

# THE BEATITUDES

**The Attributes of Jesus Christ**

**By**

*Bruce Wayne Harrell*

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## Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

*Note, this document is intended to be used in conjunction with the videos.*

All of Christ's teachings and the lessons of the entire New Testament are all about knowing God – they are not about explaining God or defining God – which is the main difference between science, religion, and Christianity:

- Science seeks to explain God
- Religion seeks to define God
- Christianity seeks to know God.

It is no surprise, then, that the greatest sermon ever preached by the greatest preacher who ever lived is about who you are on the inside, not what you look like on the outside.

Jesus starts his very first sermon with what is commonly referred to as The Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1–12. Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

The word “Beatitude” is not found in the Bible.

- “beat” is the Latin word for happy (or blessed) –the “itude” was added to imply that it was an attitude that is blessed by God.

The original Greek term for Blessed was: Makarios (mak-ar’-ee-os). It was used to describe the Greek gods who were happy within themselves because they were unaffected by the world of men because they were not subject to poverty, disease, weakness, misfortune, and death like mere humans..

It means to have an inward contentment that is not affected by outward circumstances.

Leonard Ravenhill – An English evangelist once said: “Blessedness is different from happiness because “happiness depends upon happenings” – while blessedness depends upon God”.

In essence, there is more to blessedness than just happiness.

The Greek word for Blessed used here is an adjective, not a verb. Such as: “look, there goes the Blessed one”, not: “look, how he is blessed”.

Being “Blessed” is a condition, not an action. It is a state of being not a standard of behavior.

Also notice it isn’t blessed IF you are poor in spirit or IF you mourn or IF you are meek, etc. It is blessed ARE.

It is not a conditional statement it is a fact. And it isn’t the result of an attitude you generate, it is the result of an attribute you possess.

This not about the "pursuit" of happiness as if these blessings are achieved through your own efforts to produce these attitudes. This is about the "possession" of happiness as the product or "fruit" of having these attributes.

It is who you are, not what you have.

These are like the attributes of the fictitious Greek gods that made them unfazed by human events. Their decisions and actions were not determined by human circumstances.

In truth, these are the attributes or characteristics of Jesus that gave him a blessed joy in his fellowship with the Father even while he was being persecuted and murdered.

Likewise, these are the attributes of the Believer when he:

- is yielded to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:13)
- is walking in the Spirit and not in the flesh (Gal. 5:16)
- is filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18)
- is no longer “conformed by the world but transformed internally” (Rom. 12: 1-2) and sets his affections on things above and not on the earth (Col. 3:2) and,
- these are the attributes of all the saints listed in Hebrews 11 who did not allow their faith to be swayed by the things of the world.

Since we are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:3-4) each of these should be a natural characteristic or "attribute" of the spirit led person.

It isn’t the human attitude that is blessed, it is the Godly attribute that is blessed.

- An attitude is the result of human effort –An attribute is the effect of divine transformation.
- An attitude implies God’s obligation because of human performance – An attribute declares God’s promise because of God’s work in us.
- An attitude puts man in control – an attribute puts God in control
- An attitude is about human commitment – an attribute is about Christlike surrender.

I feel it is more accurate to call these the “Be-attributes” but we’ll stick with be-attitudes because it is what we are used to hearing.

Just remember, each one of these is empowered as a gift from God and is not something you come up with on your own. We, of ourselves, have no ability to initiate any action to move toward God. It is only God in us who can initiate anything deserving of God’s blessing (Phil. 2:13).

None of these attributes are natural to the flesh - they are supernatural to the spirit (even though there may be natural temperaments that mimic these attributes).

Remember: Trying to live the beatitudes won't make you spiritual but, walking in the spirit will make the beatitudes alive in your life.

All Christians are expected to manifest ALL of these characteristics.. These attributes are typical of "normal" Christians. I didn't say “average” Christian, I said “normal” Christian. Spiritually healthy and growing in faith and good works.

Also, these are developmental – that means we are looking for progress, not perfection. Remember, the Christian life is not about working to please God but yielding to please God. It's a learning process.

“Blessed” does not mean comfortable, wealthy or healthy. It means peace of heart and mind – no matter what may happen to your body.

There are actually 7 beatitudes, not 8.

Charles H. Spurgeon once said: “The Beatitudes before us, which relate to character, are seven; the eighth is a benediction upon the persons described in the seven beatitudes when their excellence has provoked the hostility of the wicked; and, therefore, it may be regarded as a confirming and summing up of the seven blessings which precede it. Setting that aside, then, as a summary, we regard the beatitudes as seven, and will speak of them as such. The whole seven describe a perfect character and make up a perfect benediction.”

In other words, the 7 represent the outworking of God in the person of God while the 8th (persecution) represents the outworking of man toward the person of God.

The last thing I want to show you by way of introduction is that one beatitude builds on another.

I like to use a stair-way to help illustrate this along with the three aspects of each:

- The “inward” Attributes are on the end of each stair
- The outward Behaviors are on the riser for each stair
- The spiritual Blessings are on the tread for each stair

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This is not a “pick list” where you can pick or choose which ones you want to have. They are also sequential: one comes before the other in exact order. Failure to demonstrate one is a failure to demonstrate the ones that come after it.

We’ll discuss more about that when we finish looking at each beatitude which we will start in the next lesson.

## Chapter Two: THE POOR IN SPIRIT

Mt. 5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Poor in Spirit had two uses in the NT:

- Poor – as referring to someone living day to day. Hand to mouth. Barely able to make ends meet and having few possessions. Like living paycheck to paycheck.
- And, really poor - as in this case, is really poor - destitute, It refers to a beggar who has nothing, can do nothing (no skill) and cannot trade anything. All that is given to this person is a gift (such as the blind beggar who Jesus healed in Luke 18).

Likewise, the one who is poor in spirit realizes they have: Nothing to offer for their soul (Matt. 16:26), Nothing to trade for eternal life (Ps. 49:7) and nothing to do to that can earn God's favor (Eph. 2:8-9)

Poor in "spirit" – is not talking about an “attitude”, it's referring to a “condition”.

The destitute don't have an attitude they need to fix, they have a condition they cannot fix. It is an “empty” condition: a condition that is empty of “self”.

Poor in spirit is the only attribute that requires emptying, all others require filling. To be poor in spirit is the constant emptying of self that allows the continuous filling of the spirit. It is also a pre-requisite to gain the other six attributes.

To be “emptied of self” means to be “dead to self”.

The Bible says in Romans 6:11 “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” To be dead to sin means to be dead to all the self-serving selfishness's of the former sinful nature.

You have probably heard the phrase “I'm dead to you!”

That is how God wants you to react when sin that is tempting the old “self” is calling out to you. Tell it “I'm dead to you!” and then think to yourself “But, I am alive in Christ”

To be alive in Christ means that your new “self” is energized to live for Him and not for the former “self” which was energized for sin.

To be poor in spirit means to be humble and humility is the first beatitude because humility is foundational to all blessings that come from God and to the entire Sermon on the Mount in Chapters 5, 6 & 7.

God's special grace to the Believer is contingent upon the humility of the Believer. Listen to how God feels about the humble in Isaiah 57:15 “For this is what the high and lofty One says-



- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite”.

Isaiah 66:1-2 says: “This is what the LORD says: Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the LORD. (Are you trying to impress me with the things you have built?) This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.”

Humility is the first beatitude because all sin started with a lack of humility.

Someone once said “There is no humility or submission where there is no prohibition”.

The first example of prohibition in human history is the prohibition given by God to Adam and Eve to not eat of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Without this prohibition, there would not have been a need for humility or submission to God.

When they ate the fruit of the forbidden tree (not necessarily apples), they were in essence saying to God that they didn’t need to submit to His authority.

The first sin started with a lack of humility - the first blessing is conditioned on humility.

Sometimes it is easier to understand what something is by starting with what it is not.

