

# **HAPPINESS THE JESUS WAY**

By Pastor Glenn Pease

## **CONTENTS**

- 1. WHAT IS HAPPINESS? Based on Matt. 5:1-12 and Phil. 4:10-13**
- 2. PROSPERITY IN POVERTY Based on Matt. 5:3**
- 3. HAPPINESS IN SORROW Based on Matt. 5:4**
- 4. THE MIGHTY MEEK Based on Matt. 5:5**
- 5. HAPPINESS THROUGH HUNGER Based on Matt. 5:6**
- 6. HAPPY ARE THE MERCIFUL Based on Matt. 5:7**
- 7. THE HEART OF HAPPINESS Based on Matt. 5:8**
- 8. FIGHTERS FOR PEACE Based on Matt. 5:9**
- 9. THE BURDEN OF THE CROSS Based on Matt. 5:10-12**
- 10. HAPPY NEW YEAR Based on Matt. 5:1-12**

## **1. WHAT IS HAPPINESS? Based on Matt. 5:1-12 and Phil. 4:10-13**

Epictetus, the ancient philosopher said, "If a man is unhappy, this must be his own fault, for God made all men to be happy." A Christian writer, St. Bernard, said something similar. "Nothing can work me damage except myself; the harm that I sustain I carry about with me, and never am a real sufferer but by my own fault." These two men represent the internal philosophy of happiness. External mean nothing, and need have no effect upon the happiness of a person, is their view.

External evil is recognized as a reality, but one does not need to let it penetrate his inner being. Epictetus, for example, said, "I must die, but must I die sorrowing? I must be put in chains. Must I then also lament? I must go into exile. Can I be prevented from going

**with cheerfulness and contentment? But I will put you in prison. Man, what are you saying? You may put my body in prison, but my mind not even Zeus himself can overpower." Here is a rare example of how even a pagan slave can, by the power of positive thinking, demonstrate the human capacity for internal happiness without the externals usually associated with happiness.**

**The facts of life and history show that this is possible, but it is also highly improbable that more than a few rare individuals can completely ignore the externals of life. The vast majority of people depend upon externals almost exclusively. They grasp at things as the only source of satisfaction. People really believe that more money can bring happiness in spite of the fact that the suicide rate is higher among the haves than among the have nots. Abdalrahman the Khalif had thousands of wives, and millions upon millions of wealth, but this is what he wrote near the end of his life: "I have now reigned above 50 years in victory or peace. I have been beloved of my subjects, dreaded by my enemies, and respected by my allies. Riches and honor, power and pleasure have waited on my call, nor does any earthly blessing appear to have been wanting to my felicity. In this situation I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot: They amount to fourteen."**

**No amount of externals can guarantee happiness, yet man's natural tendency is to search for happiness in that direction. Men have a hard time believing that there is any hope of happiness apart from externals. Aristotle represented the Greek view when he said that the blessed life was impossible to the diseased, the poor, and the slave. Samuel Johnson had a close friend who said that his sister-in-law was really a happy woman. This made Johnson mad, and he replied like the brute he could be, "If your sister-in-law is really the contented being she professes herself, sir, her life gives the lie to every research to humanity; for she is happy, without health, without beauty, without money, and without understanding." He**

went away growling, "I tell you the woman is ugly, and sickly, and foolish and poor, and would it not make a man hang himself to hear such a creature say she was happy?" The very idea of being happy without the values so treasured by his materialistic heart made him angry. It does not seem fair to the secularist who has struggled for all the externals of wealth, power, and fame to see people who are happy who have not made the struggle.

Paul would have made him angry by his words in Phil. 4:11-12. Paul said, "...For I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." Paul's happiness was not dependent upon what happened, or what he had. This means that Paul's happiness was internal. Paul did not have control over the externals of his life, but like everybody else does, he had control over how he would react to life internally.

If it is only going to be a happy new year for us if we get more stuff, and all goes well, then we are living on a different level than Paul was on. This does not mean we should not get more stuff, and that we should not strive to make all go well. Paul advised Christians to live peaceably with all men, and to prevent all the negatives of life that they can. But if this is your only level of happiness you are too controlled by the externals, and changes can quickly rob you of your joy in Christ. We need to see the externals as fringe benefits, and not the base salary of the Christian life. The foundation is to be internal and attitudinal rather than external and material. Jesus and Paul agree here completely. Happiness does not depend on what happens, but on how you face all that happens. Jesus is saying in the beatitudes that you can be happy even if you are experiencing many negative externals.

**At this point we need to take a detour off the main road to deal with the problem that Christians have with reconciling being happy and miserable at the same time. One of the major problems the Christian has in the pursuit of happiness is the sense of failure that comes due to times of depression and other unhappy feelings. Many feel guilty for not being happy in the Lord. Their unhappiness is magnified by their guilt. They say, "I know I should be happy, but I just can't seem to feel the joy of the Lord." The first thing we need to do is clarify the Christians right to be miserable on a variety of levels. Jesus wept because of people's rejection of God's grace. This makes it clear that the Christian has every right to be unhappy over lost people. If a Christian feels guilty about being sad over this lost world, he is feeling guilty for being Christlike, for Jesus wept over this same thing.**

**Jesus also wept over the sorrow of death and the lose of a loved one. He was very unhappy also with the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and the injustice of man to man. He felt rotten about the way the temple was being used to rip off the poor, and how widows were being taken advantage of, and their houses being taken from them. Add up all the unhappy feelings of Jesus over the fallen nature of man, and you have a host of legitimate reasons to be unhappy as a Christian. In fact, it is unchristian if you are never sad and unhappy about a fallen and lost world.**

**There are legitimate reasons to be unhappy, and it is folly to feel guilty for them. We could list all of Paul's negative emotions as well, but it is not necessary, for if our Lord had good reason to be unhappy with much of life, who can be so presumptuous to expect to live on a higher emotional level then Him? Anyone who expects to be feeling happy all the time is trying to live in a world that does not yet exist. The only way to get there in the present is by insanity and the loss of touch with reality. Some unhappiness is just part of the price we pay for living in a fallen world. We have to get it out of our head that**

**Christian happiness means freedom from all care. If that is the case, the average cow is happier than the average Christian. It was because Paul cared so much for the churches that he went through so many negative emotions of frustration and anxiety.**

**What we are dealing with here is a paradox. It is the reality of being able to be miserable and happy at the same time. Paul was often miserable over the problems in the church, and yet he had an inner sense of well being that made him happy. This means that Christian happiness is not always an emotion. One might be dominated by the weeping with those who weep, and so they would feel sad at that point. This does not rob them of contentment. Paul did not have the same emotion when he was feasting with his friends as he had when he was in the dungeon starving and alone. Paul is not saying that one is just the same as the other. He would have to be a pet rock to be in such a state.**

**Paul had all kinds of emotions, just as Jesus did, but his point is that he had an attitude of contentment within regardless of his emotions. When he said that Demas had forsaken him he was feeling bad about it. He was not indifferent to circumstances and saying it's all fine with him regardless of what was happening. But even when he felt bad about circumstances, he still had his contentment in Christ which circumstances could not change. This calls for great discipline to be truly happy on this level. We get a glimpse into the depth of what it means to be Christlike by looking at this inner contentment of Paul. Look at the reasons for why we are so often discontented in life.**

- 1. Selfishness. We want things to be our way and good for us. When they are not we are discontent. We will all have some unhappiness because we always want to get our own way.**
- 2. Envy. This makes us discontent because we see the possessions and gifts of others almost as if they were stolen from us, and we resent it,**

**and so feel unhappy.**

**3. Covetousness. We have a strong desire for more than we now have, and this robs us of the enjoyment of what we do have. No matter how much we get it is never enough, for there is so much more to covet. There is always an emptiness that can never be fully filled because we covet more.**

**Paul was happy because he did not have to wrestle with these vices. He had conquered them, and so he was content with his life. A happy life does depend on our conquering all the temptations of life that fill us with discontent. This means that it is hard work to be happy, for you have to die to self and all that the world appeals to in us.**

**It is important for us to be aware that almost everything that people do is because they believe it will lead to happiness. The Prodigal Son did not take his money and go off to live in the pleasure of sin with any other motive than the desire to be happy. Men just do not pursue evil for evil's sake. Few if any could care less about pleasing Satan. All they want is happiness for themselves. Men chose the path that leads to misery only because they are convinced it leads to happiness. Sin would have nothing to offer man if it did not hold out the deceptive offer of happiness.**

**Satan competes for the souls of men by offering an imitation of everything God offers for man's true happiness. From the start this was the case. The first temptation was an offer of greater happiness by eating the forbidden fruit. Satan is constantly trying to under sell God, and he offers to men what he claims is greater happiness at less cost. What the sinner fails to think of is that it is God who does the ultimate billing, and the cost of Satan's happiness is eternal unhappiness. No one who really knew the whole story could purchase temporary happiness at such a cost, but Satan is the master deceiver. It is the purpose of the Christian to distinguish between the false happiness of Satan, and the true happiness of God, and then**

**demonstrate its superiority in life to enlighten men. This is part of what being the light of the world means.**

**A college girl told me that non-Christian kids on campus think that the Christians are dull and boring. A cab driver said he didn't like church conventions coming to town because Christians come with the Ten Commandments and a ten dollar bill, and they don't break either of them. His concept of happiness was the pleasure of sin and the spending of money. The Christian cannot please men on that level, but Christians ought to make it clear that it is a joy to be a Christian. The world should be impressed with Christian happiness. When the non-Christian says we are all seeking the same thing, we should agree, but be able to show him that the happiness the Christian finds in Christ is of a much better quality.**

**The problem in doing this is simply that Christians have not given enough thought to what happiness really is, and so they are on the same level with the world in their search for it in many different directions. Man is a complex being, and every desire, and every different kind of disposition leads to a different theory of happiness. The ancient writer Cicero said that in his day there were 20 rival opinions concerning the source of true happiness. Varro was able to enumerate 280 such opinions. There are probably more opinions on the way to happiness than on any other subject, and the problem is that there is some truth to every one of them. Happiness has a thousand faces to match the diversity of personalities, gifts, and natures. The poetess Priscilla Leonard wrote,**

**Happiness is like a crystal, Fair and exquisite and clear,  
Broken in a million pieces, Shattered, scattered far and near,  
Now and then along life's pathway, Lo! Some shining fragments  
fall; But there are so many pieces, No one ever finds them all.**

**You may find a bit of beauty, Or an honest share of wealth,**

**While another just beside you, Gathers honor, love or health.  
Vain to choose or grasp unduly, Broken is the perfect ball;  
And there are so many pieces, No one ever finds them all.**

**Yet the wise as on they journey Treasure every fragment clear,  
Fit them as they may together, Imaging the shattered sphere.  
Learning ever to be thankful, Though their share of it is small;  
For it has so many pieces, No one ever finds them all.**

**There is no doubt that she has in this poem expounded a basic truth which the Scriptures support. Being a Christian, and receiving God's best, which is salvation through Jesus Christ does not supply one with every kind of happiness. The Bible makes it clear that there are different gifts, and different degrees of talent among Christians. There is probably no Christian who has ever had everything that can be had to increase their usefulness and happiness. If we could be happier with a gain of anything either internal or external, we are not yet in possession of perfect happiness. Complete happiness is impossible, therefore, in this life. That is what heaven is all about. Even Jesus knew sorrow, pain, and grief in His human life, and, therefore, the Christian goal for this life is never absolute happiness at any price.**

**The Christian must recognize the limits of the happiness that can rightly be theirs in God's will. Sometimes God's will requires us to be unhappy, and this then brings us back to where we begin, and that is that Christian happiness is basically internal, and it is in the character of the Christian. Someone said, "Happiness is not a station you arrive at, but a manner of traveling." The blessedness Jesus speaks of in the beatitudes is an internal attitude which completely contradicts the expected response to the external facts. The direction of Christian happiness is within rather than external, but because many pagans have also found this to be the best source of happiness, the Christian view cannot be that only. Therefore, Pascal says,**



**"Happiness is neither without nor within us, it is in God, both without us and within us."**

**This sounds like a circular argument that says it is neither, and also both. It does say this, but so as to lift the subject of happiness out of the realm where man is the center to where God is the center. This is where the Christian view of happiness becomes distinct. In the pagan view even their gods are means to human happiness. In the Christian view happiness for man is not an end in itself, but is a means to the glory of God. In Christian theology man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Glorifying and enjoying God is the highest happiness man can attain. Man's happiness, therefore, is only uniquely Christian and Christlike when God receives the glory.**

**There is never any doubt when you examine the life of Christ as to who is the center of His life. In His prayer He taught us to say, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." God was the center of His life, the source of His power, and the end of all His acts. We very subtly are lead into a sub-Christian view of life when we make God a means to fulfilling our own ends. The very study of, and longing for, happiness can lead us in this direction, and, therefore, we must ever keep in mind that the essence of Christian happiness is in making God and His glory the end of all we are and all we do.**

**Ernest M. Ligon in The Psychology of Christian Personality says that many studies have led to the conclusion that integration of personality is a basic key to good health in all its aspects, and thus, to the happy life. What is integration? He writes, "Briefly, integration is the condition of a personality in which all of the emotional attitudes are harmonious and mutually helpful, thus permitting all of one's natural energy to be directed toward one end." This is Paul's, "This one thing I do." It is the life with one supreme aim and center. Ligon says, "If an individual can organize his emotional attitudes in such harmony**

**with one another, that he can direct all of his urges and appetites about one central purpose, which is always the focus of his interest and of his attention, we find the peak of efficiency, and the perfect integration." When God is that central purpose we have arrived at the highest happiness life can offer on this earth.**

