

BLESSED ARE ...

The Poor In Spirit

They That Mourn

The Meek

**They That Hunger and Thirst
After Righteousness**

The Merciful

The Pure in Heart

The Peacemakers

Rodney W. Francis

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BLESSED

ARE . . .

A STUDY OF
THE
BEATITUDES

By Rodney W. Francis

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INTRODUCTION

We hear a lot these days about the Kingdom. The word “kingdom” as used in Matthew’s Gospel and the entire New Testament is translated from the Greek word “basileia” meaning “royalty, i.e. ruling, a realm; kingdom, plus reigning” (Strong’s).

“It is a territory, state, people, or community ruled or reigned over by a king or queen” (Collins’).

For the Christian it is knowing we are living in the Kingdom and are serving the King of the Kingdom (Jesus Christ) according to His will and, secondly, knowing the rules that prevail in that Kingdom and living accordingly.

In this series of studies we will take a look at the practical aspects of Kingdom Living and apply them where they rightfully belong – in the now. The Kingdom is not only to come; it is here! **NOW!** Jesus has accomplished His triumphant victory through His death, burial, resurrection and ascension. In doing that He has left us His Word so we can daily live and walk in the power of His victory and show forth the glories of the Christian message. In reality! In your life and mine!

Kingdom Living is the outworking of living in the Kingdom. Too many Christians have been confused by the word “kingdom” as it has often been presented as something outward in the future rather than the knowing it is Christ’s life and teaching within us **NOW** by the Holy Spirit. Jesus told us clearly:

“ . . . The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation (“seeing the evidence; outward show”): Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold the Kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20-21, KJV).

“One day the Pharisees asked Jesus, ‘When will the Kingdom

of God begin?’ Jesus replied, ‘The Kingdom of God isn’t ushered in with visible signs. You won’t be able to say, It has begun here in this place or there in that part of the country. For the Kingdom of God is within (or among) you” (Luke 17:20-21, TLB).

“. . . The Kingdom of God does not come with signs to be observed or with visible display.

Nor will people say, Look! Here (it is)! or, See, (it is) there! For behold, the Kingdom of God is within you (in your hearts) and among you (surrounding you)” (Luke 17:20-21, AMP).

The whole revelation of the New Covenant in a nutshell is: ***“CHRIST IN YOU, the hope of glory”*** (Colossians 1:21-29, especially verse 27, KJV).

Kingdom Living is letting Christ live out His life in and through you by word and deed. Each day! Sunday to Saturday!

These series of studies are not meant to be exhaustive. They are put together with the desire that you will be able to simply grasp more of the wonderful things Jesus taught us – that we might be worthy of the Kingdom into which we have been called.

We start this book by showing the importance Jesus placed on teaching. Teaching causes us to understand the truth, which in turn releases the blessings of God into our lives.

A blessed person is a happy person.

- Rodney W. Francis

JESUS TAUGHT THE MULTITUDES

MATTHEW CHAPTER FIVE LESSON 1: MATTHEW 5:1-2.

Verse 1: *“And seeing the multitudes, He (Jesus) went up into a mountain: and when He was set (“sat down”), His disciples came unto Him:*

Verse 2: *And He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying,”* (KJV).

Jesus saw the multitudes. He saw the needs of the masses. They were not merely outward needs. Jesus saw beyond their outer needs right in to their inner needs. Do we?

“But when He (Jesus) saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion (“to feel the bowels or heart – the seat of feeling – yearn, to have compassion; to pity” – Bullinger’s) on them, because they fainted (“to loose out, relax” – Young’s), and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36 KJV).

Jesus saw *“they were bewildered - harassed and distressed and dejected and helpless”* (Matthew 9:36 AMP).

How can the multitudes be reached?
How can they be changed?

The answer Jesus gave is that they must be taught (“given instruction or direction” – Bullinger’s). In order to teach those who were outside the Kingdom of God the right principles of life, Jesus had to first teach His own disciples – those who are already inside the Kingdom. Hence “Kingdom Livers” are Biblically called “disciples.” A disciple is “a

learner, pupil". In the New Testament more than this, "a follower, one who follows both the teacher and the teaching" (Bullinger's). A disciple is one who willingly disciplines his/her life to please Jesus and His teachings. He is the Master Teacher - we are His disciples. Because we believe He is ***"the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me (Jesus)"*** (John 14:6 KJV) we choose to follow Him in whatever He tells and teaches us.