### **Humility is not:**

- Suppressing your personality. Your personality is God-given. What you need to do is learn to operate in your strengths and not your weaknesses.
- Displaying a sullen or down-trodden expression. You can be happy and still be humble. After all, the verse starts with “happy are”.
- It is not “looking” poor or some form of self-mutilation. It is poor in spirit, not poor in body.
- Intentionally devaluing yourself to appear humble to others.
- Not timidity. Timothy was warned by Paul to not be too timid.

### **Humility is:**

- Esteeming others before yourself. Showing deference to their wishes above your own.
- Being thankful with a contrite heart. Always showing appreciation.
- Don’t deflect praise but accept it graciously as a gesture of kindness from someone.
- Boldness for Christ but always acknowledging God in your heart for the mercy and grace he gives you.
- The absence of human pride and self-reliance. “Without me, you can do nothing”. Or as Paul said, “I count it all as dung”

The song “Amazing Grace” is one of the greatest hymns of all time about humility. It speaks about both the repulsiveness of the former self and the boldness of the new self.

Notice that it says “IS” the kingdom of heaven. All the other beatitudes say “shall”, this one says “is”.

This is the only beatitude where the promise is not future, it is both now and carries to the future. All the others are based upon fulfilling the promise based upon your “condition” - this one is based upon your “position”.

That is because this one depends on your “position” as being “in Christ” and, therefore, being a subject of God’s Heavenly Kingdom right now.

Because you belong to God’s Kingdom, you have all the spiritual blessings and benefits that go with that citizenship already (someday, you will be given a new body and physically reside in that Kingdom)

Three verses that help us see that we are already part of the Kingdom of God are:

1. Eph. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.
  - “Has blessed us” = has already given us every spiritual blessing we need as if we were already in Heaven with Him.
2. Eph. 2:4-6 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus .
  - “Seated us with Him in heavenly places”. The Heavenly Father has already reserved our seat with Christ in Heaven awaiting our final arrival. No-body else can take your seat - you could tell them: “Sorry sir, that’s my seat”.
3. Phil. 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven....
  - Remember we are ambassadors and sojourners down here (2 Cor. 5:20, 1 Pet. 1:17). Our citizenship is in Heaven.

It helps me to sometimes think of this beatitude like this (my own words): Happy beyond this world is the one who regards others more than himself and treasures Christ above all others for without Christ, they know they can do nothing for God but in Christ, they can do all Godly things and can boldly claim their citizenship is in Heaven.

We are followers of Christ, not leaders of Christ. The way to humility is to always remember to be in His shadow. When you no longer see his shadow, you are no longer following Him.

## Chapter Three: THOSE WHO MOURN

Mt. 5:4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

The first 3 Beatitudes speak to:

- “Poor in Spirit” which deals with your head - The way you think about yourself
- “Mourning” which deals with your heart - How you feel about yourself – your situation
- “Meek” which deals with your feet - What are you going to do about it?

Remember, God always works in this order when he is transforming you into Christlikeness. So, never put your heart or your feet above your head.

"Mourn" means to have a deep sadness and despair, like you would have over the death of a loved one. Something like a hopeless sensation. Questioning like “Now what do I do?”

A feeling of despair like David when he'd heard that Absalom was killed in battle which is described in 2 Sam 18:33: The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!”

### **Mourning is not:**

- This is not physical or emotional mourning or depression.
  - It is spiritual mourning.
- It is not a mood issue.
  - The Bible warns us to not let our moods rule over our minds.
  - Remember, the higher truth about the goodness of God should always be a check valve for the lower truths of human experience whether they be our sensual experiences or outward experiences.
- It is not religious misery.
  - Once you become a Christian you can't do anything fun.
- It is not pouting or self-pity.
  - Remember, we are to put self to death, not pity it.
  - Also, Jesus who was a man of sorrows in acquainted with grief never exhibited pouting or self-pity.

### **Mourning is:**

- An awareness of the “wretchedness” of the residual old self but great joy in the “new” self. “

- This is what Paul means in Rom. 7:24-25 “O Wretched man that I am!” (*And, then goes on to say*): “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”
- Morning comes from an honest and accurate understanding of sin. (Something that is not taught much in the church these days.)
- Weeping over the sins of others.
  - The state of current affairs and the direction things are going. But also having joy knowing that God is just and “all things will work to good” for his glory.
- It is the morning over the deadly effects of sin.
  - Such as Jesus did in Mt. 23:37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” .

One of the greatest Psalms that illustrates mourning is Ps. 51. It is David’s confession and repentance over his adulterous sin with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband, Uriah. I recommend you read the entire Psalm but, for this lesson, I want to share four verses of the Psalm with you.

- First, we’ll look at Ps. 51:5-6: Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

You have heard me many times strongly urge you to personalize the Scripture. Take what you’ve read and put your own name or personal pronouns into the scripture in your own words. You will gain even more if you write them down and read them over until they say exactly what God is saying to you. Let me share with you what these verses mean to me regarding the attribute of mournfulness.

- (My personalization): “Lord, of a truth, I was born with the imprint of sin on my soul. I am naturally drawn to my inherent lusts which my unregenerate flesh craves. But you, on the other hand, require truth and holiness and are willing, despite my flesh, to teach me as a father teaches his child.”
- Next, we’ll look at Ps. 51:16-17: For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
  - (My personalization): “If I could do something or bring something to earn your favor, I would gladly do it but, that is not what you are looking for. Instead, may the sacrifice of my yielded will and my softened and repentant heart be acceptable in your sight.”

You get the idea.

The outward result of spiritual mourning will be repentance.

2 Cor. 7:10 tells us that Godly sorrow leads to repentance.

Repentance is a change of direction. You realize you're headed the wrong way, so you change your direction to the right way.

God uses your spiritual grief to make you turn toward Him.

Godly sorrow is the kind of sorrow that God approves of because the source of relief is directed to Him. It is not a kind of sorrow that is focused on us, it is focused on God who is the only one who can forgive our mis-direction and encourage us in the right way and strengthen us for the journey.

Think of Godly Sorrow as "Godward" sorrow.

A.W.Tozer once called Godly sorrow "Moral Revulsion". He said "it is the description of a man who got right with God because he 'got sick of himself'. Like the prodigal son".

God puts it this way in Eze. 36:31 "Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices."

I would say that Moral Revulsion is the prelude to individual spiritual revival.

Don't wait for the church to revive you or someone else to inspire you. Stir yourself up and start your own spiritual revival. That is the key to revival in the church because it is not a "church" revival, it is a revival of individual Christians to forsake sin and turn back to God that brings revival to the church.

Mourning includes sorrowing over God's departed glory in your life that can come from allowing yourself to drift off course.

This doesn't mean that you always need to change 180 degrees. But it usually means that you have lost a sensitivity to some sin that God wants you to see.

The need for this kind of sorrow and repentance is critical for the church today. Alexander MacLaren (a Scottish Baptist pastor 1826 - 1910) once said: "...there are few things which the so-called Christianity of this day needs more than an intenser realisation of the fact, and the gravity of the fact, of personal sinfulness. There lies the root of the shallowness of so much that calls itself Christianity in the world today."

Listen to what God says in Jeremiah 8:6 "I have listened attentively, but they do not say what is right. No one repents of his wickedness, saying, "What have I done?"..."

The growing Christian's life will be marked by a life of constant repentance because of mourning over great and small sins.

Christianity is a life of continuous adjustments which are being prompted by the Holy Spirit, like a compass directing you back to God – your "true north".

It is not necessarily major adjustments if you are constantly making small ones.

The Believer is ever correcting his/her direction based upon the Spirit's guidance. This is what it means to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh (Gal. 5:16)

It is a bit like learning to drive a car, you start out with big corrections and then, as you get practice, smaller corrections. The problem with experienced driver's is they get distracted and sometimes need to make big corrections (like if they are on their cell phone). So, keep your eyes on the road, or, in the case of the Christian: keep your eyes on Jesus.

Heb. 12:2 puts it like this: "Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith". Prov. 4:25 says "Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you". And, Is. 26:3 gives us a promise: "You (*God*) will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you."

Repentance is a deliberate response to Godly sorrow.

