's what we often do with sin. We keep it bundled and hidden from God and from others. But God sees it all anyway, and He invites us to bring it to Him. Every part. Unwrapped. Honest. Exposed.

*1 John 1:7 – The blood of Jesus...purifies us from all sin.*

In this way, true believers are those who continually mourn for sin and continually run to Jesus for cleansing. And as they do, they experience the deep, lasting joy that flows from the Spirit's ongoing work of transformation (Galatians 5:22; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

## **Jesus: The Perfect Example of Mourning**

Let's never forget: Jesus, our Lord, lived out this Beatitude perfectly on our behalf. As we saw earlier, He mourned deeply for the sins of others. Yet unlike us, He never sinned Himself, so His mourning was pure, perfect, and complete.

That's why we don't mourn to *earn* God's love. We mourn because we already *have it* in Christ. We don't grieve to gain His acceptance. We grieve because we are already loved and fully and forever accepted in Christ.

True comfort doesn't come from avoiding sorrow but from bringing our sorrow to Christ—the One who mourned for us, died for us, and now lives to comfort us.

Our mourning is simply the *evidence* that the Holy Spirit is at work within us, shaping our hearts to become more like Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18). So let's reflect deeply and run quickly—again and again—to the only One who mourned without sin, yet suffered in our place.

The past is gone. Today is a new day.

Begin again with this unshakable promise:

*Blessed are those who mourn—over their sins and the sins of others—for they, and they alone, will be comforted.*

### Scripture Verse for Memorization -----

*Matthew 5:4 – Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

### Prayer -----

*Psalm 51:1-4a, 9-10, 12 – Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Amen.*

### Discussion Questions (Shorter Version) -----

1. What kind of mourning does Jesus bless in this Beatitude, and how is it different from ordinary grief?
2. Why is mourning over sin important in the Christian life?
3. How does Jesus bring comfort to those who mourn with godly sorrow?
4. How should we respond to the sin we see in ourselves and others?
5. What are some ways we can regularly express godly sorrow without losing hope?

### Discussion Questions (Longer Version) -----

1. What kind of mourning is Jesus talking about in this Beatitude? How does it differ from grief over painful circumstances?
2. Why do you think Jesus calls those who mourn “blessed”? In what ways is that idea surprising or countercultural today?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 7:10. What’s the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow? Why does that matter?

4. When was the last time you truly mourned over your own sin? What did that reveal about your heart before God?
5. What kind of comfort does Jesus offer to those who mourn over sin? Have you experienced this comfort personally?
6. How should Christians respond to the sins of others: with judgment, indifference, or grief? Why?
7. How can we cultivate grief for the lost in a way that reflects God's heart?
8. Is there a sin God is prompting you to mourn right now? What is one step can you take this week in response?
9. How can you make "mourning well" a regular part of your walk with Christ without falling into despair?

### Hymns/Songs-----

1. What a Friend we have in Jesus
2. You are my hiding place
3. Lord from sorrow deep I call
4. Grace Greater Than Our Sin
5. It is Well with My Soul

## Blessed Are the Meek

*Matthew 5:5 – Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

### The World's Way Versus Jesus' Way

If there's one quality the world prizes, it is power—*assert yourself, raise your voice, climb to the top*. But in the third Beatitude, Jesus turns this thinking upside down:

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”

Instead of pushing forward, He calls us to step back. Instead of demanding our way, He invites us to yield. Don't seek recognition—embrace obscurity. Be meek. Be gentle.

Here are two radically opposing claims:

- The world says: “Mighty are the strong.”
- Jesus says: “Mighty are the meek.”

This isn't just countercultural—it's shocking. It defies every natural human impulse. We're wired to retaliate, to defend, to rise. Yet Jesus calls us to something deeper, something supernatural: a life of meekness.

But what does that truly mean?

### The Meaning of Meekness

Meekness is *not* weakness. It's *strength under control*. In Jesus' day, the Greek word translated “meek” in Matthew 5:5 described a tamed horse—still strong but under perfect control.

This process, though demanding, produced a horse that was strong and powerful, yet kept under control and that yielded completely to its rider. It was a condition described as being “meeked.”

A young soldier during the Peloponnesian (ancient Greek) wars wrote to his fiancée about a gift he had for her: a white stallion. He described it as:

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*The most magnificent animal I have ever seen. He responds obediently to the slightest command. He allows his master to direct him to his full potential.*

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And then he wrote, “He is a meek horse.” The soldier wasn’t saying that the horse was shy or a beaten-down plow horse. Rather, it was an animal with great spirit, but that spirit was *submissive to the rider’s control*.

Tied up in the word *meek* is the concept of **power under control**, the idea of being submissive to someone greater than ourselves.”<sup>28</sup>

That’s why the Bible never portrays meekness as passive or spineless. Moses was described as:

*Numbers 12:3 – A very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.*

Jesus described Himself this way:

*Matthew 11:29 – I am gentle [the same word translated “meek” in Matthew 5:5] and humble in heart.*

Clearly, no one would call Moses or Jesus weak. Both were bold and courageous, yet displayed quiet strength and power under control.

Jesus’ third Beatitude echoes Psalm 37:11:

*“But the meek will inherit the land.”*

Understanding this connection helps us better grasp what Jesus meant by “meek.” In this psalm, David counsels the oppressed to:

- a. Refrain from anger (“Do not fret because of those who are evil”—v 1)
- b. Not to retaliate against evildoers (“Turn from wrath”—v 8)
- c. Continue doing good, even when wronged (“Do good”—v 27)
- d. Trust steadfastly in God’s timing and justice (“the LORD will not forsake his faithful ones”—v 28)

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<sup>28</sup> Haddon Robinson, *What Jesus Said About Successful Living*, p. 51, with slight changes.

In other words, according to David, the meek are those who refrain from anger, turn from wrath, and continue doing good even when wronged. Their strength lies *not in retaliation but in steadfast trust in God's timing and justice.*

Meekness doesn't mean never feeling anger. The meek may get angry—but only for the right reasons. They are stirred by injustice or dishonor toward God, not by personal insult. Instead of retaliating, they quickly forgive and continue doing good, even to those who hurt them. Their trust is not in personal vindication but in God's justice and timing.

They care for the feelings of others and strive to put the needs of others above their own, including that of their enemies! Meek individuals display:

*"The positive moral quality of dealing with people in a kind manner, with humility and consideration"<sup>29</sup> — not because they are weak, but because their strength is under the control of the Holy Spirit.*

But why is meekness such an important virtue? Why choose it as a lifestyle?

### **The Eternal Value of Meekness**

According to Jesus, only “the meek will inherit the *earth*.” This is a far greater blessing than anything this world can offer. That’s why Jesus calls His followers to pursue the path of meekness.

Notice how Jesus expands the phrase from Psalm 37:11, where “the meek inherit the *land*” to “the meek will inherit the *earth*” in Matthew 5:5—signifying not just a portion of land in Israel, but the entire world in the future.

*Only* the meek will one day reign with Christ. This is Jesus’ astounding promise. In the end, it will not be the power-hungry or self-seeking who triumph, but those who trust in God, walk in humility, and reflect Jesus’ meekness.

Yes, this truth is deeply countercultural to the world’s thinking. But that’s the lifestyle Jesus desires for His followers—a lifestyle that leads not only to true blessing here on earth, but to eternal inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

### **The Meekness Mandate for Every Believer**

In this Beatitude—and throughout Scripture—the Bible calls every believer to embrace meekness as a lifestyle, especially in how we relate to one another.

*Colossians 3:12 — Clothe yourselves with ... humility.*

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<sup>29</sup> Bill Mounce, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary*, <https://www.billmounce.com/greek-dictionary/praus>

*Ephesians 4:32 — Be completely humble and gentle [meek].*

Even Christian wives married to unbelieving husbands are urged to cultivate “the unfading beauty of a gentle [meek] and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight” (1 Peter 3:4). Later, in the same chapter, Peter stresses this non-retaliatory behavior as a requirement for *all* believers:

*1 Peter 3:9 — Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.*

In other words, don’t retaliate—no “tit for tat.” Instead, respond with kindness to those who act harshly toward you. This is the essence of meekness: the strength to restrain yourself, even when you have every right or power to strike back.

Think of David who spared Saul’s life even though he had the power to kill him. This was despite the fact that Saul wanted to kill David (1 Samuel 24)! David could have taken vengeance, but he chose mercy. He left justice in God’s hands. That’s what meekness looks like—power under control, anchored in trust.

And throughout history, countless believers have displayed that same Christlike meekness. Let’s consider one such powerful example.

### **Corrie ten Boom: The Strength to Forgive**

Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch Christian who helped many Jews escape the Nazis during World War II, was imprisoned at Ravensbrück concentration camp. After the war, she traveled the world sharing about God’s forgiveness.

One day, after speaking in Germany, a man approached her. He was a former SS guard who had once tormented her and her sister Betsie, who had died in that very camp. He told her he had become a Christian and asked for her forgiveness.

Corrie froze. Memories flooded back. The cruelty. The pain. Everything in her recoiled. Yet, in that moment, she silently prayed, “*Jesus, help me! I can lift my hand ... You supply the feeling.*”

As she reached out her hand, she felt God’s power surge through her. “A current seemed to pass from me to him,” she later wrote, “and into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.” She grasped his hand and said, “*I forgive you, brother—with all my heart!*”

"For a long moment," she recalled, "we grasped each other's hands—the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God's love so intensely as I did then."<sup>30</sup>

That's true meekness—not human effort, but the Spirit's strength working through a surrendered heart. Her story reminds us of what's possible when we choose meekness.

That is **true meekness**. It is not the weakness of human will but the **strength of the Holy Spirit** working through a surrendered heart. Corrie's story shows us what is possible when we let God's power control our emotions and responses.

## **Jesus: Embodiment of Meekness in the Flesh**

The Apostle Paul calls believers to humility by pointing us to Christ's perfect example:

*Philippians 2:5-7 — In your relationships with one another, have the same mind-set as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

Jesus, though fully God, did not cling to His divine privileges. Instead, He willingly set them aside and took on the role of a servant—literally, a slave! This is not mere humility in action; it is meekness embodied and strength willingly submitted for the sake of others.

And when he chose to describe Himself—to reveal the very essence of who He is at the very core—He didn't say, "I am strong and powerful," though He is. Instead, He said, "I am gentle and humble in heart" (Matthew 11:29).

The word translated "gentle" here is the same word used for "meek" in Matthew 5:5. Across all four Gospels—89 chapters—this is the only place where Jesus pulls back the veil to show us His heart. And what do we find there? *Meekness!*

In Scripture, the "heart" refers not just to emotions, but to the very center of one's being—the motivational headquarters of a person. It's "what gets us out of bed in the morning and what we daydream about as we drift off to sleep."<sup>31</sup> When Jesus reveals His heart, He invites us to know what moves Him most deeply, to what lies at the core of His inner being. And what do we find? Gentleness and humility!

If Jesus had a personal website, "the most prominent line of the 'About Me' dropdown would read: *Gentle and Lowly in heart.*"<sup>32</sup> Would we have ever imagined such a Savior? Never! "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways" (Isaiah

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<sup>30</sup> Corrie ten Boom, *I'm Still Learning To Forgive*. Kindle edition (Adapted with minor changes).

<sup>31</sup> Dane Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly*, p. 18.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p. 21.

55:9). His priorities, His posture—everything about Him—is so radically different from what the world expects!

One of the most profound demonstrations of Jesus' meekness came on the very night He was betrayed. Knowing what awaited Him and fully aware that Judas would soon betray Him, Jesus knelt to wash His disciples' feet. This task was reserved for the lowest servant, yet the Son of God humbled Himself to perform it. He even washed Judas' feet, showing meekness not only in service but in love toward His enemy.

Then He turned to His disciples and said:

*John 13:13-17 – You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*

Jesus, the Lord of all, chose to serve those who would soon abandon Him. In submitting to the Father's will and taking on the posture of a lowly servant, He gave us a living picture of meekness: strength under control, motivated by love. His example invites us to lay aside pride, to serve without recognition, and to respond with grace even when we are wronged.

When Jesus says He is meek, He also means He is the most understanding, kind, and welcoming person we will ever meet. One writer put it so well: "*The posture most natural to [Jesus] is not a pointed finger, but open arms.*"

That's the heart of our Savior—gentle, gracious, forgiving, and tender. And it's the same heart He calls His followers to have. Whether it's a parent responding patiently to a rebellious teen or a spouse choosing grace in conflict, meekness should shape every interaction of our daily lives.

But what happens when we choose the opposite, when we retaliate instead of responding with meekness?

### **The Cost of Retaliation**

Imagine being falsely accused—your integrity questioned, your motives misunderstood—whether at work, in your home, or among friends. The natural impulse is to strike back, to defend yourself, to make things right on your own terms. But when we take justice into our own hands, the result is never freedom—it's bondage. Retaliation carries a cost. It can lead to at least three negative consequences: distort our witness, grieve the Holy Spirit, and rob us of peace.

### **1. It Distorts Our Witness**

A retaliatory spirit contradicts the character of Christ, who, “While being abusively insulted...did not insult in return; while suffering...did not threaten, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:23).<sup>33</sup>

When we lash out to wrong with anger, sarcasm, or bitterness, we lose an opportunity to reflect Christ’s gentle and humble heart. Harsh words and self-defense may win arguments, but they rarely win souls.

What the world desperately needs to see in us is not perfect people, but people who mirror Jesus’ meekness, those who can absorb offense without revenge, trusting God’s justice more than their own. That quiet, Spirit-empowered restraint speaks louder than a thousand sermons.

### **2. It Grieves the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is grieved when we act contrary to the words He inspired men to write in the Bible, words that call us to humility, forgiveness, and love.

*Ephesians 4:30-32 – Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God... Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger... Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

When we nurse resentment or plot retaliation, we dull our spiritual sensitivity and lose the sweetness of close fellowship with God. The Spirit’s voice becomes faint, drowned out by the noise of our wounded pride. In such a condition, it is impossible to walk “in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25).

### **3. It Robs Us of Peace**

Retaliation might feel satisfying in the moment, but it never brings lasting peace. “Getting even” only multiplies the pain. The cycle of anger deepens the wounds—damaging relationships, hardening hearts, and leaving our own souls in turmoil.

Many homes, friendships, and even churches have been fractured by this spirit of revenge. But when we surrender our right to retaliate, we make room for something better: *God’s peace*—a peace that surpasses understanding and heals what vengeance cannot.

Someone wisely observed, “*Retaliation puts us on the throne; meekness puts God there.*”

So, if retaliation is our natural reflex, how can we grow in meekness—the supernatural way of Christ?

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<sup>33</sup> NASB, 2020

## Growing in Meekness: Spirit-Formed, Not Self-Formed

We cannot produce meekness on our own; it is the fruit the Holy Spirit grows within us. “The fruit of the Spirit is love... gentleness [or meekness] and self-control” (Galatians 5:22–23).

To cultivate meekness, we must rely on the Holy Spirit. He *alone* can produce this quality in us! For that matter, we cannot display this Beatitude or any other Beatitudes on our own strength. We must submit to the Holy Spirit, who alone can produce these virtues.

However, we must also remember that the Holy Spirit does not work apart from our willingness. He uses *means* to help cultivate meekness, particularly three key ones.

### **1. The Word of God: The Spirit's Shaping Tool**

The Word of God (described as the “sword of the Spirit” in Ephesians 6:17) is the Spirit’s primary tool for shaping meekness in us. James writes, “Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you” (James 1:21). This is a call to ongoing submission to God’s Word, not just at salvation, but throughout our walk.

True meekness is not shown in how much Scripture we know but in how we respond to it. Jesus affirmed this in Luke 11:28: “Blessed are those who hear the word of God and *obey* it.” *Real change* occurs when we move from *listening to obeying* God’s Word.