By His blood He purchased us out of the devil's (Satan's) kingdom and brought us into His own Kingdom (Colossians 1: 13). We have to learn the principles of this new Kingdom, for Jesus' Kingdom ***"is not of this world"*** (John 18:36-37).

JESUS THE MASTER TEACHER:

The ministry of Jesus was that of teaching life-changing principles; of teaching Kingdom Living Principles that would not only tell us the way, but also show us. He was always teaching people.

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matthew 4:23 KJV).

He placed so much emphasis upon His words and teachings that He said all of life's success or failure depends upon what we do with the words He has given us. Consider these verses:—

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock . . .

But everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand . . .

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at His teaching,

Because He taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Matthew 7:24-29, especially verses 24,26, 28-29 NIV).

We stand or fall by His sayings. Either we believe His word enough to apply and obey, or we listen to what He teaches and continue to live according to what we think is best, thus demonstrating by our actions that we think we know better than He. Luke’s Gospel chapter 4 is a classic example of the power of Jesus’ teaching ministry. It commences with the temptation in the wilderness where we read of Jesus overcoming Satan by the declaration of the Father’s words, ***“It is written . . .”*** At the end of those 40 days we read:–

“And Jesus returned in the power (Greek word “dunamis” meaning “power in action”) ***of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about.***

And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all” (Luke 4:14-15 KJV).

The Amplified Bible states:–

“And He Himself conducted (a course of) teaching in their synagogues, being recognised and honoured and praised by all” (Luke 4:15 AMP).

Jesus practised what He preached! He led by example and overcame all the opposition and onslaughts of the devil by the power of God’s Word. In verses 16-32 of Luke 4 we read of Jesus announcing His being anointed by the Holy Spirit to ***“preach the Gospel to the poor . . . to preach the acceptable year of the Lord”*** (Luke 4:18-19 KJV) and His teaching of the people on the Sabbath days (Luke 4:31). The impact of His preaching and teaching was:–

“And they were astonished (“to be driven out of one’s senses by a sudden shock, to be exceedingly struck in mind” – Bullinger’s) ***“amazed”*** – Strong’s) ***at His doctrine*** (“teaching, process of teaching, thing taught; especially the act” – Bullinger’s): ***for His word was with power*** (Greek word “exousia” meaning “privilege, authority” – Young’s)” (Luke 4:32 KJV).

In Luke 4:33-39 Jesus demonstrates the power of His word, with the people exclaiming in verse 36 very similar to that of verse 32. His teachings arrested their attention and caused them to speak of Him everywhere. The chapter concludes (verse 40-44) with Jesus preaching and healing. He had a mission to preach the Kingdom of God wherever He was sent.

As we move into Luke 5 we read these wonderful words:–

“And it came to pass that, as the people pressed (“imposed, be instant or laid on or upon” – Strong’s) ***upon Him to hear the word of God . . .***

. . . He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon’s, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down, and taught (“to teach, to give instruction or direction” – Bullinger’s) ***the people out of the ship***” (Luke 5:1-3 KJV).

All these preceding Scriptures show us that Jesus is the Master Teacher. As His disciples we have the blessed privilege of listening, learning and following Him throughout our life, and demonstrating in our generation that He is the only One to follow.

“ . . . do not My words do good to him whose ways are upright?” (Micah 2:7b NIV).

A SPIRITUAL YET PRACTICAL KINGDOM:

Jesus' Kingdom is also called The Kingdom of God and The Kingdom of Heaven. It is not a kingdom of the world, the flesh and the devil, but just the opposite. It is a spiritual kingdom, full of truth and honesty, where the voice of Jesus is heard, yet being worked out in and through His disciples in a very practical way. Because it is a spiritual kingdom we have to be born-again by the Holy Spirit to even see or enter into it (see John 3: 3-7).

“His disciples came unto Him.” His disciples should not go to anyone else (John 10:4-5). We don't belong to anyone else – **we belong to Jesus.**

HE TEACHES US:

He teaches us in such a way that we are able to teach others the principles He has taught us.

Kingdom Living is following the teachings of the King of the Kingdom, then teaching others by word, example and life-style – showing them how, not just telling them how!

Before He went back to the Father in heaven, Jesus commanded His disciples to: –

“Go ye therefore, and teach (“to be or make a disciple” – Young's) all nations” (multitudes; the Gentile nations as distinct from Israel – Bullinger's) (see Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 14:21-22).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND MEDITATION:

1. When Jesus saw the multitudes, what did He see?
2. What is Jesus' answer to the needs of the masses?
3. How can the multitudes be effectively ministered to today?
4. How does one get into the Kingdom of God?
5. What is a disciple?

