

The Be-attitudes

The greatest sermon ever preached was in Matthew's account from the beginning of chapter 5 to the end of chapter 7. Chapter 5:3-11 contain what has been commonly termed as the beatitudes; "beati", Latin for blessed. There "are nine in number and seven in character, for the last two, which concern persecution, do not relate to traits of character, but to certain circumstances which lead to blessings" (McGarvey). But, are they the only verses in the Bible that deal with all the blessings faithful Christians are to emulate? And when are these blessings to be obtained? Obviously, most can be attained in this present world, and the rest once we leave it. Once a person becomes a child of God he is assured of the following blessings which belong to him. In this setting, Jesus had just finished selecting some particular disciples from which He would eventually chose His apostles and when "His fame had spread throughout all Syria" there were many who were brought to Him "and He healed them". (Mat 4:24)

Mat 4:25 And great crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

Mat 5:1 Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. 2 And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

Mat 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed- Gk.3107- supremely blest; fortunate, well off.

"Most of the beatitudes are paradoxical, being the very reverse of the world's view, but Christians who have put them to the test have learned to realize their unquestionable truth. The poor in spirit are those who feel a deep sense of spiritual destitution and comprehend their nothingness before God. The kingdom of Heaven is theirs, because they seek it, and therefore find and abide in it."

McGarvey

As McGarvey states, the world view teaches that these traits that Christians are to seek after, and be consumed with in an attempt to attain them, are not what **it** believes as having anything to do with what carnal man judges as success. But the real power in anything is in how it's controlled and not in how it's been attained or in how hard it's worked for. Worldly gains can always be taken away. Not so the "kingdom of Heaven". We own it once we understand it to the point of obtaining it. The kingdom of Heaven is synonymous with the kingdom of God and as Jesus said in Lk 17:21 "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you". It's found within the faithful and therefore cannot be seen or heard but through a life of godliness, because the very nature of it is spiritual. The world believes these "beatitudes" to be at the bottom of its list, if there at all, while the faithful saint makes them top priority in the ultimate of life's success.

Mat 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Obviously not speaking of all who mourn or it would seem that "crying over spilt milk" then (*which is a saying that applies to being upset over nothing*) would be a blessing. This is mourning with reference to sin and sinful behavior, whether by the self or of others.

Eze 9:4 And the LORD said to him, "Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who **sigh** and **groan** over all the **abominations** that are committed in it." (*Emp. added*)

The blessing here comes when a person realizes his sin and seeks deliverance through the blood of Christ. Such sorrow only draws us closer in our relationship with the Lord, which will be consummated at His return.

Rom 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

People who go through life without such mourning end up having the most regrets. Therefore to be absent of godly sorrow a person will spend an eternity wishing they had made it a part of their journey in this life.

2Co 7:10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

Mat 5:5 "Blessed are the meek (*Gk.4239- humble*), for they shall inherit the earth.

Which takes more strength. To control the self or to control a city?

Pro 16:32 Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

Dad always said "it takes a bigger man to walk away from a fight". You can add to that "especially when you know you can win it". The one who can master the art of self-control can master almost anything. Those of the faithful who have done so are the ones who "shall inherit the earth", which is in reference to what Daniel revealed in Dan 7.

Dan 7:27 And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom (*the church*) shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.'

In a spiritual sense, meekness is strength under control. The Roman army had the physical strength to conquer Palestine but the church has the spiritual potential to triumph over the entire world. Arrogant and self-serving man cannot have all he wants because he's never satisfied and always wants more. Christians own the world and rule it through the church that Christ died for. And since God owns everything, in that sense, as His children, we own it as an inheritance. To be an heir, then, the saints have been put in a position of stewardship via the Great Commission. The saints are more apt to enjoy the beauty of the earth since we understand it was created by a superior God. Not so with carnal man. He feels it is there to be manipulated for personal gain for what short period he's here. He has no concept of the hereafter or of what it truly means to be satisfied.

Mat 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger (*Gk.3983- crave*) and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied (*Gk.5526- to gorge [supply food in abundance]*).

If we crave for and thirst after righteousness, can we imagine being gorged with it? We'll never attain such a height of spiritual satisfaction as long as we are so concerned with the things of the flesh and the ways of the world. It was the one reason Israel had a difficult time continuing in obedience to the Old Law. And God, in eternity, had already set in motion a response to that.

Rom 8:3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the **righteous requirement** of the law (*love God, love your neighbor- Lk*

10:27) might be fulfilled in us, who walk **not** according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (*Emp. added*)

"This promise is realized in part by the attainment of a higher degree of righteous living, and in part by the perfect forgiveness of our sins. But the joy of this individual righteousness, blessed as it is, shall be surpassed by that of the universal righteousness of the new creation."
McGarvey

2Pe 3:13 But according to His promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth (*Holy City New Jerusalem- the church "glorified"*) in which righteousness dwells.