The more we yield to Scripture, the more the Spirit cultivates a gentle and obedient heart. Such a life shows the unmistakable evidence of His control—where meekness grows as the sweet fruit of surrender.

So, the first means the Holy Spirit uses to produce meekness in us is God’s Word.

### **2. Heartfelt Prayer: Our Dependence Expressed**

The second means the Spirit uses to produce meekness is prayer—our active expression of dependence on God. Jesus said, “Apart from me, you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

When we pray sincerely for growth in meekness, we are praying in harmony with God’s revealed will, and He gives us assurance He will hear us as 1 John 5:14 affirms:

*“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.”*

### **3. Trials: God’s Refining Fire**

Seeing how God’s Word and prayer shape meekness, let’s consider another means the Holy Spirit often uses, one that’s harder to embrace: *Trials*.

Through trials, He humbles us, breaks our pride, and teaches us to rely on Him! Take Manasseh, for example. Not only did he do “much evil in the eyes of the Lord, arousing his anger,” but he also “led Judah and the people of Jerusalem astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the Lord had destroyed before the Israelites” (2 Chronicles 36:1, 9). Yet, when the Lord empowered the Assyrians to take him captive, “In his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors” (v. 12). Trials do have the power to soften hard hearts!

That’s why we shouldn’t despise trials but see them as one of the Spirit’s primary tools for cultivating gentleness in us. Those who have suffered deeply often emerge more patient, gracious, and sensitive to others’ pain, because suffering has a way of softening the heart.

Here’s a powerful example of how this looks in the real world.

A well-known CEO once shared how a health crisis transformed his leadership. Formerly cutthroat and intimidating, he returned from chemotherapy gentler, more approachable, and empathetic. “Pain slowed me down,” he said, “and I started seeing people instead of projects.”<sup>34</sup>

Suffering often has that power. It “meeks” us—humbles our pride, softens our edges, and channels our strength under God’s control. Through it, the Spirit births in us the quiet beauty of Christlike gentleness.

People who are broken by trials no longer feel the need to defend themselves, knowing they deserve nothing. They aren’t easily angered or driven by vengeance. Since they’re already bowed low, they fear no fall! Instead, they seek to do good, placing the interests of others above their own (Philippians 2:4)!

So, the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God, heartfelt prayer, and trials in developing meekness in us.

There is profound freedom in choosing not to retaliate. It’s not weakness; it’s worship. It’s a declaration of our trust in God to handle all the injustice done to us. As a result, we align ourselves with God’s purpose and open our hearts to His direction. As Psalm 25:9 says:

*He guides the humble [meek] in what is right and teaches them his way.*

Want to know God’s will? Be meek. Submit. Trust Him.

So, how do we know if meekness is taking root in our hearts?

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<sup>34</sup> Source unknown.

## Heart Check: Are You Truly Meek?

- How do you respond when someone insults or misunderstands you?
- What's your reaction when things don't go your way—even in small matters?
- Are you quick to speak or quick to listen?
- Do pride, anger, or resentment mark your responses, or do humility and patience show through?

Honest answers to questions like these can expose the true condition of our hearts—whether we are learning the way of meekness or still clinging to self-will. Remember, the Beatitudes are not just moral suggestions; they are spiritual mirrors that Jesus holds before us, inviting us to see whether we are truly His followers and being shaped by His Kingdom character.

## Meekness Begins at the Cross

If you've never surrendered your life to Jesus, that's where meekness begins. Come to the Cross. Acknowledge your sin and your total inability—your spiritual poverty—to meet God's perfect standard. Let your heart grieve over your sin, and in faith, turn to Jesus, who died for every sin you have committed and ever will commit—even your pride, your retaliation, and your rebellion. Receive His forgiveness and surrender your life fully to Him.

When you do, you'll not only become part of God's family but also experience the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Through His power, you'll find a new kind of strength—the strength to forgive those who wrong you, to lay down your rights, and to trust God's timing even when it hurts.

Then, and only then, can you begin to display the true meekness of Jesus. The One who calls us to this life of meekness also lived it perfectly, submitting to the Father, serving others, and entrusting Himself completely to God.

## Meekness Matters

Meekness is *not optional* for the Christian. It is essential. Jesus makes it very clear: *only* the meek will inherit the coming glorious Kingdom. This doesn't mean we earn our way into the Kingdom through meekness, but that meekness is the evidence of a heart already transformed by grace. It's one of the unmistakable fruits of belonging to God's Kingdom.

We don't pursue meekness to *earn* God's acceptance; we live this way because we are *already* loved and accepted in Christ—the One who perfectly fulfilled this Beatitude on our behalf. Our rest is not in our own performance but in His perfection. And as we yield

to the Spirit, He cultivates this beautiful virtue within us, assuring our hearts that we truly belong to Jesus and will reign with Him forever.

An old proverb says, *“The branch that bows low bears the most fruit.”* The fuller the branch, the deeper it bends. In the same way, those rich in wisdom, talent, or accomplishment are marked not by pride, but by humility. Those who walk closely with Christ know this secret well: true greatness always bows low.

In a world that prizes dominance and self-assertion, Jesus still whispers the truest measure of strength: Blessed indeed are the meek, for they—and they alone—will inherit the earth!

In the end, it won’t be the proud who will prevail, but those who rest under the power of the Savior’s gentle hand.

### Scripture Verse for Memorization -----

*Matthew 5:5 – Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

### Prayer -----

*Help me to see myself in Your sight, for then pride must wither, decay, and perish.  
Teach me submission to Your will and humble my heart before You that I may live  
like Christ in this world, to do what He would do, to live as He lived, to walk in  
love and meekness that Christ may be known. Amen.<sup>35</sup>*

### Discussion Questions (Shorter Version) -----

1. How would you describe meekness in your own words? How is it different from weakness?
2. Why do you think Jesus values meekness when the world often values power and control instead of meekness?
3. What do you think Jesus meant when He said the meek will “inherit the earth”?
4. Can you think of a time when responding with gentleness or patience made a difference in a difficult situation?
5. What is one specific way you can practice meekness in your relationships this week?

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<sup>35</sup> Arthur Bennet, *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions*, Banner of Truth Trust, 1988, p. 142

**Discussion Questions (Longer Version) -----**

1. What does Jesus' definition of meekness reveal about true strength? In what ways does the world's perception of strength oppose the meekness Jesus calls us to?
2. What challenges do believers face when they choose meekness over worldly power?
3. What might it mean to "inherit the earth" in Jesus' promise to the meek? How does this promise reshape our understanding of success and reward?
4. In what ways does Jesus' life and example redefine how we think about power and humility? When facing pride or temptation to retaliate, what can His example teach us to do?
5. Reflect on a time when you were wronged—how did you respond, and what did it teach you about your heart's condition? How might choosing meekness change your reaction in similar situations?
6. How have trials or difficult seasons in your life shaped your ability to be meek? Can you identify specific ways the Holy Spirit used those times to grow gentleness or patience in you?
7. Is there someone in your family, church, or workplace to whom you need to show meekness and extend forgiveness? What might it look like to do that this week?"
8. When you serve others, does your attitude reflect meekness? How can you tell if you're doing it for God's glory or personal recognition?
9. What spiritual practices or daily habits help you grow in meekness? How might that growth affect your closest relationships?

**Hymns/Songs-----**

1. This is My Desire
2. Meekness & Majesty
3. Refiner's Fire
4. Who is like the Lord? Psalm 113
5. At Calvary
6. Make Me a Servant

## Blessed Are Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

*Matthew 5:6 – Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled.*

### What Are You Hungry For?

“**Y**ou are what you eat,” we often say about the body. But the same principle holds true for the soul. Just as the body is shaped by its diet, our inner lives are shaped by what we hunger for, what we crave and pursue spiritually.

In this fourth Beatitude, Jesus offers a paradoxical kind of diet, not one that feeds the body, but one that nourishes the soul. He calls us to “hunger” and “thirst,” not for food or drink, but for righteousness. These are strong words, describing a deep, desperate longing that far surpasses a casual interest.

And what are we to crave? *Righteousness*, which in context here, refers to right living, a life that aligns with God’s will. Jesus promises that those who pursue this kind of righteousness will be blessed. Their hunger will not go unsatisfied; they will be filled, not with temporary or earthly things, but with the fullness of God Himself.

That, in essence, is the message of this Beatitude.

### Understanding the Righteousness Jesus Describes

The righteousness Jesus refers to here is *not* our position in Christ—our right standing with God by faith (Romans 3:22). Instead, He speaks of the *practical* righteousness that flows from our position in Christ, the kind of daily living that reflects a heart transformed by grace.

The Beatitudes are not entrance requirements for the Kingdom of God; they are the characteristics of those who *already* belong to it. They are the *fruit*, not the root. As Jesus said,

“Every good tree bears good fruit” (Matthew 7:17). A life changed by grace will inevitably begin to display that grace outwardly through right living.

But how can we be sure that we are truly right before God, that our faith is real and saving? What does practical righteousness actually look like in the life of someone united with Christ? What are the visible signs of an inward transformation?

## **Living Right Before God: What Righteousness Looks Like in Daily Life**

The righteousness Jesus describes in this Beatitude isn’t vague or something impossible to achieve. It’s deeply practical, lived out in everyday choices and relationships in life. It shapes how we think, speak, respond to challenges, treat others, and pursue what truly matters. At its heart, righteousness is simply living in a way that honors a holy God.

### **Examples of Right Living: 12 Snapshots from Jesus.**

The Sermon on the Mount isn’t just lofty ideas; it’s Jesus painting a clear picture of what a righteous life actually looks like in action. Below are twelve practical expressions of righteousness grouped into everyday categories. Each one flows from a heart transformed by grace and hungry to live in a way that pleases God.

#### *I. Righteousness in Relationships*

Righteousness shapes how we treat others, especially when it’s difficult. It chooses reconciliation over resentment, mercy over revenge, and love over hatred, even toward enemies.

1. *Pursuing reconciliation* — “First be reconciled to your brother or sister” (Matthew 5:23–24). A heart shaped by righteousness seeks peace and reconciliation rather than harboring bitterness.
2. *Gentleness instead of retaliation* — “Do not resist an evil person” (Matthew 5:39). A righteous heart chooses mercy over revenge.
3. *Love for enemies* — “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). The ultimate test of righteousness is how we treat those who hurt us.

#### *II. Righteousness in Personal Integrity*

Right living begins in the hidden places—our thoughts, words, and commitments. Righteousness means walking in purity, truthfulness, and faithfulness even when no one is watching.

4. *Sexual purity in thought, not just action* — “Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully” (Matthew 5:28). Righteousness begins in the heart, not just outward behavior.

5. *Faithfulness in marriage* — “Anyone who divorces his wife” (5:32). A righteous life honors the sacred covenant of marriage.<sup>36</sup>
6. *Truthful speech* — “All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’” (5:37). Truthfulness should mark even our simplest words.

### ***III. Righteousness in Private Devotion***

For the righteous, devotion to God is not a performance—it’s personal. It’s seen in how we pray, fast, and give for God’s eyes alone, not for the world’s applause.

7. *Private devotion, not public show* — “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them” (Matthew 6:1). True righteousness seeks God’s approval, not human applause in devotion.
8. *God-centered prayer* — “Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come” (Matthew 6:9–10). Righteousness pursues God’s glory, not self-promotion.
9. *Eternal priorities* — “Store up treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:20). The righteous invest not only their time and resources but their hearts in what will last forever—the eternal treasures of God’s Kingdom.

### ***IV. Righteousness in the Inner Life***

True righteousness reaches the unseen depths of the soul—how we think, trust, and respond when life is hard. It is marked by humility, peace, and obedience.

10. *Trust instead of anxiety* — “Do not worry about your life...But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:25, 33). Righteousness rests in God’s care rather than striving in fear.
11. *Gracious judgment* — “Do not judge...first take the plank out of your own eye” (Matthew 7:1, 5). A righteous heart corrects with humility, not hypocrisy.
12. *Obedience to Jesus’ words* — “Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man” (Matthew 7:24). True righteousness seeks to live out the truth in daily life, not just hear it!

These are not just random spiritual “goals” to check off. They are the natural fruit of a heart renewed by the Holy Spirit. And because Jesus deliberately uses the present tense, this hungering and thirsting is not a one-time craving but a continual, growing desire—

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<sup>36</sup> While Scripture does make allowances for divorce in certain painful situations—such as adultery (Matthew 19:9) or abandonment by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:12–16)—the broader message of the Bible calls us to uphold and honor the sacred covenant of marriage. Although this is an important topic, the focus here is not on divorce but instead on acknowledging its reality in certain circumstances.

*keep on* hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Just as our bodies constantly need food and water, so a heart made alive by God continually craves a life that pleases Him.

This deep, ongoing hunger has marked every true follower of Christ, especially in seasons of testing. One powerful example comes from Corrie ten Boom.

### **A Life That Hungered for Truth Amid Darkness: Corrie ten Boom**

In the crucible of World War II, *Corrie ten Boom* embodied a deep hunger and thirst for righteousness that fear could not silence. In Nazi-occupied Holland, Corrie and her family opened their home to Jews fleeing persecution, an act that eventually led to their arrest and imprisonment.

Even in the squalor of Ravensbrück concentration camp, Corrie's longing for truth did not fade. She and her sister Betsie shared Scripture secretly with fellow prisoners, whispering words of life where death reigned. Their faith-driven conviction was simple yet unwavering: God's justice and mercy were worth any cost.

When despair threatened to crush them, Betsie reminded Corrie:

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*There is no pit so deep that God's  
love is not deeper still.*

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That confession—born out of suffering—reveals the essence of spiritual hunger: a longing so deep that no darkness can extinguish it.

Corrie's story testifies that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are not defined by circumstance but by the object of their desire—to see God's truth and mercy prevail, even in a world gone mad. That is what practical righteousness looks like: choosing what is right, whatever the cost, and finding deep soul-satisfaction in the One who promised that "*they will be filled.*"<sup>37</sup>

### **Not Perfect, but Pointed Toward God**

Like Corrie, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are not perfect people. Far from it. No one is—even after salvation. But the *direction* of their lives is set toward pleasing God. Their deepest desire is to walk in obedience and delight in Him. The constant cry of their heart is like that of the old Scottish preacher Robert Murray M'Cheyne:

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<sup>37</sup> Summarized from several verified biographical accounts and Corrie's own writings. Key sources include, Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place*, *Tramp for the Lord* and *Corrie ten Boom: Keeper of the Angels' Den* by Janet and Geoff Benge and *The Watchmaker's Daughter: The True Story of World War II Hero Corrie ten Boom* by Larry Loftis.

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*"O God, make me just as holy as  
a pardoned sinner can be!"<sup>38</sup>*

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A heart truly renewed by grace aches when it fails to please the Lord. It doesn't excuse sin or grow cold; it returns—again and again—to Christ with a broken and contrite spirit, pleading for cleansing and fresh strength. As Solomon wrote, "Though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again" (Proverbs 24:16), because God delights to "revive the spirit of the lowly and... the heart of the contrite" (Isaiah 57:15).

So ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart. *Does your life reflect this kind of posture and pursuit?* If so, take heart. This hunger itself is a sign of grace—a living evidence of true faith and the pathway to deep spiritual satisfaction. You are already tasting the blessedness Jesus promised to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

### How God Satisfies Those Who Long for Righteousness

Jesus promises, "They will be filled." This promise applies only to those who continually hunger and thirst for righteousness. The language is active on our part but passive in fulfillment: **we crave—but God fills.** And what does He fill us with? The very thing we long for: righteousness itself.

Even now, we experience the joy of being declared righteous before God through faith, our *positional righteousness* in Christ. Yet when we also yearn to *live* righteously—to obey and please God in daily life—the Holy Spirit meets that longing, empowering us to put it into action. As we walk in obedience, our spiritual hunger begins to find real satisfaction—the deep joy of seeing God's transforming work in us.