THE BEATITUDES

LESSON 2: MATTHEW 5:3-4.

In the next four lessons we will be looking at what is known as “The Beatitudes.”

The Beatitudes are the “eight distinctive sayings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-12) in which He declares that the poor, the meek, those that mourn, the merciful, the peacemakers, the pure of heart, those that thirst for justice, and those that are persecuted will, in various ways, receive the blessings of heaven” (Collins’).

The word “beatitude” is not written in the Scriptures. However, the meaning of the word is “supreme blessedness or happiness” (Collins’). In the New Testament the Greek word “makarios” is used and is translated almost 50 times to mean “blessed” or “happy”. These next nine verses in Matthew 5 all start with Jesus saying “Blessed” (“happy”) – hence the name Beatitudes.

Let’s look at these important verses - all vital messages to enjoying Kingdom Living in the here and now.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT:

Verse 3:

“Blessed (“makarios – happy”) **are the poor** (“crouching, cringing in the manner of beggars; hence, begging, beggarly, poor . . . living on the alms of others, having nothing at all” – Bullinger’s) **in spirit** (“character, as invisible, and manifested only in one’s actions” – Bullinger’s): **for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven**” (KJV).

In this verse Jesus is not advocating that we all give up our possessions and professions and go on to the streets to beg. He is talking about an attitude or character of heart. Being **“poor in spirit”** is living a life of dependency upon someone else to get us through this life.

That Someone is JESUS!

We are not disciples by self-will and effort, but by His grace (and our obedience); letting His Word penetrate our innermost being to the point of changing our spirit (“character”) so that others see in our actions His teaching. This is true happiness – “makarios.”

Let me share just a few Scriptures where this Greek word is used, demonstrating the need for happiness to be in us as we face often difficult situations:

Concerning servanthood and discipleship:

“For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

If ye know these things, happy (“makarios – blessed”) are ye if you do them: (John 13:15-17 KJV).

Another translation puts that last verse like this:

“If you know these things, blessed and happy and to be envied are you if you practice them – if you act accordingly and really do them”
(John 13:17 AMP).

We must know what Jesus is teaching us and then apply it in a practical way.

Concerning suffering for righteousness and Christ:

“But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy (“makarios – blessed”) are ye . . . ” (1 Peter 3:14 KJV).

To do right will often cost us, but it is the way of blessing.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers (“having a share in” – Collins’) of Christ’s sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy.

If ye be reproached (“to defame, i.e. to disparage, reproach, cast in one’s teeth, upbraid” – Bullinger’s) for the name of Christ, happy (“makarios – blessed”) are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified” (1 Peter 4:12-14 KJV).

Blessed, happy are you in all kinds of situations - not only when everything is running smoothly.

The ***“poor of spirit”*** are the inheritors of the Kingdom of heaven; not the proud, arrogant and self-made people of this world. Has Jesus been able to teach you, His disciple, this tremendous truth? How dependent we are upon Him! We can do nothing without Him in His Kingdom (John 15:5).

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN:

Verse 4:

“Blessed (“makarios – happy”) are they that mourn (“to bewail, lament, grieve, sorrow, mourn for, especially for one dead” – Bullinger’s): for they shall be comforted (“to call near,

i.e. invite, invoke – by imploration, exhortation or consolation – beseech, call for, be a good comfort, desire, give exhortation, entreat, pray” – Strong’s).

It seems to be a contradiction - blessing in being **“poor in spirit”** and in **“mourning.”** What is Jesus teaching us? To follow Jesus fully will mean times of separation, rejection and loss from loved ones. Those who do not live in God’s Kingdom do not understand the way we live, the why’s and wherefore’s of our decision-making process. We seek to please our Master Jesus – they seek to please self. Often, when people don’t understand, they will reject, and this is especially so when they confront Kingdom Christianity. Because the love of Jesus has come and filled our heart, it really does hurt when our family, friends and relatives reject us for believing and acting the way we do (many do not accept Jesus as the only way in this 21st century!). We mourn! The world does not comprehend the paradox of the Christian faith; we “give to get,” “die to live,” “turn the other cheek” – “the way up is the way down,” etc. It is all part of the process of laying down our old life of sin and selfishness and taking up the new life of righteousness found in Jesus Christ. The old life can never conform to Kingdom principles, so it has to be put to death. Some of the old life is not easy to give up or lay down. It can cause heartache and sorrow – a grieving and mournful experience. But, oh, the blessing of release! The joy of doing right and the wonder of God’s comfort. He has promised to comfort those who mourn, especially those who mourn through the outworking of the will of God.