**I read of a big cat who saw a little cat chasing his tail and he asked why? "Because I am seeking happiness, and when I catch my tail I will be happy." The big cat said, "I too have studied happiness and found it to be in my tail. But I have observed that when I chase it it keeps running away, but when I go about my business, it just seems to come after me wherever I go." The point being, the chasing after happiness can be futile, but just being faithful to your daily duties can be fruitful in fulfilling your need for happiness. It is not all out there somewhere, but it is internal, and comes with the satisfaction of a meaningful life. Paul was not out chasing happiness. Paul was doing the best he could to fulfill the calling of God, and the result was contentment in any state. He did not always feel delighted, or happy in the sense that he never wept, felt angry or frustrated, or even depressed. But he was happy that he was in the right place doing what God wanted him to do.**

**Happiness for Paul was in knowing he was a tool available to God to minister to human need. It was both internal as a sense of peace and contentment, and external because of the evidence that he was being used. People were changed, churches were founded, and the kingdom was expanding. The externals for Paul were fringe benefits, however, and his basic happiness was the internal contentment of being in Christ, and being used of Christ. Someone said, "Happiness is life a butterfly. The more you chase it, the more it eludes you. But if you turn your attention to others things, it will come and softly sit on your shoulder."**

**Happiness comes from within.**

**Our attitudes are the key.  
No matter what circumstance,  
Some good we can always see.**

**Try positive attitudes.  
They're so easy to create.  
In joy and contentment,  
Will be your happy fate.**

**If you do good to others,  
You have made a sure-fire start.  
It is almost guaranteed,  
To put a smile within your heart.**

**Catherine Marshall has known the deep sorrows of grief, and the great unhappiness of life going wrong in so many ways, but she has known also the joy of success in Christian service. She writes, "I have observed that when any of us embark on the pursuit of happiness for ourselves, it eludes us. Often I've asked myself, why? It must be because happiness comes to us only as a dividend, as a gift given us by God. When we become absorbed in something demanding and worthwhile above and beyond ourselves, happiness suddenly becomes ours as a by-product of the self-giving. That should not be a startling truth, yet I'm surprised at how few people understand and accept it. Have too many of us made a god of happiness? Have we been brainwashed by the magazine and television ads, featuring happiness?"**

**She sees most Americans interpreting their right to the pursuit of happiness to mean the right to grab all the power, money, and pleasure they can get. This leads to some very non-Christian methods of being happy. Rights need to be dealt with right, or they become wrongs. Both Jesus and Paul make it clear that it is more than a right to be happy, it is a duty. It is part of our commitment to Christ to**

overcome all that would make us unhappy. Jeremy Taylor said, "God threatens terrible things if we will not be happy." Robert Louis Stevenson said, "There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy." If we listen to Jesus and Paul, and follow their example we will find happiness and contentment by knowing God as our heavenly Father, and by being committed to that which we know is His will for our lives.

## **2. PROSPERITY IN POVERTY Based on Matt. 5:3**

After his return from church one Sunday, a small boy said, "You know what mommie? I'm going to be a preacher when I grow up." "That's wonderful," said his mother. What made you decide you want to be a preacher?" The boy said thoughtfully, "Well, I'll have to go to church anyway on Sunday, and I think it would be more fun to stand up and yell than to sit still and listen." Happiness is yelling rather than listening from the perspective of a small boy. From the perspective of a mother, however, happiness is a small boy who sits still and listens. Happiness is obviously different things to different people, and even different things to the same person under varying circumstances.

Someone has said, to be happy with a man you must love him a little and understand him a lot. To be happy with a woman you must love her a lot, and not even try to understand her. Whatever you think of that, there is no doubt that happiness means something different to each of the sexes. It also varies according to the interest of persons. The poet Gray said, it would be a paradise of happiness for him if he could lie on a sofa and read new French romances forever. Doremas Hayes, the great Mennonite scholar wrote in response to that ideal of happiness: "To lie on a sofa and read French

**novels forever would be no paradise for some of us. It would be a purgatory by the end of one month, and it would be the blackest depth of hell in less than a year."**

**We met a couple who bought a shirt for their overweight boy, and it had these words printed on it-Happiness is suppertime. Not long ago the sign at the Holiday Inn read, "Happiness is eating in the Camelot Room." But we all know that the pleasure of eating does not make life happy in any lasting sense. And there are many in poor health who do not even enjoy the temporal blessing it can be. Happiness, as we generally think of it, varies with the winds of circumstance. We tie happiness so closely to emotion, and nothing could be more variable than feelings. We can feel happy today, and depressed tomorrow, depending on the news, the weather, or any number of circumstances.**

**Jesus is not interested in this kind of subjective haphazard happiness. He goes to the inner man, and speaks of a happiness, or blessedness, which is a matter of character and being. It does not depend on external circumstances. Happiness rises and falls, but blessedness is a kind of happiness that remains steady in spite of the variations in feelings. The Beatitudes of Jesus are attitudes of being. Happiness in the highest sense depends on what you are and not what happens to you. There are many others who have arrived at this conclusion, but no one has been so paradoxical as Jesus. He tells us that happiness is found in just the opposite direction that men are going in search of it. It seems like nonsense to the world to find happiness in poverty, mourning, meekness, and persecution.**

**Even Christians wonder what Jesus means by these apparently contradictory statements. We must recognize that Jesus is challenging the world's whole system of values. Many worldly people speak highly of the Sermon On The Mount and the Beatitudes because they are not aware of the radical nature of what Jesus is**

**saying. A true understanding of His concept of happiness will transform the life of any person, and radically alter their character and conduct. The Interpreter's Bible says, "The Beatitudes, far from being passive or mild, are a gauntlet flung down before the world's accepted standards. Thus they become clearer when set against their opposites. The opposite of poor in spirit are the proud in spirit. The opposite of those who mourn are the light headed, always bent on pleasure. The opposite of the meek are the aggressors. The opposite of the persecuted are those who always play it safe."**

**If we intend to be happy, from the perspective of Jesus, we will come into direct conflict with the standards of the world. This can and does lead to opposition, and persecution, and a great deal of subjective unhappiness for the Christian. Any way you approach it the Christian life, at its best, is a paradox. By means of what the world calls unhappiness, we can be happy in the highest sense, but the consequences may be subjective unhappiness in relation to the world. This paradox becomes easier to grasp if we distinguish between subjective and objective happiness. Almost everyone who writes about happiness thinks only of the subjective side-that is how a person feels and thinks. Jesus deals with objective happiness, that is how God thinks, for He alone can see life from God's perspective, and know the ultimate consequences of all we are and do. Objective happiness is not based on how you feel, but how you measure up to God's standard.**

**Notice how Jesus just lays it down as a fact and law of life when He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." He does not say, may they be blessed, or they should be or will be, they just are. But what if they don't feel like it, or are not aware of it? That is beside the point. Jesus is not talking about how people feel. He is speaking of the objective standard of happiness, and if you measure up, you are happy whether you feel like it or not. In fact, it is impossible to feel happy when are mourning, or when you are being persecuted, unless**

**you are neurotic or psychotic. Subjective happiness at all times would be abnormal for anyone. The poet was right who wrote,**

**If you can smile when things go wrong, and say it doesn't matter.  
If you can laugh off cares and woe, and trouble makes you fatter.  
There's something wrong with you.  
For one thing I've arrived at, there are no ands and buts,  
A guy that's grinning all the time must be completely nuts.**

**To be subjectively happy all the time would be unchristlike, for Jesus felt sorrow and grief. He wept, and He felt frustration over the failure of His disciples. He was angry and upset by evil and oppression. The world longs for perpetual subjective happiness. They want to feel good all the time, regardless of the sin and evil in the world. The Christian cannot and dare not even try, for that is to go in the opposite direction of true happiness according to Jesus. The truly happy Christian will be miserable at times in a world so full of evil and folly. The Christian naturally wants his share of subjective happiness, but this is secondary, and is to be a byproduct.**

**Our goal is to be objectively happy according to the standard of Christ. This means a Christian might feel terrible, and yet be very happy. He might say, I feel so ignorant and helpless, and it is so discouraging to have so little capacity to serve God. He feels subjectively unhappy, but Jesus says that this poverty of spirit is just what God wants in a person, and so whether he knows it or not, he is a blessed person headed for great reward in the kingdom of God. On the other hand, the Christian who says, I am satisfied with what I know, and feel happy about my service for the Lord, is really far less happy by God's standard, even though he feels better than the other Christian who is poor in spirit, and who mourns over his inability, and who hungers for more of God's righteousness.**

**It is one thing to feel happy, and another thing to be happy. The**

**mature Christian is one who is able to see from the perspective of Christ, and be able to feel subjective joy even when the circumstances of objective happiness are not joyful. When he knows he is what God wants him to be, he is happy even if he doesn't feel it. This calls for an eternal perspective, and a faith in God's ultimate plan. Jesus went this way before us, and our happiness depends on our following Him. Heb. 12:2 put it, "Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."**

**Jesus was not subjectively happy on the cross, but He was the most objectively happy person that ever lived, for He was fulfilling everything God wanted Him to be, for He was the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. This is our goal as we study these beatitudes. Being what God wants you to be is the highest level of happiness. The first of these paradoxes is, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Poor and poverty are words which the world flees from like the plague, for they see them as the enemy of happiness. Jesus says there is a form of poverty which is the key to happiness, and all are in general agreement that this is the basis on which all of the beatitudes are built. There are three attitudes which, when combined, give us a good picture of the person who is poor in spirit. First there is-**

## **I. THE ATTITUDE OF DEFICIENCY.**

**No person can be truly happy who does not recognize he has a lack in his life. We often think it would be wonderful to be totally satisfied with no sense of deficiency, but Jesus says this would be a curse. The Christians in Laodicea made this mistake. Their attitude was one of proud self-sufficiency, and this is what Jesus says to them in Rev. 3:17, "You say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I have need of nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked." Failure to recognize their deficiency led them into pride.**



**They were blind to their poverty, and the result was a subjective feeling of satisfaction, but objective unhappiness in the eyes of Christ. However they felt, they were miserable according to Christ.**

**If they had recognized their deficiency, and been poor in spirit they would have been dependent on Christ and His sufficiency, and, therefore, prosperous and happy. They took the world's way of prosperity and landed in spiritual poverty. The way of Christ is the way of poverty, which is an honest recognition that you are deficient. This leads to growth, prosperity, and happiness. The poor in spirit are those who simply see the facts of life as they are. They tell it like it is, and they know they are far from what they ought to be. Pascal said, "There are only two kinds of men, the righteous who believe themselves sinners; the rest, sinners who believe themselves righteous." These are represented by the story Jesus told of the Publican and the Pharisee in the temple.**

**The Pharisee was proud in spirit, and he was unconscious of any deficiency. He thanked God he was not as other men. The Publican saw the facts. He knew he was a sinner and needed help, and he cried out for God to be merciful to him as a sinner. He, as an example of the poor in spirit, received the kingdom of heaven. Jesus says he went away justified. The Pharisee felt no sorrow for sin. He shed no tear over his callousness to human need. He felt just great, but objectively, measured by God's standard, he was a poverty stricken wretch in the filthy rags of his own righteousness. The poor Publican knew more of his deficiency and poverty of righteousness, so he turned to God in mourning, and he hungered and thirsted for God's righteousness to fill his emptiness. He went away with great wealth, the pockets of his soul being filled with the jewel of justification, the gold of godliness, and the silver of salvation. He found the prosperity in poverty of which Jesus is speaking in this beatitude.**

**An attitude of deficiency is essential to the highest happiness, for**

such an attitude keeps us open to the blessings of God. Happy are those who know they don't have, for they are open to receive. If you think you have already, you will not be open to receive. The honest Christian knows that even though he may not steal, he still covets. He knows that his spirit is far from the ideal, and is subject to envy, jealousy, bitterness, pettiness, and love of ease and pleasure. It is hard to be honest and admit our deficiencies, and the natural pride of man resists it. The world holds up self-sufficiency as the key to happiness, and the modern man wants no part of admitting to deficiency. An egocentric writer was giving a group a running account of his own great activities and achievements. Finally he stopped and said, "Enough about myself. Let's hear from you. What do you think of my latest book?"

Jesus says those who are so delighted and happy with themselves are objectively miserable, and their final state will be tragic, but those who see their deficiency, and are dissatisfied with themselves are objectively happy and are heading for great heights in the kingdom of God. The paradox is, only those conscious of the great gulf between them and God are able to draw near to God. Only those with an attitude of deficiency can be truly happy, not because a lack of anything is good in itself, but because this attitude leads to the second characteristic of the poor in spirit.

## **II. THE ATTITUDE OF DEPENDENCE.**

A man who is truly aware of his emptiness is looking for help. The proud man is able to make it alone, but the poor in spirit knows he is not self-sufficient, but very dependent. The Greek word for poor here carries in it the idea of begging, and not merely the idea of lacking. Many translate it, "Blessed are the beggarly in spirit." The concept of dependence is in the very word.

God alone is totally self-sufficient, and no man can ever be truly

happy until he recognizes he is dependent upon God. The sin which led to all human unhappiness was the sin of striving to become independent of God. Jesus counteracted the cause of all sin with the opposite attitude of total and absolute submission, and dependence upon God. Jesus was the greatest example of the poor in spirit. Listen to His own testimony in John 5:19, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing." In John 14:10 He said, The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does His works." Jesus was totally dependent upon the Father for everything. He prayed for guidance before choosing the 12; He prayed for power before healing, and for strength to meet His needs.

Jesus did not go about in pride, as if He had an all powerful manhood. He knew He was powerless and helpless in himself. His body and physical capacity was no greater than that of other men. Without God, without prayer, and without the constant leading of the Holy Spirit, Jesus could not have lived the perfect life anymore than you or I. He succeeded, not because of His own divine power, for he emptied Himself of that and became a man with all the limitations of manhood, but He succeeded by total dependence on God the Father. According to God's standard, Jesus was the happiest man who ever was, or who will ever be, because he alone was the perfect example of the poor in spirit.