The Christian life isn't a life on "autopilot" (i.e. "let go and let God"), it requires our active participation and willful determination.

God describes Godly repentance in Joel 2:12-13 "Even now," declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity."

This may sound like an oxymoron, but the beatitude says "happy are the sad". But, it isn't the sadness that makes them happy or "blessed", it is God's response to their Godly sorrow that comforts (strengthens) them.

1 John 1:9 says "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

This is the kind of confession that comes from sorrow over sin and includes repentance. And what greater happiness is there than to know your sins have been forgiven and your fellowship with Christ restored?

Sin and happiness are incompatible, but forgiveness and happiness are very compatible.

An important word you need to understand is "comfort". This is the same Greek root word that Jesus used in John 14-16 to describe the Holy Spirit as the "comforter". It means an Advocate to come along side you to encourage and strengthen you.

An advocate is like an attorney who pleads your case before the Judge (in this case, the Heavenly Father). You may feel like your situation is hopeless, but the Holy Spirit is in you to encourage you that Christ is your defender, and you will be "more than conquering" over sin (Rom. 8:37).

He is there to strengthen you in the battle. To "not give up in well doing" (Gal. 6:9). So, it is here as well, those who mourn over sin will be encouraged and strengthened.

What greater encouragement and strengthening can there be than to know “if God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31)

Finally, the verb use of the word “mourning” is a Greek tense that means a continuous action. In other words, those who are continuously sensitive to their sin and therefore continuously confessing and repenting “shall be” continuously comforted.

These are those who keep very short accounts with God and therefore walk very closely with Him (1 John 1:7).

Finally, when I think of this beatitude, I think of the little poem by Robert Browning Hamilton (1812–1889):

“I walked a mile with Pleasure - She chatted all the way.  
And left me none the wiser for all she had to say.  
I walked a mile with Sorrow And ne’er a word said she.  
But, oh, the things I learned from her When Sorrow walked with me.”

I would challenge you to ask God to help make you more spiritually sensitive to sin. It will help you have a more thankful appreciation for God’s loving forgiveness, and it will give you a greater sense of the overwhelming covering of the blood of Christ.

## Chapter Four: THE MEEK

A.W. TOZER once said: “Poor in spirit is a person who thinks lowly of himself in relation to himself. The Humble thinks lowly of himself in relationship to others. The Meek thinks lowly of himself in relationship to God.”

- Poor in Spirit deals with our mind/head (which is seeing God’s way)
- Mourning deals with our emotions/heart (which is adjusting to God’s way)
- Meek deals with our will/feet (which is seeking God’s way)

Remember, Jesus was preaching to a large crowd in a Roman province. Undoubtedly there were some Romans there if not at least some guards or soldiers to ensure the peace.

Then think about the culture he was in for a moment - none of these attributes he was teaching about was more offensive to the Romans than meekness. Meekness was immediately associated with “weakness” and was not considered a virtue by the Romans.

Neither was “meek” the kind of Messiah the Jews expected to rescue them from the oppression of the Romans. This is the primary reason why the Scripture says: “He came unto His own, but His own received Him not” (John 1:11).

The rejection of Jesus started long before His crucifixion. It began with these sayings and at this teaching.

Meekness is the first outward attribute of the Believer. Poor in Spirit and Mournfulness are internal and private. But, Meekness is external and public. It is the part where we “confess Jesus before man” (Matt. 10:32)

The meek are those who have willingly surrendered their own will to the will of another (in the Christian’s case, to God).

Jesus speaks of himself as being meek in Matt. 11:29 “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle (meek) and lowly in heart,”

We know Jesus was meek because:

- When speaking of the Heavenly Father in John 8:29, Jesus says “I always do what pleases him (the Father).”
- In Heb. 10:9, Jesus is quoted as saying to the Heavenly Father: “Behold, I have come to do your will.”
- In the garden before the crucifixion, Jesus concluded his prayer to the Father in Luke 22:42 “yet not my will, but yours be done.”
- And when Jesus teaches the disciples to pray to the Father, he says in Matthew 6:10 “your (the Father’s) will be done”



The natural progression from the previous beatitude of repentance from mourning is to yield or submit to the Authority who brought repentance to your attention in the first place namely, God.

Meekness is not a passive position, but a determined direction to do God's will – no matter what.

Martin Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981. Reformed Baptist pastor of the Westminster Chapel in London for 30 years) explained meekness as: "Meekness is yielding control to someone else."

The key word to understanding meekness is "yielding".

**Meek is not:**

- Weak.
  - In the face of persecution, it requires great faith and strength of spirit to trust your welfare to the invisible God.
- Defending your pride.
  - It is "turning over to the one who judges justly" (1 Pet. 2:23)
- Being compliant or quiet to avoid confrontation when the truth is being maligned or "nice" to be accepted by others and hiding the truth.
- Meekness is not cowardice.
  - Meekness is an absence of confidence in self - not an absence of confidence in God.

**Meek is:**

- Yielding to another (like Abraham to Lot).
  - Look at all the OT prophets. None could have been used of God without meekness.
- The same for the NT Apostles.
- Meekness is surrendering your rights to God and yielding to His will over your own.
- Meekness is compatible with boldness and holy anger.
  - Moses (the Bible calls the most meek man on the face of the earth). Yet, see him before Pharaoh and the people of Israel. Totally yielded to God and His will.
- A meek person demonstrates a contentedness or peace that passes understanding. (Phil. 4:5-7)
  - Farmers in Jesus time used "meekness" to describe a colt that had been broken and tamed (similar to Jesus colt that was unbroken but became meek under his Lordship).

Without meekness, the next step: Hungering and Thirsting after Righteousness, is impossible.

Meekness is the first outward evidence to others that we belong to Christ. It is a life of daily public confession that we have surrendered our lives to God - that we are changed and different from what we used to be.

It is the visible testimony that we belong to a different kingdom. Ask yourself: “What kingdom do the people around you think you belong to?”

One of the greatest witnesses of meekness is that it endures injuries – trusting that God is in control and will vindicate us in His time.

When we fight for ourselves and defend ourselves, it causes confusion and sends a mixed message to others.

- On one hand we say we trust God to be all powerful yet, on the other hand, we need to defend ourselves because obviously God can't watch out for my welfare as well as I can.
- On one hand we say we believe God is all knowing yet, on the other hand, we think he must have not seen this one coming, so we need to take matters into our own hands.
- On one hand we say is loving yet, on the other hand, this calamity and pain we are suffering is unfair.
- Consider how Jesus handled the normal calamities of this world and the persecution he suffered for his faith:
  - 1 Pet. 2:20-23 But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.
- Undertaking your own defense weakens your faith, discourages Christians and confuses Unbelievers because it denies the goodness of God and undermines the sovereignty of God.

Another great testimony of meekness is they have the courage to stand up for Christ and His Truth no matter what. This is putting on the armor of God that you may stand, and having done all, to continue to stand (Eph. 6:13)

This doesn't mean to stand in hateful defiance of wrongdoers, it means to stand in loving defense of the Gospel. Not with self-inflating pride, but with self-denying boldness.

Another example is the unexplainable peace that comes from trusting that God is in control of your life. This is a peace that sees every person you encounter as a divine appointment by God for His glory. A peace that sees every calamity, heartbreaking loss and tragedy as an

opportunity to testify to the ultimate goodness of God no matter what your situation and a peace that sees beyond your illness, pain and suffering and looks up to the very throne of God to see the compassion of Christ as he lovingly speaks to your spirit

Remember Jesus' words: "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." John 14:1-3 .

This is a peace that comes over you when you are tired of the battle against sin and want to give up that says "...let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up." (Gal. 6:9 ESV)

Meekness is the "Godliness with contentment" spoken of in 1 Tim. 6:6

A good description of meekness is found in Ps. 131:1-2

My heart is not proud, Lord,  
my eyes are not haughty.  
I do not concern myself with great matters  
or things too wonderful for me.  
But I have calmed and quieted myself,  
I am like a weaned child with its mother.  
like a weaned child I am content.