All that we own, all we see and experience now in this present realm, along with those relationships we hold so dear, will one day "by the same word" (3:7) be spoken out of existence as it all was once "in the beginning" pronounced into existence (*Gen 1:1*). The ultimate in righteousness will be experienced by the "heirs according to promise" (*Gal 3:29*). Even though such is available today to all who seek it, only then will the faithful be completely satisfied.

Mat 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful (*Gk.1655- compassionate*), for they shall receive mercy.

Mercy has more to it than just forgiving someone who has sinned against us. It is an active virtue of compassion toward the world even when the world isn't merciful toward us.

Rom 12:19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

"Kill them with kindness" is the saying. To "heap burning coals on" the head of our enemy "*is a metaphor meaning we cause an enemy anguish or cause him to blush with shame because our kindness makes him realize how unkindly he treated us.*"
Brad Price

But speaking of forgiveness; when Peter came to Jesus asking how often he was to forgive, he noted a liberal amount of times that was beyond the three times that the Talmud limited the Jew of his day to. He asked "As many as seven?" (*Mat 18:21*).

Mat 18:22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.

Jesus wasn't dealing with math so much as He was the heart of the one doing the forgiving. To be merciful in this context then is to keep no log of the offenses that someone has leveled against us. 70 x 7 would be 490 times and would seem unreasonable for us to keep logs on everyone who has ever offended us and has then asked to be forgiven. But what if they never asked to be forgiven in the first place? Should we do what God Himself cannot do and forgive them anyway? Would that be "as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive" (*Col 3:13*)? Did the Lord forgive us without our asking for it? Notice the rest of this passage. Jesus went on to speak a parable of a man who owed his master ten thousand talents. Depending on whether it was a talent of silver or of gold would have made no difference since one talent of silver would be equivalent to about 75 pounds and if silver was worth \$1,600 per pound it would have amounted to 16 million dollars. After ordering the servant to be sold along with his family and all his possessions the servant begged him to have patience with him and he would pay it all back. The master didn't forgive him **before** his plea was made. But that very same servant after having been let go for what he had done went to a fellow servant and dealt harshly with him, even though he only owed him 100 denarii, which was a day's wage for the average laborer.

Mat 18:32 Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt **because you pleaded with me.** 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, **as** I had mercy on you?' 34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. 35 So also My heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother **from your heart.**" (*Emp. added*)

Two statements answer the question that asks if we should forgive the non-penitent. First, the master in this scenario forgave because the servant pleaded with him. Again, are we expected to do something God Himself won't even do? The answer is no. But, there's a second part to that question we often overlook. If we aren't looking forward to another's repentance as though it's inevitable, if we aren't hoping for such a resolution, then we don't have mercy in our hearts and can't expect that God will ever forgive us when we sin against Him. Forgiveness is an attitude of the heart. Did God forgive those who nailed Jesus to the cross the moment He asked Him to? No. Later, though, the same Jews that were there for the Feast of Pentecost, who repented of what they had done, were forgiven the moment they were obedient in baptism for the forgiveness of those sins (*Act 2:37-39*). As Jesus said, we are blessed when we show mercy toward others because doing so will bring God's mercy on us.

Mat 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart (*Gk.2588- thoughts or feelings [mind]*), for they shall see God.

This is a blessing, or fortune, that is future to those who presently live lives in purity. God told Moses "man shall not see Me and live" (*Ex 33:20*). Why? Because God is so holy that man cannot be in such presence. But...

1Jn 3:2 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. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure. (*Emp. added*)

Once stated before, there are things we say we cannot do out of fear but the fact remains that we can still do them. As children of God we have the capacity to sin but should **not** have the desire to. If our hearts are pure we won't want to view pornography, whether soft or hard, we won't want to watch most television shows with all the vulgarity they feed the average person who sees nothing wrong with it. It only shows they've been so conditioned (*apathetic*) to sin that they don't recognize it when it's there in plain view. How can we as Christians recognize sinful behavior? With a steady dose of the word of God on a daily basis. Now, people may say, and hopefully so, that you are just a fuddy-duddy and you need to relax. What they're really saying is that they're not comfortable around you because your life choice makes them uncomfortable. But...

1Jn 3:9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

That "seed" being the spiritual DNA (*Gen 2:7*) God has placed in everyone but which has been "born anew" and is the factor that controls the faithful in living godly lives.

Mat 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

"...for as he is the Father of peace, those who promote it are reputed His children."
Adam Clarke

Although there's something to be said for those ambassadors sent between countries to secure world peace, there must be more that can be said of those who have "put on the readiness" to carry "the Gospel of peace" (*Eph 6:15*). God is not interested in our making peace with the world religions by giving up our identity and thus sovereignty. We make peace with them through the truth, which is the only means Paul would employ when dealing with the "false brothers secretly brought in" (*Gal 2:4*).

Gal 2:5 to them we did **not yield** in submission **even for a moment, so that** the truth of the Gospel might be preserved for you. (*Emp. added*)

Why?

1Co 14:33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace...

Rom 14:18 Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

Peace through the Gospel of truth is the only means by which Christ...

Eph 2:16 ... might reconcile us both to God in one body (*the church*) through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Mat 5:10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- for righteousness' sake gives the reason for persecution being such a blessing. If a person was being persecuted for murder, for instance, they are only receiving their due.

