

THE BEATITUDES

To start the Beatitudes, start with Matt 4:23.

The Beatitudes can be divided into three categories in terms of application:

1. Practice
2. Position
3. Promise

There is a general position stated here (3a, 4a and so on). There is a promise attached to all eight of these and each one involves a practice.

To understand the Beatitudes one must first know the definition of the word "blessed" because that is the key that unlocks the series of these. Blessed is: 3107 makarios (mak-ar'-ee-os); a prolonged form of the poetical makar (meaning the same); supremely blest; by extension, fortunate, well off: KJV-- blessed, happy (X -ier).

Many books have been written approaching the subject of happiness and they look at the Beatitudes as the secret of happiness. It isn't.

According to Dave Hocking, the word translated "blessed" is used only here and in two other places. See Luke 1:48-49

**for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the
Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his name.
(NIV)**

Here it is used of Mary. The reason she was blessed was because God had done something too her. God produced in her a virgin conception and God came to dwell in her and therefore she was blessed.

See also James 5:11

As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. (NIV)

The people referred to here are the prophets who have suffered and endured with patience. (Look back at James 5:10.) They are enduring persecution and we declare them to be blessed.

If we contrast these two usages of the word "blessed," we can comprehend the idea of what Jesus is teaching us on the Sermon on the Mount. Happiness and blessedness are not the same and unfortunately, today we tend to base the concept of Christianity on happiness. Blessedness depends totally upon God, it has nothing to do with man. Happiness depends upon circumstances. We are so "happiness" prone that we don't understand blessedness. Blessed is a "positional" truth, not "conditional." It is also spiritual and not physical.

When you are blessed there is complete fulfillment and satisfaction.

Blessedness is more concerned with our relationship to God. Those who seek happiness are more concerned with our relationship with men. To be blessed is to know the pursuit of God is more important than any other goal.

The first beatitude says we must be poor in spirit. Poor is: 4434 ptochos (pto-khos'); from ptosso (to crouch; akin to 4422 and the alternate of 4098); a beggar (as cringing), i.e. pauper (strictly denoting absolute or public mendicancy, although also used in a qualified or relative sense; whereas 3993 properly means only straitened circumstances in private), literally (often as noun) or figuratively (distressed): KJV-- beggar (-ly), poor.

We are to be broken. It is not the same word used in Luke 21:2-3 and 2 Cor 9:9. There, it refers to what they had acquired. There, it refers to one who is poor but has the ability to acquire for his needs. Those verses read:

Luke 21:2-3

2 He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 3 "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. NIV

2 Cor 9:9

As it is written:

"He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." NIV

The word used for "poor" in Matt 5:3 is used over 40 times and is most often used of one who is a beggar; one that does not have the means to acquire for himself. He was destitute and unable to meet his own needs. Most of us do not sense our "beggarly" condition spiritually and therefore, we don't see much happen.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Spiritually we are destitute. We cannot do anything to meet our own needs. Blessed are those who know they are incapable spiritually. They are blessed and of theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Here, Matt 5:3, the manner of which one is poor is in spirit, not goods. It is spiritual, not physical.

1. If you are poor in spirit, you know you have no ability to save yourself. The opposite of this is salvation by works.
2. There is no ability to satisfy your deepest needs.
3. There is no ability to solve your real problems.

4. There is no ability to stimulate your growth in Jesus. Blessedness comes because of God, not circumstances or my ability. I cannot stimulate my Christian growth, God must cause growth in me.

5. There is no ability to serve Jesus in my own strength. If I am doing things in my own strength, at the judgment, I will see this is "wood, hay and stubble."

6. There is no ability to stand before God. Recognize how undeserving we are before Him.

See James 4:6-10

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. (NIV)

Here is what it means to be "poor in spirit."

See also Is 66:2

Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word. (NIV)

This is who God will look at with favor.

This is accomplished in the closet between just you and God. It is not something done before men. If we truly are poor in spirit, then no circumstance can effect the peace and joy we have in Jesus, because it is dependant upon God and not circumstances or people.

There's nothing we can do to solve our problems or change the circumstances anyhow. Our response to God is "help!"

Jesus gives them the promise of the kingdom of heaven. The word "for" in these verses is really "because." The word is: 3754 hoti (hot'-ee); neuter of 3748 as conjunction; demonstr. that (sometimes redundant); caus. because: KJV-- as concerning that, as though, because (that), for (that), how (that), (in) that, though, why.

We are talking about Christian people, the condition of their life which is blessed. The blessed condition will bring the future blessing. Notice all of the beatitudes are in the future tense except the first and the last in terms of promise.

The kingdom of God is the rule of God over all things, which includes me. Jesus says in John 3:3 we cannot enter this kingdom without being born again. When we are in the kingdom of God, the King is present. When we are born again, then we enter the kingdom of God and the King is present in us and we need to become before Him as the beggarly servant at His feet recognizing we have in us no ability to do anything pleasing to Him.

Matt 5:4 The promise here is future. This doesn't mean we can't experience this now. It does mean we cannot experience this without the issue of practice. You will never be comforted unless you mourn. He who mourns is already blessed because he does mourn. The condition of being blessed in Jesus demands emotional breakdown.

A life that has no capacity to express emotion is a life that is quite barren and doesn't truly know what Jesus can mean to that life.

Those who mourn are the mourning ones. They are ones whose habit of life is to shed tears. Scripture never tells us Jesus laughed. No

doubt He did, but we are never told that. We are told however, that He did weep.

The word "mourn" is: 3996 pentheo (pen-theh'-o); from 3997; to grieve (the feeling or the act): KJV-- mourn, (be-) wail. This word is used 13 times in Scripture. See Mark 16:9-10

When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. (NIV)

Over the death of Jesus, there were shedding tears. This was an outward manifestation of grief. That's what this word means.