The blessing is they shall inherit the earth (a direct quote from Ps. 37:11)

This is a simple but massive promise to those who have surrendered their power, privileges, and rights in this world knowing they will have all the power, privileges and rights in the new order at Christ's return.

It is demonstrated by your endurance of injuries by others, your courage to stand for the Truth, your faith and trust in God's providence and sovereignty and, your perseverance in well-doing. All of which will be richly rewarded in the coming Kingdom.

When you know what is coming your way, it's easier to endure what you have now.

Live with the patience of the prince who knows that someday, he will reign with the King.

## **Chapter Five: THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST**

Hungering and Thirsting is the intense desire to be fully satisfied.

In this case, we are talking about hungering and thirsting after “righteousness” rather than the natural food and water.

It is not Jesus’ intention to make a distinction between hungering and thirsting – they are used together as physical metaphor to make a spiritual point.

In essence, just like physical food and drink are necessary to grow physically. So, also, spiritual food and drink are necessary to grow spiritually.

Another way to look at it is, if there is no natural intense desire for food and drink, it is likely because the person is dead. The dead have no natural desire for sustenance.

The same works spiritually, if there is no intense desire for spiritual food and drink, it is likely that the person has not been born into the Kingdom of God. The spiritually dead have no desire for the righteousness of God. We are reminded of this in 1 Cor. 2:14 “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”

1 Peter 2:2 speaks of this spiritual hunger and thirst in the Christian like a newborn baby who, upon being born, immediately has an almost insatiable desire for its mother’s milk. So also for the newborn Believer.

It is as spiritually natural for a newborn Believer to intensely desire the milk of the Word of God as it is for a newborn child to desire its mother’s milk.

It isn’t a question if the baby is alive or not, it a matter of feeding it. So with the Believer. They are alive in Christ, now they need to be fed.

So, what do you feed a newborn Believer? The truth.

In Jesus High Priestly Prayer in John 17, in verse 17 he prays to the Heavenly Father on behalf of all Christians (past, present and future) and says “Sanctify them (make them holy) in the truth; your word is truth.”

So, to hunger and thirst after righteousness means to intensely desire the truth that you might learn how to live a life that is holy and pleasing to God.

Again, Jesus put it like this in John 8:32-33 “...If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

So also, knowing the truth will give you a passion for the truth which will result in truthful (or righteous) behavior. And, righteous behavior sets you free from the power of sin in your life (Rom. 6) (recall you have already been set free from the penalty of sin).

Psalms 119:33-37 is an excellent example of a prayer that cries after righteousness:

Teach me, O LORD, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end.

Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart.

Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your Word.

The key thing to remember is that hungering and thirsting for righteousness is hungering and thirsting after the Righteous One.

Ps. 63:1 give us a good sense of this: "O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water."

The basis of righteousness is not that you do righteous things but that you walk with the Righteous One.

Ps 1 is very clear that you become like the people you hang around with or expose yourself to.

The core rule for walking with Christ is to walk (or live your life) with a conscience that is sensitive to sin. Such a conscience will keep you from veering into the shadows or wandering from the path.

Remember, you got this far because of the need for a relationship with Christ, now don't abandon and walk away from him like the nine out of ten lepers Jesus healed in Luke 17:11-19.

This isn't the kind of person who is looking for dinner because they missed lunch. This is the person who is looking for all the food and all the drink so they might never hunger or thirst again. Like Jesus said: "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" Jn 6:35.

This isn't the person who is looking for enough righteousness to satisfy their conscience until next time. This is the person who is looking for all the righteousness they can possibly have.

It is a never-ending quest for the truth that leads to a path of righteousness living that enjoys a sweet communion with Christ (1 Jn. 1:7)

Let's look at four of the signs of someone who is hungering and thirsting after righteousness:

1. Their intense love for God
2. Their intense love for the Word of God
3. Their intense love for the people of God
4. Their intense love for the return of God

### **An intense love for God**

- For someone to have an intense desire for righteousness they must also have an intense love for the God of righteousness (Mk. 12:30, Jn. 14:15 & 23). This person is almost in constant communication with God in their heart.

Ps. 42:1&2 describes the heart of this person:

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.  
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When shall I come and appear before God?

- They are not ashamed to call God their God.

Ps. 40:10

I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart.  
I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation.  
I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness  
from the great congregation.

### **An intense love for the Word of God**

This is the person who hears the Heavenly Father speaking to them through his Word.

- They look forward to and treasure the time they spend reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on the Word.
- They want to be taught the truth and love to talk about the wondrous things God has shown them in his Word.
- They know that the way to righteous living is through the truth of the Word of God

Ps 119:97–104 puts it like this:

Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.  
Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is  
ever with me.  
I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your  
testimonies are my meditation.  
I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.  
I hold back my feet from every evil way in order to keep your  
word.  
I do not turn aside from your rules for you have taught me.  
How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my  
mouth!  
Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every  
false way.

**An intense love for the people of God**

- They see other Christians as fellow laborers in the work of God and love them as their brothers and sisters.
- They love to worship together with other Believers  
Ps. 122;1

I was glad when they said to me,  
“Let us go to the house of the LORD!”

- They love the church and look for opportunities to serve others (Eph. 4:16)
- They do not forsake gathering with other Believers even in the face of difficulty or persecution (Heb. 10:25).

**An intense love for the return of God.**

- These are like Abraham of whom it is said in Hebrews 11:10 he was “looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.”
- These Believers are watching and waiting for the promised return of Christ as he said in John 14:1-3: “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”
- These know they are to live righteous lives while they await the return of their savior. Titus 2:11-14 “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”
- These Christians live like their citizenship is in Heaven and this dwelling place is only temporary. They say with John in Rev. 22:20 “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

The result of hungering and thirsting for righteousness is being filled (fully satisfied).

This is not something that the world can ever offer.

It like when Jesus feed the 5,000. They ate until they were completely filled. No-one was lacking. And, they collected 12 baskets of leftovers

We know that our future presence in Heaven will fully satisfy our righteous desires. However, while down here on this planet, the idea of being filled or satisfied is a little different.

It is like finding a food you really like and the more you eat it, the more you want it.

It is the idea of Ps. 34:8 where we are exhorted to “taste of the Lord and see that the Lord is good”. The more you taste of the love and grace of God, the more he fills you with His love and grace and the more you want.

This is parallel to the asking, seeking, knocking in Luke 11:9-10.

- Those who ask, receive
- Those who seek, find
- Those who knock, have it opened.



## Chapter Six: THE MERCIFUL

Mercy naturally flows from those who hunger and thirst after righteousness because those who seek righteousness will live Godly and those who live Godly will look Godly which means they display the character of God in their life.

Mercy is one of the many characteristics of God's infinite love and has many facets. Like a diamond shining in the light of the sun.

Ps. 51:1 puts it like this: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions."

- The word "Abundant" comes from a Hebrew word meaning wealth, plentiful or multitude.
- The word "mercy" is often translated in the plural as "mercies" in the Scripture.

Listen to how God describes himself as merciful to Moses on Mt. Sinai:

The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the LORD. 6 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, Exod. 34:5-7

Notice the first character trait God mentions is "merciful". The remaining are all further descriptions of the facets or aspects of mercy:

- Gracious
- Patient
- Loving
- Faithful
- Forgiving

This is by no means a definitive or comprehensive list of God's character, but it is list to describe "merciful".

Ps. 51:1 describes the immeasurable breadth of God's mercy:

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Ps. 51:1

The Scripture defines God's capacity to show mercy not according to our worthiness or righteousness, but according to the boundless resources of His lovingkindness and according to the unlimited multitude of His tender mercies.

Inside the Temple in Jerusalem was a special place called the Holy of Holy's where the Ark of the Covenant was kept.

The Ark was a wooden chest, hand-crafted by God-inspired artisans to his specific dimensions and design and then overlaid with Gold.

The lid of the Ark of the covenant was called the "mercy seat"

Once every year the blood of the "sacrifice of the atonement" was sprinkled over the mercy seat.