Still, because of indwelling sin, that satisfaction remains partial in this life. But one day, when Christ returns, it will be complete. We will be raised with glorified bodies—free forever from sin's pull—and will joyfully and perfectly submit to God's will. Imagine it: unbroken obedience, uninterrupted joy, and a heart that never strays. That is the fullness Jesus promises.

Can you imagine a world where every thought and every action aligns perfectly with God's will? *Always thinking and always doing what is right in God's sight?* Where righteousness is not just desired, but *dwells* everywhere? That's what awaits us, both personally and globally. As Peter writes, "*We are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells*" (2 Peter 3:13). One day, righteousness will reign throughout creation, and those who hunger for it now will be fully satisfied then. That's His promise.

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<sup>38</sup><https://mcheyne.info/quotes/> (Last accessed May 15, 2025).

Yet Jesus' promise isn't limited to the future alone. Even now, there are rich and tangible blessings for those who pursue righteousness with all their hearts. Scripture highlights at least three.

## Three Present Blessings for the Righteous

### *Blessing #1. We Gain a Genuine and Deeper Assurance of Our Salvation*

*Romans 8:14-16 — For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God... The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

A life increasingly shaped by righteousness provides compelling internal evidence that our faith is real, and from that evidence flows assurance.

Let's be honest; many doubts about salvation arise during seasons of disobedience. We ask ourselves, "How can I truly be saved if I'm living like this?" That's a fair question. While righteous living doesn't earn salvation, it does bear witness to it. And assurance deepens as our obedience grows.

Consider the story of a Christian accountant who, after years of engaging in minor but ongoing financial dishonesty at work, felt convicted while reading Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount. Though afraid of losing his job, he confessed his wrongdoing to his employer, made restitution, and accepted a demotion.

"It was the hardest thing I've ever done," he said, "but also the most freeing. For the first time in years, I felt clean. And I could pray without shame."

God didn't just forgive him, He filled him. He filled him with peace, clarity, and a deeper awareness of His presence. That is the blessing Jesus promises.<sup>39</sup>

### *Blessing #2. We Experience Greater Power in Both Personal and Intercessory Prayer*

While God always hears His children, Scripture tells us that a righteous life brings power and effectiveness to our prayers:

*Psalm 66:18 — If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.*

*James 5:16b — The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

Unrepentant sin can create a barrier, not because God turns away, but because our hearts distance themselves from Him. Yet when we walk in righteousness—characterized by humility, repentance, and sincerity—our prayers align with His will, and He listens with delight.

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<sup>39</sup> Source unknown.

If we desire a deeper, more powerful prayer life—both personally and in intercession—we must pursue righteousness wholeheartedly. The more we hunger for it, the more we will witness God's compassionate hand move in response to our prayers.

### ***Blessing #3. We Become Powerful Witnesses for Christ***

A transformed life speaks far louder than any sermon. People might debate theology or dismiss our words, but they cannot deny a life marked by integrity, compassion, and obedience. That's why Scripture frequently calls believers to live holy, authentic lives:

***Matthew 5:16 — In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.***

***1 Peter 2:12 — Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.***

We live in a world hungry for authenticity. When our lives *consistently* reflect the character of Jesus, it stands out. Such a life becomes a powerful testimony and has the power to draw people in. It's living proof that Jesus is real and that He has the power to change hearts and transform lives.

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*Our lives either confirm or contradict the message we preach—  
may they always confirm it  
with grace and truth!*

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## **How to Cultivate a Holy Hunger**

So how can we grow this kind of desire—this *holy hunger*—for righteousness? Jesus doesn't just call us to it, He shows us how. Here are two essential ways to nurture it daily.

### ***1. Long for the Righteous One, Not Just Righteousness***

At the heart of true righteousness is not a checklist of good deeds, but a heart that longs for God *Himself*—the sum and source of all righteousness. We don't just seek His blessings; we seek His presence.

When you love someone, you naturally want to be near them, to know them deeply, and to bring them joy. The same is true in our relationship with the Lord. The more we seek Him, the more our desires are shaped to please and honor Him.

Listen to the cries of God's people throughout Scripture:

***Psalm 42:1 — As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.***

**Psalm 63:1** — *You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.*

**Isaiah 26:9** — *My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you. When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness.*

These aren't formal or ritualistic prayers; they are the passionate cries of people who have tasted God's goodness and can't get enough. That's the starting point:

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*Hungering for righteousness begins  
with hungering for the Righteous One.*

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When our deepest longing is for God Himself, righteousness naturally follows. It becomes the overflow of a heart captivated by His presence.

## **2. Feed That Longing Through God's Word**

When we love God, we want to know what pleases Him. And the only place where we discover His desires, His standards, and His heart is in His Word—the Bible. If righteousness means living rightly in God's eyes, then His Word must become our daily nourishment for knowing how to live.

That's why, throughout Scripture, we see God's people continually expressing their deep desire and delight in God's Word:

**Psalm 119:20** — *My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times.*

**Job 23:12** — *I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.*

**Jeremiah 15:16** — *When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, Lord God Almighty.*

**Matthew 4:4** — *Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*

This isn't about collecting Bible facts; it's about *obedient delight*. The more we feed on God's Word with a heart ready to obey, the more our hunger for Him grows. It becomes a beautiful spiritual cycle:

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*Longing for God → leads to a longing for His Word → strengthens the soul → produces obedience  
→ deepens our spiritual hunger.*

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But the reverse is also true:

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*Neglecting God → leads to neglecting His Word → weakens the soul → produces disobedience → dulls our spiritual hunger.*

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So ask yourself: *What am I feeding my soul with? What do my cravings reveal?* As the saying goes, "You are what you eat." If your soul feasts on the things of the world, your appetite for the things of God will fade. But when you intentionally feed on His presence and His Word, you'll discover a hunger that both satisfies and multiplies.

Peter urges us to put away "all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind" and "to crave pure spiritual milk [i.e., God's Word], so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (1 Peter 2:1-3).

Take a few moments to honestly ask yourself:

- Am I watching or consuming things that dull my desire for God?
- Am I chasing worldly pursuits more than heavenly ones?
- Are my relationships pulling me closer to—or further from—God's will?
- Am I daily craving and feeding on God's Word?

In other words, *what am I really hungering for?*

## A Loving Challenge

In South India, there is a custom often practiced when someone dies. I remember doing it myself as a young boy—before I knew Christ—when my father passed away. In this ritual, a handful of rice is placed in the mouth of the deceased, symbolizing nourishment for the soul after death. But as the body is carried to the burial ground, that rice remains untouched. Why? Because the dead no longer hunger or thirst.

That image carries a sobering spiritual truth: spiritually dead people have no hunger or thirst for righteousness. So if you profess to be a Christian and yet feel no craving to do what is right in God's sight, you must ask yourself a serious question: *Am I spiritually alive?*

Remember, the Sermon on the Mount is not just a list of moral ideals, it is a mirror that Jesus holds up to reveal whether we truly belong to Him. His warning near the end makes this unmistakably clear:

*Matthew 7:21 – Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

One mark of doing the Father's will is a deep, growing hunger for righteousness, for living in a way that pleases Him. If such hunger is absent, can we honestly claim to be His children?

We must not deceive ourselves. If our lives show no evidence of righteousness, the call is clear: *repent without delay*. We must come to Christ in humble brokenness, confessing our sin and trusting fully in His death and resurrection for forgiveness. That's where true life begins: when God declares us positionally righteous in His sight.

From that moment on, the Holy Spirit, given to every true believer, works within us to cultivate a deeper and deeper hunger for righteousness. And God, who placed that longing within us, promises to satisfy it completely.

One day, when Christ returns, that hunger will be fully and finally satisfied—when we live in perfect obedience and unbroken joy before Him forever.

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*Lord, if there is no hunger in my heart for what pleases You,  
awaken me. Convict me, cleanse me, and give me the grace to come  
to You  
in repentance and faith.*

*I want to hunger for righteousness—and for You—more than anything else. Amen.*

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## **The      Eternal      Warning      We      Cannot      Afford      to Ignore**

Those who reject a life of hungering and thirsting for righteousness will one day hunger and thirst for something else entirely—*relief from the torments of hell* (Luke 16:24). But in that place, their thirst will never be quenched. Their hunger will never be satisfied. What a tragic, terrifying, and utterly hopeless eternity awaits those who ignore Jesus' serious call to righteousness.

We are what we eat. If our souls continually feed on sin, self, and rebellion, our final destiny will be eternal separation from God—a place of unending suffering. But if we feed on righteousness—if we long for what is right in God's sight—our destiny will be eternal and overflowing joy in His glorious presence.

Two appetites. Two destinies. **What are you feeding your soul with today?**

May God help us to choose the path of eternal joy, to hunger and thirst after righteousness until the day we are fully and forever satisfied in Him.

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*Blessed indeed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they and they alone will surely be filled.*

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And to Him who makes it all possible:

*Jude 1:24-25 – To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy — to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.*

### Scripture Verse for Memorization -----

*Matthew 5:6 – Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled.*

### Prayer -----

*Lord Jesus, So often I chase after the world and its desires. Forgive my hidden faults and willful sins; may they not rule over me. Teach me to love Your Word and Your ways and to hate what is evil. Help me to hunger and thirst for Your righteousness. Your ways are steadfast, and all of them are righteous. Make them more precious to me than gold, my Lord, my Rock, and my Redeemer. Fill me with a longing for You alone until the day I am fully satisfied in Your presence forever. Amen.<sup>40</sup>*

### Discussion Questions (Shorter Version) -----

1. What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness in your daily life?
2. What do your priorities and habits show about what your heart is truly seeking?
3. Are there things in your life that might be dulling your desire for God and His ways?
4. How can you grow your appetite for God's righteousness this week?
5. How does God's promise to "fill" those who seek Him encourage you in spiritually dry spells or challenging seasons?

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<sup>40</sup> Prayer combines language and ideas from Psalm 19:12–14 and Arthur Bennet, *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions*, Banner of Truth Trust, 1988, p. 170-71.

### **Discussion Questions (Longer Version) -----**

1. In your own words, what does it mean to “hunger and thirst for righteousness”? How is this deeper than simply trying to be a moral or religious person?
2. What are you truly “hungering” for right now in your life? What do your thoughts, time, and energy reveal about your soul’s appetite?
3. What are some things that may be dulling your spiritual hunger for righteousness? (For example: entertainment choices, relationships, unchecked sin, worldly ambitions.)
4. How can you tell if your pursuit of righteousness is genuine and Spirit-led versus driven by duty, pressure, or self-righteousness?
5. Why must a believer’s right standing before God (positional righteousness) come before pursuing right living (practical righteousness)? How does the gospel free us to pursue holiness with joy and not with fear?
6. In which area of your life—relationships, personal integrity, private devotion, or inner life—do you most struggle to live righteously? Why?
7. Spiritual habits like time in the Word, prayer, fasting, confession, fellowship with other believers, reading a good Christian book, etc., help us sustain a hunger for righteousness over time. Which of these habits have helped you grow closer to God, and why?
8. Thinking about the habits you reflected on in the prior question, what practical steps can you take this week to cultivate that deep hunger? Are there specific disciplines, sacrifices, or intentional changes He might be calling you to make?
9. Have you ever experienced the soul-satisfaction Jesus promises in this Beatitude? What did that feel like and what brought it about?
10. What does Jesus’ promise, “they will be filled,” tell you about God’s heart toward those who pursue Him? How might that give you hope or motivation in dry seasons?

### **Hymns/Songs-----**

1. As the Deer
2. Abide
3. Knowing You
4. Give Me Jesus
5. I Need Thee
6. Thy Word

7. Nothing but the Blood
8. All I Once Held Dear
9. Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

## Blessed Are the Merciful

*Matthew 5:7 - Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

When John Wesley was a missionary in Georgia, Governor James Oglethorpe had a slave who stole a jug of wine and drank it. Furious, the governor demanded the man be beaten. Wesley pleaded for mercy, but Oglethorpe snapped, “I want vengeance. I never forgive.” Wesley quietly replied, “Then I hope to God, sir, you never sin.”

Not only in Wesley’s day but also in Jesus’, mercy was often despised. The Greeks and Romans viewed it as weakness. One Roman philosopher even called mercy “a disease of the soul.”<sup>41</sup> Into that kind of hard, honor-driven culture, Jesus spoke these startling words: “*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*”

Even today, our culture often prizes vengeance, bitterness, and self-protection over compassion. But Jesus calls His followers to a radically different way: to live as people marked by mercy. Yet another call to counterculture living! According to Jesus, mercy isn’t a disease of the soul; it’s the surest sign of a soul healed from the disease of sin. This, Jesus says, is the truly “blessed” life—the one that carries God’s approval.

### Understanding Mercy

“Mercy” is one of the most beautiful words in the English language and certainly one of the most precious truths in the Christian faith. A Greek dictionary defines mercy as “the moral quality of feeling compassion and especially of showing kindness toward someone in need. This can refer to human kindness and God’s kindness to humankind.”<sup>42</sup>

The following story from history beautifully illustrates the true nature of mercy:

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<sup>41</sup> Source Unknown.

<sup>42</sup> Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words.

A soldier in Alexander the Great's army was caught after deserting it, and his punishment was death. So, his mother came and pleaded with Alexander repeatedly, saying, "Please have mercy." Alexander replied, "He does not deserve mercy."

The wise mother responded, "If he deserved it, it wouldn't be mercy."<sup>43</sup>

That reply captures the very essence of mercy—it is never earned. Mercy is compassion in action, a deliberate choice to show kindness to those who don't deserve it. An unknown writer described it this way: *"Mercy understands the hurt, feels the hurt, and moves to heal the hurt."*

In other words, mercy involves the mind in that it understands the hurt, it involves the emotions in that it feels the hurt, and it involves the will in that it acts to cure the hurt.

## God's Mercy in Action

This is exactly how God demonstrates His mercy toward us. He saw the devastation that sin brought upon humanity, and—moved by compassion—He acted by sending His Son to heal our brokenness. God withholds what our sin deserves: judgment. That is mercy. Then He gives what we could never earn: new life through Christ. That is grace.

Peter reminds us, "In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). Paul echoes this truth, describing God as being "rich in mercy" (Ephesians 2:4). And the writer of Hebrews invites us to draw near with confidence to God's throne of grace, where we "receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

I love how the prophet Micah captures God's heart:

*Micah 7:18 – Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever, but delight to show mercy.*

As believers, we acknowledge that everyone has sinned in many ways against our holy God. We understand that, apart from His mercy, we deserve nothing but His righteous judgment: death and eternal separation from His presence. Someone once said, *"If we were given a single glimpse of what we would look like if we got what we deserved, it would give us nightmares for the rest of our lives."*<sup>44</sup>

And yet, in the face of such deserved judgment, Micah tells us that God *delights* to show mercy. What astonishing good news! We do not receive what we justly deserve; instead,

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Duguid, Iain M. Hero of Heroes: Seeing Christ in the Beatitudes (p. 41). Kindle Edition.

we are freely given mercy. That is the gospel in its purest form: divine compassion moved to action for those who could never save themselves.

## Our Call to Be Merciful

The prophet Micah once declared, “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). The same God who delights to show mercy (Micah 7:18) calls His people not only to receive mercy but also to love and *delight* in showing it to others.

Those who have experienced God’s mercy are commanded to extend that same mercy to others—with the same generous, willing spirit that God has shown them. That is exactly what Jesus is teaching in Matthew 5:7, and again in Luke 6:36: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

Here, Jesus describes the true lifestyle of His followers—people marked by mercy. And this mercy is not proven by words or religious sentiment, but by visible, practical, and often costly acts of compassion. The merciful don’t simply admire mercy; they *practice* it.