This is the kind of sorrow that will take possession of the individual himself. This is where the sorrow has taken control and Jesus said they shall be comforted.

See 2 Cor. 7:9-10

yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. (NIV)

There are two kinds of sorrow. We must be aware of them because we see them in the lives of the people in the Bible. There is a sorrow in which men are upset over the consequences of their sins. Such was Judas. See Matt 27:3-5

When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." So

Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself. (NIV)

Here Judas "felt remorse." There are two words for repented. One is to change your mind or attitude. The other is simply to express sorrow over the consequences of your action. You repent because you get caught. That is what is in verse 3 here. Judas didn't change his mind over this. He didn't repent as in Matt 3:2. He experienced no comfort.

Another example is in Heb 12:15-17

See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears. (NIV)

This centers in the believer because the context of Heb 12 speaks of believers. This warns us that we don't fail in the grace of God in losing our salvation, but we don't respond to God's grace in an attempt to accomplish what we think God wants us to do.

In Heb 12:15 we see a man can experience bitterness. There is no sorrow and therefore no comfort. Esau sought comfort with tears but found none. This is a sorrow we experience because of the consequence of my action, but does not change the course of action in my life.

Turn to Ps 51:16-17

You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.(NIV)

Here is David's Psalm of repentance for his sin with Bathsheba. When we speak of emotional breakdown it is not simply the shedding of an abundance of tears. It is truly the breakdown of the spirit of pride that is in man that resists falling at the feet of God and saying "help," but instead says he can still handle his own affairs. The key to emotional breakdown, the true meaning of mourning, is the experience of having our spirits broken by God.

This goes with the first beatitude, the poor in spirit. See Luke 22:54-62.

54 Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. 55 But when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. 56 A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him." 57 But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said. 58 A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." "Man, I am not!" Peter replied. 59 About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean." 60 Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. 61 The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." 62 And he went outside and wept bitterly. NIV

Peter experienced mourning; emotional breakdown. What brought this about in Peter? God's Word. It is the Word of God that pierces a man to the point that he has true repentance and he changes his mind. This is where we learn to put ourselves in the position of a bond servant. Here, we can thank God for the suffering and sorrow

and in those times we learn, when our life and spirit are broken, then we are close to what God wants in our lives.

Here we see it isn't sacrifices and things we bring to God, but instead we bring a broken and contrite heart. It's a life that is humbled before God. The first two beatitudes are two sides of the same coin. God wants to break us and those who are broken will experience God's comfort.

Look at the example of Jesus. Turn to Luke 19:41-44

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace-- but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." (NIV)

Jesus Himself experienced a broken heart over people. In John 11:11-46 we find that it was the people who failed to believe His power that caused Him to weep and to mourn. He was mourning over the peoples lack of understanding of who He was and of His power to do anything about it.

Jesus was a man of sorrow, acquainted with grief. See Is 53:3

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (NIV)

The KJV has "grief" instead of "suffering."

Let's look at the place of mourning in the Bible. What is the purpose of mourning? Why should we experience this emotional breakdown? See Rom 8:18

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. (NIV)
and Rom 8:23

Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (NIV)

No matter who we are, sooner or later we are going to suffer. If God delays His coming we will all experience physical death. Why does God bring all of this? Why doesn't He just let us live forever? That's not His plan, for one. He has many reasons for suffering, one of which is that those who are emotionally broken down by the things they suffer will know the joy of heaven. One of the purposes of mourning and the way in which we will be comforted is heaven itself. It causes us to long for heaven; the redemption of our bodies. That's a blessed hope of a Christian.

See also Ps 56:8-13

Record my lament; list my tears on your scroll-- are they not in your record? Then my enemies will turn back when I call for help. By this I will know that God is for me. In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise-- in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? I am under vows to you, O God; I will present my thank offerings to you. For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life. (NIV)

God knows when I will wander from Him. He knows my life from beginning to end. David was broken by sin. He repented and was broken in spirit.

There was an ancient custom of putting tears in a bottle and leaving it by the grave. David learned the truth of total dependence upon God. You know why a lot of us can't learn this? Because we have never

been emotionally broken down. We keep going on. It's pride inside of us and we won't let go.

See Rom 9:1-3

I speak the truth in Christ-- I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit-- I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race,...(NIV)

Paul experienced mourning over the sins of others. How could Paul pray this? Because mourning means emotional break down. He had continual sorrow in his heart. He had emotional breakdown over people he wanted to reach for Jesus. Jesus wept over people; Paul wept over people; and today we don't care. The world is going to hell and we stand by and watch.

The great commission in Matt 28 is for all of us. The root of the problem is that we don't care. Why? Because the pride and sin nature hasn't been broken. If there is this emotional breakdown, then you will experience Matt 5:4.

Acts 20:17-38 is an example of this. Paul mourned over the church at Ephesus. There was mourning and repentance within the church over this mourning. In 1 Cor 5 Paul admonishes the church because there is no mourning over the sin in the church. They didn't care. They tolerated sin. In II Cor 12 he says the same thing. We should mourn over the sin we see in others.

There is a wonderful promise to those who experience this mourning. There will be comfort. There will be comfort in sowing the seed. See Ps 126:5-6

Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him. (NIV)

He who sows in tears will reap in joy. The joy will be when he comes home bearing the sheaves he's gone after.