Ralph Sockman said of the poor in spirit, "Whatever success they achieve they attribute to sources beyond themselves." This was the attitude of Jesus, and must be ours if we would be happy in the highest sense. Jesus said, "Without me you can do nothing." Only as we recognize this, and yield ourselves to Him in total dependence can we say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." The attitude of dependence on Christ is the door to the kingdom, and the way to the heights of happiness within the kingdom.

**Andrew Tait defined the poor in spirit as, "Those who are conscious of their own frailties and imperfections, who renounce all dependence on themselves and all pretension to merit, and, weary and heavy laden, cast themselves at the feet of Christ for mercy." You notice he includes both the attitude of deficiency and the attitude of dependence. To feel your deficiency can lead to defeat if it does not drive you to dependence upon God. The spies who went into the Promise Land saw their deficiency, and they felt like grasshoppers before giants, but they were not happy. Joshua was happy because he took the second step, and had the attitude of dependence upon God, and thus, was assured a victory. Poverty of self-sufficiency in one's own spirit which leads to dependence upon the power of God's Spirit is the key to prosperity and happiness."**

**The saint that wears heaven's brightest crown,  
In deepest adoration bends;  
The weight of glory bows him down,  
The most when most his soul ascends;  
Nearest the throne itself must be  
The footstool of humility.**

**The third character of the poor in spirit is-**

### **III. THE ATTITUDE OF DETACHMENT.**

**Luther said, "Poverty before God, that is, of the heart, is when one does not place his trust and confidence in temporal things." If one is to be truly dependent upon God, he must be detached from the things of the world that non-Christians grasp at for happiness.**

**Jesus was ever calling men to detach themselves from the values of the world to follow Him. James and John were called to leave their boats and nets. Matthew was called to forsake his tax collecting. Zachaeus offered to detach himself from his wealth and share it. Paul**

suffered the loss of all things to serve Christ. All the values he had established in society he gave up. He became detached from all to be a slave for Christ. The rich young ruler could not detach himself from his wealth, and so could not become a disciple.

The curse of riches, fame, and power, and all the world's ways to happiness is not due to inherent evil, but because they compete with total dependence upon God. Men get attached to their wealth, position, and power, and, therefore, lose their attitude of dependence upon God. The history of Israel reveals it over and over. When she was poor and helpless, she depended completely on God, and was happy and blessed. When she became prosperous, and became attached to riches, she lost dependence upon God, and ended up under God's wrath. Prosperity was her greatest curse, and led to her poverty. It was not because wealth is evil, for it is not, but because it destroys dependence. The attitude of detachment is essential to maintaining the attitude of dependence.

If we become prosperous, the only way to avoid it being a destructive thing is to avoid becoming attached to it. Literal poverty comes in here, but we don't have time to deal with it here. The evidence would lead to the conclusion that the literal poor stand a better chance of finding God's highest happiness than the rich, because poverty leads to dependence on God, and it is easier to feel detached from what you do not possess. Potentially, the poor in this world's goods can be the richest in the kingdom of heaven.

This is a sidelight, however. The poor in spirit are those who, be they rich or poor in this world's goods, are detached from them, and dependent upon God. Dependence is the central concept of the poor in spirit. The attitude of deficiency on one side, and detachment on the other, are for the sake of increasing and maintaining dependence. Whatever leads to dependence upon God is good and intensifies our happiness. Poverty of spirit is the starting line, and only as we start

here can we ever hope to experience the prosperity of Christlike happiness.

### **3. HAPPINESS IN SORROW Based on Matt. 5:4**

The soloist asked the visiting preacher what his subject was. She wanted to follow up with an appropriate message in song. When he hesitated she told him to never mind, she would listen and select something appropriate. When he concluded his sermon she sang, "Sometime, Somewhere, We'll Understand." Many a sermon is hard to understand because it is over our heads, complicated, and far removed from our experience of life. But one of the paradoxes of life is that a sermon can also be hard to understand just because it is too simple, and easy to grasp. This is the case with the beatitudes. Jesus uses no big words; nor does He get complicated, or off on areas of life removed from common experience. On the contrary, He is so simple and clear in what He says that it becomes a problem.

Blessed are those who mourn is just too clear, and Luke makes it even more clear when he writes, "Blessed are you who weep now for you shall laugh." This is so clear and obvious that it is hard to understand. The simplicity of it must be complicated by distinctions and interpretations before it makes sense, for who ever heard of happy sadness? Paradox always calls for careful interpretation. If we take these words as an absolute statement without qualification we end up as universalists. If all who mourn are to be comforted, then all shall be comforted, for all men mourn. The aged poet reflects back on life and writes,

I've seen your weary winter-sun  
Twice forty times return,

**And every time has added proofs  
That man was made to mourn.**

**Certainly, Jesus did not mean to convey the idea that mere mourning is the key to happiness. That would turn hell into heaven, and give us salvation by sorrow. What of the immoral mourning of Ahab because he could not have the vineyard of Naboth? What of Jonah's mourning because of God's mercy on Ninevah? What of Haman's mourning over the advancement of Mordacai? What of the mourning of Judas over his betrayal of Jesus, and the millions who mourn because the consequences of sin are misery and death? The road to damnation is wet with the tears of those who mourn. It is clear that the simple statement of Jesus cannot be taken as an absolute rule, for that would lead to the superficial conclusion that all evil men will be comforted rather than condemned. Sin, suffering, and sorrow would be only illusions, and we will all be happy when the light of truth dissolves them. This is an unbiblical view of evil, and certainly this is not what Jesus meant.**

**What then did Jesus mean by this statement? Bill Graham asks, "How can one extract the perfume of gladness from the gall of sorrow?" If not all sorrow leads to happiness, and not all mourning leads to comfort, then we need to distinguish between good and evil sorrow. The best way to accomplish this is to look at the mourning of Christ. What made Him weep and shed tears? This will be the kind of mourning that we must do to be blessed. We must study the attitudes of Christ which made Him mourn to see the meaning of this beatitude. The first attitude of Jesus that led Him to mourn was His-**

## **I. ATTITUDE ON SIN.**

**Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, not just because of what sin was doing to Him through those who rejected Him, but because of what sin was doing to them. Weep not for me,**

**He said to those who felt sorry for Him, but weep for yourselves. The consequences of sin are horrible, and those who do not find refuge in Christ must suffer the full force of God's wrath on sin. This is why Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and there can be no doubt that He shed many tears of mourning as he prayed alone all night in secluded places. This kind of mourning over sin is a key to happiness, because it leads one to oppose sin and its consequences. This is to take a stand with God against Satan, and assures one of eternal victory and comfort.**

**This attitude is different from that of sorrow over sin because the consequences spoil your pleasure. The worldly person mourns over sin in this way. The one thief on the cross mourned because his sin led him to the death penalty. He did not feel bad over his sin, but he felt terrible over getting caught, and having to pay the penalty. The world's beatitude is, "Blessed are they that never get caught." Bertha Buxton said, "After all, the eleventh commandment (thou shalt not be found out) is the only one that is vitally important to keep in these days." This is no joke, but the sincere philosophy of masses of people. To enjoy the pleasures of sin and escape the penalty is the goal of life for many. This leads to being insensitive to sin, and a careless and carefree attitude which is just the opposite of what Jesus is saying.**

**When we cease to be sensitive to sin, and, therefore, cease to mourn over what it is doing to God, others, and to ourselves, we cut ourselves off from the hope of anything but the most superficial happiness. Newman said, "Our best remedy against sin is to be shocked at it." The tragedy is that sin is so common that we tend to take it for granted. We adjust to it and consider our comfort and ease in its presence a sign of strength. As a college student, John McFarland spent a summer in the slums of Chicago. When he returned to school, and to the country parish where he served, he told of his shock at what he saw. After the service, a member of the**



**congregation, who had been on the board of a large corporation in Chicago, came up to him and said, "Don't worry about it John-you'll get to the place where that sort of thing won't bother you any more."**

**He was right, of course, but what he failed to realize is that when we adjust to sin, and are no longer bothered and disturbed enough to mourn, we drop down to zero on God's objective standard of happiness. By escaping the sorrow that comes with being disturbed by sin, we place ourselves in a neutral position in the battle of good and evil. This is the lukewarm position that is distasteful to God, and makes you of no value in His plan to push back the forces of darkness. Happiness for the Christian is dependent upon being sorrowful over sin, and what it does to people's lives. Those who do not mourn over sin do not repent, and so they do not receive God's forgiveness, and so cannot be ultimately happy.**

**He that lacks time to mourn lacks time to mend.  
Eternity mourns that. 'Tis and ill cure  
For life's worst ills to have no time to feel them.**

**Had the Prodigal Son never come to the place of mourning over his folly, he never would have experienced the happiness of a father's forgiveness, and a joyous welcome home. His mourning was the key to his happiness, and so it is for millions who mourn over their sin, and flee back to God in repentance.**

**God's love runneth faster than our feet,  
to meet us stealing back to Him and peace,  
and kisses dumb our shame; nay, and puts on  
the best robe, bidding angels bring it forth.**

**The angels of heaven rejoiced over the repentant returning sinner. God is happy as well, and so is the one who has mourned over his sin. In no other kind of sorrow can so much happiness be found. Who is**

**happier than the one who has just lost his heavy burden at the cross.**

**It is important that we see this is to be continuous, and not just a once for all mourning at the time of conversion. It is not, blessed are those who have mourned, but, those who do mourn. Sensitivity to sin must characterize the Christian at all times. This leads to immediate sorrow when we sin, and to confession and cleansing. Paul wrote in II Cor. 2:10, "For Godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regrets, but worldly grief produces death." There is a clear distinction between sorrow that leads to death, and that which leads to the life of happiness. Happiness comes only from the sorrow that is honest and realistic about sin.**

**Pascal said, "There is no comfort in anything except the truth." And the truth is, says L. P. Jacks, "We are all stockholders in human misery and degradation." The poor in spirit recognized this, and those who mourn do something about it, for they repent and receive God's solution to their sin through Christ. In a very literal sense, no man will ever be truly happy who has not mourned because of his sin, and that of others. Jesus wept over what sin did to others, and this leads us to the consideration of the second kind of mourning Jesus had in mind. It is that mourning which comes from-**

## **II. ATTITUDE OF SYMPATHY.**

**Thomas Jefferson said, "Sensibility of mind is indeed the parent of every virtue, but it is the parent of much misery too." Jesus could have lived a much more peaceful and undisturbed life had He not been so sensitive to people's needs. He had compassion on the multitudes over and over again, and this meant a heart constantly bearing the burdens of others. Dr. Jowell called Jesus the divine seismograph. He wrote, "His heart was a delicate instrument sensitively registering the faintest tremors of the world's pain and sorrow." This is the kind of mourning that leads to happiness by**

**God's standard. The happiest people in the world are not those who have sealed up their hearts, and walled themselves off from the suffering of the world. On the surface it may seem like happiness to be oblivious and indifferent to the needs of others, but in reality it is a curse. It is that form of security in which you lose your life by saving it. He who would save his life must lose it, said Jesus. He must open his heart to the pain of involvement, and take up the cross and follow Him. Follow Him to happiness on the road of sympathy.**

**Lord Shaftesbury, the English Reformer, saw a funeral as a boy that changed the course of history. The body of the poor man had been put in a hand made coffin, and was being pulled by his three drunken friends on a hand drawn cart. They were singing foolish songs, and in their carelessness they let the coffin fall and break open. They were hilarious and disgusting, and the sadness of it hit him so deeply that he vowed that he would do something to change that sad scene. He was grieved by what he saw, and because he came to have the power to do something about it, his mourning led to victory over much evil. He went on to make a major difference in many social issues of his day. Theophylact said, "It is one of the worst sights to see a sinner go laughing to hell." Jesus mourned over such sinners, and so have many others, and these mourners, because of their sympathy with the sinner have done things to lead many of them to heaven.**

**"Let my heart be broken with the things that break the heart of God," was the prayer of the founder of World Vision. No Christian can be happy in depth if he does not have the heart of Christ which mourns over what sin does to people's lives. David in Psa. 119:136 wrote, "Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed." When you get so hardened that the power of sin to destroy lives no longer bothers you, you have shriveled up, rather than have grown. It may hurt to care but it is only those who hurt who care enough to help.**

**Isolation and the attempt to be happy by taking care of no. 1 and leaving others to bear their own burdens is the devil's joy. James Reid said, "The saddest thing in all God's world is not a soul that sorrows; it is a heart so dull that it is incapable of feeling grief at all." Abraham Lincoln said, "I am sorry for the man who can't feel the whip when it is laid on the other man's back." It costs to be sensitive and to have compassion. A great deal of subjective happiness goes down the drain when you take up the cross of sympathy, and weep with those who weep. It is a burden that lifts, however, and leads you and others into the depths, and also the heights, of blessedness.**

**Samuel H. Miller, dean of Harvard said, "There is no way to share in the agony of our world, its darkness and shame and bewilderment, except by suffering what it suffers, caring in our hearts what it cares in its heart, and sweating through the Gethsemane of its travail and decision." This, of course, is what the incarnation of Christ is all about. When Jesus, with strong crying and tears, wept in agony in Gethsemane, He entered wholly and sympathetically into the suffering of mankind, and by so doing opened the way to perfect understanding between God and man, and thus, to perfect happiness. If you are never sad, but only mad at sinners, you will not be a happy Christian.**

**A joy there is, in sacrifice secluded;  
A life subdued, from will and passion free;  
Tis not the joy which over Eden brooded,  
But that which triumphed in Gethsemane.**

**Blessed are those who mourn because of their attitude toward sin, and their attitude of sympathy toward the sinner. The third attitude which shows the reality of finding happiness in sorrow is very comprehensive, and it takes in mourning over sickness, suffering, separation, setbacks, and sidetracks in life. It is the-**