The High Priest dare not enter the Holy of Holies without the blood of a spotless lamb. In essence, the High Priest was saying "I am worthy of death, but because of the death of this spotless lamb, I enter into your presence.

The blood was then sprinkled over the mercy seat above which was the Shekinah glory of God – the bright manifest presence of God.

Inside the Ark was the "Law" (the original tablets of the 10 commandments written with the finger of God).

The commandments represented the law of God - His perfect standard for entrance into his presence which no-one can meet.

The "mercy seat" was between the perfect standard required to enter God's presence and God. Unless you met God's perfect standard, you could not stand in His presence.

Those sacrifices were symbolic of the final and real sacrifice, Jesus Christ

Christ was the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)

Jesus Christ is the seat of God's mercy for mankind to all who accept his sacrifice for their sins.

This is why "mercy" is number one. Without mercy, there would be no hope.

Mercy with all its facets are actionable verbs, not passive verbs. To be actionable is to take the initiative. To be passive is to respond to someone else's initiative.

To be merciful is to initiate showing merciful behavior to others before they meet your conditions to deserve it.

There were five facets of mercy mentioned earlier. Let's see what each of these looks like in the Christian's life.

### **GRACIOUS**

To be kind, useful and serving others

- It is active goodwill

- To be good to others
- To show favor to someone
- To work for the welfare of another
- To do things to help others
- It is a favor done without expectation of thanks or recognition in return.

John 1:16 speaks of grace like this: “For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”

Like the wave of the ocean coming to shore – one upon another without diminishing the ocean even one drop. So also should the lovingkindness of God flow through us to others – one loving act upon another - over and over again.

### **PATIENT**

Just as kindness will give anything to others, patience will receive anything from others.

- Patience is the capacity to be wronged and not retaliate
- It means to be long-suffering
- Patience never takes revenge for being hurt or insulted or abused.
- The ability to be inconvenienced or taken advantage of by a person over and over again and yet not to show irritation or anger
- To endure difficult circumstances and persevere for the testimony of Christ.
- “Patient” comes from a Greek word meaning “to remain under” (like a weight). It is the essence of Matt. 16:24 when Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me”.

### **LOVING**

- The compound word: “lovingkindness” is a cause-and-effect term
- God’s love is the cause, kindness is the effect.
- Love is the motivation – kindness is the action. John 3:16 is God’s example for us: “For God so loved that he gave...”
- Love without kindness is empty and worthless like faith without works (James 2:14-18). This kind of love is pointed out by John in 1 John 3:16-18

“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does

God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." 1 Jn 3:16–18

- The merciful aspect of loving is generosity. Generosity means: “showing kindness more than necessary to others”. When the love of God is allowed to flow through you to others, you will be a generous person.
  - Being generous means to invest your life in others. Jesus tells us in Matt. 6:21 “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matt. 6:21 He is saying that what you invest in, you love. To invest your life for the good of others is a loving and generous thing to do.

And, being loving takes grace to the next level.

- While being gracious includes is doing kind things for the good of others, loving takes it to the next level and is sacrificing yourself for the good of others.
- While being patient includes bearing the weight of the cross, loving includes paying the price for the cross

Loving is a deep caring interest in someone even to your own hurt. Being loving or showing lovingkindness can be a high-risk venture because it opens you up to be used and abused. And, it means to be tender-hearted and to show compassion even if it costs you your life.

## **FAITHFUL**

There is a difference between being “full of faith” and being “faithful”.

- To be full of faith means to have the faith, to be faithful means to live the faith.
- It is the difference between professing to be trustworthy and actually being trustworthy.
- There are many who claim to be faithful but, when tested by the fires of affliction, aren't very faithful at all. It is like “when all is said and done, more is said than done”. Or “do what I say, don't do what I do”
- It means being faithful even when others are not faithful. A promise-keeper even to those who break their promises.
- Being honest about what you can and cannot do (don't write checks you can't cash).
- Someone who is reliable and trustworthy. A person worthy of putting confidence in

The reason a faithful person is also merciful is because they value even the smallest things you share with them so you can have confidence they will not betray the weightier things you share with them. They can be entrusted with your best interest at heart.

This is what Jesus meant when he said in Matt. 25:21 “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.’”  
Matt. 25:21

A person who is faithful to Christ, will be faithful to others.

### **FORGIVING**

This word means ready to pardon or to be ready to forgive.

It is used only one other place in the Bible in Ps. 86:5 “For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love (mercy) to all who call upon you.”

To forgive is to:

- Untie or to loosen. Such as to free up or release somebody of the obligation of paying a debt
- To absolve or pardon.
- To not hold accountable
- To remit someone’s fault and exempt them from punishment
- To not hold a personal offense against someone

“For” in forgive comes from the same root as “fore” which means “forward”, “in front of”, “before”

“Give” in this sense means to “grant” or “hand over” or “release”

So, to forgive, means to grant or hand-over before or in front of.

In other words,

- You release somebody of their debt before they pay it off.
- You exonerate someone of fault before they are accused
- You pardon someone from punishment before they serve their sentence

The key to forgiveness is that you have “readied” yourself (as God has) with no ill-will in your heart so the minute you see them you can forgive them as a natural outflow of mercy from unconditional love.

Also, forgiving others in your heart allows God to forgive you as well. Not for salvation, but from the curse of anguish, physical problems and unfruitfulness that accompany bitterness, anger, and grudge-holding.

It is this forgiveness from God because of your forgiveness to others that gives you a “joy unspeakable” and “peace that passes understanding” (1 Pet. 1:8, Phil. 4:7).

To know forgiveness is to know the truth which is to be “free indeed” (John 8:36)

These five facets of mercy are transformational behaviors

When you yield your will to the Holy Spirit and thus do not quench the power of the Spirit working through you, it allows:

- The grace of God to flow through you to be a help to others.
- The patience of God to flow through you to be enduring of others.
- The love of God to flow through you to be generous to others.
- The faithfulness of God to flow through you to be true to others.
- The forgiveness of God to flow through you to be peaceful to others.

The “merciful” shall have mercy which means to be set free.

It isn’t that we manipulate God into showing us mercy when we show mercy (God can never owe any man anything), but, God can reveal to us more of the mercy He is already giving us as we are merciful to others.

It’s like looking at the night sky. If we look with the naked eye, we are only able to see a small portion of the universe. But, if we use successively larger telescopes, we can see more and more of what’s already there.

As we enlarge our sphere of mercy to others, we can see and understand how much more merciful God has been and is being to us.

The more we allow God’s mercy to flow through us to others, the more we see the “unsearchable riches” of His mercy toward us. Eph. 2:4 and 3:8.

2 Cor. 3:18 explains: “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate (gaze into) the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

Every time you enlarge your grace, your patience, your love, your faithfulness and, your forgiveness to others, God becomes bigger, more beautiful, and more precious to you than you ever imagined.

I would strongly encourage you to ask God to bring someone to mind you maybe have not been gracious to or patient with or loving to or faithful to or have not yet forgiven. Don’t argue with God about it, just go to that person, ask their forgiveness, and let God’s love flow through you to them.

What joy and peace you will experience!

## **Chapter Seven: THE PURE IN HEART**

Pure means not being mixed with something else (mixed feelings, desires, objectives, loves).

It means to have an undivided heart. Singleness of thoughts, affections and will - not divided between God and the world.

Jesus explains it like this: “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one (give attention to) and despise (neglect) the other” Matt. 6:24

James puts the same truth in another way: “Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” James 4:4 . He then gives the solution to the problem: “Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (v. 8).

Purity means fidelity. God is concerned about our personal relationship with him (He’s a “jealous” God).

Think of “high fidelity” records = true to the original recording. Not mixed with scratches, impurities and static.

Purity of heart is more than sincerity. A thief can be completely sincere about robbing your house.

In this case, God is referring to moral purity. It means sincerity without hypocrisy or deception, without folds (nothing hidden) and with no immorality mixed in.