Look at 2 Cor 7:5-7

For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn-- conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever. (NIV)

Paul was exhausted. There was fighting (literally) going on around him and he had fear inside. But God comforts those who are cast down. Comfort is 2293 *tharseo* (thar-seh'-o); from 2294; to have courage: KJV-- be of good cheer (comfort). In the absence of Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit; the Comforter.

Finally, see Rev 21:3-7

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. (NIV)

That day is coming.

Matt 5:5 How to be calm. Remember then to be blessed is solely upon God, not you. As we walk with Jesus, this is the result. This is a quote from Ps 37:11. This verse literally reads, "Blessed the meek ones, because they will inherit the earth." This is yet future.

Meekness is used 16 times in the New Testament. It is not the absence of anger. It does not refer to an attitude of passiveness. Passiveness leads to apathy. It is not weakness. It is not merely the outward actions of being a gentle man. Finally, it is not a natural attribute of man.

Meekness should be true in the life of every believer because the Holy Spirit is working in them.

Meekness is a word the Greeks used of a wild animal that has been domesticated. In Gal 5:23 we find meekness is a part of the fruit of the spirit. If you are walking in the Spirit, meekness is being produced. See also Eph 4:1-2

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. (NIV)

and Col 3:12

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Meekness is part of humility.

Turn to Titus 3:1-3

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men. At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions

and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. (NIV)

The old sin nature wants to “get even.” Meekness is the opposite of angry, speaking evil, brawling type of spirit that always wants to get even.

Turn to James 3:13-17

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. (NIV)

The way to show you are a wise man is that your works will have a meekness of wisdom. Verse 14 is the attitude of Satan. Verses 13 and 17 shows us God’s wisdom and contrasts it with the wrong kind of wisdom in verses 14-16.

See 2 Sam 16:11-14

David then said to Abishai and all his officials, “My son, who is of my own flesh, is trying to take my life. How much more, then, this Benjamite! Leave him alone; let him curse, for the LORD has told him to. It may be that the LORD will see my distress and repay me with good for the cursing I am receiving today.” So David and his men continued along the road while Shimei was going along the hillside opposite him, cursing as he went and throwing stones at him and showering him with dirt. The king and all the people with him arrived at their destination exhausted. And there he refreshed himself. (NIV)

This son is Shimei. Here is an example of meekness. David didn't want to get even with him or vindicate himself. God will do it and the meek man knows this and will let God straighten it out. The Christian recognizes he is in a blessed condition or state and the quality the Holy Spirit produces is meekness, not a desire to get even.

It is also an essential attitude in receiving the Word of God. See James 1:19-21

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. (NIV)

Most of us are the opposite of this. Verse 20 tells us anger is exactly the opposite of what God wants us to do. Verse 21 tells us to receive God's Word fully. I need meekness. Why? If we don't receive God's Word with meekness, we'll turn away from God's Word and do what we want. We cannot be bond servants without meekness.

2 Tim 2:24-26

And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. (NIV)

It is a necessary quality in witnessing. God responds when we teach with meekness and with repentance in our lives.

Gal 6:1

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. (NIV)

Meekness is an attitude that never looks down on another. When ever we have an opportunity to share with a brother who has been overtaken and fallen, be very careful about the spirit in which you do it. Correct in the spirit of meekness. Realize that at any moment you can fall into the same thing.

Real meekness does not seek to defend itself and does not seek vindication. It loves and it desires no harm to anyone. See Num 12:1-15

Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. "Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?" And the LORD heard this. (Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.) At once the LORD said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, "Come out to the Tent of Meeting, all three of you." So the three of them came out. Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the Tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When both of them stepped forward, he said, "Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" The anger of the LORD burned against them, and he left them. When the cloud lifted from above the Tent, there stood Miriam-- leprous, like snow. Aaron turned toward her and saw that she had leprosy; and he said to Moses, "Please, my lord, do not hold against us the sin we have so foolishly committed. Do not let her be like a

stillborn infant coming from its mother's womb with its flesh half eaten away." So Moses cried out to the LORD, "O God, please heal her!" The LORD replied to Moses, "If her father had spit in her face, would she not have been in disgrace for seven days? Confine her outside the camp for seven days; after that she can be brought back." So Miriam was confined outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not move on till she was brought back. (NIV)

Moses was meek through the whole event. Here, Aaron and Miriam challenge Moses saying God speaks to them also. Moses' attitude is revealed in verse 13. There is no anger or vengeance on his part. The love that is behind meekness doesn't seek to harm anyone and doesn't rejoice in the sufferings of anyone.

Psalm 22:26a

The meek shall eat and be satisfied:.... (KJV)

Here we find that the meek are satisfied. They have a trust and confidence in the Lord.

Psalm 25:9

He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. (NIV)

We need meekness to be taught by the Lord.

Psalm 147:6

The LORD sustains the humble but casts the wicked to the ground. (NIV)

We have God's promise of His power given to the meek.

Psalm 149:4

For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation. (NIV)

The meek have beauty in salvation. Some people are saved but they aren't so attractive anymore. This refers to disposition.

Psalm 37:11

**But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace.
(NIV)**

The meek will inherit the earth because we are joint-heirs with Jesus and the earth belongs to Him. But it goes beyond this. Inheriting has the idea of possessing all that God has for your life. The meek is the one who enjoys life to its fullest. He enjoys God's plan for his life in this life, that is, on earth. A person can sit as a believer and say "I'm supposed to be meek. What do I do now?"

Turn to Matt 11:28-30

**"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 and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
(NIV)**

Jesus says to learn from Him because He is meek and lowly. Study the gospels and watch the Master at work. Learn from Him. But notice there is a step we must first take. Jesus says to take His yoke upon us and that's the hardest thing we've got to do. This is the step of becoming a bond-servant. The word "easy" here is literally "well fitted." The word is *chrestos* (khrase-tos'); from 5530; employed, i.e. (by implication) useful (in manner or morals): KJV-- better, easy, good (-ness), gracious, kind. (Strong's Dictionary) It is exactly what you need. Everything in our lives is exactly what we need. Its good for us.