### **III. ATTITUDE OF SUBMISSION.**

**This attitude alone can make it possible for the Christian to find happiness in much of the mourning of life. We have a vague idea in our minds that grief, tragedy, and suffering somehow brings us nearer to God, but we don't believe it enough to long for those things. On the contrary, we shun them, and pray for God's providence to help us avoid them. We would rather draw nearer to God in health and prosperity any day. The world also wants the happiness of a suffering free life, but, of course, they cannot attain it, and Jesus knew none of His followers could attain it either, and so He incorporated the unavoidable sorrows of life into His system of happiness. Suffering and sorrow from evil is real. Jesus endured it Himself, but He also conquered it through submission. Not my will but thine be done, was the conclusion Jesus came to as He mourned in the garden. The only way much suffering can be redeemed for good is by letting it drive you to God in total submission. Any mourning that leads to this attitude will place you high on God's objective standard of happiness, and in His providence will often lead also to great subjective happiness.**

**For example, when Frank Laubach was a missionary in the Philippines, he wanted desperately to be chosen president of the Theological Seminary in Manila. One vote cost him the appointment. As a result, he became bitterly resentful, and so much so that in his brooding his work and his health began to fail. Here is destructive mourning that will never lead to happiness, but only to misery. There is only one way that this sorrow can be a means to happiness, and fortunately for him, the world, and the kingdom of God, Frank took it. In desperation he cast himself before God in total submission. Without reservation, he committed his life to be used in any way God saw fit. To demonstrate his death to self, he went to live among the fierce head-hunting Moros, whom no missionary had been able to reach.**

**For months he lived in great danger, but he labored diligently and won their confidence, and began a Christian work among them. Because of his submission and willingness to be nobody, God made him somebody, and Frank Lauback went on to become one of the best known men in all the world, as the world's greatest apostle to illiterates. He has taught more people to read than any man in history. A friend of his wrote of his experience. "God took the deep yearning that had turned into mourning, and the mourning that had triumphed in relinquishment, and out of this yearning and relinquishment brought into birth a meek, God-controlled Frank Lauback."**

**Any mourning that leads to submission to God, rather than resistance, resentment, or rebellion, will lead to happiness. This principle holds true for the sorrow that comes with the loss of a loved one, or the shock of finding you have cancer, or any number of things that lead to mourning. Dr. William F. Rogers in his book, *Ye Shall Be Comforted*, gives us a bit of established information that will be of value to all of us. "As human personalities we can stand a great deal in the way of emotional shock, but the one thing that gets us into trouble is deceit. When we honestly face and accept the fact, no matter how distressing, the immediate shock can be accommodated without dire consequences, but when we try to evade or suppress unpleasant realities, then we are in for emotional disturbances. When we express our sense of loss and sorrow, the reality of it is fully established, it is accepted, and it is overcome."**

**From a scientific and psychological point of view he concludes, "There is no comfort for those who do not mourn." The statement of Jesus is not absolute in the sense that all mourning will be comforted, but it is absolute in the sense that all mourning which leads to submission to God shall be comforted. This means that the essence of this beatitude is the same as the first one, and all of the rest, for it is a matter of dependence upon God. An attitude toward sin that drives**

**you to Christ as your only hope. An attitude of sympathy that drives you to serve others in the compassion of Christ, and finally, an attitude of submission that drives you to your knees before God, broken and yielded to be used as He wills. These are the attitudes that will lead us to Christlike happiness in sorrow.**

#### **4. THE MIGHTY MEEK Based on Matt. 5:5**

**A dejected coach entered a telephone booth after losing out in the high school basketball tournament. When he discovered he didn't have a dime he called a passing student: "Hey! Lend me a dime so I can call a friend." The student reached into his pocket and pulled out two dimes. He handed them to the coach and said, "Here's two dimes coach, call all your friends." It is hard to be a loser and still win friends and influence people. Human nature resents defeat. Yet, defeat is necessary to test a person's strength of character. Most everyone can win gracefully, but it takes something extra to be graceful in defeat. It is one of the paradoxes of life that some positive values can only be developed under negative circumstances. The poet gives an example.**

**Good sportsmanship we hail, we sing,  
It's always pleasant when you spot it.  
There's only one unhappy thing;  
You have to lose to prove you've got it.**

**Richard Armour**

**What is true for sports, is true for the game of life in general. Only those who know how to respond properly to defeat, anger, insult, and persecution, can be truly happy and good sportsman in the**

**game of life. The natural tendency is to meet every challenge to the ego with aggression. Any insult to the I on the throne must be met with revengeful retaliation.**

**This attitude was at one time built right into the framework of society. The code of honor required men to duel to the death of one of them over an insult. The man who could avenge himself by eliminating anyone who dared to offend him was a hero. Although this tragic code has longed been outlawed, the attitude it represented still reigns in the hearts of men.**

**So much so that the words of Jesus, "Blessed are the meek," are themselves an offense to men. It is an insult to their dignity, and contrary to what they feel are the facts of life. It is the aggressor who gets what he is after. The meek are crushed and trampled under the feet of the strong, and rather than inheriting the earth, they are fortunate if they can hold on to what little they have. The only happiness you can get out of this beatitude, say the critics, is the happiness of a good laugh. Kim Hubbard considers it a joke and writes, "It's going to be fun to watch and see how long the meek can keep the earth after they inherit it."**

**Meekness has come to be so closely associated with weakness that it loses all attraction. Even children want no part of it. A little boy said to his mother, "Don't call me your little lamb, call me your little tiger." Power is what appeals, and words that speak of strength. Meekness may be a good word for the female of the species, but it is as out of place in the masculine camp as lace. Aristotle was afraid of meekness, even though he considered it a good thing. He wrote, "The meek man is not apt to avenge himself, but rather to forgive." He feared the very thing that Jesus holds up as the key to happiness, which is the ability to forgive one who has insulted or injured you. This beatitude brings us into conflict with the value systems of the world, and the sinful pride of our own nature. Only if we are poor in spirit, and recognize our own deficiency and dependence upon God,**



**and only if we mourned over our sin, and submit ourselves to God, can we find the happiness that comes through meekness.**

**Jesus is always our greatest example of every virtue, and when we see what meekness is in Him, we discover it is not weakness, but power and strength. Jesus was the mighty meek, and His meekness of being the Lamb of God was not incompatible with His mightiness of being the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. His lowliness of being the Lily of the Valley is not incompatible with His loftiness of being the Bright and Morning Star. Meekness, when rightly understood, is not only compatible with strength, it is the way to strength, and, as Jesus says, it is the means whereby Christians will accomplish what all the power of aggression has failed to do, and they will inherit the earth. We want to look at three attitudes which characterize the meek.**

## **I. THE ATTITUDE OF REASONABLENESS.**

**Meekness is a matter of the mind. Matthew Henry, the well known Bible commentator writes, "The office of meekness is to keep reason upon the throne in the soul as it ought to be; to preserve the understanding clear and unclouded, the judgment untainted and unbiased in the midst of the greatest provocation." The opposite of being meek is to be a victim of passion. Alexandra the Great in a drunken fit of anger threw a spear at one of his best friends and killed him. When I was in high school doing jail visitation on Sunday, I met an Indian who had gotten mad at his friend. He went and got a sawed off shotgun and blew his friend in half. He was drunk, as was his friend. These are illustrations of the power of the non-meek, and those who are ruled by unreasonable passion.**

**As tragic as passion and brute force can be, the world still holds that this is the way to be victorious in the dog eat dog life. The Saga Of King Olaf by Longfellow gives us the world's philosophy.**

**Force rules the world still, Has ruled it, shall rule it;  
Meekness is weakness, Strength is triumphant.  
Over the whole earth, Still is it Thor's-Day.**

**Jesus says this is blind unreasonable deception, and that meekness is the true power that will conquer. Those who allow emotion and unreasonable force determine their response to life's blows, blow up and destroy the happiness of others as well as their own. Jesus rejects such nonsense, and says in Matt. 11:29, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." Paul was wise enough to take this advice, and he writes, in II. Cor. 10:1, "I Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ."**

**Meekness is that attitude of God when He said, "Come now let us reason together." All through the Bible the appeal is to be meek and gentle, for this is the only reasonable way to face life. Jesus, in meekness, faced scoffing, pushing, whipping, spitting, and every indignity men could inflict upon Him. Even unto to crucifixion. He went as a lamb to slaughter, and He opened not his mouth. This was not weakness, but incomparable strength. Jesus had the power to retaliate to the injustice of it all with a just wrath, but instead, He prayed, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Jesus not only kept cool when being provoked to a point that would make most men boil, and overflow with rage, He responded in love.**

**Reasonableness leads to restraint, so that a man's energy and temper are brought under the control of a purpose. Meekness, therefore, leads to strength, for it keeps energy on the right track where it fulfills goals. Xenophon used the very Greek word we have here for meekness to describe horses broken to bridle. They were made meek by being tamed, and this was not to make them weak, but to make their strength useful. The wild horse burns up power in useless displays of wildness. The meek horse is just as strong, but his**

**energy is being channeled into creative usefulness. The meek man is not weak, but the man who uses his strength for accomplishing a reasonable purpose.**

**The reasonable man, or the meek man, does not strike back and fight, and go about defending his ego, because he is not foolish, and has better things to do with his energy.**

**Paul says be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. This is the reasonable response of the man of meekness. This takes far greater power than letting your nature respond to its natural desire for revenge when it is insulted or injured. Hugh Martin said, "Weakness is yielding to our nature; meekness is mastery over it." Those who master their nature, and control it by reason, are the mighty meek. Prov. 16:32 confirms this. "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city."**

**The reasonable of meekness is demonstrated in many ways. It is a great preserver of life. The meekness of Christ spared all of us, and the meekness of the wise through the ages has prevented much bloodshed. Sr. Walter Raleigh was once insulted by an ill-tempered young man who challenged him to a duel. Raleigh refused to take him seriously. The friends of both men were looking on, and the youth spat upon his clothes and said, "Now then will you do it?" Sir Walter took out his handkerchief and said, "Young man, if I could as easily wipe your blood from my conscience as I can this insult from my person, I would draw my sword at this instant..." That was not weakness, for weakness would have run him through. That was the strength of meekness; the strength of reason and restraint over the passions.**

**You and I will never save anyone's life by refraining from a duel by the power of meekness, but the principle is just as relevant to us, for studies indicate that meekness is an effective life preserver in our automotive society. Dr. Tillmon and Dr. Hobbs of Canada, in an**

**analysis of highway accidents, have shown that the proud and aggressive drivers are the killers. High accident rate people have one thing in common, the lack of reasonable restraining meekness. They consider no one else but themselves, and demand their rights at any cost. They cannot take an insult, like being passed, without a fight. They demand to get even, and allow their passions to take over.**

**If you study other areas of life, you will find that lack of meekness is the cause of so much chaos. This is true in marriage also. Someone wrote,**

**There's was a "beef stew" marriage,  
And their case was somewhat crude.  
The wife was always beefing,  
And the husband, always stewed.**

**Such marriages are the result of egocentric people who are too proud to share blame, admit error, and control their temper. They are blind and weak because they are not meek. This is true for many areas of life where the lack of meekness leads to trouble and unhappiness. Blessed and happy are the meek for their attitude of reasonableness and restraint will stand them in good stead for time and eternity. Another aspect of meekness is-**

## **II. THE ATTITUDE OF RECEPTIVITY.**

**Again, Jesus is the greatest example, for He was the most receptive of any person. None who come to Jesus will be cast out. Christ receives sinful men, for all are welcome to come and receive His forgiveness, His love, and His guidance. Jesus was also receptive of truth and guidance from His heavenly Father. Jesus never felt so adequate and self-sufficient that He could stop praying. Even though perfect, He hungered and thirsted for righteousness, for in His manhood He needed constant grace to maintain that perfection.**

**Meekness precedes the hungering and thirsting, for the meek are receptive, and only the receptive can be filled. The proud and the arrogant are not open to new truth. They have arrived, and what does not fit their philosophy is rejected. Neither the Bible, nor the Holy Spirit are permitted to offer any new light. Such persons are not happy, for they must live in a non-expanding self-created world. They have reduced God to a finite being, and must live in fear lest some new discovery shake their faith. When a Christian gets to this point, he is no longer open and receptive to more of the infinite truth and wisdom of God. He has lost the virtue of meekness, and will, thereby, cut himself off from many of the blessings of God.**

**E. Stanley Jones tells of the newspaper strike that went on for a year and a half in India. A subordinate was rude to a superior officer. He was dismissed and the other employees went out on strike until he was reinstated. After a lengthy strike, a Christian government labor official suggested that the dismissed man apologize and ask for forgiveness, and that the officer forgive him, and reinstate him. This was done, and the strike was over. Because of pride, it took a year and a half. The meek are those who solve such problems before the sun goes down. Meekness is power because it refuses to let man sinful pride run the show, and make life complex. Meekness keeps life simple because it does not need all kinds of defense mechanisms.**

**In the French New Testament, a very interesting word is used for this beatitude. They say, "Blessed are the debonair." That is a word the world uses, and it is an attractive word, so they do not need to defend this virtue like we do the word meek. Debonair people are fun loving, courteous, well-mannered, and all that a gentleman should be. Blessed are the debonair, therefore, for they are not burdened by pride's response to insults. They bypass slights and personal attacks with light-hearted indifference. They are receptive even to learning from their critics. They are not given to ramroding their own views down anyone's throat, but to listening, growing, and**

**learning to be all things to all men that they might win them to Christ. Life is ever fresh to them, for as God's gentleman, they are always expanding in their knowledge of God and man. This receptivity of the meek leads them to present riches beyond compare, plus the inheritance of the earth.**

