

Lesson 12 - BLESSINGS OF GOD'S GRACE (2) Matthew 5:1-12

(Matt. 5:1-2) - These beatitudes are pronouncements of spiritual and eternal blessings upon God's people. Each characteristic can only be attributed to born again believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. These characteristics are the work of Holy Spirit conviction (John 16:8-11). Satan and unregenerate men can counterfeit these characteristics, but they are not natural unregenerate sinners (1 Cor. 2:14). Each promise attached to each blessing is a spiritual and eternal promise of God's grace in and by Christ. None of the promises of God given here are blessings that we earn or deserve by our works.

(Matt. 5:3) - *"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"* - This is first because there is no one in the kingdom of heaven who is not poor in spirit. The Lord is not speaking of material poverty but of SPIRITUAL poverty. Notice, He did not say, "Blessed are those who are spiritually poor," as all people by nature are spiritually poor - without righteousness, dead in sin, depraved, and in darkness (Rom. 3:10-12). But all are not *"poor in spirit,"* i.e. made aware of their spiritual poverty. By nature, we all think we are rich in works and character, but we are poor (Rev. 3:17). This is a conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit Who shows us the reality of our sin and depravity and our need of God's grace and mercy found only in Christ and His blood and righteousness for salvation. The Spirit shows us the impossibility of salvation conditioned on our works or wills and shows us that all salvation is conditioned on Christ Who fulfilled all righteousness for us. He humbles us by showing we have nothing to offer a holy God, and we deserve nothing but God's wrath. But in doing this, He also shows us the riches of God's grace in the Lord Jesus Christ and drives us to Christ by God-given faith in Him.

(Matt. 5:4) - *"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted"* - This is Godly sorrow over sin that continually drives us to Christ for comfort, forgiveness, and assurance of salvation. All people mourn over many things, but not all mourn in this way over sin. The proof of this is that, by nature, people will always seek comfort in someone or something other than Christ. Not all will find comfort in Christ's righteousness alone and His power to give life and preserve us unto glory. The child of God is made to realize that there is no true joy in this world, that true spiritual and eternal joy is found in a saving knowledge of Christ (Rom. 14:17; 15:13). Believers grow in their grief over sin as they grow in grace and in knowledge of Christ, and as they grow nearer and nearer to physical death (Rom. 7:24-25).

(Matt. 5:5) - *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth"* - Humility and meekness before God are not the products of fallen, unregenerate human nature. They are the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Meekness is not weakness. It is the grace of submission to God's way and word. It is when a sinner is made aware of what he is before a just and holy God and his need of a righteousness that he himself cannot produce. He is made aware that only Christ can and has produced a righteousness that enables God to be just and justify him (Rom. 10:1-4). All who are made to be meek by the Spirit glory only in Christ (1 Cor. 1:29-31; Php. 3:3; Gal. 6:14). They all will inherit the earth because all things are theirs by virtue of their union with Christ, and they shall inhabit the new earth throughout eternity (2 Pet. 3:13).

(Matt. 5:6) - *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled"* - This hunger and thirst are not natural to unregenerate people. Again, this is the work of the Spirit when He works within us a spiritual hunger and thirst that can only be satisfied by looking to, resting in, and following Christ for all righteousness. Man by nature

hungers and thirsts for righteousness but seeks to relieve these needs by his own works and will. When a sinner is brought to see that the only way he can be just in God's sight is the imputed righteousness of Christ, he then can know he has been truly blessed of God and be filled with all that a righteous God requires for his salvation (Rom. 4:6-8; 5:21).

(Matt. 5:7) - *"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy"* - A sinner to whom God has shown mercy and forgiveness in and by Christ will see the need of showing mercy and forgiveness to others, especially in showing other sinners the way of mercy and forgiveness revealed in the Gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). This is NOT saying that we obtain mercy based on our showing mercy to others. If that were the case, then we would have to say that our salvation was by our works, and this is not so. It is simply stating that the graces of mercy and forgiveness within us as we show mercy and forgive others is a fruit and product of God's unmerited mercy towards us in the Lord Jesus Christ Who is our Mercy-seat.

(Matt. 5:8) - *"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"* - Those who are pure in heart are those whose hearts have been spiritually cleansed by the blood of Christ, i.e. *"having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience"* (Heb. 10:22). When the Holy Spirit reveals and convicts us of the knowledge of Christ as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer, He spiritually cleanses our hearts from dead works to serve the living God. He brings us to see and approach God as we are (sinners saved by grace, washed from our sins by the blood of Christ, made righteous by Christ's righteousness imputed) and to see God as He is, both a righteous Judge and a grace, merciful, and loving Father.

(Matt. 5:9) - *"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God"* - This is not promoting pacifism so as to forbid us from defending ourselves when threatened by enemies. Peacemakers here are those who first promote peace between sinners and God by preaching the Gospel of peace through Christ and based on His blood and righteousness (Col. 1:20-23). They also promote peace among brethren in Christ (Eph. 2:11-22). And they promote peace with all people, even unbelievers, without compromising the Gospel and what it reveals about the state of men's souls and the wickedness of their works (Heb. 12:14). They are called the children of God because God is the God of peace, Christ is the Prince of peace, and they have been reconciled to God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:19-21).

(Matt. 5:10) - *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"* - This is suffering in the form of persecution from the enemies of Christ over the Gospel that exposes their lost state and the evil of their works (John 3:19-20; 15:18-16:3). Paul called it the *"persecution for the cross of Christ"* (Gal. 6:12). Whatever we may suffer here on earth for the Gospel of God's grace in Christ and based on His righteousness imputed is not to be compared to the glory of the kingdom of heaven which is ours by God's grace, power, and preservation.

(Matt. 5:11-12) - Standing firm for the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace, especially in opposition to the majority of false religion, will bring persecution from the enemies of Christ and His truth (John 15:18-16:3; Php. 1:27-30). This is certainly not pleasant, but it puts us in good company. God's prophets in the Old Testament were accused and abused by God's enemies. They are now enjoying their great reward in heaven as their spirits are now with the Lord. All who by God's grace and power stand firm against the opposition of the world will receive this same reward. It is not a reward that we earn by our perseverance. It is the reward of grace which is Christ Himself (Gen. 15:1) and all that He earned for us by His righteousness given to us.