An inexperienced ox is lightly strapped to a yoke with an experienced ox. All he does is walk along and learn. He doesn't even pull the load, the experienced one does. Jesus says for us to just plow with Him and He will walk with us and teach us.

Matt 5:6 We hunger AND thirst. This expresses the intense appetite of the individual. The realization of the need must be upon the heart to experience the satisfaction.

See Luke 15:11-24

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. (NIV)

That young man knew what it was to be empty and in want. Notice verse 17. Like him, we must sense our hunger and need before we ever experience satisfaction. It is not wrong to hunger and thirst.

That emphasizes a need. It is the ones who continue to hunger and thirst that are blessed. Verse 14 shows us his need.

To hunger and thirst is a sign of spiritual help. One thing wrong with Christianity today is that we feel we have arrived. We feel we have come to the place of satisfaction. We have not experienced all there is. It is not a blessed condition to be filled all the time. Jesus said it is a blessed condition to hunger and thirst. Hungering and thirsting are signs of needing help. To hunger and thirst are not abnormal appetites. We were created to hunger and thirst. Just as in the case of the physical world, the absence of hungering and thirsting indicates sickness or death. If one doesn't long after righteousness, if there is no appetite for it, one may be spiritually dead.

If one is a Christian and doesn't hunger and thirst for righteousness, he is spiritually ill. This illness causes us not to desire the things of God. It is a sign of spiritual health.

Also, hunger and thirst are never permanently satisfied. The Bible teaches us to be content always in our circumstances, but the Bible does not teach that we should ever come to the point we are satisfied; that it is all over. We like to eat and drink because it feels good to satisfy that need. We do it over and over and will continue to do it until we die. The Old Testament example of this is with the manna. Everyone had to gather for himself daily to satisfy their hunger. God provided the manna daily because their desires were never permanently satisfied.

Also, the temporary pain of hunger and thirst increase the joy when they are satisfied. When we fast, our minds seem to constantly think about food. The longer we fast (within reason) the greater the joy of satisfaction when we eat.

See Ps 63:1-8

O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.

David expresses the fact he has a need. David seeks for God - not what God shall give him. In verses 5-6 David says his soul is satisfied when he remembers and meditates on God.

Also notice that satisfaction comes from outside yourself. When we are physically hungry we have to get food from somewhere to fill that need. Jesus says here (Matt 5:6) you shall be filled, not that you shall fill yourself. It comes from outside. God fills our need. When? When I hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Appetites are not filled until *you* do something about it. Just thinking about it won't help.

What kind of righteousness meets the need Jesus is speaking of? In the Greek, this verse speaks of "the" righteousness. It is not just righteousness, but a particular righteousness. The righteousness is the direct object of what I hunger and thirst after. It is to hunger and thirst for the whole thing, not just part of it. The righteousness I hunger and thirst after is Jesus Himself. Only He can satisfy.

How much do we long after Him? This isn't speaking of the salvation issue. This speaks of the continual appetite that longs after Jesus as "The" righteousness. See Jer 23:6

In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness. (NIV)

See 1 Cor 1:30

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. (NIV)

Righteousness or justification means the act of God where He takes me as a sinner and He pronounces me righteous through my trust in Jesus who substitutes His life for my sins and through His death on the cross on my behalf, I am declared righteous. Righteous from what? My sins. This is a standing before God and it does not mean I will demonstrate it in my life. This isn't the point of Matt 5:6. The point of this verse is Jesus is the righteousness. To hunger and thirst after Him is to be satisfied.

See Ps 16:11

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. (NIV)

The results of this hunger and thirst is satisfaction. Turn to Ps 23:1-6

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (NIV)

Here is addressed how a shepherd cares for his sheep and also the feeding of the hungry. Notice verse 5. Jesus prepares for us a table. A shepherd feeds. See Is 40:11

He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young. (NIV)

Turn to 2 Cor 3:18

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (NIV)

The glory is His, not us. When we see the glory of the Lord we are being transformed into His glory, not mine. The image is the real thing; Jesus. This is not His likeness (a reflection) but Him. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. When man was created he was made in the "image and likeness" of God. When man sinned, he lost something more than just being immortal. In Genesis 5 we find that man is now in the image and likeness of Adam; that is, fallen man. How does he get back the "image and likeness" of God? Simple. In John 3 Jesus said that man must be "born again," which is accomplished by accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior. Notice Col 1:15-17

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (NIV)

Jesus is the "image" of God, but not the likeness. Why? Because He is God; the real thing. When man makes the choice of accepting Jesus, Jesus comes to dwell within him and then the "image" of God Himself is within the man, and as the man lives in grace, the "image" of God is reflected through the man and God's "likeness," (a reflection of the image) is visible to all who see him.

Look now at 2 Cor 4:6

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (NIV)

The glory is Jesus and we have it. The vessels aren't much, it is what is inside of them; the very life of Jesus. It is not us but Jesus.

Man so often hungers and thirsts and desires that which He gives rather than Himself. The result is very little of Jesus is seen. Jesus isn't on our minds. Its what He's done that's on our minds.

Matt 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. (NIV)

As we go through the beatitudes, there is a progression of maturity. We have gone from our response to God to our responsibility to one another.

Here the word "for" is now "because." These are the ones who by way of habit continuously show mercy in their lives. Remember, blessedness comes from an internal condition. It does not mean the same thing as happy. It is God in us that produces the blessed life.