1Pe 3:14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, 16 having a good conscience (*1 Pet 3:21*), so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

"Those who suffer because of their loyalty to the kingdom of heaven are blessed by being bound more closely to that kingdom for which they suffer." McGarvey

Mat 5:11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in Heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

These closing two beatitudes...

"...are pronounced not upon character, but upon those in certain trying conditions. They are addressed to the disciples, and are meant to strengthen and encourage them to continue in the life of sacrifice when discipleship demanded." McGarvey

The Rest of the Sermon

There were some important points that Jesus wanted to make sure His Jewish disciples understood as He was transitioning them away from “the law of sin and death” and into “the law of the Spirit of life” which was to set them free in Him (*Rom 8:2*). They had been conditioned to some things through the leaders of their day that Christ was about to “re-program” to “the new and living way that He opened for us [all] through the curtain, that is, through His flesh” (*Heb 10:20*). The scribes and Pharisees then desired to have their works openly displayed “that they may be seen by others” (*Mat 6:5*), in what Jesus termed, hypocritical. He had a different teaching about Who it is that our works are to glorify.

Mat 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may **see** your good works and **give glory** to your Father Who is in Heaven. (*Emp. added*)

That said, what are some things that should separate us from a carnal world view so that our lights can and will shine? Jesus continued by explaining that He did not “come to abolish the Law or the Prophets... but to fulfill them” (*v.17*). Saying such was contrary to what was being spoken in error about Him and His disciples needed to understand that. He told them that “unless [their] righteousness [exceeded] that of the scribes and Pharisees, [they would] never enter the kingdom of Heaven” (*v.20*). They were taught from children up to respect and show a level of reverence to Moses and the Law God gave him to deliver to Israel. Christ would later tell them after His resurrection...

Luk 24:44 ... “These are My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

Other Lessons from the Sermon on the Mount

Mat 5:21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 22 **But I say to you** that everyone who is angry with his brother (*KJV adds “without a cause”/ Gr.1500- lightly [Berry]*) will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. (*Emp. added*)

Jesus wasn't refuting the law against murder, but was amending it, if you will, to include the point from which all sin originates. If that point can be controlled then the act would have little possibility of coming into fruition. This passage teaches that there are three types of anger which begin within the heart and, if acted upon, will bring judgment to the one engaging them.

1. Anger within- Whether we have reason to be angry with brethren or not, anger is a cancer that eats within if not dealt with. We can “be angry and not sin” but we shouldn't “let the sun go down on [our] anger” as Paul wrote to the Ephesian church (*Eph 4:26*). It must have been a problem they were having among them. But here it seems to be a rage within that should obviously have been settled if the one harboring it followed the beatitude of compassion. How can it be, even within the Lord's church, that such is possible because of the selfish pride of the one harboring such anger?
2. Verbal- All anger begins within the heart but in many cases erupts into our speech. Insulting another person can be a way of demeaning them into subjection to the one who verbally abuses them. Why else do ill-treated women make excuses for their

abusive husbands were it not for the verbal cruelty he employs to humble her into submission to his every whim?

Col 4:6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

3. Vicious criticism- Beyond insult there is the final and worst of the three types of anger, even though God looks at all sin on the same level. It is the act of viciously attacking someone with words of anger. It's the idea of snuffing someone else's lamp in order to make one's own appear brighter. Sadly, the room only becomes a little darker. As Jesus states here, it becomes "liable to the hell of fire" if not dealt with beforehand. Of course speaking to the Jew under the Mosaic Law He concludes His remarks on sinful anger by teaching them the importance of how such ill emotions can and do have an effect on acceptable worship.

Mat 5:23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

- If your brother has something against you-

"Reconciliation takes precedence of all other duties, even of offerings made to God."

"God hears and heeds the voice of the unreconciled brethren, and the gift is bestowed upon the altar in vain."

"The lesson teaches us to be reconciled with all who bear grudges against us, and says nothing as to whether their reasons are sufficient or insufficient, just or unjust."

McGarvey

It would be easier if Jesus would have said "if you have something against your brother" but how would that provoke us to be the "peacemakers" He said are the "children of God" (v.9)? What if I've done something to deserve a grudge being held against me? But you might ask, "What if that brother or sister won't hear me?" At that point their worship to God would be in vain until they humbly come to you to settle whatever the disagreement was. The ball is then in their court. The rest of His sermon dealt with other sins committed in action such as adultery, lying, vengeance and hatred. All of which He concluded were unlawful when acted upon under the Old Covenant, but He went on to say they were sins of the heart if harbored within. But...

1Jn 3:21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask (*"according to His will"*- 5:14) we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him. 23 And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as He has commanded us. 24 Whoever keeps His commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit Whom He has given us.

In conclusion...

Mat 5:48 You therefore must be perfect (*Gk.5046- complete [in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character, etc.]*), as your heavenly Father is perfect.

"God is our model. Everything short of that is short of what we ought to be."

McGarvey

Charli Yana
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