The Prophet Isaiah declared how the work (ministry) of the Holy Spirit would –

“ . . . comfort all that mourn;

To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (“weakness” – Young’s); (“blunted; applied to faintness of the spirit, when the vigour of the mind is dull and enfeebled” – Wilson’s); ***that they might be called trees*** (“oaks”) ***of righteousness, the planting of the***

Lord, that He might be glorified” (Isaiah 61: 2-3 KJV).

According to Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies the mourning period for the Jews lasted for a period of 30 days from the time of burial, during which they abstained from the ordinary occupations and comforts of life.

Mourning is a time of self-denial and sacrifice; it is carrying a cross for Jesus. Yet in the midst of it we can know Divine comfort, beauty, blessings and joy.

“What a wonderful God we have – He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of every mercy, and the One who so wonderfully comforts and strengthens us in our hardships and trials. And why does He do this? So that when others are troubled, needing our sympathy and encouragement, we can pass on to them this same help and comfort God has given us. You can be sure that the more we undergo sufferings for Christ, the more He will shower us with His comfort and encouragement” (2 Corinthians 1:3-5 TLB).

Poor in spirit?

Are you mourning?

Makarios! Blessed are you – NOW! – present tense!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND MEDITATION:

1. What does it mean to be poor in spirit?
2. What is the inheritance of those poor in spirit?
3. Can you give an example of being comforted by God in a time of mourning?
4. What does the Holy Spirit do for those who mourn?
5. Why does God comfort us?

THE MEEK INHERIT

LESSON 3: MATTHEW 5:5-6.

Someone once said, “If you think it is weak to be meek, try being meek for a week.”

Meekness is a character of Kingdom Living and a vital part of following Jesus. Listen to what He says:–

Verse 5:

“Blessed (“happy”) *are the meek* (“gentle, enduring all things with an even temper, tender, free from haughty self-sufficiency, tender of spirit” – Bullinger’s): *for they shall inherit* (“receive a share of an inheritance” – Bullinger’s) *the earth*” (KJV).

As you can see from the meaning of meekness, it is certainly a tremendous quality to have. To “endure all things with an even temper” is not easy! We might have patience and grace with some people in some areas of life, and virtually none in other areas. **Meekness is definitely not weakness!** Treating other people gently and being “free of a haughty (“having or showing arrogance” – Collins’) self-sufficiency” takes the grace of God working in us. But that is Kingdom Living. Living life the Jesus way. And to treat people with an air of grace in a true heart-attitude of a tender spirit has to be evidence of the new creation at work within us!

Praise God! It can be done.

Moses:

Take Moses, for example. How would you have liked the responsibility

of leading the nation of Israel with all their gripes and grizzles, having criticism from within his own family circle, etc? Not many people could walk in his shoes, yet we discover that one of the main strengths of Moses' life is recorded for us in Numbers 12:3:–

“Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (KJV).

“Meekness” in the Old Testament is translated as being “humble” and is spoken of people “who prefer to suffer wrong rather than do wrong, and who therefore enjoy God’s favour” (Wilson’s). Moses was meeker than anyone else in his day – that’s why he was their leader. Meekness makes great leaders.

“The meek inherit the earth.” While many will interpret this statement as a futuristic inheritance, I see the importance for Christians to claim their God-given rights to ***“possess the land”*** now. God told Joshua a long time ago:–

“Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

. . . There shall not any man be able to stand (“to set self up against” – Young’s) ***before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake*** (“leave”) ***thee.***

Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them” (KJV). (See Joshua 1:3-9).

That land and inheritance for Joshua was in the now – right then – in his life time. He was not to wait till he died to claim it! Why should we?

In Isaiah 57:13b we read:

“But he who takes refuge in Me shall possess the land

(Judea) and shall inherit My holy mountain (Zion, also the heavenly inheritance and the spiritual Zion)” (Isaiah 49:8, Psalm 37:9,11; Psalm 69:35,36; Matthew 5:5; Hebrews 12:22) (AMP).

God’s holy mountain is Mount Zion, and the New Testament tells us we are (have) come to that mountain now:–

“But ye are come unto Mount Zion (“the city of Zion or Jerusalem” – Young’s), *and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable* (“not to be numbered” – Young’s) *company of angels, . . .*

And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant . . . ” (KJV).
(See Hebrews 12:22-24).