Caring or showing mercy means to have compassion to those in need. See Matt 9:27-30a

As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you"; and their sight was restored. (NIV)

Now look at Matt 15:22-28

A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession." Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour. (NIV)

In both cases they knew they needed the mercy of Jesus.

Turn now to Matt 20:30-34

Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. "Lord," they answered, "we want our sight." Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him. (NIV)

These are not the same two as in Matt 9. Notice verse 34. Jesus had compassion. We cannot separate compassion from mercy.

Turn to Mark 10:46

Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. (NIV)

When people have real needs they sense their needs and cry out to God, even when people try to hold them back.

Look at Luke 1:57-58

When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. (NIV)

God's mercy always deals with God's action. It is the same for us. To show mercy is to be moved to action showing the compassion you may say you have. It can't be passive.

Turn to Luke 10:30-37

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." (NIV)

There is a progression of thought in this illustration. The priest saw him and the Levite looked upon him. The Greek would imply the first saw and the second looked intently.

The Samaritan had compassion and did something. Notice what Jesus says of these three.

Look now at Luke 16:19-26

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.

So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’ (NIV)

Here it appears the mercy is deliverance from the torment.

See Luke 17:11-14

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. (NIV)

The Bible challenges the Christian to show mercy. Its just as important now as it was when it was written.

Look at Phil 2:25-27

But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. (NIV)

God showed mercy in healing Epaphroditus and He showed mercy to Paul in revealing to him the burden he had in his heart for his brother who was sick. Paul told the people to rejoice with them over this healing so he could receive even more mercy.

Showing mercy is relieving the heavy heart of people.

2 Tim 1:16-18

May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus. (NIV)

We are to seek out diligently those to whom we might minister too. He who showed mercy to Paul would find mercy himself.

See Heb 4:15-16

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may

**receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.
(NIV)**

God continues to show mercy towards our weakness. It means to have compassion on those in need. We are to “draw near.” This is in the present tense and means we are to do this continually.

Compassion comes from a regenerate heart. It comes from Jesus. It is given to those who continually show mercy to others by way of action.

It involves care that goes beyond mere performance. While acts must be present, it goes beyond the outward act. See Hos 6:6

For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. (NIV)

To have mercy and love is more important than the actual act of sacrifice. It is more important what we are on the inside then what we are doing on the outside. See Matt 9:10-13

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and “sinners” came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?” On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” (NIV)

In verse 13 Jesus quotes from Hos 6:6. Keep in mind that the Pharisees were totally dedicated to what they were doing. They believed they were the most religious of their day. They were sincere. However, they missed the internal ingredient that God wanted in their hearts. Their righteousness was only what happens on the external. They lost sight of what should be on the inside and they concentrated on the outside. God wants mercy (internal), not sacrifice (external).

See Matt 12:1-8

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath." He answered, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread-- which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."(NIV)

So often people notice only our action and miss the heart of the matter, which is care. Care is based on love and an internal relationship with God. It is a part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). It is easy to just go through the motions and not care, but God sees the heart. Study 1 Cor 13. Its internal.

See James 2:1-13

My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you?

Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong? If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment! (NIV)

If we are truly concerned with showing mercy, then our concern must be broad enough to concern *all* men.

See Rom 12:6-8

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. (NIV)

Mercy is a spiritual gift. We are to show mercy with a joyful spirit; always ready to respond.

Matt 5:8. Literally this would read "Blessed the pure ones in the heart." This is the area or sphere of the heart. Pure is not separate. It is used over 60 times in the scriptures and 37 times it is translated "clean." That's the issue. The blessing is they see God. It is difficult to see if the lens is dirty. In the word of God it relates cleanliness to seeing properly.

See Matt 6:22-23

“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! (NIV)

Its terrible to have cloudy vision. Jesus says the reason is because we have sin and dirt in the light gathering portion of the body. Activities of the body are directed according to the light through the eye. The fruit of the eye is reflected through the activities of the body. It is supposed to make the whole body full of light. See Prov 4:19

But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble. (NIV)

and Rev 3:18

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. (NIV)

The darkness is great for the one who can't see what God wants him to see.

People who are trying to see God but have sin in their life, their vision is cloudy. Since this is true, how do we make our hearts pure? The heart is our being (our emotion) and sees, feels and thinks. It also wills and has discernment. It is the total personality; the total you. Jesus says the pure ones in the sphere of the heart - your central personality - are the ones who see God properly.

To understand this, we need to explore the word “pure” in scripture. The word “pure” is: 2513 katharos (kath-ar-os');of uncertain affinity; clean (literally or figuratively): KJV-- clean, clear, pure. First, we must know by faith I am already clean in position before God because of the blood of Jesus. Every believer has the position of being clean. See Heb 1:3

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. (NIV)

Purification is the same word as pure. The way man is made clean is by a voluntary act on the part of Jesus. Notice this verse is past tense; it is done. He did this by Himself.

See 1 Jn 1:7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (NIV)

This emphasizes what we already are in Jesus: clean. This verse isn't conditional. It would more properly read "since" instead of "if." Jesus is already there. This statement refers to our position. If we are walking by habit of life in light by contrast walking by habit of life in darkness, we have two things: 1. Fellowship with one another and 2, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. This is the same word as pure in Matt 5:8. Here it is continuous as a habit of life. It also refers to *all* sin. It continually cleanses us.