God’s blessing rests on such people. They are the ones who receive and extend mercy, and to them belongs this beautiful promise: “They will be shown mercy.”

The call to be merciful is not optional. It is the unmistakable mark of those who belong to the Kingdom of Heaven.

## The Danger of Not Showing Mercy

Refusing to show mercy carries serious spiritual consequences. Jesus makes it unmistakably clear that only the merciful will receive mercy. Later in His ministry, He underscores this truth in *The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant* (Matthew 18:21-35). Through it, Jesus not only defines what mercy looks like but also emphasizes the inescapable responsibility of those who have received mercy to extend it to others. Failure to do so provokes God’s righteous and severe judgment.

The parable tells of a servant who owed his king an enormous, unpayable debt (v. 24). In keeping with the law of the time, the king “ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt” (v. 25). This form of debtor’s slavery served as both punishment and restitution—though even a lifetime of servitude could not settle such a vast debt.

In desperation, the servant fell to his knees and begged for patience (v. 26). Moved with compassion, the king “took pity on him, canceled the debt, and let him go” (v. 27)—a stunning picture of the mercy God shows to all who truly repent.

But the story takes a shocking turn. That same servant went out and found a fellow servant who owed him a tiny fraction of what he himself had been forgiven. Seizing the man by the throat, he demanded payment (v. 28). When his fellow servant pleaded for mercy in nearly identical words, the forgiven servant refused and had him thrown into prison (vv. 29-30). The contrast exposes the man's heart: forgiven but unforgiving, shown mercy yet merciless.

When the king heard what had happened, he said, "You wicked servant...I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" (vv. 32-33). That phrase—"just as I had on you"—reveals the heart of the matter. Those who have received mercy from God are commanded—and obligated—to extend that same mercy to others.

The parable ends with a sobering warning: the king, in anger, handed the servant over to be tortured until he repaid all he owed (v. 34), a picture of severe judgment. Jesus concludes, "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart" (v. 35).

As one writer observed:

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*A transformed heart produces a changed life  
that renders to others the same mercy and  
forgiveness one receives from God.<sup>45</sup>*

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A failure to forgive reveals a heart never truly transformed. Scripture consistently teaches that *forgiven people are forgiving people*. Those who withhold mercy show that they have never truly received it, and thus they remain under God's judgment.

James echoes this same truth in a striking manner:

*James 2:12-13 – Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

Though mercy and judgment may seem like opposites, both are expressions of God's righteousness. Yet for those who refuse to show mercy, judgment—not mercy—will prevail.

Those who have genuinely received God's mercy will extend it to others now and receive its fullness in eternity. But those who withhold mercy—no matter how loudly they

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<sup>45</sup> Michael Williams, Matthew, Grace and Truth Study Bible, p. 1321.

profess faith—exhibit lives untouched by God’s mercy. And in the end, they will receive judgment—not mercy.

The world finds revenge delicious. It stays up at night, plotting payback. But followers of Christ are called to reject even the desire for retaliation and instead to *delight in mercy*. When we show mercy—without excusing evil, but responding with redemptive grace—we often soften even hardened hearts.

Yes, true reconciliation cannot happen without repentance. Yet, mercy has the power to awaken hearts hardened over the years by bitterness and open doors for genuine repentance and reconciliation. And even if mercy does not lead to change in the other person, it still transforms us. Indeed, it aligns our hearts with the heart of God.

### **The Beauty of Mercy**

Mercy is a beautiful thing. Without it, you and I would be doomed forever in hell. But through His mercy, God sent Christ to bear the judgment we deserved so that, instead of eternal torment, we could enjoy eternal life with Him. When mercy becomes a consistent part of our lifestyle, we reveal that we have truly received God’s saving mercy—and that we will one day experience it in its fullest measure. That assurance is the rock-solid evidence of genuine salvation (Matthew 6:14; Colossians 3:13).

Yet mercy is not only about eternity; it’s also about this present life, especially in the way we treat one another. A critical and judgmental spirit destroys intimacy in all relationships, including marriage. If one or both spouses constantly criticize or hold grudges, how can intimacy grow? Sooner or later, both will want to get far away from the other.

That’s why the prophet Micah urges us to “*love mercy*.” This is God’s heart, and He wants His people to imitate His ways. There is no better place to do that than in the home, especially in our relationships with our spouses.

*A wife got into an accident while driving a brand-new car. Upset and worried about what her husband might say, she frantically opened the glove compartment to retrieve the insurance papers.*

*As she pulled them out, she saw a note in her husband’s handwriting, “Dear Mary, when you need these papers, remember it’s you I love, not the car!”<sup>46</sup>*

*All of us are broken and sinful by nature, which is why no relationship—particularly marriage—can survive without a steady flow of mercy. Where there is no*

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<sup>46</sup> Gary L Thomas, *Fall in Love with Mercy*, <https://faithgateway.com/blogs/christian-books/fall-love-mercy> (last accessed September 28, 2025)

*mercy, there can be no genuine intimacy. Yes, a couple might stay married for decades, but without mercy, the relationship will only function; it will not flourish.*

*A man once told his pastor about the arguments he had with his wife. When the pastor asked what happened during those fights, the man replied, "Every time we argue, my wife gets historical." The pastor smiled, "You mean hysterical." "No," the husband said. "Historical. She brings up issues that happened twenty or thirty years ago."<sup>47</sup>*

That's what happens when mercy is absent. Keeping records and rehearsing past hurts makes real intimacy—and healthy relationships—impossible. Mercy, however, frees relationships from the chains of the past. It makes forgiveness possible. It restores tenderness. And it reflects the mercy we ourselves have received from God.

Mercy is not optional. Nor is it a sign of weakness. It's a gospel necessity. Without it, relationships crumble, hearts harden, and our witness to the mercy of Christ is obscured. But where mercy flows freely, both divine and human relationships thrive—and the beauty of God's heart shines through His people.

## How to Grow in Showing Mercy

So, how can we *love* mercy? How can we *delight* in showing it?

It begins by continually remembering who we are and what we have received. Mercy grows in the soil of gratitude. When we regularly examine our sins and meditate on the forgiveness we've received through the suffering of the Son of God—who bore our judgment on that cruel cross to purchase our pardon—our hearts begin to change.

We remind ourselves again and again:

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*I deserve hell. Yet, God, You have shown and continue to show mercy to me—a sinner undeserving of even a moment of Your kindness. Jesus, when I see You, I see the full embodiment of mercy.  
Help me to be like You."*

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When this becomes the posture of our hearts, everything changes. We won't be able to say, "I refuse to show mercy to the one who hurt me."

You see, we cannot keep looking at the cross—see the crucified Savior bleeding, suffering, and taking the punishment our sins deserved—and still say, "I cannot forgive them."

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<sup>47</sup> Exact source unknown.

Friends, mercy isn't given to those who *deserve* it. If they deserved it, it wouldn't be mercy at all, would it?

As we increasingly grasp the weight of our own sin and the depth of Christ's mercy, the Holy Spirit softens our hearts. Offenses—whether petty or profound—begin to lose their grip. Mercy takes their place.

The more we look at Jesus, the less room there will be in our hearts for bitterness and the stronger our desire becomes to reflect His mercy to others.

## Living What We've Received

Is there anyone in your life you need to show mercy to? Then do it, not out of obligation or as a grudging duty that says, "I *have* to show mercy," but with joy that says, "I *get* to show mercy. Freely I received, freely I will give!"

But that kind of mercy can only flow from a heart that *loves* mercy. And we only grow to love mercy when we reflect deeply and often on the mercy God has shown us in Christ (Romans 12:1-2).

Remember, showing mercy is not optional. It is clear evidence of a redeemed heart. Receiving mercy is where our new birth began: when, in poverty of spirit, we mourned over our sin and, in meekness, turned to Christ for mercy. From that moment on, the Holy Spirit has been shaping in us a hunger and thirst for righteousness—a life that walks in God's ways and delights in showing mercy to others.

So, let me ask you:

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*Have you personally received God's saving mercy?*

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Perhaps the reason you find it difficult to extend mercy is that you've never truly received it. Maybe you've never seen your sin in all its ugliness or run to the cross for mercy.

If that's the case, ask God to open your eyes. Ask Him to show you your sin and then lead you to the cross, where mercy flows. That's the starting point. And once you've received His mercy, you'll have the power to show it to others.

And that kind of mercy—the mercy that comes from Christ—has the power to change lives. It can heal relationships, restore hearts, and even lead others to salvation.

Please allow me to leave you with a final reminder:

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*The Beatitudes are not just beautiful sayings; they are a spiritual mirror Jesus holds up to help us see whether we truly belong to*

*Him. Are you truly a child of God? If so, then this promise is yours:*

*“Blessed indeed are the merciful, for they—and they alone—will receive mercy” when Jesus, the embodiment of all mercy, comes to reign as King in all glory!*

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### **Scripture Verse for Memorization -----**

*Matthew 5:7 – Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

### **Prayer -----**

*God, thank You for the great mercy You showed to me when I was still a sinner. Help me to extend the same kind of mercy to others and to forgive as You forgave me. Amen.*

### **Discussion Questions (Shorter Version) -----**

1. What does it really mean to be merciful, and how is that different from just being “nice”?
2. Why do people sometimes see mercy as weakness, and how does Jesus challenge that view?
3. According to the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21-35), what does a lack of mercy reveal about a person’s relationship with God?
4. In what ways are you tempted to seek revenge or hold a grudge instead of showing mercy? What lies fuel that temptation?
5. How does remembering God’s mercy toward you help you show mercy to others?
6. Is there someone God might be prompting you to show mercy to right now? What’s making that difficult?

### **Discussion Questions (Longer Version) -----**

1. How would you define mercy in your own words? How does Jesus’ view of mercy differ from how the world defines it, especially in cultures that associate mercy with weakness?

2. What does the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matt. 18:21-35) teach us about the relationship between receiving and showing mercy? What warning does Jesus give about those who refuse to extend mercy?
3. How does this Beatitude point us to the heart of the gospel? In what ways is mercy both the message and the method of Christian living?
4. Can you remember a time when someone showed you mercy you didn't deserve? What impact did that act have on your heart or your relationship with them?
5. Why is it so hard to show mercy, especially when we've been deeply hurt? What internal lies or beliefs make revenge or resentment feel more satisfying?
6. What might a lack of mercy in our lives reveal about our understanding of God's mercy toward us? How does this Beatitude function as a mirror for our hearts?
7. Is there someone in your life right now you need to show mercy to? What's holding you back and how might remembering the cross help you move forward?
8. Where in your everyday life—home, church, work—do you have opportunities to grow in mercy this week? What's one practical step you can take?
9. Why is mercy often seen as a sign of weakness, even among Christians? What might that reveal about how deeply (or shallowly) we've embraced the gospel?
10. What's one way you can imitate Jesus' mercy this week in a relationship where it's hard to forgive? How might God use your mercy to soften or even transform someone else?

### Hymns/Songs-----

1. His Mercy is More-Matt Papa
2. Wonderful, Merciful Savior
3. O God of Mercy, Hear our plea
4. At Calvary
5. Freely, Freely
6. Amazing Grace

## Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

*Matthew 5:8 – Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

### The Longing to See God

If you could see one thing—anything at all—what would it be?

Most people might choose to see a loved one they've lost, a glimpse of their future, or a breathtaking corner of the world. But how many would honestly say, "*I want to see God*"?

For much of the world, God feels distant—or even threatening. But when the heart has been awakened by grace, that feeling changes completely. The one who has truly met Christ begins to feel a deep, unshakable longing: "I want to see God. I want to behold His beauty in the face of Christ. I long for His presence."

This longing isn't just emotional; it's spiritual. It flows from a heart awakened by the Spirit and continually transformed by grace.

This desire is not new. Moses once pleaded, "Show me your glory" (Exodus 33:18) and David echoed that same cry: "One thing I ask from the Lord...that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD" (Psalm 27:4). Throughout Scripture, those who knew God best longed to see Him most.

This hunger to see God is beautiful, but it's also profoundly countercultural. We live in a world that glorifies self-fulfillment, not self-purification. The Beatitudes, including this one, call us to a radically different kind of life. They don't just tweak our lives; they transform our hearts from the inside out.

But that raises an important question: if only the pure in heart will see God, what does it really mean to have a pure heart?

## The Desire Is Good—But Is It Enough?

It's one thing to *desire* to see God. It's quite another to be *certain* that we will. That's the very question Jesus answers in Matthew 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

This is a breathtaking promise from Jesus. But it's also an exclusive one: *only* the pure in heart will see God. Not just the decent, the outwardly religious, or the morally upright. Only those who are pure where it matters most—*the heart*—will see God. No one else.

So, what does it mean to be "pure in heart"? And how can we know if that's who we really are?

## The Fogged-Up Window

Imagine standing before a massive picture window that overlooks a stunning landscape—soaring mountains, a golden horizon, and a valley filled with light. But the glass is fogged over. You know the beauty is there, but you can't see it clearly. The view is blurred, obscured.

That's what sin does to the human heart. It clouds our vision of God. We may believe He exists and even desire Him, but without purity, our sight remains dim—obscured by pride, shame, and hidden idols.

Jesus doesn't just promise the view. He gives us the key to seeing clearly: a heart made clean by grace.

## Where This Beatitude Leads Us

This Beatitude is not a call to condemnation. It's an invitation to reflection and to deeper longing.

Jesus isn't setting an impossible standard; He's awakening a holy hunger. The call to be pure in heart isn't about achieving perfection; it's about pursuing a direction, a life fully surrendered to God and continually cleansed by His mercy.

So ask yourself: When was the last time you deeply longed for more of God's presence—not for what He could do, but simply for who He is?

That's the starting point of true discipleship.

In the pages ahead, we will explore what it truly means to:

- See God
- Be pure in heart
- Cultivate purity in real life

- And live with the unshakable hope this Beatitude promises

Let's begin.

## **Seeing God: The Greatest Sight of All**

The promise of seeing God is the highest joy of the Christian life. But what does that really mean both here and now and in eternity?

### *Jesus: The Radiance of God's Glory.*

Because God is spirit, He is invisible to human eyes. As Scripture says, "No one has ever seen God" (John 1:18). But that doesn't mean He is unknowable. In love, God has chosen to reveal Himself in visible and tangible ways.

So when Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God," what does He mean?

The Bible gives us a clear answer. Hebrews 1:3 declares that Jesus is "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." *In other words, to see Jesus is to see God.* That's exactly what Jesus Himself told His disciples in John 14:9: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

Though we cannot yet see the Father in His full essence, we behold Him in Christ—through His words, compassion, power, suffering, and glory. Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15).

### *The Day We See Him Face to Face.*

But this isn't the end of the promise. It goes even further. One day, we will see Jesus—not merely with the eyes of faith, but with resurrected eyes, in all His heavenly majesty.

1 John 3:2b gives us this incredible assurance:

*We know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see Him as he is.*

This is the ultimate fulfillment of the Beatitude. The pure in heart *will* see God by seeing Jesus Christ in His full, unveiled glory.

Imagine a child who has only heard their parent's voice on the phone. They've seen a few pictures, maybe even glimpsed them on a video call, but never in person. Then, one day, the door opens. There stands the parent they've longed to see. There's instant recognition, overwhelming joy, and a love that floods the room.

That is only a faint picture of what awaits every true believer. One day, the One we have trusted, worshiped, and longed for—often from a distance—will appear in glory. And we will see Him as *He is*.

### ***A Question Worth Pondering***

If the greatest promise of eternity is to *see Jesus*—not merely to escape pain, or enjoy reward, but to behold the Lord Himself. *Does that longing match the deepest desire of your heart?*

Or have comfort, success, or the temporary joys of this world dulled your desire for Him?