As we possess our inheritance that is given to us in the new covenant, we are “inheriting the earth” – we are walking in God’s victory which He purposed for us. If that were not so, then the god of this world (Satan) would have control over us and prevent us from living for Jesus. Praise God for the victory we have in Jesus right now on this earth!

“But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace”
(Psalm 37:11 NIV).

HUNGERING AND THIRSTING AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS COMPLETELY SATISFIES:

Verse 6:

“Blessed (“happy”) *are they which do hunger* (“an appetite, desire, need or craving” – Collins’) *and thirst* (“an eager longing, craving, or yearning” – Collins’) *after righteousness: for they shall be filled* (“feed, fill, satisfy” – Strong’s) (KJV).

Jesus tells us here that there is happiness (“blessing”) in desiring and craving after righteousness. This verse is translated also like this:–

“Blessed and fortunate and happy and spiritually prosperous (that is, in that state in which the born-again child of God enjoys His favour and salvation) are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (uprightness and right standing with God), for they shall be completely satisfied.” (Isaiah 55:1,2)
(Matthew 5:6 AMP).

“Righteousness must be very important if Jesus taught us to hunger and thirst after it. So, what is righteousness? It is “the doing or being what is just and right; the character and acts of a man commanded by and approved of God, in virtue of which the man corresponds with Him and His will as His ideal and His standard; it signifies the sum total of all that God commands and approves. As such it is not only what God demands, but what He gives to man, and which is appropriated by faith; and hence it is a state called forth by God’s act of justification . . . ”
(Bullinger’s).

“A righteous person, therefore, is one who is “right, just, i.e. fulfilling all claims which are right and becoming; just as it should be; a right state, of which God is the standard . . . ” (Bullinger’s).

Righteousness is fulfilling the life-style and standard that God has set for us, in which we happily please Him rather than ourselves. If righteousness is God’s standard for us – and it is – then righteous living must be the motivating desire of our heart. Let us not forget the Kingdom of God is a righteous Kingdom where righteousness, peace and joy reigns! (Romans 14:17). When we hunger and thirst after righteousness, we are filled. The word “filled” in this verse is used in the sense of an animal which is fed with grass or hay, feeding it and filling it to the point of being filled – and satisfied! Just as we can experience the joy and satisfaction of having our natural stomach filled with good food, so we can delight in the contentment and satisfaction of

being spiritually filled with God's righteous standards within our daily life-style. Completely satisfied abiding in Jesus!

“Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?”

He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart” (Psalm 15:1-2 KJV).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND MEDITATION:

1. What does one have to do to inherit the earth?
2. Can you share an example of meekness in the life of someone you have met?
3. What does it mean to hunger and thirst after righteousness?
4. Can you, in your own words, give a meaning of righteousness?
5. Who sets the standards in God's Kingdom?

THE MERCY MINISTRY

LESSON 4: MATTHEW 5:7-8.

Yes, showing mercy is a ministry! How we all need more of it. Mercy produces mercy, and mercy forgives, releases and blesses those who have offended us by giving them a fresh start. So much damage is done by Christians when they don't or won't let mercy minister. When mercy is not working through us, then usually legalism (law) and judgment is. Mercy is a major principle in Kingdom Living.

Verse 7:

*“Blessed (“happy”) are the merciful (“actively compassionate, not merely unhappy for the ills of others, but desirous of relieving them; not merely pity, but beneficent aid promptly applied” – Bullinger’s): **for they shall obtain** (“gain possession of, acquire; get; take hold of” – Collins’) **mercy** (shall receive the pity and compassion of others)” (KJV).*

Without the mercy of God toward us – that is, if God did not have mercy upon each Christian individually – there would be no such thing as redemption, regeneration, forgiveness, new life, personal relationship with Jesus, etc. But, thanks be to God, **HE HAD MERCY ON US!** He loved us enough to do something for us hell-bound sinners. This is how the Scriptures declare it:–

“But God is so rich in mercy; He loved us so much that even though we were spiritually dead and doomed by our sins, He gave us back our lives again when He raised Christ from the dead – only by His undeserved favour, have we ever been saved – and lifted us up from the grave into glory along with Christ, where we sit with Him in the heavenly realms – all

because of what Christ Jesus did” (Ephesians 2:4-6 TLB).