Notice 1 Jn 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (NIV)

This verse is true because God is faithful and just. The payment of the price for us (the Blood of Jesus) was sufficient. There is no more payment to be made. Our sins are forgiven (taken away). The word cleanse in verse 9 is the same as pure in Matt 5:8. See John 1:29

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (NIV)

The issue is being cleansed once and for all through the Blood of Jesus. Every time I sin and confess my sin, God doesn't take some

blood and throw it on the altar. It is already done; completed; finished. Under the Blood of Jesus, I am clean! Our position in Jesus is that we are clean in Jesus.

See Heb 9:21-22

In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. (NIV)

In verse 22 the word “cleansed” is the same word as “pure” in Matt 5:8. The word is “katharizo (kath-ar-id'-zo); from 2513; to cleanse (literally or figuratively): KJV-- (make) clean (-se), purge, purify.” Blood cleansed all that could be cleansed. By comparison, see Acts 15:7-9

After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. (NIV)

Cleansing in verse 9 is the same as Matt 5:8. Our heart is made pure by the blood. Peter tells us this is by faith in Jesus.

Is there something more than just position? Yes. We need not be mistaken about our position. If you know Jesus as Lord and Savior, you are clean before God. This brings us to the second area which is faith in God’s power through His word. The Bible teaches that not only are we made pure by the Blood of Jesus, but we are made pure by the Word of God dwelling within us. This is why we need to continually be involved in God’s Word. It is essential to being clean. What this means is we are putting out trust in God’s Word instead of in ourselves.

See Ps 119:9-11

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (NIV)

God's Word overcomes sin. Our faith must rest in God's Word having power to cleanse us.

See also John 13:10

Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." (NIV)

By Jesus' own words He says as we walk through this world our feet need to be washed. See Ps 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. (NIV)

As we walk through this world our feet get dirty as a Christian. We've already had a bath in the Blood of Jesus. By way of practice, what do we do? The conclusion of this isn't found until John 15:2-3

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. (NIV)

The word "prunes" is the same word as "pure" in Matt 5:8. Verse 3 is a play on words. Clean here is the same word. You clean up the branch so it will bear more fruit. Now you are clean. How? Through the word Jesus taught them. In other words, the word of God causes a cleanness that results in fruit bearing. Notice also John 15:6-7

If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. (NIV)

Turn to Eph 5:25-26

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, (NIV)

Here is the same word. How does Jesus cleanse the church? By His washing with His word. The water that cleans us is the Word of God.

2 Cor 7:1-2

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one. (NIV)

We have a responsibility in all of this. We cannot clean ourselves up by way of position. The Blood of Jesus did that. But it is our responsibility to cleanse our life by trusting in the power of the Word. If you don't do it, God won't and you will not see God. This is spoken to believers. How? By what we already saw in Ps 119.

See 2 Peter 1:3-9

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being

ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. (NIV)

All that we need has been provided but where does it come from? Verse 3 says through the knowledge of Him. Where do we get this knowledge? Through God's Word. Notice verse 9. The one who lacks the things that come through the knowledge of Jesus which we obtain in His word is what? Blind! He has forgotten he was cleansed (purified); same word as Matt 5:8. The one who doesn't stay in God's Word will soon forget his position is clean by the Blood of Jesus. You don't see God in your life anymore. The Word cleans us up even though our position is already clean. We need to wash our hands and feet.

See 1 Tim 1:5

The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (NIV)

Here are the results. We all want love and to be loved. This comes from a clean heart. Dirty hearts will destroy love.

See 2 Tim 2:22

Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (NIV)

Pursue with a pure heart.

Turn now to Heb 10:22

let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (NIV)

We already have looked at verses 19-21. Now we must act according to verse 22. The only way we can really draw near to God with full

assurance (confidence) is based on us having a clean heart. Why do we lack faith? God says because our hearts aren't clean yet. Sin comes into our lives and we aren't cleaning ourselves up with the Word.

See 1 Pet 1:22

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. (NIV)

Why isn't the body loving one another as it should? Because we have dirty hearts. There is sin in the camp.

There is power in the Word! Believe it!

Matt 5:9. Here is an area involving our practical application. What is peace? The Jewish word Shalom expresses the hope of the nation Israel. Grace and peace go together.

The word peace comes from a root word that means to "bind together." The basic idea is the entire life of an individual is in balance. God's peace means a person is mentally, emotionally and spiritually in balance.

Jesus says blessed are peacemakers; those who make harmony and balance in peoples lives. The word here for "maker" deals with the end product. We are talking about someone who, by effectiveness, produces harmony as the end product.

The phrase "sons of God" does not refer to spiritual birth, but to position. It speaks of a quality of life.

The quality of one who is a son of God is that he makes peace wherever he goes. He brings harmony and balance; not strife.

See Col 1:19-20

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (NIV)

Jesus made peace through the cross.

Look at Eph 2:14-16

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. (NIV)

Peace is binding together in perfect harmony.

To fully understand peace, we need to know what it is not. Peace is not running away from a problem. That doesn't bring peace.

God's peace is not the absence of war and strife. It is conflict that sharpens the quality of peace. Jesus says the world hates us and will persecute us.

Peace is not compromise. We are not to tolerate evil in an attempt to compromise for peace.

God's peace is not the ingredient of our nature. We don't have it.

Peace is not living a life of leisure. The world programs us towards these things that are not God's peace.

We must first understand that God's peace is different than the world's peace. You'll find God's peace in His word. See Jn 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (NIV)

In the context (Jn 26) Jesus is dealing with the Comforter; the Holy Spirit. His peace belongs to Him. It is different than the world's view of peace. His peace is not fear. God's peace is the absence of fear. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is ministering in us and produces peace and comfort only He can give.

Look at 2 Tim 1:7

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. (NIV)

We don't have from God the spirit of fear (timidity). Paul describes a sound mind.