### **What It Means to Be Pure in Heart**

When Jesus says the pure in heart are blessed, He's pointing us to something far deeper than surface-level morality. He was going after the heart.

#### ***More Than Clean Hands—A Clean Heart***

The word "pure" in Matthew 5:8 comes from the Greek word *katharos*, from which we get the English word *catharsis*—a purging, a cleansing, a removal of impurities. Biblically, it speaks of inner cleansing—spiritual and moral—not merely external or behavioral.

Many people associate being "pure in heart" primarily with sexual purity. And yes, purity certainly includes freedom from lust. Jesus Himself warns about lusting in the heart later in this very sermon (Matthew 5:27-30). But here, Jesus is addressing something broader: a heart free from *all* impurities, such as pride, greed, hypocrisy, deceit, envy, and yes, lust.

A pure heart is one that is *undivided in its loyalty* and fully devoted to God, with nothing competing for His place.

#### ***Undivided Devotion***

In Matthew 6:24, Jesus declares, "No one can serve two masters...You cannot serve both God and money." More literally, it reads, "No one can be a slave of two masters...you cannot be slaves of God and of money."<sup>48</sup>

This is what it means to be pure in heart—*a heart with one Master*. No mixed motives. No hidden agendas. No divided loyalties. Just sincere, wholehearted devotion to God.

That kind of inner purity was exactly what the religious leaders of Jesus' day lacked. Their obsession was with outward appearance, not inward transformation. Jesus exposed

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<sup>48</sup> Holman Christian Standard Bible, 2009 rendering.

this hollow righteousness again and again, reminding them that what truly defiles a person is the condition of the heart and not external behavior:

*Matthew 15:19-20—For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person.”*

### ***Clean on the Outside.***

A story is told of a devout Jewish man who was imprisoned and given only a piece of bread and a small cup of water. Instead of drinking the water, he used it to ceremonially wash his hands before eating, faithfully upholding a ritual, even in hardship.

But Jesus would ask, *What good is a clean hand if the heart remains unclean?*

This isn't to mock tradition or devotion. Rather, it reminds us that external cleanliness is no substitute for internal purity. God sees far beyond the surface. He is not impressed by ritual, reputation, or appearance but by hearts that are surrendered, sincere, and fully devoted to Him.

### ***Purity Is Not Perfection, but Direction***

Jesus calls for a purity that isn't about being flawless, but about being *faithful*. A pure heart is a repentant heart, a heart washed by grace and seeks to continually walk in step with God's will.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus paints a vivid picture of what this purity looks like in daily life:

- Putting away anger and pursuing reconciliation (Matthew 5:21-26).
- Honoring the marriage covenant and rejecting lust (Matthew 5:27-32).
- Speaking truth instead of manipulating with words (Matthew 5:33-37).
- Refusing to retaliate but responding with love and mercy by seeking to go the extra mile of loving, praying, and doing good even for enemies (Matthew 5:38-48).
- Giving, praying, and fasting, not for human applause, but for God's glory (Matthew 6:1-18).
- Storing up treasure in heaven, not on earth (Matthew 6:19-34).
- Judging others with humility and compassion (Matthew 7:1-12).
- Walking the narrow road of obedience rather than the broad road of convenience (Matthew 7:13-27).

In short, the pure in heart are not focused on an outward show of religion but on real, inside-out transformation. They don't settle for appearance; they seek authenticity. Their lives are shaped by a sincere love for God and a deep longing to please Him.

### ***Is Your Heart Divided?***

Take a moment to pause and ask yourself:

- Are there areas of my heart where I'm serving two masters?
- Are my motives mixed or even self-deceptive, doing the right things but for the wrong reasons?
- Do I genuinely want to be clean before God, not merely to appear clean before others?

Jesus doesn't just expose our divided hearts; He offers to purify them. In the next section, we'll explore how we can pursue and maintain a heart that's truly His.

### **How to Maintain a Pure Heart**

So how do we do it? In a world overflowing with impurity, how can we keep our hearts pure?

Jesus calls us to be "pure in heart," but this isn't something we can achieve in our own strength. It's a lifelong pursuit that *begins* with God and *continues* by His grace.

Scripture gives us clear guidance for how to walk this path. Below are four foundational principles to help us cultivate and maintain purity of heart in daily life.

#### **Principle #1: Be Saved**

The starting point of a pure heart is a *cleansed heart*, one that has been washed clean from the guilt and pollution of sin.

Scripture makes it clear that this cleansing happens through faith in Jesus Christ. As the Apostle Peter said of the Gentile believers in Acts 15:9, God "purified their hearts by faith." Salvation isn't about trying harder to fix ourselves; it's about coming to Jesus, who alone can wash away our sins and give us a new heart. Without this initial cleansing, there can be no true purity.

However, it's important to understand that when Jesus spoke these words in the Sermon on the Mount, He was primarily addressing those who already believed—those who had placed their faith in God. That means the purity He describes in Matthew 5:8 goes *beyond* the moment of salvation.

It's not only about *positional purity*—our righteous standing before God when we're saved—but also about *practical purity*—the ongoing, daily shaping and renewing of our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

God doesn't just want us to be forgiven; He wants us to be transformed, with hearts that are not only freed from guilt, but *increasingly* freed from sin's grip.

***The Filtered Stream.***

Imagine you're hiking in the mountains and come across a crystal-clear stream. It looks clean, sparkling, refreshing and untouched. But any seasoned hiker knows that even the clearest water can carry unseen bacteria. Unless it's filtered or purified, it can still make you sick.

In the same way, a heart may appear clean—moral, kind, even religious, but without Jesus, it remains spiritually contaminated. Only Jesus can purify what lies beneath the surface and make us truly clean before God.

***For Reflection:***

- Have you ever tried to be “pure” by changing your behavior without first being changed in your heart?
- Have you trusted Jesus not only to forgive your sins but to give you a new heart, a heart that longs for Him?

That's where the pursuit begins—with a new heart. But how do we keep that heart clean in a polluted world?

**Principle #2: Pray Daily for a Pure Heart**

Maintaining a pure heart isn't something we can accomplish on our own; it requires continual reliance on God's grace. Left to ourselves, our hearts naturally drift away from God rather than toward Him. We are naturally prone to defilement by pride, selfishness, lust, bitterness, and the pull of the world.

That's why, like King David, we must learn to cry out day after day, as he did in Psalm 51:10:

*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

David's prayer wasn't a request for a simple surface-level clean-up; it was a desperate cry for radical transformation—a heart thoroughly cleansed from all spiritual pollution, fiercely devoted to God alone, and free from divided loyalties.

This is not a one-time prayer but a daily cry because only the Holy Spirit can renew our hearts and keep them centered on Christ.

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*When Was the Last Time You  
Asked God for a Pure Heart?*

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We ask God for so many things—healing, provision, guidance, comfort—but how often do we pause to ask Him for a clean heart?

If we're honest, this kind of prayer often gets pushed aside. Why? Because our hearts are often *divided*, torn between a love for Christ and a love for the world. And when our hearts are polluted, our motives inevitably become contaminated. We begin to desire comfort more than holiness, recognition more than righteousness, and control more than surrender.

Living in an entertainment-saturated culture dulls our hunger for God's things. What we consume, chase, and daydream about all reflect the condition of our inner life.

### *A Quiet Mirror for the Soul*

One theologian posed a series of soul-searching questions that serve as a mirror to examine the state of our hearts:<sup>49</sup>

- What do you think about when no one is watching and your mind slips into neutral?
- How tolerant are you of deception or shady humor, no matter how funny?
- What consistently captures your loyalty and allegiance?
- What do you want more than anything else? What (or whom) do you truly love?
- To what extent do your actions and words reflect your heart—or hide it?

These questions aren't comfortable, but they are necessary.

When asked regularly and answered honestly, they can expose the cracks in our affections. This realization isn't meant to crush us. Instead, it's meant to *drive us back to God*. It reminds us that we lack the spiritual resources to live a God-pleasing life on our own.

That's why Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with the words: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit*" (Matthew 5:3). Only when we recognize our poverty can we come to the One who purifies.

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<sup>49</sup> Carson, D. A. Jesus's Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World: A Study of Matthew 5-10 (p. 31). (Function). Kindle Edition.

**For Reflection:**

- When was the last time you sincerely cried out, “Create in me a pure heart, O God”?
- Have you become more concerned with managing your image than maintaining inner purity?

***Hope in the Gospel: Cleansed by Christ's Blood***

The beauty of the gospel is this: *we are not left to fix ourselves*. Jesus didn’t just come to forgive our sins; He came to cleanse us completely. As 1 John 1:7 assures us, “The blood of Jesus...purifies us from all sin.”

So, let us approach Him, not with pride or self-reliance, but with humble confidence in His mercy. We can ask again and again for the purity of heart that only He can give.

**Principle #3: Diligently study God’s Word**

If prayer is how we cry out for a pure heart, Scripture is how God answers that cry.

Jesus said to His disciples in John 15:3, “You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.” The Word of God is what initially cleanses our hearts at salvation. But this cleansing isn’t meant to be a one-time event—it’s a lifelong process.

Just two chapters later, Jesus prays for His followers:

*John 17:17—Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.*

To *sanctify* means to set apart. In this case, it is to set apart from sin to holiness, from impurity to purity. And how does this happen? Through the truth of God’s Word. It is the divine knife that cuts away what defiles us and shapes us to reflect God’s holiness.

***God’s Word: A Daily Cleanser***

Think of God’s Word as a spiritual cleanser. Just as our bodies need regular washing to remove the dirt and grime of daily life, our hearts need daily cleansing from the dust and defilement of the world. This cleansing happens as we read, meditate on, and obey Scripture.

Neglecting God’s Word is like refusing to bathe. It doesn’t take long before the buildup shows. Pride, anger, lust, and selfish ambition begin to fester when our hearts aren’t regularly exposed to the cleansing truth of Scripture.

We don’t just need *information* from the Bible; we need *transformation* by the Bible (Romans 12:2). That transformation only comes when we approach God’s Word humbly, allowing the Holy Spirit to apply its truth deeply and personally.

**For Reflection:**

- Are you consistently exposing your heart to God's Word in a way that *confronts, cleanses, and transforms* you?
- Or have your times in the Word become rushed, mechanical, or rare?

Let us not forget: *There can be no purity of heart apart from the Word of God.* If we truly desire to see God more clearly, we must allow His Word to regularly and thoroughly refine our hearts.

**Principle #4: Guard What We See, Where We Go, And Who We're With**

If God's Word cleanses our hearts, then what we allow into our lives through our eyes, ears, and relationships can either protect or pollute that purity.

The pursuit of a pure heart is not only about our intentions—it's also about our choices. What we allow into our lives through our eyes, ears, and relationships shapes the condition of our hearts; it will either cultivate purity or gradually corrupt it.

King David, a man after God's own heart, made this solemn vow in Psalm 101:3-4:

*I will not look with approval on anything that is vile. I hate what faithless people do; I will have no part in it. The perverse of heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with what is evil.*

David understood a vital truth: purity requires boundaries. If he wanted to walk closely with God, he couldn't afford to indulge his eyes on wickedness or keep company with corrupt influences. His heart's purity was too valuable to risk.

*And so is ours.*

***The Gateway to the Heart***

Our eyes and ears are not neutral; they are gateways to the soul. What we watch, listen to, and surround ourselves with inevitably shapes our desires, thoughts, and decisions. That's why Scripture warns us so clearly:

***1 Corinthians 15:33 — Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'***

We might think we're unaffected by a show that glorifies sin, a relationship that cools our zeal for Christ, or a digital feed full of vanity and envy. But the Bible says: *don't be deceived.* These things change us—and rarely for the better.

We must be ruthless in removing anything—whether entertainment, environments, or even certain friendships—that dulls our appetite for God or pollutes our affections.

### ***Polluted Water***

Imagine trying to fill a glass with clean drinking water while a few drops of sewage slowly drip in. Would we drink it? Of course not. Even if it's mostly clean, the contamination makes it unsafe.

In the same way, our hearts may seem "mostly" pure—but if we're allowing a steady drip of impurity through what we watch, listen to, or the company we keep, our spiritual health *will* suffer.

#### ***For Reflection:***

- Are there influences in your life—through media, relationships, or environments—that are subtly eroding your heart's purity?
- What courageous steps might God be calling you to take to better guard the gates of your heart?

Remember: purity of heart doesn't happen by accident. It requires *vigilance, intention, and sometimes painful decisions*. But the reward—*seeing God more clearly*—is worth every sacrifice.

As someone rightly said, "Sin always looks better through the windshield than the rear-view mirror." But God's promises are better: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God!*<sup>50</sup>

### **The Heart That Will See God**

So, there we have it—four essential principles for cultivating and maintaining a pure heart:

- Be saved. That's the starting point.
- Pray daily for a pure heart.
- Diligently study God's Word.
- Guard what we see, where we go, and who we're with.

These are not just spiritual habits. They are the heart-level responses of someone who truly longs for God. And according to Jesus, *only* the pure in heart will see Him.

Hebrews 12:14 echoes this sobering truth:

*Without holiness, no one will see the Lord.*

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<sup>50</sup> Garrett Kell, *Pure in Heart*, p. 24.

It's not enough to say the right things or merely appear religious. Our words, actions, and motives must flow from a heart that has been cleansed and is *being continually purified* by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.

As Paul exhorts in 2 Corinthians 7:1:

*Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

In other words, purity on the inside ("spirit") leads to purity on the outside ("body"). A pure heart produces a pure life. And this kind of life doesn't happen overnight—it's a daily journey, fueled by grace, marked by repentance, and empowered by the Spirit.

And the reward?

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they—and they alone—will see God.*

- May this promise awaken our hunger for holiness.
- May it deepen our desire to know and love Christ.
- And may it shape how we live today—for the joy of seeing God face to face tomorrow.

### Scripture Verse for Memorization -----

*Matthew 5:8 –Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God*

### Prayer -----

*Lord Jesus, Thank You for dying for my sins. Give me a deeper repentance, a holy hatred for sin and a deep remorse for how it grieves Your Spirit. Reveal the worldly areas of my life I have not surrendered and that keep me from You. Help me to flee from them and to resolve that my heart shall be Yours alone. Transform my heart through Your Word so that I may desire only You. Continue to purify me by the power of the Holy Spirit that I may walk in Your ways. Keep me by Your grace until the day I see You face to face and live in Your presence forever. Amen.<sup>51</sup>*

### Discussion Questions (Shorter Version) -----

1. What does it mean to have a pure heart, and why does Jesus say that only the pure in heart will "see God"?

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<sup>51</sup> Prayer combines language from Arthur Bennet, *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions*, Banner of Truth Trust, 1988, p. 75.

2. What influences (media, relationships, environments) might be subtly polluting your heart on a daily basis, and what boundaries or changes might God be calling you to make?
3. How can you tell if you're more focused on looking good to others than on being pure before God?
4. What role does Scripture play in cleansing and renewing your heart, and what needs to change in your approach to God's Word?
5. How consistently do you ask God, like David did in Psalm 51:10, to create a pure heart in you? How might praying this prayer regularly change your spiritual life?

### **Discussion Questions (Longer Version) -----**

1. What does it mean to you personally to "see God"? Is that something you truly long for, or has it been pushed aside by other longings?
2. Jesus said only the "pure in heart" will see God. In your own words, how would you define a pure heart?
3. We often say purity is not about perfection, but direction. What direction is your heart currently pointed in? What is it most drawn to?
4. Are there any areas in your life where you feel divided—trying to serve two masters (God and something else)? How does that affect your relationship with Him?
5. What role does God's Word play in your heart today? Are you allowing Scripture to cleanse, shape, and convict you, or has it just become information?
6. How often do you pray like David did in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a pure heart, O God"? What might keep you from praying that more often?
7. Are there any influences—media, relationships, habits—that may be subtly eroding your heart's purity? What step might God be prompting you to take to guard your heart more carefully?
8. Do you find yourself more concerned with appearing pure to others than actually being pure before God? What's the difference, and how can we avoid hypocrisy?
9. The promise is that the pure in heart will see God. How does that eternal reward motivate you to pursue purity today in both your thoughts and choices?