Having extended great mercy to us, God now expects us to have mercy – to show pity – on others. Mercy is showing kindness. Showing mercy is the way of blessing – happiness! As we sow mercy into other people’s lives we will also reap mercy in our own life. It is a principle: what we sow we shall also reap (see Galatians 6:7-9).

In Judges 1:4-7 there is the record of a king by the name of Adoni-bezek (name means “lord of lightning” – unfortunately for him he wasn’t quick enough to escape the justice of God!) When he had the opportunity to show mercy to 70 other kings, he did not do it. In his anger he cut off their thumbs and big toes, which is a very cruel thing to do. The day came when Judah came and fought against him, captured him and cut off his thumbs and great toes! Before he died Adoni-bezek made a powerful confession:–

“ . . . God has paid me back for what I did to them”
(Judges 1:7 NIV).

He received exactly what he dealt out to others. Be merciful!

If you turn to Luke 10:25-37 you will see how Jesus answered the question,

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 10:25 NIV).

It came down to two conditions:–

1. ***“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and,***
2. ***Love your neighbour as yourself”*** (Luke 10:25-27 NIV).

To love our neighbour as we love ourselves means showing mercy on our neighbour. It was the good Samaritan (who was despised by the Jews – John 4:9) who was actively demonstrating the mercy ministry

when he rescued the man who fell among thieves. The other two, though very religious and active in church matters, did not show mercy, but passed by on the other side! They were not living by Kingdom principles. What a sad picture this is of many today – religious but lost! (Or, too busy to get involved!)

Mercy is love and compassion in action through the believer and disciple of Jesus Christ.

“The heart is happiest when it beats for others” (author unknown).

THE PURE IN HEART SEE GOD:

Verse 8:

“Blessed (“happy”) are (not, will be) the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (KJV).

Pure in heart. What does it mean? The word **“pure”** is explained in the following ways:–

- a) “Pure from everything that would change or corrupt the nature of the subject with which it is combined, free from every foreign admixture, whether good or bad; clean, and free from every stain, odour, colour, or any useless thing whatever; free from every false adornment” (Bullinger’s).
- b) “clean, clear” (Strong’s and Young’s).
- c) “free from tainting or polluting matter; clean; wholesome; free from moral taint or defilement” (Collins’).

Our whole ongoing relationship with God depends on the condition of our heart. Why is this?

“As the corporeal (“physical”) organ of the body, it is the seat of life, which chiefly and finally participates in all its movements: also as the seat and centre of man’s personal life in which the distinctive character of the human manifests itself. Hence the significance of the heart as the starting point of the developments and manifestations of personal life,

as well as the organ of their concentration and outgo” – (Bullinger’s).

The heart is the centre of our life, both physical and spiritual. For us in the Kingdom our heart is continually being cleansed by the blood (1 John 1:7-10) and the Word of Jesus (John 15:3) as we walk in the light with one another. Our relationship with fellow Christians has a lot to do with the state of our heart. The more we are right with one another, the “purer” our heart becomes. Through the merciful workings of God He is now teaching us through His Word. The result of this is a cleaner, purer, clearer heart. We become more and more transparent. The purer our heart, the clearer our vision is to see God! As we deal with the “foreign stains and odours” in our heart, the more pure we become and the clearer the will and purposes of God become. **“Seeing God”** has got to be the highest motivating desire within us as we deal with the matters of the heart.

As we allow the teaching of Jesus to “disciple” us, we are continually being put through a process of purification. The illustration of the potter’s wheel in Jeremiah 18:1-6 shows us that there is an ongoing need for corrupt impediments, grit, etc., to be removed from the clay in order that the finished product will bring glory to the potter. The Epistle of Jude positively affirms that Jesus is going **“to present us faultless** (“without blemish, blame, spot” – Young’s) **before the Father’s glory!”** Hallelujah! (see Jude 20-25; Ephesians 5:25-27). For our part we must abide in Him and keep ourselves in the love of God.

The purifying of our heart is the pathway of blessing – happiness! It is a joyful process to walk in the light with Jesus. But that does not mean a life free of trials, pain and suffering:–

“ . . . **we must through much tribulation** (“pressure, affliction, anguish, burdens, persecution, tribulation, trouble” – Strong’s) **enter into the Kingdom of God”** (Acts 14:22 KJV).

Jesus says the pure in heart shall see God! Two men of God can testify to this, even though their lives endured much tribulation:–

1. Job:

The whole book of Job is dedicated to the experience of a severe trial Job went through. The Bible says:–

“ . . . *the man was blameless and upright, and one who (reverently) feared God and abstained from and shunned evil (because it was wrong)*” (Job 1:1 AMP).