Peter puts it like this: “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking. As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” 1 Pet. 2:1–2. Back in the day, sincere milk meant unmixed and undiluted with water. The real thing.

When we talk about the internal purity of heart, we are talking about blamelessness, guiltlessness, and innocence.

Ps. 32:1-2 says: “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit (thoughts, intentions) there is no deceit.”

Our thoughts and intentions are judged by our conscience.

Paul uses this defense for his innocence before Felix in Acts 24:16 “So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.”

King David refers to the conscience as a “clean heart” in Ps. 51:10.

Heb. 10:22 talks about the “true” heart or “pure” heart as being “sprinkled clean from an evil conscience”

And Heb. 9:14 tells us, “How much more will the blood of Christ... purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

David calls upon God to judge him based upon his conscience in Ps. 26:1-2 “Vindicate me (Judge me), O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering. Prove me (examine me), O LORD, and try me, test my heart (conscience) and my mind (thoughts).

- “Heart” as a Hebrew noun means knowledge of right from wrong which is the conscience.
- Like in Gen. 20:1-7 when Abraham was travelling through the southern deserts of Israel and was afraid King Abimelech would kill him to get his wife, Sarah. Abraham lied and said, “she is my sister” and Sarah lied and said “she is my brother”. When God comes to Abimelech and tells him he took another man’s wife. In verse 5 Abimelech pleads with God on behalf of his innocent conscience: “Did he (Abraham) not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she (Sarah) herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart (conscience) and the innocence of my hands I have done this.” Gen. 20:5. Based on his innocence, God does not punish him.

If your conscience is clear before God, you are considered blameless concerning your thoughts and intentions regarding that issue.

It is hearing and knowing the truth from the Word of God that convicts our conscience of sin.

Heb. 4:12 says, “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” The thoughts and intentions of the heart are the conscience.

I’ve said all this to help you understand that to have a “pure heart” is to have a clean conscience before God. A conscience that, upon examination by God, is unaware or ignorant of sin.

So, how do I keep my heart pure? How do I keep my conscience clean?

John helps us understand in 1 John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (sin). “To cleanse us from all unrighteousness” is the purity we are looking for.

When the Holy Spirit convicts your conscience of sin, immediately confess it, ask forgiveness and blood of Christ will cleanse you from all sin and guilt. Your conscience will be guiltless, and you will be cleansed – made pure, blameless and innocent.

Pure is the Greek word “katharos” it is where we get the word catharsis.



In psychology, catharsis is the process of providing cleansing or relief from strong or repressed emotions.

To be pure in heart, means to have been cleansed from sin and relieved from the repressive burden of guilt.

This is what confession, forgiveness and the washing of the blood of Christ provides.

The way to keep your heart pure is:

- When in doubt, don't (Rom. 14:23)
- When convicted, confess
- When concerned, ask. Like David did in Ps. 139:23-24 "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous (evil, wicked) way in me," Ps 139:23-24

The blessing is "They shall see God"

Not just seeing God physically in the afterlife but seeing him spiritually in this life.

The word "see", means an ongoing experience. They will be seeing and will continue to see God in all that he is doing in their lives and in the world.

The Hebrew application of this phrase signified that seeing a thing was like possessing it. Seeing God was like possessing God's undivided attention. Enjoying his presence – eye to eye, not just in the same room or stadium. You not only know Him, but He knows you as well.

So, how do you "see" God?

Hebrews 11 helps us understand the idea where it recounts Moses' faith in leaving Egypt and following God. It says in verse 27 "By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible."

John MacArthur once said, "Purity of heart cleanses the eyes of the soul so that God becomes visible."

It is the pure in heart who can see God working in their life and the lives of those around them- who can see God moving in the events of the world.

It is the pure in heart who can see amazing things in the Word of God and can say like Ps.119:18, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law".

These are those to whom Jesus says in Matt. 13:16 "But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear."

We will conclude with 1 John 3:2-3 and Ps. 119:1

“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. 1 Jn 3:2–3

Ps. 119:1 “Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD!  
Ps 119:1

Ask yourself: “Are you living every moment as if your next breath could be standing before God giving accountability for your conscience?”

## Chapter Eight: THE PEACEMAKERS

So far, in the first six Beatitudes, the “Blessed” one has:

- Poor in Spirit = Recognized the truth
- Those who Mourn = Bemoaned the truth
- The Meek = Enthroned the truth
- Those who Hunger and Thirst = Pursued the truth
- The Merciful = Showed the truth
- The Pure in Heart = Lived the truth
- Now, the Peacemaker = Speaks the truth

This is the only use of the word “peacemaker” in the Bible. It is very similar to the word “mediator”.

A mediator is someone who tries to bring about harmonious relations between two opposing parties. A person who tries to remove the discord.

1 Tim 2:5 calls Jesus our mediator with God, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

We needed a mediator because Romans 5:10 reminds us that we were once contrary to God – out of tune.

The Bible called us “enemies” because we were opposing God. And Col. 1:21-22 tells us that we were once alienated and separated from God but, after salvation, are now reconciled to God.

To be reconciled means to be brought into alignment with or harmony with God. Like using a tuning fork to tune an instrument to the proper pitch.

Eph. 2:14-16 puts it like this: “For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Christ is our tuning fork who brings us into perfect harmony with God.

Peace comes from the Father, through the Son by the Spirit

- The Father sent
- The Son came
- The Spirit fills

I like to think of it like this: The Father is a never-ending river of peace that flows graciously through the Son to the fountain of living water in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is in us

Ro 15:33 reminds us that God is a God of Peace. Yet, while God is a God of peace, Man is a creature of war.

The history of man both begins and ends with peace. God begins with peace in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 1:31) and ends it with eternal peace in the New Heaven and New Earth (Rev. 21-22). In the middle is war – the war between good and evil (Gen. 3:15, Eph. 6:12)

The only possible peace in the middle comes from knowing Jesus Christ (John 14:27, Rom. 5:1, Eph. 2:13-14)

Since Jesus is “The” Peacemaker, when he says “Blessed are the Peacemakers”, He certainly knew what he was talking about.(John 14:27)

Furthermore, God has given the commission of being a Peacemaker to every one of His children (Matt. 28:19-20, 2 Cor. 5:11-21). And only those who know peace can make peace (James 3:18).

Being a Peacemaker follows the “Pure in Heart” in the beatitudes. This is because sin is what destroys peace and only the “Pure in Heart” can lead others to a peaceful relationship with God. Remember: to be “Pure in Heart” means that you walk in fellowship with Christ and are constantly being cleansed by the blood of Christ through a life of confession and repentance (1 Jn. 1:7-9)

John MacArthur explains why Peacemaking is the last of the Beatitudes. He says the spirit of peacemaking is: “built on humility, sorrow over its own sin, gentleness, hunger for righteousness, mercy, and purity of heart.” He states that “G. Campbell Morgan commented that peacemaking is the propagated character of the man who, exemplifying all the rest of the beatitudes, thereby brings peace wherever he comes.”

To be a peacemaker does not mean to seek peace at any price.

- We are not to compromise the truth like false prophets or false teachers.
- Nor are we to be merciless and hit people with the cold-hard truth.
- We are to use human cunning, craftiness or deceitful schemes but, rather, speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:14-15)

But, even then, remember that Jesus said in Matt. 10:34–36. “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household.

Remember, the peace we are bringing is the Gospel. We are a witness to the “good news” for those who are willing to repent and believe. But, it is bad news to those who won’t

The truth is whoever believes in Jesus Christ will be saved, whoever does not believe, will die (John 3:18). That is not a very tolerant message to the world.

The truth is that Jesus is the only way (John 14:6, 1 Tim. 2:5). That’s not very inclusive by the world’s standards.