**The non-meek who are non-receptive, and unteachable lose everything. Hitler, like most great servants of evil, was perceptive enough to see this weakness in men. He wrote in his book Mein Kampf, "The receptive ability of the masses is very limited, their understanding is small, their forgetfulness great--out of indolence and stupidity they trot toward their doom." The devil himself could bear witness to the cursedness of the non-meek, because they are hard, closed, and self-centered.**

**The meek are soft and flexible, and meet the challenge of changing times, because they are not so brittle that they break, but can be molded by the Holy Spirit to fit the need. They are ever open and receptive and gentle, all of which leads to great strength. But note, they do not conquer the earth by their power. Jesus says they inherit the earth. An inheritance is not earned, it is a gift. The meek would never seize the earth, it must come as a gift. There are many interpretations of this promise. Many point out that history supports the truth we read in the Interpreter's Bible. "The mammoth creatures that once terrorized the planet are gone. They blundered to destruction, victims of their own too great strength, but the sheep still graze on the hills." The aggressors destroy earth, they do not inherit it. This is true in the animal kingdom, and among men.**

**This statement of Jesus is a direct quote from Psa. 37:11. It says, the meek will possess the land, and is referring to the promised land. There can be no doubt that Jesus is simply enlarging the concept of the promised land for the new Israel. The promised land for the meek in Christ is the whole world. We look for a victory over**

**all the earth, for this is the territory where Satan reigned. Our hope is not just a matter of mansions in the sky, but of paradise on earth where it first began. The goal of aggressors through the ages had been to conquer and control the earth. It will never be realized by anyone but the meek. The mighty meek shall reign with Christ. Let us, therefore, be strong in the Lord, and develop meek, debonair, attitudes of reasonableness, restraint, and receptivity.**

## **5. HAPPINESS THROUGH HUNGER Based on Matt. 5:6**

**A woman leaving church said to the pastor, "Thank you for that sermon, it was so helpful." The pastor said, "I hope it was not as helpful as the last one." "Why what do you mean," she asked. "Well," he said, "that last sermon lasted you three months." On the other hand, there's a pastor who told a woman how glad he was to see her so faithful in attendance each Sunday. "Yes," she said, "it is such a rest after a hard week to come and sit down and not think about anything."**

**These two cases are extremes, but nevertheless they are typical attitudes which are happiness killers for many professing Christians. A poor appetite means trouble in the body, and a lack of craving for spiritual food is a sign of an unhealthy soul. Jesus says in order to be happy we must hunger and thirst after righteousness. It is not enough to nibble at it at your convenience. To hunger and thirst is a painful experience which motivates a person very strongly. A craving for food and water makes a person desperate and leads to revolutionary action. Nothing matters to the person who is starving or dying of thirst but the satisfying of that burning desire.**

**David entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence which was unlawful, but he did it because he and his men were so**

**hungry. The Bible tells of two mothers in Samaria who, when the city was besieged by Benhadad, made a pact to eat their own babies. This has happened many times in history, and even here in America. The Donner party on its way to California in the frontier days got stranded in the mountain snows. Even though they represented the best of American life, hunger drove them to eat the flesh of those that died.**

**Thirst also drives men to desperate measures. People who heard Jesus knew more about real thirst than we do. The hot sun in the desert made water more precious to them than we can realize. Rider Haggard in King Solomon's Mines tells of three men and their guide who are running out of water. The Zulu guide says, "If we cannot find water, we shall all be dead before the moon rises tomorrow." One of the men reflecting back on the torture of thirst and the hallucination it created said, "If the Cardinal had been there, with his bell, book, and candle, I would have whipped in and drunk his water up, yea, even if I knew that the whole concentrated curse of the Catholic Church should fall on me for so doing..."**

**Men become desperate when they hunger and thirst, and all the energy of their being is concentrated on one goal-to satisfy their need. This sounds like misery, and it is, but it is in the spiritual realm another example of the paradoxical misery that leads to happiness. Without hunger men will not crave what they need. If the Prodigal Son had not ended up eating husks being fed to pigs, he may never have returned to his father. The misery and hunger motivated him to go home, and to the spiritual banquet of forgiveness, as well as the physical banquet of food.**

**Happiness through hunger is the next logical step in the beatitudes of Christ. The first three have been downward. We must be emptied of self; dependent upon God, and submissive in humility before we can be filled with the righteousness of God. Those who are poor in spirit,**



**who mourn, and are meek are sufficiently detached from self, and now ready for this new direction in which we are to climb.**

**Empty of self-righteousness and ready to be filled with the righteousness of Christ. There are three attitudes that will characterize us if we have arrived at this point, and truly hunger and thirst after righteousness. First there will be:**

## **I. THE ATTITUDE OF ADMIRATION.**

**Admiration is the appetite of the soul. Sir John Suckling said, "Tis not the meat, but tis the appetite makes eating a delight." To be happy in hungering and thirsting after righteousness we must have an appetite for righteousness. If we do not admire the righteousness of Christ, and men of righteousness in history are not our heroes, we will have a hard time being a happy Christian. A happy Christian who does not admire righteousness is as contradictory as a gourmet who is repulsed by food, or a clown who does not like laughter.**

**If the Christian still finds sin very appealing, he will not hunger or thirst after righteousness. The man who does not mourn over sin, and long for the sanctified life that Jesus can give can never find the happiness of this beatitude. He's hung up back on the negative beatitudes, and is yet full of self-satisfaction. To such a person the righteousness of Christ is as unappealing as a full course meal to one with the flu.**

**Dr. William S. Sadler wrote, "I doubt if the highly self-satisfied and conceited person is capable of genuinely admiring anything or anybody. And we must not overlook the fact that when we enlarge our capacity for admiration we at the same time increase our capacity for joy and happiness." Admiration is an admission there is something better than what you have, and it stimulates hunger. What you admire you desire. This, of course, can lead to good or evil, but it is necessary if we are to go anywhere. If you admire the movie stars,**

**you will hunger and thirst after fame. If you admire the wealthy you will hunger and thirst for money. If you admire Christlikeness, you will hunger after righteousness.**

**The whole Sermon On The Mount focuses on the inner man as the realm of true happiness. Whatever you admire in the inner man is what you will become. If you admire the proud and arrogant who get their way by force you will not be poor in spirit nor meek. If you admire the Casanova who deceives women you will let your lust be the controlling factor in your inner life, but if you admire the man who cherishes his wife and is faithful to her as long as they both live, then you will be guided by that admiration to be just such a man yourself. We must be aware that we are ever becoming what we admire. Nobody wants to be a doctor unless they admire doctors; nobody wants to be a pastor unless they admire pastors, and nobody wants to be a better Christian unless they admire those who are better Christians. Everybody is going in the direction of their admiration.**

**It all starts on the inside where you develop your appetite. The history of a fisherman starts with a boy admiring his father, or some other man catching fish, and he desires to do it too. He develops a taste for it and just loves catching fish, and he aspires to become good at it, and thus begins to commit time and money to acquire all that he can to reach this goal. He buys tackle of all kinds, electronic gear for the boat he has purchased, and he is filled with anticipation of landing bigger and better fish. This is the normal pattern of life for the happy fisherman. The same pattern is what Jesus is saying is essential in the spiritual life.**

**Whatever wins your admiration wins your appetite, and becomes the motivating factor in your life. Jesus does not want His followers to miss out on all the blessings of admiring music, art, sports, and numerous other values, but He demands a priority in our admiration. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these**

things shall be added unto you." In other words, the higher and nobler the object of our admiration, the higher will be our happiness. The ultimate is an attitude of admiration for righteousness. The second attitude that is essential is-

## **II. THE ATTITUDE OF ASPIRATION.**

Aspiration is reaching out for what you admire. Richter said, "There is a long and wearisome step between admiration and imitation." Many people admire Jesus and the life He lived who do not aspire to be like Him. It would be all right with them if they could attain some measure of righteousness, but they do not hunger and thirst after it. These will never know the blessedness of being filled. Only those whose aspiration is like that of the Psalmist will be: "As the heart panteth after the water brooks so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God...." And elsewhere he cries, "O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek Thee, my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land..." And again, "My soul longeth, yea, fainteth for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

Here is a man whose appetite and thirst for God was unquenchable. He wanted more and more, and more yet. This is the kind of aspiration that will lead to fullness and happiness. The paradox is you have to be always hungry to be filled. You must be ever dissatisfied with what you are to find satisfaction. Perpetual discontent is the only way to contentment. We must feel like Tennyson when he wrote-

An Oh for the man to arise in me,  
That the man I am may cease to be.

Andre Kostelanetz, one time the most listened to conductor on earth with such orchestras as The New York Philharmonic, The

**Philadelphia Orchestra, and The Boston Symphony, tells of how important inspiration is to him as a musician. He writes, "It is, I think, a sense of discovery, a keen appetite for something new.... Someone has described the whole feeling as a divine discontent."**

**You can see how all that has gone before in these beatitudes are the foundation for this one. You have to be poor in spirit and meek to go on perpetually admitting you are still deficient and far from the goal of righteousness. The only way to keep moving along the road to perfection is to be ever conscious of our imperfection. We tend to feel our dignity demands that we level off and be content with where we have gotten. If we are fine respectable people that should be good enough. We don't have to go to extremes. But Jesus says, you cannot know God's best and experience the highest happiness unless you persistently aspire to go all the way to the top. How far we get is not as nearly as important as how far we desire to go.**

**Jesus does not say, blessed and happy are those who are righteous, but rather, blessed are those who hunger and thirst after it. Many Christians have died before they got far along, but if they aspired to go all the way with Christ, they shall be filled. The thief on the cross only lived a matter of hours, but he got to taste heaven that very day because he hungered for it. Paul says he never arrived at his goal because his goal was so high it could not be attained in this life. Right up to his death he was pressing on toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He was hungering and thirsting to the end. That is true happiness, and many Christians miss it because they are too early satisfied. The only way to be like Jesus is to want to be like Jesus.**

**We are not honest with ourselves, and poor enough in spirit to admit we are in desperate need of more of God's righteousness. With the evidence of spiritual malnutrition obvious, we in pride pretend we need no food for our souls. Abraham Lincoln deserves the title honest**

**Abe because of his willingness to admit his deficiency and need for God's guidance and righteousness. He said to a friend one day, "I have been reading the beatitudes and can at least claim one of the blessings therein unfolded. It is the blessing pronounced upon those who hunger and thirst after righteousness." Those who have arrived and are satisfied with their righteousness can never claim this promise. If, however, you are discontent, unsatisfied, and aggravated with your poor grasp of God's Word and ability to live it and communicate it, rejoice, for this honesty with self leads to the attitude of aspiration for greater things, and this is the key to happiness.**

**Dean Stanley says that on the Christian tombs in the Catacombs of Rome the first sign of Christian life is pictured by a stag drinking eagerly at the stream of life. This should be the perpetual attitude of every believer. When the thirsty stag is no longer attracted to the refreshing stream, then we can cease to hunger and thirst after righteousness. This, of course, means a never ending aspiration.**

**As pants the wearied hart for cooling springs,  
That sinks exhausted in the summer's chase,  
So pants my soul for Thee, great King of Kings,  
So thirsts to reach Thy sacred dwelling place.**

**As admiration must lead to aspiration, so aspiration must lead to the third attitude which is-**

### **III. THE ATTITUDE OF ANTICIPATION.**

**A mother said to her little boy, "Don't you think your older brother should have the biggest piece of pie?" "No mama," he responded, "He was eating pie three years before I was born." Here was a little guy who felt behind in his pie consumption and he was trying to catch up. That may be a foolish goal in the physical realm, but in the spiritual realm it is not. The new Christian can anticipate**

**eating on the same level as the mature Christian. You can go from milk to meat very rapidly if you only hunger to do so. Some stay on milk all their lives, but others are rapidly into the meat of the Word. A five year old Christian may be eating bigger and better meals than a twenty year old Christian if they hunger to do so. The Christian who anticipates catching up and eating spiritual meals fit for a king can soon be at the king's table.**

**Hunger and thirst are a curse and not a blessing to the man who has no hope of satisfying these desires. Hunger and thirst are only blessings when you anticipate satisfaction. The man who is hungry before a banquet is the happy man because he anticipates satisfying that hunger. The Christian cannot be happy who admires righteousness, and aspires to reach out for it, if he cannot do so with a sense of assurance that he will be filled.**

**Jesus promises that if we hunger and thirst we shall be filled, and, therefore, we must press on with expectancy anticipating each day that God will supply daily bread for the soul. The problem with the average Christian is that he does not really anticipate any exciting and delicious morsels for his soul. He is so accustomed to the crumbs of spiritual food that he does not expect anything more. This lack of anticipation for a new spiritual meal every day lessens the appetite, and the poorer the appetite, the weaker the aspiration and desire.**

**If you woke up this morning with no anticipation, and no expectancy that this could be a day of delicious and delightful meals for your soul, you are robbing yourself of one of the keys to the happy life. Every day we must live with the attitude of anticipation. If we are empty vessels longing to be filled with the water of life, we are assured of being filled. T. E. Brown wrote,**

**At God's sweet fountain  
Some one left me long ago;**

**Left my shallow soul expectant  
Of the everlasting flow.**

**And it came, and poured upon me,  
Rose and mounted to the brim;  
And I knew that God was filling  
One more soul to carry Him.**

**You should never be content with the great meals you have had in the past. We have all had delightful experiences of eating, but we are not content to leave it at that. We anticipate having other great meals ahead. So it is to be with spiritual food. There is no point in the previous beatitudes which leave us empty of self unless we follow through and anticipate being filled with all the fullness of God. Tennyson gives us a brief word portrait of the men who combined all the beatitudes we have looked at so far.**