Job came under a Satanic attack that left his body covered with sore boils (Job 2:7-8). He was not immune to attack even though in God’s eyes he was blameless. His wife and friends really struggled with what was happening to him, blaming God and Job’s sin for the causes of such. When we get to the last chapter of Job we read an amazing statement made by Job concerning the “experience” he had just been through – “*I had heard of You (only) by the hearing of the ear; but now my (spiritual) eye sees You*” (Job 42:5 AMP).

A purifying of heart took place in Job’s life as a result of that Satanic attack! He could now see God! The pure in heart shall see God.

2. Moses:

As mentioned in Lesson 3, Moses had the tremendous responsibility of leading the children of Israel out of Egypt into the land of Canaan. The people often murmured and complained against him. What they didn’t realise was that God had taken 40 years to prepare and purify the man Moses in the land of Midian (Exodus 2 and 3).

When the time came for him to take the people by faith out of Egypt, he himself was strengthened and guided by the Living, yet invisible God. The testimony of Moses was that:–

“ . . . *he endured* (“to be strong, staunch, or firm” – Bullinger’s) *as seeing Him who is invisible.*” (Hebrews 11:27 KJV).

Moses could see the invisible God! He was pure in heart.

Today we can see God also as we allow the teachings of Jesus from the Beatitudes to sink deep down in our heart. What an honour for us to behold Him!

Can you say: “*But now my eye sees Him?*”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND MEDITATION:

1. Can you describe the mercy ministry in action?
2. Why can we show mercy unto others?
3. In the story of the good Samaritan, what did he do to show mercy? (Luke 10:25-37).
4. Why is purity of heart so important?
5. What does it mean to be pure in heart?
6. How can we “see God”?
7. In what way were Job and Moses helped to see God?

THE
PEACEMAKERS
ARE
GOD'S CHILDREN
LESSON 5: MATTHEW 5:9-12.

There is a great need for peacemakers today, both in the church and in the world. Being a peacemaker is an extraordinary gift. A true peacemaker (in the Biblical sense) is given such an honour as to be called a child of God. Let us look at it:–

VERSE 9:

"Blessed ("happy") *are the peacemakers* ("a maker of peace" – Bullinger's): *for they shall be called the children of God*" (KJV).

This verse is not talking about a state of being that is all harmony and bliss. It is about being able to bring peace into a situation of strife, upset, variance between people, church division, etc. Most of us can relate reasonably well in a state of good relations with others, but once that harmony has been broken it becomes very difficult to press through the barriers to bring restoration. In the Kingdom of God we are called to be peacemakers. If we are born-again by the Spirit of the God of Peace (2 Thessalonians 3:16; Philippians 4:9; Hebrews 13:20) then the peace of God working in us will work through us to restore peace in the lives of our brethren. Often only time can fully restore broken relationships, but the child of God is a person who is always seeking peace, speaking peace, and whose actions show we are disciples of the God of Peace. Many heartaches and trials friendships and potential for God in Christendom are marred because there has been the absence of the peacemaker at a crucial time.

The peacemaker speaks and acts totally opposite to the “natural man” when he/she is hurt and offended. The natural man wants to reject, isolate and not have any more to do with those who hurt and offend him. But the peacemaker knows that doing that is wrong for those in the kingdom and reaches out seeking to bring restoration. It is easier said than done! How different church life would be if every Christian lived as a peacemaker! Jesus gives such high honour to the peacemaker that He calls them *“the children of God.”* It is the only time in the Beatitudes that we are called this. God Himself identifies with the peacemaker and is even pleased to call us His children. The peacemaker is a person who has caught-on to the heart-beat of God.

To those Christians who may be feeling that you do not have any “ministry” for God, you need to know that the ministry of the peacemaker is available right now. There is always the need for it and it will keep you blessed and useful in the Kingdom of God.

"OH, PLEASE NOT PERSECUTION!"

I'm sorry! As much as I feel the same, we are disciples of Jesus who are committed to follow His teachings. The Bible in many places makes it quite obvious that there is a cost involved to be a true follower of the Lord. In today's so-called “enlightened” world, the thinking is that it is old-fashioned to believe in Jesus as the only Saviour; it is even more condemning of those who seek to live their lives by His Word. There is an ongoing conflict between good and evil, flesh and spirit, right and wrong (see Romans 8:5-9; 1 Corinthians 2:11-16; Galatians 5:16-26).