### **Hymns/Songs-----**

1. Create in Me a Clean Heart

2. Give Us Clean Hands
3. As the Deer
4. Open the Eyes of my Heart?
5. Draw me Closer
6. Face to Face with Christ My Savior
7. Lord Make Me Pure in Heart
8. Search Me O God
9. Take Time to be Holy
10. From the Inside Out

## Blessed Are the Peacemakers

*Matthew 5:9 – Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

### The Makers of Peace: Children of God in a Divided World

In a world fractured by conflict, violence, and division, peace often feels like a distant dream. Nations clash. Communities are divided over politics, race, and ideology. Even churches, places meant to embody Christ's love, are often filled with discord. Families fracture under the weight of unresolved pain. Spouses grow cold. Parents and children live like strangers.

Conflict is everywhere—sometimes loud and explosive, other times quiet and simmering beneath the surface. But it's always damaging. Always costly.

And yet, into this chaos, Jesus offers a radical promise: "*Blessed are the peacemakers.*" Not peace-dreamers. Not peace-wishers. Not even mere peace-lovers. But *peacemakers*—those who step into the conflict, not to fan the flames, but to heal the wounds. People who *actively* build bridges where walls have been erected. People who carry the peace of Christ in their hearts and extend it to a fractured world.

### Peacemaking: A Sacred Calling

But what exactly does it mean to be a peacemaker?

The word "*peacemaker*" comes from two simple words—*peace* and *maker*. But there's nothing simple about their meaning.

*Peace*, in Scripture, is far more than the absence of war. It's the rich Hebrew concept of *shalom*—a state of wholeness, well-being, and right relationship with God, others, and even ourselves. In Greek, the word *eirēnē* carries a similar meaning: harmony, stability, and the blessing of God's presence.

And *maker* implies action. Peacemaking is not passive. It's not simply hoping things get better. It requires initiative and intention. It may even involve struggle—but a very different kind of struggle than the world's. Peacemaking is the *active pursuit* of healing, restoration, and reconciliation.

So when Jesus calls us to be peacemakers, He is calling us to *take up the work of reconciliation*, to step into broken places and become agents of healing in a world wrecked by sin.

But, as with all Kingdom work, peacemaking carries tension. While we are called to pursue reconciliation, we are never called to do so by compromising truth. Real peace must be built on God's righteousness. Otherwise, what we call "peace" may only be avoidance or appeasement in disguise.

### **Peace Without Compromise**

Let's be clear: Striving to be a peacemaker does *not* mean we are to bring peace at any cost, especially not at the expense of obedience to God's Word.

The previous Beatitude calls for purity of heart—a heart centered on God, one that seeks to reflect His character. Just as God never compromises holiness to achieve peace, neither should we. True peace is never built on impurity. We cannot—and must not—pursue peace by tolerating what God clearly calls sin. Peace without purity isn't peace at all.

Being a peacemaker also doesn't mean our lives will be free from conflict or that everyone will speak well of us. Nor does it mean we gloss over real problems. In fact, striving for peace may stir even more resistance. Yet even in the face of tension or rejection, we are still called to step into the brokenness of this world as God's agents of reconciliation.

It's also important to understand what Jesus means when He says, "*They will be called children of God.*" He is not teaching that we *become* children of God by being peacemakers. If that were the case, none of us could ever qualify for we all fall short of living up to God's commands.

The Beatitudes are not instructions for earning God's favor. Rather, they describe the character and lifestyle of those who *already* belong to Him—those who are His children. We become children of God by grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ alone, not through our own effort. As John 1:12 says, "Yet to all who did receive him [i.e., Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

Those who have been made children of God will begin to reflect their Father's heart, because peacemaking is part of the family resemblance. Living as a peacemaker is one of the evidences that a person's faith is real. It is the *fruit*, not the *root*, of our salvation. This is the "blessed" person—one who lives under God's approval and favor, walking in step with His redemptive mission in the world.

Because peacemaking reflects the very heart of God, it is a high and holy calling, one that touches every part of our lives. So if this calling truly mirrors the character of God, what does it actually involve? What does it look like, in practice, to live as a true peacemaker in a broken world?

I believe there are **eight defining characteristics** of a true peacemaker.

## Eight Characteristics of Peacemakers

### Characteristic #1: Peacemakers Are at Peace with God

#### *Reconciliation Through Christ*

The foundation of all true peace begins with being at peace with God. And the only way to experience this peace with our holy God is through His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Paul makes this very clear:

*Romans 5:1 — Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

It is the blood of Jesus that cleanses us from all sin, opening the way to a restored relationship with God. Because Jesus is the appointed means by which we are reconciled to our holy God, every peacemaker must begin here—rooted in God’s grace and forgiveness.

#### *Inner Transformation Leads to Outer Peace*

Peace with God transforms our hearts. When we experience God’s forgiveness and grace, it reshapes how we see ourselves and others. It releases us from fear, pride, and bitterness—barriers that often fuel conflict. Only through this inner transformation can we genuinely offer peace and reconciliation to others.

Without this transformation, our peacemaking efforts—though well-intentioned—may ring hollow or even come across as hypocritical, because the root of peace—our own heart—is unsettled. This becomes especially clear when we contrast external efforts with internal readiness.

Imagine someone trying to reconcile two friends while harboring deep anger or unresolved bitterness themselves. Their efforts often fall flat, because true peacemaking always begins from within.

Similarly, without peace with God, attempts at peacemaking lack the authentic foundation needed to heal broken relationships. Only when we are reconciled to God can we genuinely reflect His peace to the world around us.

And this peace is not just a legal status granted once at salvation; it's a daily reality. Jesus doesn't merely secure our peace with God once and for all; He invites us to walk in His peace every single day. This is the inner calm, the settled assurance, that flows from knowing we are held by a faithful Savior—no matter what storms may come.

And that brings us to the next defining characteristic of a peacemaker.

## **Characteristic #2: Peacemakers Experience the Peace That Jesus Offers**

### ***A Peace Unlike the World's***

On the night of His betrayal, Jesus comforted His disciples with these words:

*John 14:27 — Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid.*

Amid the despair, Jesus offered a peace unlike any other, a peace not dependent on changing circumstances, but resting deeply within the soul. Unlike the fragile and temporary peace the world offers, Jesus' peace is enduring, calming troubled hearts even in the midst of fiercest storms.

### ***Trusting Jesus in the Midst of Trials***

This same peace is available to us today. When we keep our eyes on Jesus—trusting His promises and resting in His presence—we can experience His peace regardless of what life throws our way.

Consider, for example, a young mother whose child is seriously ill. While doctors work diligently, she faces long nights of worry and uncertainty. Yet, in the midst of her fears, she finds a calm assurance—an inner peace that carries her through each difficult day. This peace doesn't erase the challenges, but steadies her heart because she trusts that Jesus is with her, holding both her and her child in His care.

But having Christ's peace within us is only part of what it means to be a true peacemaker. That peace must also shape how we live, especially in our relationships. We must be vigilant not to become the source of conflict or division. As the next characteristic highlights, peacemakers guard their hearts and actions carefully, refusing to be peace-breakers. They pursue humility, patience, and forgiveness, recognizing that pride and selfishness are often at the root of brokenness.

## Characteristic #3: Peacemakers Will Not Be the Cause of the Loss of Peace in Relationships

### *Avoiding the Role of Peacebreaker*

Although we are called to be peacemakers, far too often we act more like peace-breakers. Our attitudes, words, and actions can expose a stubborn insistence on having things our own way. We demand to be understood, to be right, to be vindicated—sometimes at any cost. And when someone dares to confront or correct us, our pride reacts defensively, even wounding others in the process.

This pattern shows up everywhere—in marriages, in parenting, among friends, within church communities, and even in our workplaces. Wherever relationships exist, the temptation to protect self over peace lurks nearby.

### *Pride Divides; Godly Wisdom Unites*

We speak too quickly. We lose patience. We lash out. Even minor frustrations can lead to major blowups. A lack of humility and forgiveness poisons relationships. Where pride takes root, peace breaks down. We cannot truly be peacemakers if we habitually stir up conflict. That is the life of a *peace-breaker*.

But Scripture calls us to something better: to pursue godly wisdom. In his letter, James paints a vivid contrast between the chaos produced by worldly wisdom and the healing and harmony that flows from wisdom shaped by heaven:

*James 3:16-18 — For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.*

When pride, envy, or selfish ambition rule our hearts, peace becomes impossible. But when godly wisdom takes over, we begin to reflect the heart of Jesus—a heart that is peace-loving, merciful, and sincere.

True peacemaking begins in the heart with a posture of humility, mercy, and patience. Without that foundation, we'll always drift back toward being peace-breakers instead of peace-builders.

F.W. Boreham, in his classic work on the Beatitudes titled *The Heavenly Octave*, captures this truth beautifully:<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> <https://www.sermonsearch.com/sermon-illustrations/4190/the-ideal-peacemaker/> (Last accessed September 26, 2025).

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*The ideal peacemaker is the man who prevents the peace from being broken. To prevent a battle is the best way of winning a battle.*

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He shared a powerful image from Jewish tradition:

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*I once said to a Jewish rabbi, 'I have heard that at a Jewish wedding a glass is broken as part of the symbolism of the ceremony. Is that a fact?' 'Of course it is,' he replied. 'We hold aloft a glass, let it fall and be shattered to atoms, and then, pointing to its fragments, we exhort the young people to guard jealously the sacred relationship into which they have entered—since, once it is fractured, it can never be restored.'*

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What a sobering picture. The best kind of peacemaking often happens before the damage occurs by guarding our words, tempering our tone, humbling our hearts, and refusing to let pride take over.

An everyday example might be a family dinner where tensions rise over a small disagreement. Instead of insisting on being right or reacting sharply, one person chooses to listen calmly and respond gently. That single act defuses the situation and preserves unity. Being a peacebreaker would have been easy, but choosing patience keeps the relationship intact.

Guarding our own hearts from becoming sources of conflict is essential, but peacemaking doesn't stop there. It also involves taking intentional steps toward peace with others. As the next characteristic reveals, true peacemakers not only avoid causing harm but they also actively seek to build peace in their relationships and communities.

## **Characteristic #4: Peacemakers Strive to Be at Peace with All People**

### ***The Biblical Mandate to Pursue Peace***

The Bible repeatedly calls every follower of Christ—every peacemaker—to *actively* pursue peace with others. This pursuit is not optional; it is a clear and continual command from our Lord.

Jesus Himself taught in Matthew 5:23-24:

*Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First, go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.*

In other words, reconciliation takes priority—even over religious acts of worship. God values restored relationships more than ritual.

Paul echoes this in Romans 14:19:

*Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.*

And the writer of Hebrews adds this essential exhortation in Hebrews 12:14a:

*Make every effort to live in peace with everyone.*

Taken together, these passages make one truth unmistakably clear:

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*Pursuing peace is not optional—it is a divine mandate for all who belong to Christ.*

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### ***Peace as a Priority in Relationships***

While Scripture's call to pursue peace is clear, living it out is rarely simple. Differences in perspective, wounded emotions, and lingering misunderstandings can make reconciliation feel painfully hard. Yet, peacemakers understand that the cost of *unresolved conflict* is far greater than the discomfort of *humble pursuit*.

Imagine two friends who have drifted apart because of a misunderstanding. One chooses to reach out—not to prove a point, but to listen patiently, seek forgiveness, and extend grace. That courageous step toward peace opens the door to healing and restores a bond that once seemed lost.

Still, peacemakers know that peace is not always possible. Some conflicts remain unresolved despite our best efforts. But even when reconciliation doesn't come easily, the true peacemaker remains steadfast—choosing faithfulness over frustration and obedience over outcome.

This leads us to the next defining mark of a peacemaker: the commitment to pursue peace *as far as it depends on them*, even when others may not respond in kind.

## **Characteristic #5: Peacemakers Pursue Peace Even Though They Know They Will Not Always Have Peaceful Relationships**

### ***Peace in an Imperfect World***

Let's face the truth: even Jesus, the perfect Peacemaker, did not have peaceful relationships with everyone. Neither did the apostles! The same will be true for us. Remaining faithful to the gospel sometimes brings conflict.

Jesus Himself made this clear.

**Matthew 10:34-36** — *Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’*

These sobering words remind us that following Christ will sometimes divide even the closest relationships. Truth and holiness can provoke resistance. Yet this is not because Christ delights in conflict—but because light exposes darkness, and truth confronts sin.

That's why Paul wisely counsels:

**Romans 12:18** — *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

Notice those words: *if it is possible* and *as far as it depends on you*. We are called to do our part—to make every reasonable effort to pursue peace—yet we cannot control how others respond. Some will resist reconciliation or even prefer hostility. Still, the peacemaker goes the extra mile, extending grace, patience, and forgiveness even to those who will not return it.

Consider the example of a humble church leader who faces opposition from a few vocal critics. Though discouraged at times, he continues to listen carefully, seek common ground, and labor for unity, fulfilling the spirit of Ephesians 4:3, which urges us to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” His faithfulness may not produce immediate harmony, but it honors God and keeps the door open for future healing and restoration.

While pursuing peace in our *own* relationships is essential, true peacemakers go beyond personal peacekeeping. They step into the fractures between *others*, helping to restore what is broken. They are not passive bystanders but active agents of reconciliation, which leads us to the next defining characteristic.

## Characteristic #6: Peacemakers Always Strive to Bring Peace Between People

*The Courage to Intervene: Biblical Examples of Peacemaking*

Simply put, true peacemakers care enough to get involved. When conflict arises between others, they do not turn away or remain silent. Instead, they prayerfully and courageously step in, seeking to build bridges, not walls.

Of course, this is never easy. Stepping into conflict always carries risk. We might be misunderstood, criticized, or even lose friendships. Yet genuine peacemakers accept these risks because they value reconciliation more than comfort.

The Apostle Paul modeled this kind of courage. In *Philippians 4:2*, he pleads for unity between two believers, writing:

*I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.*

Paul didn't ignore their disagreement or hope it would simply fade away. He loved the church enough to engage directly, urging both women toward humility and harmony.

We see Paul's commitment to reconciliation again in his letter to *Philemon*. Onesimus, a runaway slave who had wronged his master, came to faith in Christ through Paul's ministry.

Instead of keeping silent, Paul intervened, urging Philemon to forgive and receive Onesimus as a brother in Christ. Paul even offered to absorb the cost himself, writing in *Philemon 1:17-18*:

*So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me.*

That's the heart of a peacemaker—willing to bear personal cost for the sake of reconciliation.

Consider a modern example: a wise believer who steps into a heated family conflict. They listen patiently, speak gently, and help both sides see one another through the lens of grace. It's uncomfortable and risky—but often, those courageous efforts bring healing where bitterness once reigned.

Like Paul, we are called to this same ministry. Peacemaking is not a passive wish for harmony; it is an active, Spirit-empowered pursuit of restoration no matter the cost.

As we'll see next, that cost can be significant. But true peacemakers embrace it, knowing that the price of reconciliation is always worth paying.

## **Characteristic #7: Peacemakers Are Willing to Pay the Price for Promoting Peace**

### *Perseverance in the Face of Opposition*

Peace always comes at a cost.

- It cost the Father His Son so that He could reconcile us to Himself.

- It cost Jesus His very life to purchase our peace.
- It cost the apostles their comfort, their safety, and in many cases, their lives as they carried the good news of peace to the world.
- And it will cost us something, too.

