

BLESSEDNESS & DIVINE JOY

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

Mat 5:3

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What did Jesus mean in saying “Blessed are the poor in spirit”?

Contrary to what some might think, it doesn't refer to a person with limited intelligence or ability to discern. Rather, being poor in spirit reflects the knowledge and discernment a person possess to realize the need for God in their lives, and to live according to God's will and wisdom.

Isaiah 57:15 says: “For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name *is* Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him *who* has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

In other words, God's Spirit takes residence in those who are humble, recognize their sinful nature and need for God's righteousness, and surely not in the proud at heart. The reason James 4:6 says, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

Jesus in Luke 18:9-14 added the parable of the proud Pharisee and the tax collector praying to God in the Temple, describing why God forgave the latter one for his humility and repentance, and the Pharisee's self-righteousness was rejected by God.

That's why Jesus said in Mat 18:4: “Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

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Mourning is defined as a deep sadness and sorrow following sad events in our life.

Psalm 34:18 says "The LORD *is* near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit." Just as loving parents will comfort a sad child, God is even closer to His children, both for emotional sadness and through the trials and challenges of life. In essence, while mourning brings sadness, if we seek God through such events, He most surely will bring comfort to our hearts and spirit. In Isaiah 41:10, God said, "Fear not, for I *am* with you; be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

How does that translate into our lives?

Paul in 2Cor 1:3-4 said this: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

Where then does our hope lie for eternity?

Rev 21:4: "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

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The modern world provides very different definitions of meekness, than how it is defined in the Bible. While the world refers to it as a weakness, it is a strength by God's design. Moses is perhaps the best example of meekness. Yet he was a strong, calm, self-controlled and disciplined leader.

Meekness is a strength acquired through an attitude of humility towards God, coupled with deep belief and a firm stand on His Word, and translates into humble attitudes of life.

The reason Paul wrote in Titus 3:1-2, "Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men."

We must understand that our attitude of submission to authorities, as with God, requires strength, endurance, perseverance, discipline, and a deep commitment to honor God.

James 5:11 says, "Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful."

Finally, Psalm 37:11 says, "But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."

Will we stand with God, and be strong and disciplined in meekness of heart?

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While some might associate righteousness with being made right as a result of having been cheated, deceived or taken advantage of, true righteousness refers to desiring God's holiness in our lives, and living in accordance with His Word and will, rather than being made right by the world.

Jesus in Mat 6:33 said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." In other words, that's where it all starts, and also ends. We are warned in 1John 2:15: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." In plain words, to love the world equates to reject God's righteousness, and to desire to live by the flesh, as opposed to live to honor and serve God in all aspects of life.

Psalm 42:1 gives us a representation of seeking after God's righteousness: "As the deer thirsts for a stream of water. In the same way, I thirst for you, God." In truth, seeking God's righteousness equates to desiring all that God is, all that He desires from us, to embrace His holy character and live accordingly.

The apostle in 2Peter 3:13 added, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

What is it that we hunger and thirst for right now?

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The greatest example of mercy is without a doubt how God, through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, offered forgiveness and eternal life to whoever truly believes in Him, as John 3:16 clearly says. In the same way, we must be merciful to others, so we can obtain mercy throughout our lives.

Paul in Eph 4:31-32 put it in these words: "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."

In other words, we must daily seek to become more like Christ, if we profess to truly believe in God and Christ, in loving our neighbor as ourselves, as Jesus said in Mat 22:39.

A most powerful scripture to so enjoin us is being merciful is found in Ps 103:10-13, "He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities *his* children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him."

As true believers, are we committed to forgive others, just as God forgave us through Christ?

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Purity of heart is characterized by an attitude of holiness in our thoughts and actions, with the purpose of honoring God through all aspects of our life.

We all know that God doesn't look at the outward appearance of piety or religiousness. Rather God looks at the heart, as the Lord said in 1Samuel 16:7, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the LORD* does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

How can we then have a pure heart?

Rom 12:2: "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

That's why Pro 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it *spring* the issues of life." In essence, we must realize that our Lord sees everything, the reason we must have a committed and pure heart for God.

As a result, we have access to the Throne of God, as Ps 24:3-4 says, "Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart."

Can we ask God, as Ps 51:10 says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me"?

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Who is our foremost example of peace?

Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Why should we seek and pursue peace?

Heb 12:14: "Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."

Col 3:15: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful."

How do we maintain peace?

Eph 4:1-3: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

What did Jesus tell us about peace?

John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

How do we know we have the true peace of God?

Philip 4:7: "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Are our hearts and minds at peace, through Christ our Lord?

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Here’s what Jesus said about persecution for the believer?

Luke 6:22: “Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile *you*, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man’s sake.”

John 16:33: “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

Mat 10:22: “You will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.”

John 15:20: “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. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”

Then the apostle in 1Peter 4:12-14 said: “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.”

Paul in 2Tim 3:12 added, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

Will we stand by Christ, even through persecution?

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