**We feel we are nothing-for all is Thou and in Thee;  
We feel we are something-that also has come from Thee;  
We know we are nothing-but Thou wilt help us to be.**

**This anticipation of God's helping us to be, combined with admiration for Christ, whom we are to be like, and aspiration that keeps us climbing to this goal, leads to the highest happiness of which we are capable.**

**As we now by means of eating and drinking remember Him by whose life and death we are saved, let us pray that beginning today we will hunger and thirst after righteousness, and begin every day in the attitude expressed centuries ago by Bernard of Clairvoux in this poem:**

**From the best bliss that earth imparts,  
We turn unfilled to Thee again.**

**We taste Thee, O Thou living bread,  
And long to feast upon Thee still.  
We drink of Thee, The Fountain Head,  
And thirsts our souls for Thee to fill.**

## **6. HAPPY ARE THE MERCIFUL Based on Matt. 5:7**

**The tallest Methodist church in the world stands in the loop of Chicago. Skyscrapers of offices are around it, but stretching still steeper into the sky is the slender steeple symbolic of man's aspiration to reach God. Sometime ago bells were installed in this steeple in order to peal out a Christian witness to those in the streets far below. When the installation was complete, and the bells were rung, they discovered that they could hardly be heard because they were so high. The crowd thronged the canyon-like streets unimpressed because the message of the bells went uselessly into the sky.**

**So much of what the church does goes uselessly into the sky because it never reaches the man in the street. This is the very danger that faces the Christian who hungers and thirsts after righteousness. He can obey Scripture, and set his affections on things above, and aspire to climb to perfection, but without the attitude of mercy which keeps him relevantly and realistically related to his fellow man, he may literally become so heavenly minded he is no earthly good. It is possible to be so involved with your own righteousness that you become narrow and harsh and holier than thou. Some of the old Puritans got this way, and were such brutal perfectionists that in there determination to be heavenly they made it hell on earth for those around them. They lost all sense of tenderness, compassion, and mercy for the sinner. This is the very thing Jesus does not want, and He condemned the Pharisees for their cold and hard-hearted righteousness.**



**In Matt. 23:23 Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy and faith." Jesus is not interested in bells ringing so high they cannot be heard, and He is not interested in a righteousness that cares about all kinds of details, but which neglects to meet the needs of the common people. Jesus wants to make it clear what kind of righteousness it is we are to hunger after, and that is what these next few beatitudes are all about. A righteousness that is not merciful is not the righteousness of Christ. A right relationship with God is always demonstrated by a proper attitude toward man. If mercy does not characterize our relation to others, there is reason to doubt that we are right with God. John says we cannot love God whom we do not see if we do not love men whom we do see. Mercy is love in action, and without it there is no possibility of being happy in any true and lasting sense.**

**A merciful attitude has always been God's requirement for His people. One of the outstanding Old Testament texts is Micah 6:8: "He has showed you, O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." Jesus kept telling the Pharisees that God wants mercy and not sacrifice. The New Testament letters are filled with references to mercy. E. Griffith Jones wrote, "Mercy is the richest fruit of the divine love. The Bible is full of it from the first page to the last. It is ankle deep, as it were, in Genesis, knee deep in the prophets, shoulder deep in the Psalms, and fathomless as midmost ocean in the New Testament."**

**Paul says it was according to God's mercy that He saved us, and we are urged in Heb. 4:16 to call upon God for more mercy constantly. "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." The poet wrote,**

**O King of mercy from thy throne on high,  
Look down in love and hear our humble cry.  
Thou art the bread of heaven, On Thee we feed.  
Be near to help our souls in time of need.  
Thou art the mourner's stay, the sinner's friend,  
Sweet fount of joy and blessings without end.**

**Our salvation, blessings, victories, and all that contributes to our happiness comes from the mercy of God. Therefore, whatever opens the door to God's abundant mercy is the key to happiness, and Jesus says here that being merciful is that key. In other words, if we are not merciful in our relationship to others, we choke off our own supply line of mercy from God. The Bible is filled with texts that make this clear. Prov. 21:13, "He who closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself cry out and not be heard." This says in effect, cursed are the unmerciful for they shall be treated unmercifully.**

**Later in the Sermon On The Mount Jesus repeats the same idea in different words. In Matt. 7:2 He says, "For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get." No where did He put it so forcefully as after the Lord's Prayer in 6:14-15, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses." In James 2:13 we read, "For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy." These texts make it clear we are not dealing here with any minor matter that we can ignore if we like. Our whole Christian experience of the mercy of God in life and for eternity depends upon power being merciful to others. It is essential, therefore, that we understand just what it means to be merciful. There are three things which will characterize us if we are merciful, or becoming merciful. First-**

## **I. KEENNESS OF HEAD OR AWARENESS.**

**This means one is sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. There is sharp awareness of, and keen interest in the problems of others. One of the surgeons at Homestead Hospital confessed that he never bothered to go down to waiting families after an operation to tell them of the outcome. But one day his wife discovered he has cancer of the breast, and he took her to a friend for surgery. Being a surgeon he knew exactly what was taking place and how long it would take. When his friend did not come and talk to him for an hour and a half it seemed like eternity to him, and ever since that he goes down immediately to inform loved ones. Those moments of misery led to much happiness for many people because it made him keenly aware of what it is like to wait in suspense. His mind was sharpened to the needs of others, and he became more merciful.**

**We cannot be merciful if we are blind and dull to how people feel. The doctor was not trying to be mean, he was just without an awareness of what his neglect was doing. He was not very sharp. The sharp man and the keen man perceived the needs of others, and how their acts and words meet, or fail to meet, those needs. Keeness is essential to being merciful.**

**In the day of Christ people were not very sensitive. Cruelty was very common. Slaves were treated as mere tools, and could be killed for the slightest mistake. Children who were not wanted were thrown out like garbage. It was not done in hate and anger, but cool deliberation. There was just no keen awareness of the preciousness and infinite worth of the individual. We have a letter that was written in the year 1 B.C. that illustrates this so clearly. Let me read it to you.**

**"Hilarion to his wife Alis, warmest greetings.... I want you to know that we are still in Alexandria. Don't worry if, when they all go home, I stay on in Alexandria. I beg and entreat you, take care the little child; and, as soon as we get our pay,**

**I will send it up to you. If-good luck to you!-you bear a child, if it is a boy, let it live; if it is a girl, throw it out."**

**Here is a husband concerned about comforting his wife, but thinks nothing of telling her to throw out her child if it is a girl. To make things worse these exposed children were often picked up and trained for brothels, or deliberately maimed and used as professional beggars. Even the Jews, in spite of the Old Testament teaching, were lacking in mercy. A popular view of suffering was that it was the direct punishment for sin, and so the tendency was to look upon the sufferer as one who was deserving of what he was suffering. This destroyed compassion. In a world like that Jesus came with His love, compassion, and mercy. He was so keenly aware of the need of every individual. He was embarrassed with the woman taken in adultery, and he helped her escape the cruelty of those who would have stoned her. He felt deeply for parents whose children were suffering, and girls were as precious as boys. He healed the daughter of Jairus and the daughter of the Syrophonesian woman, and raised the dead son of a poor widow, and cured the boy who kept falling in the fire because of fits.**

**Jesus was so sensitive to people's needs that He had compassion on them just because they were hungry, and He performed a marvelous miracle to satisfy that need. Keeness characterized Jesus in all His relationships with people. He entered right into their sorrows and fears. He saw life from their perspective, and did what he could to lighten their burden. Jesus was so willing to forgive the sinner, for he saw most people as victims of sin. He took no pleasure in condemnation, but rather in seeing people set free from the bondage of sin. He prayed for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him, because they knew not what they were doing. He saved Paul because His persecution was done in ignorance. We say ignorance is no excuse, but it makes a big difference to the keen mind of Christ. The Word of God is sharper than a two edge sword, and splitting hairs,**

**and making distinctions on the basis of hair splitting is part of being merciful. It takes a keenness of mind that enters right into the life of the sinner and finds a basis for compassion and forgiveness.**

**For example: In Detroit in June of 1957 the sorrowing father of 6 year old Mary de Coussin, who was murdered by a sex maniac said, "I would not blame the man so much as the society which produces such a man. It is a society that allows sex magazines on newsstands for kids to read, a society that measures Hollywood stars by their bosoms, and a society where the telling of dirty stories and the use of foul language in commonplace, that produces sex perverts out of people who have only the slightest abnormal tendencies."**

**The man with a sensitive heart and mind says there but for the grace of God go I. The self-righteous are quick to pronounce judgment and condemnation, but the merciful are too keenly aware of their own sin to deal harshly with others. Jesus told a parable of a man forgiven a great debt and who went out and dealt harshly with one who owed him a small debt, and he had him thrown in jail. When this got back to the one who forgave him there was anger, and he lost his mercy and ended up in prison himself. His lack of mercy lost him his mercy. Jesus says, so it will be with us who have received God's immeasurable mercy if we are dull and insensitive to others who need our understanding and mercy. Keenness of mind is the beginning of mercy, and out of this will come the second characteristic which is-**

## **II. KINDNESS OF HAND-ACTION.**

**This is a basic meaning of the word mercy. 38 times in the Old Testament the Hebrew word for mercy is translated kindness. Mercy does not just think toward men as God does, it acts toward men as God does. It is possible to stop short at feeling, and consider your pity for others a sufficient demonstration of mercy. Mercy that ends as an emotion is not the kind that Jesus is speaking of. No doubt the priest**

**and the Levite who passed by the beaten man on the road felt pity for the poor soul. They were not necessarily cruel and hard hearted to the point that they had no feeling about his misfortune. They may have even prayed for him and his family. The point is, they did not act in kindness as did the good Samaritan. Their emotion of pity and possible prayer were bells in the sky that communicated nothing. The action of the Samaritan was a demonstration of Christlike mercy. He stretched forth a kind hand.**

**Jesus could have sat on His heavenly throne and wept in pity over sinners forever, but it would not have saved a single soul from hell. It was not the emotion of Christ that saved us, but His mercy in action which brought Him to earth, and then to the cross to atone for our sin. God's mercy is manifested in action which does something to relieve the problem. We do not express God's mercy unless we, like Him, act in kindness toward those in need. Billy Graham in his book *The Secret Of Happiness* writes, "Satan does not care how much you theorize about Christianity or how much you profess to know Christ. What he opposes vigorously is the way you live Christ-the way you become an instrument of mercy, compassion, and love through which He manifests Himself to the world. If Satan can take the heart, motive, and mercy out of Christianity, he has killed its effectiveness."**

**We need to get down out of the ivory tower, and stop ringing bells that are never heard, and start meeting people where they are with the compassion and kindness of Christ. Many of you have probably heard of the story of Sir. Launfal's search for the Holy Grail-the cup out of which Christ drank at the Last Supper. The poet tells of how he spent his whole life in search of it. Returning home, old, weary and worn, and possessing nothing but a piece of crust he meets a leper who is starving and begging. Sir. Launfal shares with him his crust, and brings him water from the stream. Suddenly the leper is no longer a leper, but the Crucified, and the cup from which he drinks is changed into the Holy Grail. In showing mercy to another he found what he**

**had so long and mainly sought. Every need we can meet is an opportunity to be Christlike in kindness and mercy.**

**In 1914 a tourist by the name of Sadie Smithson, a humble seamstress, was caught on a battlefield one night. It was a house of horrors, but she pitched in and bandaged wounds, brought water to the thirsty men, and scribbled notes to loved ones. Like an angel of mercy she worked until an ambulance came. A young doctor saw her and asked, "Who are you, and what in thunder are you doing here?" "I'm Sadie Virginia Smithson and I've been holding hell back all night," she replied. "Well," said the young officer, "I'm glad you held some of it back for everybody else was letting it loose last night." The ministry of mercy is being among those who are holding back hell, and all of the forces of evil, and the consequences of sin, by the power of Christlike action in kindness. If you do not act in kindness toward others, you will not experience the happiness that Jesus speaks of in the beatitude. The third characteristic we need to look at concerning the merciful is-**

### **III. KINSHIP OF HEART-ASSOCIATION.**

**The merciful recognize all individuals as actual brothers in the flesh created in the image of God, and potential brothers in the spirit by recreation into new men in Christ. The United Nations Charter Of Human Rights says in its preamble, "Man is created equal and is endowed with freedom and conscience and should act toward man in a spirit of brotherhood." What it says is good, but has no foundation apart from Biblical revelation. Who created man equal, and how are they brothers, and how can they have a spirit of brotherhood? These questions have their answers only in Scripture, and Christ alone can make men truly brothers. In His mercy He identified with man completely in His incarnation. He endured all that we do, and is sensitive to our needs and temptations. He is not ashamed to call us brothers. He became one with us. This is what Biblical mercy is all**

**about. It is to get so close to another in their need that you enter right into their point of view. Self must surrender in total identification with another in sympathetic understanding. As Barclay says, "The supreme example of mercy is God's identification with men in Jesus Christ."**

**We become merciful only when we really identify with others. Many are not merciful because they refuse to admit their kinship with those who differ, and with those who are living in sin. The self-righteous have no pity for the sinner just as the brave have no pity for the coward. We must be poor in spirit to be merciful in identifying with others as brothers in need. The merciful are those who admit their kinship with sinners, because they know they are only saved by the grace of God, and not because they are superior and worthy. Longfellow wrote,**

**Being all fashioned of the self-same dust,  
Let us be merciful as well as just.**

**Lincoln was the greatest man of mercy in American history. He was asked when the war is over, and the South has been conquered, how are you going to treat those rebels? Lincoln said, "I am going to treat them as if they had never been away." They were kin to him, and in mercy he welcomed them home like the father did the Prodigal Son. Justification is God treating the rebellious sinner just as if he had never been away. Lincoln was sensitive to the deserters who could have been shot, but in mercy he pardoned them. Many are the stories of those whose lives he saved because they in some moment of weakness failed to do their duty.**