The truth is that coming to Christ for salvation requires repentance (Luke 13:3). That requires change, and people hate change (John 3:20, John 5:40)

### **What a Peacemaker does not do**

- Is not quarrelsome. 2 Ti 2:22–26. So flee youthful (immature) passions (drives) and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies (fruitless debates); you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome (verbally combative) but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.
  - When you argue and fuss with someone, you invariably put yourself between them and God and they focus on you instead of God - just like Satan did in the Garden with Adam and Eve.
- Is not angry. Jas 1:19-20. "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.
  - The anger of man is a punitive wrath, not a Godly anger.
- Is not jealous or self-serving. Jas 3:14-16 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.
  - Jealousy sends a message that you are discontent with God.
- Does not complain and argue. Phil.2:14–16 Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.
  - Complaining and arguing is a direct affront on God's goodness.

### **What a Peacemaker does do**

- Loves their enemies and prays for them. Mt 5:44-45. But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons (children) of your Father who is in heaven.
  - prayer aligns your passions – it's hard to hate someone you're praying for.
- Is at peace with other Christians. Matt. 5:23-24 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.
  - To be an effective peacemaker, you must first be at peace with your own brothers and sisters in Christ. Remember, you aren't concerned about their 95% in the wrong, you are concerned about your 5%.
- Seeks unity in the church. Phil. 2:1-2 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.
  - Eph 4:1-3 "I therefore..., urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Eph 4:1-3
  - Since we are the ambassadors for peace to the world, we certainly ought to have peace in our own embassy.

Pursues peace as the highest goal. Ro 14:19. "So then let us pursue what makes for peace..." Ro 14:19

- "Pursue" means to go after with the intent to catch; often involving great effort or striving toward the object. To run it down. Don't stop chasing peace until you get it – overcoming every possible obstacle that gets in the way.
- It Requires energy, creativity, flexibility, endurance and focus.
- Again, Jesus is the best example of this. Lk 9:51 "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem." As he left Samaria for the last time and started heading for Jerusalem for his final days, he set his focus on pursuing the opportunity for peace for all mankind. He did not allow himself to be distracted from what was the ultimate purpose for his life.

- Likewise, the ultimate purpose of our lives is His continuing mission of reconciling sinners with God through Him. If you want a purpose driven life, that should be the purpose that drives your life.

But, you might say, I thought that glorifying God was the Christian's highest goal? Is it not glorifying to the God of Peace, the Prince of Peace and the Spirit of Peace to have His children pursue peace?

The blessing is "they shall be called sons (children) of God."

To be called a child of God is to be called a Christian (Christ-one).

They are called the "children of God" because they look like Him, smell like Him, act like Him and talk like Him.

In Matt. 28:16-20, we are commissioned to go into all the world and speak the truth of the Gospel which means "good news".

However, this truth has both bad news and good news, and there are a lot of good reasons to tell the "good news":

- The bad news is you're a Sinner – but you can be saved
- The bad news is you're Condemned – but you can be pardoned
- The bad news is you're Unclean – but you can be washed
- The bad news is you're Lost – but you can be found
- The bad news is you're Fallen – but you can be lifted up
- The bad news is you're Enslaved – but you can be set free
- The bad news is you're Blind – but you can see
- The bad news is you're Deaf – but you can hear
- The bad news is you're Lamé – but you can walk
- The bad news is you're Dead – but you can live.

The thing that makes the Peacemaker "Blessed" is that he/she is chosen the messenger.

Is. 53:7 How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" Is. 53:7

But, "peacemaking" is a dangerous endeavor because the world likes to shoot the messenger and we will look at that more in our next lesson.

For now, let's remember Ps 118:6 "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" Ps 118:6

## Chapter Nine: THE PERSECUTED

It is the natural attribute of the Unbeliever to be in opposition to the Believer.

It is their natural state due to their unregenerated condition. Listen to how Paul describes the condition of the unbelieving:

- They are blind to the truth: 2 Corinthians 4:4 "...the god of this world (Satan) has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 2 Corinthians 4:4
- They cannot understand the things of God: 1 Corinthians 2:14 The natural (unregenerated) person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Corinthians 2:14
- They are separated from all that pertains to the children of God: Ephesians 2:12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. Ephesians 2:12

From these verses, we see that the natural condition of the Unbeliever is they have:

- o No Truth
- o No Understanding
- o No Savior
- o No Kingdom
- o No Promise
- o No Hope
- o No God

It is no wonder that they are hostile toward those who do have these things. Listen how Jesus describes their aggression toward the Believer in his warning to the disciples:

John 15:18–20 "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you..." John 15:18–20

"Hates / Hated" is used 4 times in this dialog. It means "strong dislike or antagonism prompting to injury. Just like love stimulates one to give to its object, so hatred stimulates one to persecute its object.

Satan is the prince of this world, and he has been trying to destroy the children of God from the beginning.

In Genesis 3:14–15 the LORD said to Satan in the form of a serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I



will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

God said there would be a constant struggle between satanic forces and mankind. It would be between Satan and the woman, and their respective children.

Since the children of Eve are being contrasted with the children of Satan, the passage is not referring to all mankind in general. Rather, it is referring to the children of righteousness vs. the children of unrighteousness (1 John 3:7-13). See also, John 8:44, Matt. 23:33, 1 Thess. 5:5.

This battle between the righteous and unrighteous, the children of light and the children of darkness, right and wrong and on and on, started in the Garden of Eden and will continue until final judgement (Rev. 20:11-15)

Persecution can come in all kinds of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual ways.

One important thing to remember: Satan, his demons and his children can oppress you, repress you and suppress you, but neither he nor his demons can possess you.

- o To oppress you – Keep you down or even incarcerate you
- o To repress you – Make your way difficult and even use force to do it
- o To suppress you – Cover up your testimony or discredit you
- o But they cannot possess you (1 Cor. 3:16, 19, 2 Cor. 6:15-16, Rom. 8:9, 1 John 4:4, Col. 1:13, 1 Pet. 1:5)

And God is always faithful to provide a way for you to glorify Him under the weight. 1 Corinthians 10:13 reminds us “No temptation (test, trial or your character) has overtaken you (seized you, gotten ahold of you) that is not common to man (that is unusual to man). God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability (the assumption is with God’s help), but with the temptation he will also provide the way (the “right” way) of escape, that you may be able to endure it (strength through the trial for God’s glory).”

It would be an impossible task to list all the ways a Believer could suffer persecution.

- Fox’s Book of Martyrs is an excellent resource to see how some of the saints of old were persecuted and gave their lives for Christ
- The Voice of the Martyrs magazine and website gives true stories of current persecution in our world today. <https://www.persecution.com/>
- As part of our church’s global missions initiative we give monthly to Open Doors to help persecuted Christians around the world. <https://www.opendoorsusa.org>

Psalm 69 is an excellent general description of persecution. It not only recounts David’s sense of persecution but, it is a prophetic passage about Christ’s persecution. We will look at some specific verses.

Ps 69 Verses 7-12 For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face. I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons. For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. I am the talk of those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me.

Ps 69 Verse 14 You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you.

Ps 69 Verse 26 For they persecute him whom you have struck down, and they recount the pain of those you have wounded. Psalm 69:26

Let's recount all of what these verses say about the way the enemy treats the children of the King.

- Borne reproach = Taunting, scorn and slander
- Dishonor has covered my face = shame, public embarrassment, disgrace
- Stranger to my brothers = countrymen
- Alien to my mother's sons = siblings
- The reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me = their slander against you is slander against me
- When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach = I deliberately humbled and disgraced myself in pray for them
- When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them = I became a proverbial saying to them, they shake their heads in disgust
- I am the talk of those who sit in the gate = the leadership makes me the theme of their gossip
- The drunkards make songs about me = I have become the laughing stock of the carousers and boozers.
- They persecute him whom you have struck down = They kick me when I am down
- They recount the pain of those you have wounded = How glad they are to remind me of my suffering

David knew all along that God was fully in control just as Christ knew on the cross. Yet, how quickly the enemy will rush in and add torment to misery to render God as weak, unkind and even neglectful of His own.

In Psalm 71:11, David tells how his enemies see the sufferings that Believers endure for Christ: "They say, 'God has forsaken him; pursue and seize him, for there is none to deliver him'." (Don't forget Jesus' parable of the Evil Farmers in Matt. 21:33-46.)

