



An undenominational publication  
devoted to the teachings of Jesus and His  
apostles and dedicated to those who seek  
the truth.

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## PEOPLE BLESSED BY GOD



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Editor

Is there anyone who does not want to be blessed by God? Most of us would go to great lengths to find assurance that we have God's favor, that He will bless us now and take us to heaven when this life is over. That's why "The Beatitudes" have such universal appeal. These eight principles of how to receive divine blessings are greatly needed! This issue of "Christ for Today" is devoted our Lord's promises of blessedness.

### THE PURE IN HEART

It is not by accident that the Beatitudes emphasize inner spiritual qualities. **"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God"** Jesus said (Matthew 5:8). There is no room for duplicity or hypocrisy in a Christian's life. All insincerity, play-acting and living a "double-life" is ruled out by this simple statement. Only those who truly want to do what is right, who want to please the Lord with their lives, only those who desire to obey Him whole-heartedly will find God's favor and blessedness. One can fool some of the people all of the time, some of the people part of the time but none of the people all the time. One can never fool God. He knows the deepest thoughts and hidden ambitions. He searches the heart and mind of everyone. The scripture assures us that Christians will "*see His face*" (Revelation 22:4) but the promise of "*seeing God*" through-out eternity belongs to the "*pure in heart.*"

Read and ponder "The Beatitudes" for they will give you courage to love God more. They will help you be a humble, obedient child of God every day. They will instill in your heart a conscious desire to be truly a Christian. They will become the standard by which you determine every action and every choice.

# The Beatitudes

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

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

Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.

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

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

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

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

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**Matthew 5:3-10**

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# THE POOR IN SPIRIT



“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 5:3). Here is the fundamental characteristic of the spiritually mature Christian. This quality of life implies emptying ourselves. What is emphasized here is an individual’s attitude toward himself. At the very beginning of the new life in Christ is the realization that we cannot live as the Lord would have us live in the strength of our own abilities. Without such a sense of inadequacy and a consciousness of our need, there would be no desire for better things.

To be poor in spirit means an absence of pride, self-assurance and self-reliance.

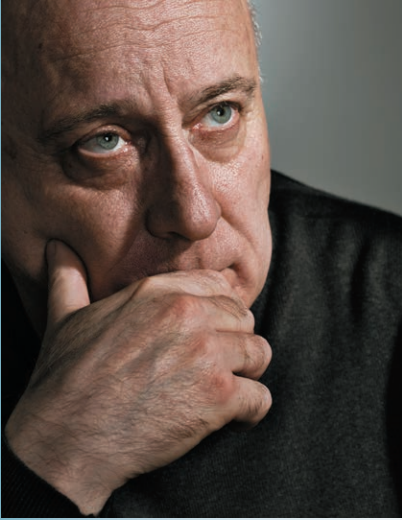
To be poor in spirit is to possess the attitude of Moses who felt unworthy of the task of leading his people out of Egypt. “O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since You have spoken to Your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue” (Exodus 4:10). Poverty of spirit characterized the life of Paul: “For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:9-10). This quality of life is seen supremely in the life of Jesus, “who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:6-8).

The poor in spirit rid themselves of love of the material, love of public opinion, love of personal authority, love of their own opinions. They are ready to learn anew the truly important and worthwhile things of life.

We become poor in spirit by immersing ourselves in God and His word, by emulating our Lord, and by praying “Lord, increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). We are poor in spirit when we feel our spiritual need and are driven to God for satisfaction.

Blessed Are

# THOSE WHO MOURN



In high school, my group of friends and I thought it was fun to insult each other and cut one another down, saying things like, “Hey, ugly!” or “What’s up, stupid?” As I grew up a little and was expanding my social circle in college, that manner of speech stuck around. One day I genuinely hurt someone with my words. A young woman who had fragile emotions, heard me answer

a call from one of my old friends. The conversation was full of small personal insults and jabs at each other’s egos. The young lady was very upset. She could not believe that I was nice to her but so mean to my other friends, so she proceeded to walk off, nearly in tears. I felt so guilty! My careless words hurt someone I cared about. My heart ached; I was consumed with guilt. The next day I apologized to her profusely. I resolved to change the way I talked to my friends.

In His Sermon on the Mount Jesus stated “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). At first glance this looks a little odd. Why are those who mourn blessed? In our modern thinking we associate mourning with a tragic event like the death of a family member. But that is not the type of mourning Jesus is talking about.

Remember what happened in my story? After I hurt the young woman’s feelings, I mourned. Not because something bad had happened to me, but because I had hurt someone else. I was heart broken when I recognized the consequences of my irresponsible words. In the same way, Jesus says that those who mourn over their own sinful actions are blessed. Why? Because they realize their sins have hurt God. This sorrow drives them to change their lives, stop their sinful actions and do what is right. This is repentance. When a person chooses to change his ways and do what is right, he is able to live the way Jesus wants him to live. In this way he is comforted. Do you feel guilt over wrongs you have done? Are you mourning over the sin in your life? Jesus is the answer to that guilt. Contact the Church of Christ that sent “*Christ for Today*” to you. You will learn what you must do to make things right with God. You, too, will be comforted by the Lord.

— David Rollert, Church of Christ, Tilton, New Hampshire

# THE MEEK

Do you know anyone who is overbearing or hot tempered? Typically, we have a hard time forming relationships with people like that. Why? Perhaps, it is because we feel that we need to walk on “egg shells” when we are around them. They like to assert themselves and tend to get their way most of the time because no one wants to challenge them.



Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). Contrary to the overbearing and hot tempered person, Jesus puts forth the “meek” person as one to be emulated. These statements by Jesus Christ should make all of us look at ourselves in the mirror and examine ourselves. In order to understand this Beatitude we need to consider the meaning of “meekness”.

Biblical meekness does not mean weakness or cowardice. It does not mean that a person has no strength of character. Barclay, a theologian, describes meekness: “Blessed is the man who is always angry at the right time, and never angry at the wrong time.” Another meaning of meekness is gentleness. Gentleness is soft and loving behavior. The follower of Jesus Christ is to be meek and gentle. He is to be well mannered, polite, balanced, and well behaved. He is to be God’s gentleman or gentlewoman. A classic definition of meekness is “strength under control.”

Jesus said, “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble in heart . . .” (Matthew 11:28-30).

Jesus Christ is always the best example for us to look at. He alone lived a perfect and sinless life. He promised those who live a meek life will “inherit the earth.” What does this mean? In this life a follower of Jesus inherits “the richest, fullest, and most satisfying life that this earth can give.” In addition, in the life to come the ultimate fulfillment of this promise will be heaven.

Meekness involves more than just speaking softly and being kind to our neighbors. Meekness involves our total submission to God and to His Son Jesus Christ.

— Arnie Holmes, Church of Christ, Manchester, Connecticut



Blessed Are

# THOSE WHO HUNGER & THIRST

Hunger and thirst are among the most basic human reflexes that keep us alive. It is a blessing that our bodies call out for food. It is also a blessing to have wholesome food available. Eating and drinking is not just a matter of being satisfied; it is a matter of being healthy. If we don't eat we starve to death, but if we eat the wrong things we may get sick and possibly die.

Jesus used physical things to teach us about something non-physical. Our inner person needs nourishment in order to be spiritually healthy. Our souls can be starved or poisoned. Jesus declares that righteousness is the wholesome food. In the Bible righteousness is contrasted with evil: "The Lord detests the way of the wicked but He loves those who pursue righteousness" (Proverbs 15: 9).

What does it mean to be righteous? Can we be confident that we are eating to live eternally? Let Jesus answer that question.

- **What did Jesus eat?** "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work" (John 4:24).
- **What food does Jesus recommend for us?** "Jesus declared: 'I am the Bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty'" (John 6:35).
- **How can we feed on this bread?** "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63).

Do not ignore the pangs of hunger that call your soul to eat, but make sure you are eating to live in righteousness by heeding the words of Jesus. Traditions of men that compete with the words of Jesus bring spiritual sickness which destroys the soul. Men's teachings have no nutritious value, and in fact can poison us. Peter proved that he was hungering and thirsting for righteousness when he said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

— Arthur Barry, Church of Christ, Sayre, Pennsylvania



# THE MERCIFUL

God will bless a person who conducts his life in a way that life and heart reflect faith and a godly attitude. Matthew 5:7 states that God approves the person who extends mercy. Mercy will be given to him.



Mercy is an attitude of heart that looks with compassion on those who are helpless, miserable and lost.

Jesus illustrates this in Luke 16:10-25:

There was a rich man, clothed with fine linen, who fared sumptuously every day. There was a beggar named Lazarus, who lay at the rich man's gate desiring to be fed the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Both died; the rich man went to torment while Lazarus went to paradise. The rich man's fate was not due to wealth, but because of a choice he had made. He did not miss heaven because he was immoral or ungodly, but because he refused to extend mercy. In this life they were separated by a gate, in the after-life they were separated by a gulf that no man could cross.

Mercy connects an individual to others with a sympathy that brings service. Jesus told a story of a Samaritan whose compassion moved him to help a stranger beaten by robbers (Luke 10:25-37).

A lame individual, a grandson of King Saul (David's enemy) was aided by King David (2 Samuel 9). Though David was a fighter and a warrior, he had a heart of mercy. His heart displayed tenderness, care, and concern for others. He did not allow the cruel culture in which he lived to influence him. He invited Saul's grandson to the palace where David gave him grace and mercy. David did not wait for the crippled man to cry out to him. He invited him to eat as a son at the king's table. In a similar way, each one of us could be considered spiritually lame. Our lives have been crippled by sin. God through His tender mercy invites us to sit at His table as His children (Luke 14). However, we cannot sit at the Lord's table unless we extend mercy to others.

Matthew 6:12 states, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." The Bible says: "Judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy" (James 2:13).

Blessed Are

# THE PEACEMAKERS



**In our world the quest for peace is never ending. The more we seek peace it seems the more it eludes us. Many cry out for peace but find no peace!**

Jesus is looking for those who are willing to obey His will, who accept the gospel of peace, as revealed by the Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

The Scripture says: “How can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: *‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news’*” (Romans 10:14-15). The “*good news*” is the gospel of peace.

Being a peacemaker is central to being a child of God. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9).

The process of peace begins with the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus paid the price by shedding His own blood on the cross so we can have peace (Colossians 1:20). Through the cross Christ put to death our hostility. He came and preached peace to those who were far away and also to those who were near. Through His death, burial and resurrection, He brought us close to the Father.

Do you recall this verse from the Bible? “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace.... His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace” (Ephesians 2:13-17).

What a blessing is this promise of Jesus: “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you” (John 14:27)!



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