Remember what we saw in Col 1:20. God's peace is a transaction on *His* part, not ours, that solves a problem in *our* lives, not His. God reconciled us to Himself. That means to restore back to a previous condition. Before man fell, his life was in perfect peace. Reconciliation restores that unfallen position. How did Jesus do this? Through the cross. Man can never experience true peace by ignoring the cross. The whole foundation of peace (why we have it or why we don't) centers in the work of Jesus on the cross.

Turn to Eph 2:13-18

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, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace

to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. (NIV)

Peace means to make one; bind together in harmony. Jesus did this. How? He broke down the wall that was between us (verse 15). Peace begins by understanding that Jesus made peace by the blood of the cross (verse 16). It was the cross that came in and solved man's problems.

Look at Rom 5:1-2

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. (NIV)

Those who put their trust in God through the transaction of reconciliation of the cross are justified and have peace with God.

See Gal 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (NIV)

Peace is one part of the fruit of the Spirit. Remember John 14:27. You don't have the Holy Spirit until you are justified to God by the reconciliation of the cross through faith. Man cannot have peace until he understands the work of Jesus making peace and put your faith in what Jesus has already done. When you do this, you have peace. It isn't something we can work for. The Holy Spirit is in us producing that quality. Peace is both a position we have when we believe in Jesus and when the Spirit works in us He produces and develops the quality of peace we already have through the cross. Struggles and trials test our peace and as our peace is tested it grows. It's not the absence of strife but is present in the midst of strife.

Peace is based on forgiveness and love. See Col 3:12-15

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. (NIV)

Peace should control us. Mature Christians know what it is to have love and forgiveness. Love is the only maturity that can seek forgiveness. It is a bond that puts love and peace together to rule in our hearts. The bond of maturity is love and it binds people together. It is the expression of peace which is the binding together of God.

There are Christians that do not have the peace of God ruling in their hearts. When love is ruling and forgiveness is prevailing, then peace reigns and rules.

Peace is not ruling when there is conflict in our hearts; jealousy, envy, strife, etc.

Peace is the result of prayer. See Phil 4:6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (NIV)

Do not worry. How? By prayer and supplication; the heart that really pours itself out to God, and with thanksgiving. Verse 7 is God's promise to us. This, according to verse 7, possesses all understanding. It will protect us from getting out of peace (out of balance), collapsing under pressure because verse 7 says it will

“keep” or “guard” us. That means it will build a fortress around our minds.

Finally, turn to Luke 2:11-14

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” (NIV)

The angels are announcing that in the person of the Savior, peace had finally come into the world and it would go to the men of good belief; people who thought correctly. The people who know God through Jesus will know peace.

Is 9:6-7

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.(NIV)

Matt 5:10-12. David Bivin and Roy Blizzard, Jr, in their book *UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFICULT WORDS OF JESUS*, give the following information about verse 10. *On the basis of this translation, one would quite naturally assume that there is some religious merit in being persecuted for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Early in the second century A.D. this idea developed and found its fruition in the martyrdom of millions during the years of the ten severe persecutions until the Edict of Toleration by Constantine in 311 A.D. The idea of gaining religious merit through*

suffering persecution or through martyrdom has continued in the theological consciousness of the church to the present day. Does Jesus mean that religious merit can be obtained by suffering persecution? Are we to seek persecution? No! This eighth beatitude should be translated, "How blessed are those who pursue righteousness, for of these is the Kingdom of Heaven"

There are actually four mistranslations in this one verse. We should not translate "persecute," but "pursue." Secondly, "righteousness" is an unfortunate translation in English. "Salvation" or "redemption" would be more accurate. Thirdly, "theirs" also leaves the wrong impression. We do not possess the Kingdom. The correct translation would be "of these," or "of such as these" as in Luke 18:16, "Let the children come to me and do not prevent them, for of such as these is the Kingdom of God." Fourthly, the Kingdom of Heaven is not futuristic, as is so often understood.

In the eighth beatitude Jesus is not discussing persecution at all. He is describing people whose chief desire is for God to redeem the world. The Beatitudes are a description of the kind of people who make up the Kingdom of Heaven. This beatitude, like the others, characterizes the "Kingdom Man," who wants above all else for God to rule in the life of every person. The eighth beatitude expounds on the fourth beatitude which speaks of those who "hunger and thirst [i.e., 'desire above all else'] for righteousness," in other words, for God to save the lost. It also echoes Matthew 6:33 in which Jesus says that we are to "seek first [i.e. 'desire above all else'] His righteousness [i.e. 'salvation']."

Saving the lost was Jesus' number-one priority. See Luke 19:10.

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

NIV

In Matthew 5:10 Jesus is again emphasizing that the kind of people who make up the Kingdom of God are those who want more than anything else to see God save the lost, those who pray "Thy Kingdom

come” an exhortation which means “Rule God, over more and more individuals”.

How could “pursue” be confused with “persecute”? If one knows Hebrew, he can easily understand how this happened. The Hebrew word *radaf* has two meanings: 1, “pursue” or “chase,” and 2, “persecute.” It would make no sense, for instance, to translate Isaiah 51:1 as, “Listen to me, you who persecute righteousness...” The context forces us to translate “you who pursue righteousness.” This double meaning of *radaf* caused it to be mistranslated in Matthew 5:10.

However, if we say that Matthew 5:10 has nothing to do with persecution, then how are the next two verses, which do mention persecution , to be explained? Is reward for persecution not promised here?