**Mercy is the very heart of the Gospel, and the message of mercy is the message we must get out to our world. John Bunyan tells of a battle where a soldier said, as they laid siege to a fort, "As long as those besieged were persuaded they would not receive mercy they**



**fought like madmen. But when they saw one of their fellows taken captive and treated with favor, they came tumbling down from their fortress to surrender." Bunyan writes, "I am persuaded did men believe that there is grace and willingness in the heart of Christ to save sinners, as the word imparts there is, they would come tumbling into his arms; but Satan has blinded their minds so they cannot see this..."**

**David Wilkerson in his book Have You Felt Like Giving Up Lately writes, "I feel so ashamed of myself when I think back over my early ministry, because I condemned so many sincere people. I meant well, and often my zeal was honest and well-meaning. But how many people I brought under terrible condemnation because they didn't conform to my idea of holiness! But lately God has been urging me to quit condemning people who have failed and, instead, preached to them a message of love and reconciliation. Why? Because the church today is filled with Christians who are burdened down with mountains of guilt and condemnation."**

**Is David getting soft on sin? No, he hates it more than ever as he sees its destructive power in lives, but he now sees better that there is only one way to deal with sin that works. You can't beat it out of people, but you can forgive it, and therefore, only the merciful can do anything with the sinner that really matters. If blasting it and rejection would help, the Pharisees would have had the perfect system with no need of improvement.**

**The merciful are willing to identify with others and their need. They are willing to get involved with people because they look upon all men as potential brothers in Christ. They are the light of the world, and the salt of the earth. They are not ringing bells in the sky. They are down where men are with keenness of head, or awareness of their need; kindness of hand, or action to meet their need, and kinship of heart, or association with them in their need. These are the blessed**

**merciful who will be happy in the mercy of God.**

## **7. THE HEART OF HAPPINESS Based on Matt. 5:8**

**Two soldiers were on a transport going overseas. Standing on the deck they gazed out across the vast expanse of water. One who had never been near the ocean said, "That's the most water I've ever seen in all my life. Did you ever see so much water?" His companion responded, "You haven't seen anything yet-that's just the top of it!" Even the surface of the sea is impressive, but the depths take away your breath in awesome wonder. The beatitudes we have looked at so far are far from being shallow surface saying of Christ. They are deep and challenging, but they are at least within the range of what seems possible to us.**

**But in this sixth beatitude, Jesus plunges to such depths in the ocean of holiness that we feel it is impossible to follow Him deeper, and that up to now we have only seen the top of it. We feel we are just not built for this kind of depth. The pressure we feel would crush us. Both the condition of purity of heart, and the promise of the vision of God seems so far beyond our capacity that the whole thing appears impractical. It is like asking a man with a snorkel and swim fins to follow an atomic powered submarine.**

**No one claims to be adequate for the task of even explaining this beatitude. Preachers apologize for their audacity in even presuming to try and preach on this text. It is agreed, however, that Jesus is not mocking us here, but offers the hope of attaining an apparently impossible ideal. It is agreed that Jesus gets to the very heart of happiness in this beatitude. All else stands or falls on the basis of what we do with this one. Matthew Henry in his commentary writes, "This**

**is the most comprehensive of all the beatitudes; holiness and happiness fully described and put together. Here is the most comprehensive character of the blessed; they are the pure in heart. Here is the most comprehensive comfort of the blessed; they shall see God."**

**Hastings in the Great Texts Of The Bible writes, "If in blessedness there be a crown of blessedness it is here." A. R. Clippinger says, "In the bright constellation of the beatitudes this star of promise shines the farthest and is the most beautiful." The great hope of God's people has always been to see God and behold His presence. Moses cried out, "I beseech Thy, show me Thy glory." (Ex. 33:18). In Psa. 17:15 the Psalmist describes his greatest bliss: "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness." In Psa. 41:12 he expects his integrity to be rewarded by being set before God's face forever. In Psa. 63:2 he says, "So I have looked upon Thee in the sanctuary, beholding Thy power and glory." Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and many are the texts in the Old Testament that refer to seeing God, or the great hope of seeing God. This is true in the New Testament also.**

**Jesus said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." Paul holds forth the hope of seeing Christ face to face, and no longer through a glass darkly. In Rev. 22:4 it says of the servants of God, "They shall see His face and His name shall be in their foreheads." In both the Old and New Testaments the condition for seeing God is a pure heart. In Psa. 24:3-4 we read, "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart." In I John 3:2-3 we read, "We know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is, and everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself as He is pure." The longing of every Christian should be for a pure heart. Walter C. Smith expressed it in poetry:**

**If clearer vision Thou impart,**

**Grateful and glad my soul shall be,  
But yet to have a pure heart  
Is more to me.  
Yea, only as the heart is clean  
May larger visions yet be mine,  
For mirrored in its depths are seen  
The things divine.**

**The clearer the heart the greater the vision. The heart is the telescope whereby the believer sees into the heaven of heavens, and the cleaner the lens the further he sees. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. A man is what his heart is. The heart is the telescope by which we see beyond the heavens which declare the glory of God into the heaven of the very presence of God. A man with a telescope can see what others do not, even though it is present to all. He can point at a star and say it is two stars, but you look and see one, and you do not believe it until you look through the telescope. So the man with a clean and pure heart can see God at work where others see nothing, or only men working.**

**Jesus is not just talking about the vision of God when time is over, and we see Him face to face. The seeing begins now in the life of the pure.**

- 1. When you point to the big dipper and look up and say, "I see it," that is physical sight.**
- 2. When you tell me how to find the big dipper by looking to the Northwest, and I say, "I see," that is mental sight.**
- 3. But when I look up at the dipper and feel the wonder of God's creation, that is heart sight. You are seeing God on a level that the physical and mental cannot penetrate. You are going beyond the body and mind into the realm of the spirit where you have the ability to enter the presence of God and praise Him for His creation.**

**Men only see what they are prepared for seeing. The man who**

loves and studies nature sees the beauty of animals and plants that most men never see. A sightseer once stopped to watch Turner the great artist at work. "Why Mr. Turner," he said, "I never saw any such light and color in nature as you put on your canvas." Turner merely replied, "Don't you wish you could? As for me, I never can hope to match with pigments the glory I see in the sky." Wesley had this same experience in the spiritual realm and wrote:

Lo! to faith's enlightened sight,  
All the mountain flames with light.  
Hell is nigh, but God is nigher,  
Circling us with hosts of fire.

Keith Miller in his book *The Second Touch* tells of two men who were traveling at night in the brush land of the Southwest. The driver lived on a ranch in the area, but the passenger was from the East. As they approached a cut in a hill the Easterner saw in the headlights a boulder rolling down into the road ahead of them. He yelled and leaped into the back seat in fear. The driver, however, drove on undisturbed, for he knew it was a tumbleweed. Both saw the same object, but what they saw was determined by their experience in that environment. So it is with all of life, and so it is in the spiritual life. We see what we are fit to see, and prepared to see, and only the pure in heart are prepared to see God. This includes both the literal vision of the future as well as the spiritual vision of the present.

Alexander Maclaren, one of the most famous preachers of all time, summed up all that is meant by the present vision of God that is helpful to our understanding. He wrote, "Whether you call it the vision of God, or whether you call it communion with God in Jesus Christ, or whether you fall back upon the other metaphor of God dwelling in us and we dwelling in God, it all comes to the same thing. The consciousness of His presence, the realization of His character, the blessed assurance of loving relations with him, and the communion

**in mind, heart, will, and conduct, with God who has come near to us all in Jesus Christ." In other words, purity of heart is the condition of experiencing all that the New Testament says about having fellowship with God. The impure lose the sense of the presence of God. The Christian with sin in his life is out of fellowship with God. The lens of his telescope is out of focus and smeared. The paradox is, many feel God has faded from their life, and is no longer a vital factor, when in reality, it is they who have lost focus, and their impure heart has clouded their vision.**

**This beatitude keeps a balance on the former one of being merciful. Some may interpret mercy for the sinner to mean toleration of his sin, and even participating in his sin. Jesus clearly destroys that idea, and make it plain for all to see that mercy that sinks to the level of fellowship with the sinner in his sin cuts one off from fellowship with God. We must be merciful, but at the same time be pure. Notice how the happy life must maintain a perfect balance in relation to God and man.**

**In hungering and thirsting after righteousness-God is central.**

**In being merciful man is the object of attention.**

**In being pure in heart we are back to God and**

**In being a peacemaker we are again relating to men.**

**Get out of line on anyone of these and you destroy the framework of the perfect life of happiness. If we learn nothing else from these beatitudes, we will certainly learn why most Christians are not as happy as they could, and should be. It is because they do not work at following the pattern Christ has given, and they do not give heed to keeping their life balanced.**

**Even a partial understanding of this profound beatitude will do wonders in our lives if we heed what we hear. We must come to it with the attitude of David who prayed, "Create in me a clean heart O God**

**and renew a right spirit within me." We must already be poor in spirit, and totally dependent upon God, for pride is the worst contamination of the heart. With Joseph Hart we look to the power of God.**

**Tis Thine to cleanse the heart,  
To sanctify the soul,  
To pour fresh life in every part,  
And new create the whole.**

**We must look at two things that will characterize us and be evident if we are becoming pure in heart by the grace of God. The first is-**

## **I. SPIRITUALITY.**

**By this we mean a perspective on life that sees the inner man as central. It is to see life as God sees it who looks, not on the outward appearance, but at the heart. The Pharisees were very religious, as were the pagans Paul spoke to on Mars Hill, but neither group were spiritual in the sense that Jesus demands of Christians. Their concept of purity was external and ceremonial. They cared only for that purity that was visible to the eye. Jesus demanded purity in the heart which was not visible to the eye. Jesus was not opposed to keeping clean and washing your hands and feet, but He was opposed to making this kind of purity the ultimate. Jesus said, there is no sense on cleaning the outside of the cup if the inside is left filthy. What good is whitewash on a tomb if the inside is full of rottenness and corruption? This is what the Pharisees were doing, and Jesus rejected their purity as superficial. It is the inner man that really counts. The real man is represented by the heart. The heart in the Bible is the symbol of man's mind, emotions, and will. All of this is unseen, but all of it is far more than what is seen. Shakespeare put it-**

**I am but the shadow of myself.**

**My substance is not here,  
For what you see is but the smallest part,  
And least proportion of humanity.**

**The pure in heart are those who see this, and are vastly different than those who emphasize only the external. The spiritual person is far more concerned about controlling his temper than controlling the weeds in his garden. He cares more for cleaning up his thoughts than cleaning the car. He does not neglect the externals, but he does not make them primary. The man who is spiritual has his eyes focused on the inner man; on motives more than conduct. He longs to see as Jesus sees-**

**Out of the mist into the light,  
O blessed gift of inner sight.**

**The spiritual man is sensitive to his own sin. He mourns for it, confesses it immediately, and trusts in the blood of Christ alone for forgiveness. He does not trust in externals like the Pharisees. If a Christian thinks he can atone for sin by reading his Bible, going to church, and having family devotions, or anything of this nature, he is a carnal Christian. His very Bible reading and church attendance can be a sin, for he has a false perspective. His heart is not pure. His motives are mixed, and he does not have a spiritual perspective. Like the Pharisees, he paints the pump when the water goes bad. He changes the crystal when his watch spring breaks. He putties the cracks when the foundation decays. He never gets to the heart of the matter, because he fails to see that the source of all troubles is the inner man. He is like many neurotics who wash their hands a hundred times a day to try and wash off guilt, because they do not see that externals do not cleanse the inner man.**

**The pure in heart do not forget externals, but their focus is on internals. You can test your own spirituality by asking yourself on**



**what you really rely for comfort, courage, and guidance in the Christian life. If you are depending on externals and conformity to someone else, you will never be the Christian God wants you to be, and you will miss the happiness He wants you to have. Each of us must let go of those things that keep us floating on the surface, and we must plunge into the depths of the inner life. Keith Miller has done this, and his testimony is so refreshing and honest that he became a speaker in great demand. For example, he was a typical Christian man who wanted to be the best Christian he could be, and so he wanted to have family devotions.**

**Good Christian families did this, and so he tried it after an evening meal. The phone rang consistently; dishwashing and homework were delayed, and the whole thing left the family tense and cross. Mr. Miller found himself becoming so determined to be spiritual that he was cross and aggravated at meals all the time, but he was having family devotions. He finally woke up to realize that it was not Jesus who needed him to have family devotions. It was his need to conform to what was suppose to be a standard of spirituality. He had very subtly become a Pharisee and didn't even know it. He forgot devotions and worked out a plan for prayer with his children that fit the shape of their lives and schedule. It was a plan that was from the heart, and not an external appendage. In many other areas of life he did the same, and became honest with himself before God. He became a deeply spiritual man rather than a superficial conformist. This is part of what it means to be pure in heart. The second thing we want to consider is-**

## **II. SIMPLICITY.**

**The Greek word for pure means without blemish, admixture, or alloy. The Greeks used it to describe an army unit purged of every undesirable element, or of language free of error, or gold free of any other metal. Anything that is pure is fully one thing. Pure nylon is**

**100% nylon and not 99% and 1% cotton. Oneness, or singleness characterizes that which is pure. It is reduced to its simplest form with no mixture.**

**The idea of purity of heart is several times expressed as singleness of heart or eye. In chapter 6:22 Jesus says, "If your eye is single your whole body will be full of light." Singleness of heart and light of vision are again connected. Paul in Col. 3:22 tells slaves to serve their masters, not with eye-service as man pleasers, but with singleness of heart fearing the Lord: that is, without duplicity-not looking to men but to God only. The double minded are unstable in all their ways says James. Duplicity and the tainted motive is what blinds and blurs one's vision of God. Pureness of heart is singleness and simplicity. One motive dominates. One master is served. This is the way to God's best.**