When Jesus followed His words in *Matthew 5:9* ("Blessed are the peacemakers...") with the next Beatitude (Matthew 5:10-12), He was not changing the subject—He was continuing the thought. Those who live out the Beatitudes, especially as peacemakers, will inevitably face misunderstanding, opposition, or even persecution.

No matter how gently truth is spoken, it can still wound human pride. And proud hearts often resist correction. Sometimes, the pushback comes not from unbelievers but from fellow believers, people in our homes, our churches, or our workplaces.

Yet, obedience to God's call outweighs the fear of rejection. Peacemakers understand that peace is precious enough to suffer for.

Consider the whistleblower who exposes wrongdoing within a company. They risk their reputation, their friendships, and perhaps even their career. Yet they choose integrity over comfort because truth and peace are worth the cost. Likewise, godly peacemakers must be ready to endure misunderstanding, criticism, or loss for the sake of righteousness and reconciliation.

As Paul reminds us in *Romans 12:18*, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." Our task is not to ensure peace at all costs, but to *pursue* it faithfully—no matter the cost to ourselves.

True peacemakers resemble Christ most clearly when they are willing to suffer for peace rather than sin for comfort.

Yet their mission doesn't stop there. The greatest work of peacemaking is not only reconciling people to one another but helping them be reconciled to God Himself. That's where our final characteristic takes us.

## **Characteristic #8: Peacemakers Faithfully Tell Others Who Are Not at Peace with God That Peace Is Available for Them**

### *Ambassadors of Reconciliation*

True peacemakers cannot keep the good news of peace to themselves. Having experienced reconciliation with God through Christ, they long for others to know that same peace—the peace that comes from being forgiven, cleansed, and made right with God.

*Isaiah 52:7* celebrates such messengers:

*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation.*

This is the heartbeat of every gospel-shaped peacemaker. They are not content to enjoy God's peace privately; they desire to see others set free from fear, guilt, and alienation. That's why Paul writes in *2 Corinthians 5:20*:

*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

To be an ambassador means to represent Christ faithfully, to speak His truth with both love and urgency. Peacemakers act as bridges between God and those who are far from Him, inviting the lost to receive the peace Jesus purchased through His blood.

Imagine a believer who notices a co-worker weighed down by anxiety and restlessness. Instead of offering mere comfort, they gently share how Jesus has brought peace into their own heart and invite their friend to discover that same peace for themselves. That single conversation could be the beginning of eternal reconciliation.

This is the highest expression of peacemaking, helping others move from being God's enemies to becoming His children. Every time we share the gospel, we participate in God's ongoing work of making peace through Christ.

## **Living as Children of God in a Divided World**

So, there we have it: eight defining characteristics of true peacemakers. Together, they show that peacemaking touches every part of life—from our relationship with God, to how we treat others, to how we share the gospel with the world.

But understanding these truths is only the beginning. The real challenge lies in *living them out consistently* in an increasingly divided and often hostile world. In truth, we cannot do it in our own strength.

It is only by *continually depending on the Holy Spirit* that we are empowered to live as peacemakers. Jesus not only perfectly fulfilled this Beatitude on our behalf, but He also gave us the Spirit to enable us to live it out.

As Paul reminds us in *Galatians 5:22*:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...*

It is the Spirit's transforming power that shapes us into true peacemakers. He works in us through the Word, through prayer, through the community of believers, and often

through hardship and trial. He softens our hearts, refines our motives, and produces within us the peace of Christ.

But this transformation begins with the most important peace of all: *peace with God*. As we saw in the very first characteristic, we must first be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Only then does the Spirit come to dwell within us. Without peace with God, we cannot bring peace to others.

Scripture continually calls us to walk in humility, patience, and forgiveness—to release our need to always be right, to overlook offenses, to bear with one another, and to pursue peace—not only when it is convenient, but especially when it costs us.

We are to follow the pattern of Jesus.

*Colossians 3:12-15 — Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

When we pursue this Spirit-empowered way of life—marked by humility, mercy, and love—we not only bring peace into the world, but we also *reveal the heart of our Father*.

*Blessed indeed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God!*

And by His grace, that is what we are.

**For Reflection:**

- Where in your life is God calling you to step into the role of peacemaker today?
- Is there someone you need to reconcile with, even if it feels difficult?
- Is there a challenging conversation you need to approach prayerfully and with humility, grace, and courage?
- Is there a wound you need to release into Christ's nail-pierced, yet tender and healing hands?

May we, through the power of the Holy Spirit, take these steps in faith, trusting that as we become peacemakers, God's peace will flow through us, healing hearts and transforming relationships for His glory.

**Scripture Verse for Memorization -----**

*Matthew 5:9 — Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

**Prayer -----**

*Father, Thank You for the peace I have in You through Jesus Christ. Transform me into Your likeness and help me to pursue peace with others. Teach me to live in a way that brings reconciliation and restoration to the relationships around me. Let my words and actions reflect Your grace, and may I share the good news of Jesus with those who are lost so they too may know true peace and forgiveness. Amen.*

**Discussion Questions (Shorter Version) -----**

1. What does it mean to be a true peacemaker, and how is that different from just avoiding conflict?
2. How has your peace with God affected the way you handle tension or conflict with others?
3. What attitudes or emotions (like pride or defensiveness) can make it hard to be a peacemaker?
4. Have you ever pursued peace with someone, but the relationship remained strained? How do you stay faithful to your calling as a peacemaker, even when peace doesn't come?
5. In what practical ways can you help bring peace between others who are in conflict, especially when it would be easier to stay uninvolved?
6. Who in your life needs to hear the message of peace with God through Jesus Christ, and how can you faithfully and lovingly share that with them this week?

**Discussion Questions (Longer Version) -----**

1. What's the difference between being a peacemaker and simply being a peacekeeper or peace-lover? How might these roles look different in real life, in a family, church, or workplace setting?
2. Why is personal peace with God the essential starting point for becoming a true peacemaker? How has your relationship with God shaped—or challenged—the way you handle conflict with others?
3. Jesus says His peace is “not as the world gives” (John 14:27). What do you think He meant by that, and how have you experienced His kind of peace in a difficult situation?
4. In what ways might pride, defensiveness, or the desire to be "right" keep us from being peacemakers? Can you think of a recent situation where that was true for you?

5. Romans 12:18 says, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." What does this verse teach us about our responsibility in strained relationships, even when reconciliation isn't guaranteed?
6. Have you ever felt called to step into a conflict between others as a peacemaker? What made it challenging, and what helped you in that moment?
7. Why is it important to understand that peacemaking may come at a personal cost (emotionally, relationally, or even spiritually)? How can we prepare our hearts for that kind of sacrifice?
8. One of the characteristics of peacemakers is faithfully sharing the message of peace with those not at peace with God. In what ways can you become more intentional about this in your day-to-day life?
9. Reflecting on the Beatitude, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God," how does being a peacemaker reflect our identity as God's children? What would it look like for you to live out this "family resemblance" more fully this week?

**Hymns/Songs-----**

1. Christ Be Magnified
2. Prince of Peace (You Are Holy)
3. He Giveth More Grace
4. Holy Spirit Living Breath of God
5. Hymn of Heaven
6. Blessed are the Peacemakers (Harrison Millard – Old Hymn)
7. They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love

## Blessed Are Those Who Are Persecuted

*Matthew 5:10-12 – Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

### The Paradox of Persecution

Persecution is never something we naturally embrace, especially when it comes as a consequence of standing for what is right. Yet, in this eighth and final Beatitude, Jesus calls those who suffer for righteousness' sake, "Blessed." Of all the Beatitudes, this one may be the most paradoxical—and perhaps the most sobering. It calls us to count the cost of following Christ, and in doing so, to discover a blessing and reward far greater than anything this world can offer.

#### *Persecuted for Righteousness: A Modern-Day Witness*

One powerful modern-day example of this truth is found in the life and death of Southern Baptist missionary Karen Watson. Before leaving for Iraq, she wrote a letter to her pastors dated March 7, 2003, instructing that it be opened only if she should die.

Just over a year later, on March 15, 2004, Karen and four others were tragically killed in an attack. Her letter stands as a moving testimony of unwavering faith and sacrificial obedience.<sup>53</sup>

Here are some of her words:

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<sup>53</sup> <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2004/may/15353.html> (last accessed September 24, 2025)

*When God calls there are no regrets. I wasn't called to a place. I was called to Him. To obey was my objective, to suffer was expected, His glory my reward.*

She continued:

*I was called not to comfort or success but to obedience.... There is no joy outside of knowing Jesus and serving Him.*

Karen's story reminds us that suffering for righteousness is not just a distant biblical concept, but a present reality—one that calls for faith, courage, and hope beyond this life.

### *Living and Dying for Christ*

Her words, *"His glory my reward,"* reflects a life fully surrendered to Christ, echoing the heart of Jesus' final Beatitude. She clearly understood what it meant to live, not for herself, but for the One who died and rose again.

Among the Scriptures she requested to be read at her funeral was this passage:

**2 Corinthians 5:15** — *And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

Karen's story is not ultimately about loss. It is about gain. Though she gave up her earthly life, she gained eternal life in Christ, just as Jesus promised when He said, "By your perseverance you will gain your lives" (Luke 21:19).<sup>54</sup> Today, she worships the One she followed so faithfully, her reward not found in comfort or safety, but in the joy of being with Him forever.

### *A Call to Examine Our Hearts*

Her story challenges us to look inward and ask ourselves honest questions:

- Are we living for comfort or for obedience?
- Are we living for success or for His glory?

These questions invite us to consider where our true priorities lie and whether we are willing to follow Christ's call, no matter the cost.

## **The Reality of Suffering: Biblical invitation to Embrace Suffering as Normal for the Christian life**

### *Persecution Is Inevitable for Followers of Christ*

In this final Beatitude, Jesus clearly warns that persecution is not a possibility but an inevitability for those who live according to His commands. Because His followers live a

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<sup>54</sup> Quoted from the Legacy Standard Bible, 2021 edition.

countercultural life—as described throughout the Beatitudes—they will face rejection and opposition.

Notice that Jesus does not say *if* but *when* people insult, persecute, and falsely accuse us for bearing His name (Matthew 5:11). Though the intensity and form of persecution may vary depending on location and circumstance, suffering for righteousness is a reality every believer must expect.

### ***Honest Warnings About Persecution by Jesus***

Jesus speaks frankly about the cost of following Him, preparing His disciples not for ease, but for endurance. He warns that living out His commands will provoke resistance, not only from the world around us, but also from spiritual forces opposed to His Kingdom. This truth can be difficult to accept, especially in Western contexts where faith is rarely challenged by suffering. Regardless, suffering remains essential for every follower of Christ.

Consider His words:

***Matthew 10:22 — You will be hated by everyone because of me.***

***Mark 8:34 — Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.***

***Luke 14:27 — And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.***

***John 15:20 — A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.***

### ***Confirmation of Suffering by the Apostles***

The apostles also echoed Jesus' warnings, reminding believers that hardship is expected:

***Acts 14:22 — We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.***

***2 Timothy 3:12 — In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.***

***1 Peter 4:12 — Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.***

### ***The Future Reality: Suffering in Revelation***

Even the book of Revelation anticipates intense suffering for believers in the last days:

***Revelation 13:10 — If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed.***

This final book of the Bible reminds us that persecution is not only a historical and present reality but one that will intensify in the days to come.

### *Hope Amid the Reality*

Though sobering, this reality is not cause for despair. Jesus Himself has already taken up the cross and now provides grace through the Holy Spirit to help us endure opposition. He is both our example and our strength. We never face trials alone—He walks with us and will never forsake us.

Recognizing that persecution is part of the Christian life prepares us to stand firm and find courage in Him. But it also raises an important and deeply personal question:

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*Why does a loving and sovereign God allow hardship for those walking in obedience?*

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The good news is that Jesus did more than warn us about suffering, He gave it meaning. In the next section, we will explore how and why suffering for righteousness' sake can become, not just bearable, but deeply purposeful in God's hands.

## **The Reason for Suffering: What It Means to Suffer for Righteousness' Sake**

### *Not All Suffering Is the Same*

Jesus not only tells us that His followers will suffer, but He also tells us *why*. In Matthew 5:10, He blesses those who are “persecuted because of righteousness.” In verse 11, He adds, “because of me.”

In other words, this is not suffering caused by our own sinful choices and neither is it the general suffering that comes from living in a fallen world (1 Peter 4:15; Romans 8:20–22). This is a *specific* kind of suffering that comes precisely because we chose to follow Jesus and live according to His truth.

To suffer for righteousness' sake means to suffer for obedience, to bear reproach because our lives reflect the light and character of Jesus in a world that prefers darkness. And why does that kind of life provoke resistance? Because *darkness always resists the light*.

Jesus Himself explained this reality in John 3:19-20:

*People loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.*

The very purpose of light is to reveal what is hidden, and that's what faithful believers do. Simply by walking in truth, we expose the sin around us. And because of that, the world, the enemy, and even our own families may retaliate—sometimes with force.

### *The Many Forms of Retaliation*

This resistance to righteousness can appear in many ways, insults, false accusations, slander, exclusion, or even violence (Matthew 5:11). Sometimes, the persecution is verbal; other times it takes social, emotional, legal, or physical forms.

This is why Paul wrote with such certainty:

*2 Timothy 3:12 — Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

When we faithfully follow Christ, we disrupt the comfort of sin. Our very presence—our words, values, and choices—becomes a quiet confrontation to a world that rejects God's truth. And when that happens, the world often pushes back. Those opposed to the gospel will go as far as they are permitted to silence the truth and to make life as painful as possible for those who live by it.

That's why persecution is not a sign of failure but of faithfulness. It means we are walking in the same light—and the same path—that our Lord walked before us.

### **The Response to Suffering: Jesus' Surprising Call to Joy in Persecution**

When we face persecution, how should we respond? Jesus gives a clear and surprising answer:

*Matthew 5:12 — Rejoice and be glad.*

Luke's version adds even more intensity:

*Luke 6:23 — Rejoice in that day and leap for joy.*

This joy in suffering for Christ is not a one-time command; it is a recurring theme throughout the New Testament.

### *The Radical Joy of the Early Church*

When the apostles were flogged for preaching Jesus, they left "rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name" (Acts 5:40-41). They did not retreat in fear or self-pity.

Instead, "day after day... they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah" (Acts 5:42).

Paul and Silas faced a similar test. After being “stripped and beaten with rods...and severely flogged,” they were thrown into prison. Yet rather than despair, “they were praying and singing hymns to God” (Acts 16:22-25).

These examples reveal something astonishing: the early Christians did not abandon their faith after one or even multiple painful experiences. Instead, they remained steadfast—filled with joy, even in chains.

And that same joy compelled the apostles to urge others to respond the same way when suffering for Christ:

*1 Peter 4:13 — Rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ.*

*James 1:2 — Consider it pure joy... whenever you face trials of many kinds.*

### ***Our Modern Struggle to Rejoice***

Yet if we’re honest, our response often falls short of this example. Even a small insult can weigh us down for days. We may withdraw—emotionally or spiritually—feeling we’ve paid too high a price for our loyalty to Christ.

Why do minor oppositions affect us so deeply? Often, it’s because the world still holds too firm a grip on our hearts or because we haven’t yet taken Jesus’ words fully to heart. Sometimes, pride simply gets in the way. That’s why even hearing the word *persecution* can make us uneasy.

But Jesus reminds us that persecution is not exceptional; it is inevitable for those who live in His kingdom (2 Timothy 3:12). Our response, then, should be one of deep, even defiant joy. Yes, suffering may bring tears. It may shake us. But it must never steal the deeper joy that comes from knowing *we are privileged to bear the blows for the One who bore the cross for us.*

This is the paradox of the Christian life. As Paul writes, we are “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2 Corinthians 6:10).