Verse 10:

“Blessed (“happy”) are they which are persecuted (“to pursue with malignity” – Bullinger’s); “to oppress, harass, or maltreat; to bother persistently” – Collins’) for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven” (KJV).

Notice that the persecution must be for righteousness’ sake (refer to

Lesson 3 for Bible meaning of righteousness). Any persecution we receive that is not because of a righteous stand or godly life-style may be self-inflicted. There are no medals for opposition that comes against us because of a lack of wisdom or stupidity!

Persecution is par for the course for those who follow Jesus according to Kingdom principles:–

“Indeed all who delight in piety and are determined to live a devoted and godly life in Christ Jesus will meet with persecution – that is, will be made to suffer because of their religious stand” (2 Timothy 3:12 AMP).

Piety is “dutiful devotion to God and observance of religious principles; the quality or characteristic of being pious” (Collins’).

Verse 11:

“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile (“to use abusive or scornful language against” – Collins’) you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake” (KJV).

That tongue!

Jesus promises His followers that they will be happy in the midst of rejection: when we are slandered for being identified with God and His righteous ways. The tongue can be used against us in very hurtful ways, so we must be mindful of why this opposition comes, being very careful that we do not respond negatively to it.

For the Christian it is not always the other person’s actions that we should get upset about, but our own re-actions!

- How do we re-act to criticism?
- How do we re-act to their misunderstanding of us?

- Do we use our tongue just as maliciously, or have we learned the Jesus way ***“to revile not again”*** (1 Peter 2:23 KJV)?

So much can be written about the tongue!

“Death and life are in the power (“ability” – Wilson’s) ***of the tongue . . . ”*** (Proverbs 18:21a KJV).

The tongue reveals what is in our heart:-

“ . . . For out of the fullness – the overflow, the superabundance – of the heart the mouth speaks.

The good man from his inner good treasure flings forth good things, and the evil man of his inner evil storehouse flings forth evil things . . .

For by your words you will be justified and acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned and sentenced” (Matthew 12:34b-37 AMP). (see also James 1:26).

James 3 is another important chapter that speaks to Christians about the tongue. In fact the Bible has so much to say about the tongue and our words that it would be worthwhile taking a concordance and doing a fuller study of the subject.

I will leave with you a few anonymous quotes that I have come across on matters of the tongue:–

- The Christian should learn two things about his tongue – how to hold it and how to use it.
- He who has a sharp tongue soon cuts his own throat.
- Long tongues will mean short friends.
- Everybody agrees that a loose tongue can lead to a few loose

teeth!

- Some of the best preaching is done by holding the tongue.

Take note from Matthew 5:11 that people will say all manner of evil against you falsely. It will happen – and often when you least expect it! What do we do? Hold on to the blessing of God! Be happy!

Do what the next verse tells us to do:–

Verse 12:

“Rejoice (“be delighted or pleased” – Bullinger’s), ***and be exceeding glad*** (“to leap or dance much, hence, to rejoice, exult” – Bullinger’s): ***for great is your reward*** (“hire, wages or pay for service” – Strong’s) ***in heaven: for so persecuted*** (same meaning as in verses 10 and 11) ***they the prophets*** (“those to whom God speaks and through whom God speaks; proclaimers of a divine message” – Bullinger’s) ***which were before you***” (KJV).

Accept the fact that persecution against Christians has been going on from the beginning, and will continue until the end. So, be positive about it and rejoice greatly. Get excited over the privilege we have to be identified with Jesus and prophets. We are in select company! Let’s hold our heads high and be like the early disciples when theyaced their times of persecution:–

“And they departed from the presence of the council (who had just beaten them physically), ***rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His*** (Jesus’) ***name***” (Acts 5:41).

God uses these very times to build into us more character, patience, experience, hope and the love of God (see Romans 5:3-5).

No matter what – keep rejoicing in Jesus!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND MEDITATION:

1. Can you clearly describe what a peacemaker is?
2. Can you tell of a good experience you have had in being a peacemaker?
3. Why do many Christians struggle with the thought of persecution?
4. How do you react to negative words spoken against you?
5. Is persecution a sign that we are out of the will of God, or in the will of God, or what?

I trust you have found these Lessons helpful. May you know the blessing of following the teachings of Jesus in a very real way.

Jesus loves you very, very much and wants you to grasp the power of His Word and teachings in your daily living. Feed upon His Word often and let the power of His wonderful promises *“fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost”* (Romans 15:13).

God bless you abundantly.

- Rodney W. Francis



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