The promise is "...for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Not only is your destiny the kingdom of heaven (just like the poor in spirit) but, also like the poor in spirit who have nothing, whatever the persecuted have is taken away

But, you are in great company with those who are listed in Hebrews chapter 11.

Unfortunately, many Christians don't experience much persecution (if any at all) because they don't get past step 4 (Hungering and Thirsting after Righteousness) or they don't make it to step 7 (Peacemaker).

But, if you do, know that you not only share in the sufferings of those who went before you, but you share in the sufferings of Christ who will "greatly" reward you.

So ask yourself: who would you rather be greatly rewarded by? A beggar of a billionaire?. By ruler of this world or by the King of Kings?

Just keep in mind, persecution is inevitable for those who follow hard after Christ.

One last thought.

Did you ever wonder why Jesus was crucified between two thieves and why they divided up his clothes instead of giving them to his family.

In ancient Palestine, there were ordinary thieves who would rob homes and businesses and then there were highwayman or robbers who would beat, rob, and even kill travelers.

The first kind of thief was usually never executed unless it involved murder. They were usually consigned to repay their debt or work it off through slavery.

The second kind were viewed as being anarchist, insurrectionists or rebels against the government.

Since this is how the Jewish leadership portrayed Jesus to Pilot and not wishing to make him appear as a martyr (which would've happened had he been crucified alone), pilot ordered him to be crucified between two highway robbers that he might be associated as someone who was a non-conformist and an enemy of the people – their intention was to destroy his reputation and make him look like any other highway robber.

This is the same position that was taken by Nero when he blamed the Christians for burning Rome as if they were the enemies of Rome.

So, do you think it strange that your association with Christ should be seen as disruptive, non-conforming and rebellious by the masses? After all, if this is how they treated your master, then how do you think they will treat you?

Did you also wonder the reason they cast lots for his robe rather than giving it to his mother.

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They had no regard for what he possessed because they treated him like a thief who probably stole it in the first place. This is the message they wanted to send to the people.

In Ps. 69:4 it says “They judged me a thief, though innocent, and gave my goods to others, as though I had stolen them.” Ps. 69:4

Remember, the greatest enemy of a lie is the truth.

So, speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15) and if you suffer for it, “rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.”

## Chapter Ten: THE DAILY GOSPEL

In this lesson, there are six things I want to show you about why all of Christ's teachings about spiritual growth and our relationship with God all come back to the beatitudes.

**First:** The work of the Spirit vs the lusts of the flesh.

Each Beatitude conquers and overcomes a corresponding fleshly lust when you yield to the Holy Spirit rather than the flesh.

- The Poor in Spirit = Pride
- Those who Mourn = Blame
- The Meek = Control
- Hunger and Thirsting for Righteousness = Desires
- The Merciful = Rights
- The Pure in Heart = Allegiances
- The Peacemakers = Fears

If you want to mortify any of these sins, consider what has been taught about each of the attributes of Christlikeness.

**Second:** 20/20 Vision about seeing yourself from God's perspective.

For us to have each attribute evident in our lives, we must see God "this" way and see ourselves "that" way.

- Poor in spirit: See God's perfect standard and our wretched condition
- Mourning: See God's holiness and our hopelessness
- Meek" See God's power and our need to surrender
- Hungering & Thirsting: See God's glorious righteousness and our filthy rags
- Merciful: See God's boundless loving-kindness and our provisional compassion.
- Pure in Heart: See God's great faithfulness and our unstable devotion.
- Peacemaker: See God's reconciling truth and our divisive hypocrisy.

**Third:** How Jesus satisfies all the hopes of the beatitudes

And, to this, we will add "persecuted"

- For the poor sinner, he is their Savior
- For those who mourn, he is their Comforter
- For the meek, he is their Master
- For those who hunger and thirst he is their Teacher
- For the merciful, he is their Advocate
- For the pure in heart, he is their Companion
- For the peacemaker, he is their King
- For the persecuted, He is their Friend.

**Fourth:** How truly "blessed" you are when you possess these attributes

When you possess these attributes, it's as if the cares, concerns and conflicts of this world have little or no negative effect on you.

- The Humble live without concern for their reputation
- The Mournful live without concern for their adequacy

- The Meek live without concern for their future
- The Hungering & Thirsting live without concern for their satisfaction
- The Merciful live without concern for their needs
- The Pure live without concern for their innocence
- The Peacemakers live without concern for their welfare
- The Persecuted live without concern for their life

**Fifth:** The Death, Burial and Resurrection in the Beatitudes

The beatitudes are a perfect illustration of the Gospel.

- 1-3 represent the cross
- 4-6 represent the tomb
- 7 represents the resurrection

The cross had one purpose: death.

- The first 3 beatitudes represent our death to self by way of our death in Christ.
- It is a public demonstration and confession of our acceptance of Christ's death for our salvation.

The tomb had one purpose: transformation

- The next 3 beatitudes represent the transformation that takes place to conform us to the image of Christ.
- It is a private place where God works in the heart and changes you from the inside out.

The resurrection had one purpose: Power

- It is the power of God being demonstrated by a new life liberated from sin to live unto God.
- The 7th beatitude is the proof that you have been resurrected to a new life in Christ that is empowered by the Holy Spirit for the glory of God.

To put it another way:

- 1-3 represents the Father drawing you to salvation
- 4-6 represents Christ being formed in you
- 7 represents the Spirit empowering you to obedience which glorifies God

**Sixth:** The victorious life of the living gospel in the beatitudes

- The seven beatitudes are one built upon another
- You can't skip any of them or get them out of order.

That is the problem with the self-improvement gospel (i.e. therapeutic gospel) – it gets the beatitudes out of order by making people think that outward works of 4 thru 7 (studying, generosity, devotion and witnessing) are a higher priority than the inward works of the first three (humility, repentance and surrender).

The same problem is with the prosperity gospel: they want the blessing without the offering – the life without the death.

In the true Gospel, death comes before transformation and transformation before power. And, condition always precedes character which always precedes conduct.

While the Holy Spirit is developing these attributes in your life, if you slip on one step, you start back at the beginning because all sin has at its root in pride and arrogance.

For example:

You may be humble and sorrowful for the sin you do or see, but if you are not willing to confess and surrender, you can't get past meekness which shows you still have pride in your life and God takes you back to square one.

Or, you may be merciful and gracious to a friend or co-worker, but if you are not the same to your spouse, parents or children – you again have a pride issue and need to go back to have a closer look at what arrogance gives you the right to not be patient, forgiving and gracious to them as well.

Or, you may be a great warrior for Christ and his Word, but if it is not delivered with love, compassion and a personal commitment, you have a pride problem to deal with that is making you think you are superior to them.

You get the idea. It works like that with all of the beatitudes.

Learning to walk in the power of the Spirit to fortify these attributes takes a lifetime. But, progressing through all seven of them can happen in less than a minute for a single event or encounter.

For example, say you encounter someone who has hurt you deeply or keeps offending you over and over again, does your anger block your progress or....

Do you listen to your conscience that quickly reminds you of

1. Your own condition before salvation (poor in spirit)
2. Your own personal ongoing struggle with sin, (mournful)
3. That without Christ you are nothing (meek)
4. What would be the Godly thing to do? (Hungering and thirsting for righteousness)
5. Can you forgive them as Christ forgave you? (merciful)
6. Can you ask their forgiveness for your part? (pure heart)
7. Can you offer to testimony of how God has been working in your life and show them some kindness? (peacemaker)

If not, you will stunt your own spiritual growth and God will be constantly bringing you back to the beginning to deal with the self-willed pride in your own life.

But, just when you think you're doing pretty well and got it down, God will send a particularly difficult trial to show you something you need to work on.

Christian growth occurs when you go through the cycles of death, transformation, and power over and over again in various situations until Christ is fully formed in you.

It is our working through these cycles that strengthens our faith, and we grow from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

Remember, birth is an event, but growth is a process.

Let the process work and you will surely experience what it means to be “blessed”.