### **The Reward for Enduring Suffering: Eternity with God—the Promise of the Kingdom and Unending Joy with Christ**

What do we gain in the end? Is it truly worth walking a path marked by rejection, pain, and persecution—simply because we follow Jesus?

Jesus doesn’t avoid that question—He answers it directly:

*Matthew 5:10 — Theirs [and theirs alone] is the kingdom of heaven.*

“Kingdom of heaven” is the reward promised to those who suffer for righteousness’ sake. And when Jesus adds, “great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:12), He reaffirms the same truth:

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*The reward for enduring suffering is nothing less than eternal life  
with the Triune God in the  
Kingdom that Jesus is preparing.*

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This is not a mere symbol or metaphor; it is a *real, literal inheritance* for those who belong to Christ. Those who remain faithful under persecution will one day dwell in the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, worshiping the One who redeemed them by His blood in His glorious Kingdom. That is the ultimate reward. These are the truly *blessed* ones—those upon whom God’s favor rests, even as the world rejects them.

In fact, in one sense, the entire Beatitudes are about life in God’s Kingdom. Notice how the first and last Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3 and 5:10) both end with the same phrase: “*Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*”

This framing shows us that everything in between is about living as citizens of that Kingdom—experiencing it now in part and one day in full when Christ returns.

### ***You Are Not Alone***

To strengthen His disciples for this costly calling, Jesus added a word of encouragement:

*Matthew 5:1 – For in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

In other words, this path of suffering is not new. It has always been the way of God’s people—from Abel, who was killed by his brother, to the prophets of Israel, who were rejected, mocked, and martyred for speaking truth.

Jesus reminds us: *You are not the first to suffer for righteousness, and you will not be the last.* You are walking a well-worn path, one marked by the footsteps of the faithful throughout redemptive history. And you are *not forgotten*.

This reminder makes the reward all the more precious. It is not a wage we earn but a gift promised by the One who suffered first. Eternal life with Christ—free from sin, sorrow, and death—is worth every insult, every tear, and every trial. These coming glorious realities should fuel our joy, even in the midst of pain.

That’s what fueled Paul’s joy even as he endured more suffering than most of us could imagine (2 Corinthians 6:4-10; 11:23-29). His secret? His eyes were fixed on eternity:

*Romans 8:18 — I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*

*2 Corinthians 4:17 — For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*

Like Paul, may our eyes also remain fixed on the joys of eternity. May we endure the temporary sufferings of this life with steadfast hope, knowing that every act of faithfulness—even in persecution—echoes into eternity.

### **A Call to Reflect, Repent, and Rejoice in Suffering for Christ**

In light of this eternal reward, Jesus' final Beatitude calls us to pause, reflect, and examine how we respond to suffering for His sake.

Let us remember: the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount—including the Beatitudes—are not lofty ideals for the spiritual elite. They are a mirror held up to every follower of Christ. And when we look into that mirror, we see how far short we fall. We cannot live out these truths perfectly—only Jesus did.

But here is the good news: we are made right with God *by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone*. And now, united with Christ by faith, His Spirit dwells within us—shaping us into His likeness day by day.

That means these Beatitude qualities are not optional virtues or spiritual add-ons; they are the *inevitable evidence of a transformed life*. A life that has been touched by the mercy of God will reflect the character of the Son of God.

And wherever true righteousness appears, opposition will follow. Whether at home, at work, at school, or in our wider culture, those who live for Christ will inevitably meet resistance.

Yet rejection for the sake of Christ is not a mark of failure; it is a mark of faithfulness. It is evidence that we belong to Him. And that is why Jesus can command us to “*rejoice and be glad.*”

For every insult, every misunderstanding, every act of opposition endured for His name is a reminder that we are counted worthy to share in His sufferings and that our reward in heaven is great.

And *that* is cause for great joy.

### ***The Gift of Suffering for Christ***

One of the greatest misconceptions in the church today is the belief that persecution signals God's displeasure or absence. This lie lies at the heart of much of the prosperity

gospel, which equates God's favor with comfort, success, and safety. But Scripture tells a very different story.

*Philippians 1:29 — For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.*

The word "granted" carries the sense of a gracious gift—a divine favor freely given. In other words, both *belief in Christ* and *suffering for Christ* are grace gifts from the same loving hand of God.

This means that suffering for His name is not a punishment to be feared, but a privilege to be embraced. Through it, God draws us closer to Himself, refines our faith, and allows us to share in the sufferings of our Savior.

If we thank Him for the gift of believing in Christ, how can we resent the gift of suffering for Christ? Both are expressions of His grace—one that saves, and one that sanctifies.

### *The Example of Jesus*

When we are insulted or rejected for His name, we are called to respond as Jesus did. Peter reminds us:

*1 Peter 2:23 — When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.*

Jesus is our example, the perfect model of patient endurance. He bore far more for us than we will ever bear for Him. He left the glory of heaven, endured the rejection of men, suffered under the wrath of God, and died in our place. If He suffered willingly to secure our salvation, is it not a privilege for us to suffer in even the smallest measure for His sake?

### *The Absence of Persecution: A Warning Sign?*

Yet this raises a sobering question:

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*If persecution is inevitable for true followers of Christ, why do so many who claim His name experience little or none of it?*

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The answer is not that the world has grown more tolerant but that, too often, our lives fail to reflect the righteousness Jesus described. What the world sees may be a form of *self-righteousness*, not the *Spirit-produced righteousness* of the Beatitudes.

Jesus Himself issued a chilling warning at the close of His sermon:

*Matthew 7:21—Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

And what is the Father's will? That His children bear the marks of the Kingdom, the very qualities described in the Beatitudes. Those who are poor in spirit, who mourn over sin, who are meek, who hunger and thirst for righteousness, who are merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, and willing to suffer for His name are the *true* citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

### ***The Urgency of True Repentance***

If you've never truly turned to Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, please don't delay. Today is the day of salvation. Confess your sin, turn to Him in repentance, and trust fully in His finished work on the cross.

Only through faith in Christ can you receive a new heart and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit—the very power that enables you to live a Beatitude-shaped life, including the strength to endure suffering for His name.

### ***A Final Question of Reflection***

So let us examine our hearts honestly:

- Are we being insulted, mocked, or rejected because we are truly living for Jesus?
- Or are our sufferings due to our own sinful reactions or unwise choices?

If we are suffering for righteousness' sake, Jesus tells us to rejoice and be glad, for great is our reward in heaven. But if our suffering comes from sin or pride, let us humbly confess, repent, and plead with the Lord to shape us into *people who suffer well—because we are living well, for Him*.

Those who truly live this way find that obedience to Christ always comes at a cost, but it is a cost worth paying. And few lives illustrate that truth more powerfully than that of William Borden.

### **No Reserves**

William Borden graduated from high school in Chicago in 1904. As the heir to the Borden Dairy estate, he received an extraordinary graduation gift: a trip around the world. But what was intended as a celebration turned into a spiritual awakening.

As he traveled through Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, William became deeply burdened for those who had never heard the gospel. He wrote home, expressing his desire to give his life in service to Christ as a missionary. His decision shocked many. Why would someone with wealth, prestige, and a guaranteed future walk away from it all?

But William had made up his mind. In the back of his Bible, he wrote two words: "**No reserves.**"

### No Retreats

After returning, Borden enrolled at Yale University. Some expected that college life would cool his zeal, but it did the opposite. He started a small Bible study, and by the end of his first year, 150 students were gathering to study Scripture and pray. By his final year, more than 1,000 of Yale's 1,300 students were involved in discipleship groups.

But his ministry wasn't confined to the campus elite. He founded the *Yale Hope Mission* to serve the homeless, widows, and addicts in New Haven, Connecticut. He was often seen ministering on the streets, sitting with those society had forgotten. One overseas visitor, when asked what impressed him most about America, replied:

The sight of that young millionaire kneeling with his arm around a 'bum' in the Yale Hope Mission.

When Borden graduated, he received numerous high-paying job offers. He turned them all down. In his Bible, under the earlier entry, he added two more words: "**No retreat.**"

### No Regrets

Borden entered Princeton Seminary and, after graduating, set sail for China to minister to unreached Muslims. En route, he stopped in Egypt to study Arabic. But while there, he contracted spinal meningitis. Within a month, he was dead.

William Borden was just 25 years old.

After his death, someone opened his Bible and found, beneath the earlier phrases, a final entry: "**No regrets.**"

William Borden had counted the cost. He had laid everything on the altar. He had chosen obedience over comfort, surrender over safety, eternity over earthly success. He knew that Christ was worth it.

Those who understand the price of their redemption also understand this:

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*A life fully lived for Christ is a life without regret.*

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William Borden chose the path of surrender because he knew the One who had ransomed him.

**How about you?**<sup>55</sup>

Are you willing to follow Jesus where He leads, no matter the cost?

Will you live with no reserves, no retreats, and no regrets?

Will you embrace suffering, not as punishment, but as privilege?

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*Don't waste your suffering.  
Rejoice in it—for Jesus is worth it!*

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**Scripture Verse for Memorization** -----

**Matthew 5:10-12** – *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

**Prayer** -----

*Lord Jesus, help me to live with no reserves, no retreats, and no regrets—no matter the cost. Thank You that when I suffer persecution for the sake of Your name I can rejoice that I am counted among those who are bought and redeemed by Your blood. Remind me that suffering for You is a gift, strengthen my trust, and teach me to depend on You, Amen.*

**Discussion Questions (Shorter Version)** -----

1. How can we know if we're suffering for Jesus or simply facing consequences of our own mistakes?
2. Jesus says persecution will definitely come (when not if). How does acknowledging this reality impact your daily walk and witness as a Christian?
3. Have you ever faced criticism or rejection because of your faith? How did it affect you?
4. What role does the promise of the Kingdom of Heaven play in helping believers endure trials and persecution?
5. William Borden lived with the motto "No reserves, no retreats, no regrets." How does his example challenge you to live more boldly for Christ, even if it costs something?

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<sup>55</sup> Carter; Anthony (2013-03-19). Blood Work, (pp. 106-108). Reformation Trust Publishing. Kindle Edition, with some changes.

**Discussion Questions (Longer Version) -----**

1. How can we tell the difference between suffering for Christ and suffering for our own mistakes or unwise choices?
2. Jesus calls those who are persecuted “blessed.” What does that reveal about how God views suffering and faithfulness?
3. Have you ever experienced rejection, criticism, or opposition because of your faith in Christ? If so, how did you respond, and what did it reveal about your heart?
4. Karen Watson wrote, “I was called not to comfort or success but to obedience.” What would it look like for you to live with that kind of mindset in your daily life?
5. Jesus says to “rejoice and be glad” when we’re insulted or persecuted for His sake. Why do you think joy—not bitterness—is the right response in those moments?
6. What does the willingness to suffer for Jesus reveal about a person’s priorities and faith? How does it show whether we’re living for this world or for God’s Kingdom?
7. Why do you think the early Christians rejoiced even when they were imprisoned or beaten for their faith? What can we learn from their example about our attitude in the face of trials?
8. If you rarely or never face any kind of pushback for your faith, what might that indicate? How should this challenge us to examine how boldly or visibly we’re living for Christ?
9. Jesus promises a great reward in heaven for those who suffer for Him. How can keeping your eyes on eternity help you endure hardship with hope and perseverance?

**Hymns/Songs-----**

1. He Will Keep You (Psalm 121)
2. My Soul Finds Rest in God Alone
3. Jesus, Draw Me Ever Nearer
4. Christ Our Hope in Life and Death
5. Be Thou My Vision
6. Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus
7. O Church Arise

## CONCLUSION

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### Thank You

**T**hank you for taking the time to journey through this book. I don't take your time or attention for granted, and I pray that what you've read has not only informed your mind but also stirred your heart.

The Beatitudes call us to a radically different, countercultural way of life, a life that seems upside-down to the world yet is right-side-up in the Kingdom of God. This calling is not optional for the follower of Jesus; it is the shape of the life He calls us to.

Yet even as we are called to live this way, let us never forget: Jesus Himself lived it perfectly. He embodied every Beatitude without flaw. Through His life, death, and resurrection, He secured for us what we could never earn on our own. Our pursuit of this way of life is never an effort to gain His love but always a grateful response to it—an overflow of trust, gratitude, and joy in His finished work.

So, rest in His perfection. Let His obedience be your confidence. And from that place of rest, pursue the life He has called you to—empowered by His Spirit and motivated by His love.

Grace and peace to you as you walk with Him.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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### And Credits

**F**irst and foremost, I am endlessly grateful to my Lord, Savior, and King, Jesus Christ. It is by His strength and wisdom that this book came to life. Throughout this journey, the power and presence of the Holy Spirit has been a lamp to my feet and a light upon my path, revealing countless precious truths at every step.

I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to my family, whose love and support have been my anchor. My dear wife, Geetha, has been a constant source of love, encouragement and care. Her unwavering support is a blessing far beyond what I could ever deserve. My children, Paul (married to Kaitlyn) and Preethi (married to Jake), have offered steadfast support and joy. And my mother, Prema, whose prayers have lifted me over the years, continues to be a wellspring of strength and comfort.

The church family at Grace Bible Church—past and present—has been a true gift from God. Their love and fellowship have not only nurtured my spirit but have also shaped the very foundation of this book, which began as a series of sermons. Serving alongside such faithful brothers and sisters has been one of life's richest privileges.

I am deeply thankful to all who helped with the song selections connected to the chapters of this book. And to the many prayer partners whose steadfast prayers and encouragement carried me from the very beginning and particularly in the weeks leading up to completion. *I am profoundly grateful.*

Special thanks go to Melissa Sheridan, whose careful attention and servant's heart guided this project from beginning to end. Her skill, diligence, and continual encouragement was a true blessing. Melissa, I thank God for your partnership in this project from the very first day until its completion. Truly, this book is as much yours as it is mine!

I'm grateful for the biblical training I received at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, where a few M.Div. classes under godly teachers strengthened both my understanding of Scripture and my writing.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Though so many have contributed to this book, *any shortcomings are my own*. I welcome your observations and suggestions, trusting that this work can continue to grow and improve.

*To God be all the glory, now and forever—may every word of this book reflect His grace and truth.*

## ABOUT THE

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## Author

I'm a sinner saved solely because of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I come from an orthodox Hindu Brahmin (Indian) background. The Lord saved me primarily through the loving, faithful, and persistent witnessing of a Christian friend, Vijay, an ex-Hindu who was graciously converted to Christ and also through the reading of a Bible placed at my doorstep by an unknown individual while studying in Texas, USA, at the same time.

One verse, in particular, deeply moved me and brought me face to face with the Savior: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Primarily through that verse along with many others, the Holy Spirit opened my heart to the reality of the gracious Shepherd and Savior—the Lord Jesus Christ—and led this rebellious sinner into a saving relationship with Him.

I am married to Geetha, and we are blessed with two adult married children: Paul (married to Kaitlyn) and Preethi (married to Jake). By God's grace, all of them know and follow the Lord, which is a precious gift we never take for granted.

Since 2003, I've had the great joy and privilege of serving as the pastor of Grace Bible Church in Windsor, Ontario. This loving church family has walked with me through many seasons of life—including times of intense personal health challenges—with steadfast love and prayerful support. It was to them that these Beatitudes were first preached as a sermon series back in 2019. They've been a continual source of encouragement and grace to me.

More details about me can be found at:

- [www.gbc-windsor.org](http://www.gbc-windsor.org)
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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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*Copies of this book are available on the Amazon website, both Print and Kindle versions.*

*A free PDF version of this book is also available on the sites mentioned below:*

*<https://english.biblebasedhope.com/>*

*and*

*<https://gbc-windsor.org/>*

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If you have any questions or feedback—whether about this book or the Scriptures in general—I'd be honored to hear from you. Please don't hesitate to reach out. I'm also well aware of my own limitations and am continually seeking to grow in my understanding of God's Word.

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