When we look closely at the text, we notice a sudden shift in the pronoun from third person (“they”, “theirs”) to second person (“you,” “yours”). This is a clear indication that these verses were not originally a part of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, but a part of another context or story. They were probably placed after Matthew 5:10 by the editor of Matthew’s source because of the word “persecution,” which appears in both passages. Actually, Matthew 5:11-12 does not deal with the same theme as Matthew 5:10. These two verse were, perhaps, given in the context of Jesus’ post-resurrection teaching to His disciples.

In Matthew 5:11-12, Jesus does speak to His disciples about persecution; and He does promise a reward to those who suffer merely because they are His disciples. Yet even here, Jesus was not urging His disciples to go looking for persecution or martyrdom to gain a heavenly reward. He was speaking about what the attitude of the disciples should be when they were cursed and slandered by

their fellow countrymen. They were not to be discouraged, but were rather to rejoice in the realization that their predecessors, the prophets, faced the same kind of persecution.

Notice in verse 11 Jesus switches from “they” to “you.” There is a strong emphasis to His disciples on this one beatitude as to what they will experience.

Notice also the beatitudes end with the same promise they began with.

The last beatitude is expounded on more than the others. The subject of persecution and suffering is expounded on all through the New Testament.

In Matt 5:10-12 there are four key thoughts:

1. Notice the reason for the suffering. There is a lot of persecution and suffering we endure as a result of our own fault. Jesus is speaking of suffering for righteousness. See 1 Pet 2:20

But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. (NIV)

Jesus is talking about normal Christian experience, facts that are true about the believer. It is right to expect to be persecuted for righteousness sake. This is the common experience of the believer and as a result you are blessed.

2. Verbal persecution seems to be the most prevalent in the New Testament. When we are put down for our convictions, for whose sake is it? Jesus says it is for His sake.

3. What is our reaction to this persecution? To rejoice and be glad. Jesus is emphasizing a pattern of life, not just a spur of the moment reaction. It reminds us of Eph 3:20 which says,

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,...(NIV)

Obedience brings this to us. We are to be thrilled over this persecution.

4. The reward we receive is in heaven. A lot of us look for appreciation that we are suffering now and as a result we are blowing our reward.

Also, be encouraged because others suffered greatly as well. Notice verse 12b. They suffered trials and persecution probably far greater than any of us ever will.

We need to understand the source and cause of our suffering. There is a suffering which comes as a result of our own faults. That's not what Jesus is speaking about in the beatitudes.

Everything suffers as a result of the curse of sin. There is a curse that brings suffering and persecution. See Rom 8:18-23

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (NIV)

To expand our concept of this we need to see what is behind this: sin. Before sin entered man there was no curse.

See James 5:14-16

Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (NIV)

The church is given instruction of what to do in a serious situation. The word for prayer here is a prayer of worship. Notice verses 15b-16. Sin is a factor in physical illness. Sin does not cause all physical illness (Jn 9:2-3). However, we are not to write this off. Especially when there are offenses between Christians. Verse 16 shows us faults in the camp can cause physical sickness.

Turn to 2 Cor 12:6-7

Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say. To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. (NIV)

Notice that even if Satan causes physical affliction he does it only because God allows it. God permitted this in Paul's life. Notice the reason why.

It is hard for us to comprehend but God is behind all of this suffering. Nothing can happen apart from His will. Notice again John 9:2-3

His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. (NIV)

God permits all of this suffering to work His plan out in our lives. He gives us suffering to long more for heaven, where there will be no more suffering.

Taking all of this into account, lets go back to Matt 5:10-12. How can we be happy when we experience this? How or why does Jesus say this? According to God's word there are three areas He is dealing with in our lives.

1. Maturity. It can not come in any other way. 1 Pet 5:10

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. (NIV)

I need suffering because I can't be perfected, confirmed, strengthened or established without it. Look up Heb 12:3-13

3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons:

"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."

7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a

little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. NIV

and John 15:2.

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. NIV

The purpose of this suffering is to make us more productive. God wants mature, productive fruit-bearing Christians and His method of producing them is suffering. Notice again Heb 12:11. This isn't fun while your going through it. The point for the Christian is to rejoice in what God is doing in our lives. We know that we could never be what God wants us to be without suffering. Therefore, I can have peace in suffering. I can rejoice in this. Turn to James 1:3-4

because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (NIV)

We get to this point when we can praise God and rejoice in any and all circumstances. He will mature us and make us more stable than we could ever be without it.

2. Ministry. We cannot effectively minister without suffering. See 2 Cor 1:3-7

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into

our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. (NIV)

We all suffer in different ways because we are all needed to minister to others in the body.

There is no comfort for anyone where God is not the source. See Rom 15:3-4

For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (NIV)

and 1 Thes 4:18

Therefore encourage each other with these words. (NIV)

Its the words of scripture that brings true comfort.

As we saw, the key is found in 2 Cor 1:3-4

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. (NIV)

We are comforted by God so we may share that comfort with others. God has a plan for everything that comes into our lives. He wants to prepare us for effective ministry.

3. Motivation. We need to be aware that it isn't the here and now we need be concerned about, but the here after. He gives us a little suffering, persecution and tribulation to get our motivation straightened out. See 2 Cor 4:16-18

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (NIV)

The contrasts here are “temporal” verses “eternal.” We need to be focused on where we are going eternally. Look at Rom 8:18

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. (NIV)

Turn to 1 Pet 4:14

If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. (NIV)

and 1 Cor 10:31

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (NIV)

Our basic problem is we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Our lives reveal this fact, that we fall short of God’s glory. Suffering brings us to the proper motivation of our lives, which is to glorify God.

See Heb 4:12

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (NIV)

If our motivation is not right, God’s word will straighten us out. His word will show us the “why” of any circumstance. Our greatest need is to saturate ourselves with God’s word.