**Ibsen's character Peer Gynt made his money by sending shiploads of idols each spring to China, but to soothe his conscience he sent missionaries to China each autumn. He was double minded, and thus impure, and, therefore, not happy. He compared his life to an onion that you can peel and peel and never find a core, but discover, as he did, that he had no inner life. He was all outsides and superficial with no depth, and blind to ultimate values. Christians sometimes try to serve two masters and wonder why they are not happy. God made man to be happy only when he has an ultimate loyalty. Even the sinner who is sold out to sin is often happier than the double minded Christian, because he has a simplicity to his life with only one master.**

**Keats said, "Oh! What a power has white simplicity. G. K. Chesterton said, "The only simplicity that matters is the simplicity of the heart." To be pure in heart is to be controlled and motivated by one, and only one, source of power: The power of the Holy Spirit. Who would dare say that they have arrived. Many times Christians feel they are pure, when really they have just been still and unmoved**

**so long that the sediment has settled to the bottom. The liquid looks pure at the top as long as it is undisturbed. Let something come along and jar them, and shake them up, and all the dirt and mud in them rises and clouds the pureness, and they see they were not so pure after all. True pureness of heart is when you can be shaken, and still be totally yielded to the Holy Spirit, and react with singleness of heart, rather than with a mixture of self-pride.**

**Satan gains his greatest victories over the Christian when he can divide their loyalty, and split their simple and pure devotion to God. C. S. Lewis in the Screwtape Letters picture Satan instructing Wormwood on how to best corrupt Christians. He advises, "The point is to help a man feeling that he has something other than God, and the courage God supplies, to fall back on. So that what was intended to be a total commitment to duty becomes honeycombed all through with little unconscious reservations."**

**Just a few spots of reservation can spoil the pureness and simplicity of the Christian heart, and destroy his happiness. Along with the happiness it also destroys health. Dr. Ligon says, "All mental disorders are the result of the failure to integrate one's drives into a single purpose." Let your life stray from the simplicity of wholehearted commitment to Christ, and the result is complication and chaos, and loss of happiness and health. Thomas a Kempis, way back in the 15th century said, "The more a man is united within himself, and interiorly simple, the more and higher things doth he understand..." This is just another way of saying, blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.**

**Eternal light! Eternal light!  
How pure that soul must be,  
When, placed within Thy searching sight,  
It shrinks not, but with calm delight  
Can live, and look on Thee.**

**This can be our happy experience if we become truly spiritual, and focus our eye on the inner man, and focus it in simplicity on Christ alone. Christ in you the hope of glory. Such spirituality, simplicity, and singleness of eye will, Christ promises, lead you to the depths and the very heart of happiness.**

## **8. FIGHTERS FOR PEACE Based on Matt. 5:9**

**One of the paradoxes of life is the fact that the peacemaker must be a fighter to be effective. Edwin Markham just before his death in 1940 remarked that his fondest hope had not been realized. He had wanted to write a poem that would dispense the armies of the world. Unfortunately, peace is not achieved by poetry. It takes something more than beautiful words. It takes risky and sacrificial action. The peacemaker must take the same risks as the warmaker. It costs Jesus His life to be a peacemaker, and this is the price many have paid to bring peace between God and man, as well as between men. The soldier of the cross is subject to all the dangers of the soldier in physical warfare. The New Testament is filled with references to the Christian life in terms of the military. Putting on the whole armor of God; fighting the good fight, and other such phrases are common. The Christians as peacemaker is in the midst of constant battle. He would be useless and irrelevant where strife and conflict are absent, but he is God's most relevant on the field of battle.**

**Christian, seek not yet repose;  
Cast thy dreams of ease away;  
Thou art in the midst of foes;  
Watch and pray.**

**The Christian who is aware that peacemaking is as difficult, or more difficult, than war making will recognize that diplomacy is not**

**enough. Diplomacy is essential, but sometimes it is like having a bayonet when the enemy is ten miles away. You never get the chance to use it. Such was the case of the experience of a banker in Melbourne. He was out for a walk one evening, and passed a fence of a shabby home where he heard screams in the back yard. Climbing up on the fence, he saw a man attacking his wife with an ax. He shouted at him, but this had no effect. He climbed over the fence and attempted to protect the woman. As he did, he was not only attacked by the man, but the woman also turned on him as an intruder, and he was lucky to get away without serious injury. The way of the peacemaker is indeed hard, and often seems as futile as war. On the other hand, though he received no thanks, he did end the quarrel by uniting them against a common foe-namely himself.**

**So much of the peace between nations is due to their unity against a common foe. Herod and Pilot even got together, and so did the Pharisees and Sadducees, over their common opposition to Christ. Jesus in this beatitude says the peacemaker will stir up war against himself, and will be persecuted. He will be slandered and called everything but a son of God. It is important that we do not get a superficial view of what it means to be a peacemaker. If we think it means we will never be in the turmoil of battle, but always at a place of calmness, we are deceived. Paradise needs no peacemakers; only the battlefield does. That is why it is so hard and costly to be a peacemaker. You have to be one who loves peace and who hates war, and yet you must be in the midst of war fighting with everything you have for peace.**

**John Foster Dulles said, "The world will never have lasting peace so long as men reserve for war the finest human qualities. Peace, no less than war, requires idealism and self-sacrifice and a righteous and dynamic faith." Christians often fail to be dynamic as peacemakers because they feel it is futile. The Bible seems to indicate wars will continue to the end until the Prince of Peace Himself comes to silence**

**all guns forever. This sounds like a logical basis for defeatism, but it is not. J. C. Macauley in Moody Monthly said, "The fact that wars are predicted in Scripture, and by our Lord Himself, does not mean that Christians should encourage war! It is our privilege to put on the brakes by demonstrating those attitudes which tend to peace." He goes on to say these attitudes are to be the opposites of the world. The worldly man delights in the suffering and defeat of the enemy. They rejoice in retaliation. There is nothing Christian in such emotions. Even enlightened pagans have known this.**

**Homer in the Illiad wrote,**

**"Curs'd is the man and void of law and right,  
Unworthy property, unworthy light,  
Unfit for public rule, or private care;  
That wretch, that monster, that delights in war.**

**The Christian may be up to his neck in war, and may be forced by circumstances beyond his control to participate in its horrors, but he is no peace maker unless he hates it. If he enjoys it and finds satisfaction in killing and destroying, he is not only sub-Christian, but it is more than likely anti-Christian. The Christian attitude in war is expressed by General Grant: "Though educated a soldier, and though I have gone through two wars, I have always been a man of peace, preferring to see questions of difference settled by arbitration. It has been my misfortune to be engaged in more battles than any other American general, but there never was a time during my command when I would not have chosen some settlement by reason rather than the sword."**

**Here was a man of war who hated it, and loved peace, and thus, was a peacemaker even in the midst of war. He was not one deceived by the glory of drums, flags, and victory parades. All the glory of war is pure paganism. It deceives millions, however, who are immature**

**and ignorant. We could expect to find confirmation of this from the writings of pacifists, but the most powerful evidence comes from men who have been great leaders on the battlefield. General Sherman made a famous pronouncement which we seldom hear in context. He said, "I confess without shame that I am tired and sick of the war. It's glory is all moonshine. It is only those who have neither heard a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for more blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is hell."**

**Wellington, another great general, said, "War is a most detestable thing. If you had seen but one day of war, you would pray God that you might never see another." Multiplying quotes is unnecessary, for it should be obvious that a peacemaker is one who despises war, even if he is engaged in it, just as a fireman hates the destructive flames even though he would have no job without them. To be deceived by the so called glory of war is to be as sub-Christian as the fire bug who starts a fire occasionally to bring out the bravery and valor of the firemen. There is no glory in war, for even if it were a case where only evil men were being killed, if God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, how can we glory in it and profess to be Christian? The peacemaker, therefore, though he cannot always by diplomacy prevent war, never praises war, even if it is inevitable. He despises it, and is daring in self-sacrifice to try and end it. Cowper wrote,**

**Those Christians best deserve the name,  
Who studiously make peace their aim.**

**This means getting into the center of things with all of the determination of a war monger. This is where I feel the weak point is in pacifist groups such as the Jehovah Witnesses. They are passive spectators in the bleachers shouting to the players on the field to play fair. The man who gets into the game has not just the power to shout about fair play and peace, he has the power to be a fair player and peace maker. Christians of wisdom and love in government, and in the military, can do more for the cause of peace, if they will, than**

**those who shout, but have no policy making power. An Esther in the palace is worth more than masses of protesters in the streets for saving the Jews from an unjust slaughter. If godless men and warmakers are given the job of making all the decisions with no Josephs or Daniels as advisers, then the poets picture will be true:**

**The devil's kingdom is come,  
Ill is the news I tell,  
The devil's will is done  
On earth as it is in hell.**

**Even so, the Christian peacemaker never ceases to do God's will on earth as it is done in heaven. Lack of peace does not hinder his persistent and determined efforts for peace, since he knows that he is laboring for what will be ultimately. The golden age is as sure as the Word of God.**

**Down the dark future, through long generations,  
The sounds of war grow fainter and then cease;  
And like a bell with solemn, sweet vibrations,  
I hear the voice of Jesus Christ say-Peace!**

**The assurance of ultimate victory is what enables the peacemaker to be as determined as the warmaker. George Fox the Quaker leader, said he strived to live "in the power of that spirit which takes away the occasion of all war." When the Indians went on the warpath in Pennsylvania, he and his family did not go to the fort, but stayed in their cabin with no weapons to defend themselves. About as unrealistic as anything could be, but he depended upon God alone for protection. In those days you opened a door by pulling a throng of deer skin on the outside, which raised a heavy wooden latch inside. The latch string was pulled in when there was to be no admittance. To say the latch string is out meant visitors were welcome. Fox always let his latch string out, but one night he drew it in. His wife could not**



sleep, and said it was not trusting God to pull in the string. He felt so too, and put it out again.

In the night they heard the wild cries of Indians all around them. They crept to the window and saw on the edge of the forest the Indians were in counsel. They thought they were deciding to either kill them, or take them prisoner. Soon a tall chief in war paint came to the door of the cabin and fastened a long white feather to the top of it, and then they all left. They never took it down, and later a friendly Indian who spoke English told them what it meant. "This is the house of man of peace. Do no harm." Only a peacemaker could ever have such an experience, for only a peacemaker is willing to take such risks for the cause of peace.

But what if the ending of such a risk is not always so pleasant, and the peacemaker loses his scalp? It does not change the picture at all, for Jesus says, "Rejoice and be glad for great is your reward in heaven." The warmaker may win many battles, but it is the peacemaker who will win the war. May God grant us each the courage, when we find ourselves in the midst of any conflict, to be fighters for peace.

## **9. THE BURDEN OF THE CROSS Based on Matt. 5:10-12**

Florence Chadwick was the first woman ever to swim the difficult and cold 21 mile stretch of water between Catalina Island and the California coast. She failed on her first attempt because of poor vision. After 15 hours and 55 minutes of numbing cold she asked to be taken out of the water. A heavy fog blanketed the area and obscured her vision of the land only one mile away. She said, "If I could have seen the shore, I could have made it." She was defeated because she

**lost sight of her goal. The fog did not hinder her physically, but psychologically it sapped her of her strength and courage to go on by robbing her of the vision of her goal.**

**Jesus, the creator of the mind, is naturally the master psychologist. He knows how important vision is to strength, courage, and happiness. He knew that the fog of persecution that would settle down around His disciples would lead to doubt, confusion, and discouragement. He knew that these things blind Christians and rob them of the vision of their goal, and can defeat them, and cause them to lose the happiness of all the other beatitudes. Therefore, in this last beatitude Jesus provides His disciples with a defensive weapon to penetrate the fog of persecution. He promises great reward in heaven to those who will press on in the dark, knowing the light is still shining beyond.**

**Joseph Conrad in Typhoon has the captain shout to Jakes the mate as great waves pound the ship, "Don't you be put out by anything! Keep her facing it! Facing it, always facing it-that's the way to get through-face it! That's enough for any man. Keep a cool head and face it." This is what Jesus is saying to His disciples. The storm of persecution is coming. If they try and turn back to escape it, they lose all. Their victory and happiness depends on their keeping a cool head and facing it. It is hard to keep cool in the fires of affliction, however. How many of us could face the cruelty of Nero, who put Christian men and women in sacks, covered them with oil, and set them up on poles in his garden; then lit them as living torches to light up his garden at night. Yet this is what Jesus calls His disciples to face. This is the burden of the cross.**

**Lowell wrote, "By the light of burning heretics Christ's bleeding feet I track. Toiling up new Calvary's ever, with the cross that turns not back." Happiness is pressing on whatever the cost with your eyes upon Him who bore the cross for you. Jesus says, happy are those who take following me seriously enough to bear the burden of the**

**cross. Take up the cross and follow me Jesus said, and His demand is still the same today, and the promise is still the same, that those who suffer with Christ shall also reign with Him.**

**This beatitude must have been shocking to those who first heard it. They were expecting honor and Jesus offers them hostility. You would naturally think that the person who developed all the qualities of character in these beatitudes would be loved by all. He would be so pleasant and helpful in society that his friendship and presence would be treasured, you would think. One of the unfortunate paradoxes of life, however, is the fact that the best people are often the most despised. Jesus, who alone embodied all of these beatitudes perfectly, was crucified. Excessive goodness provokes opposition because it makes the conscience of evil men burn with shame and guilt. Too much light clashes with darkness, and holiness clashes with evil, and so the Christian is under constant pressure to conform to the world so as not to rock the boat, and stir up opposition. There is a tendency to abuse the former beatitude and be a peacemaker at any price, even the price of compromise and silence. Everyone one of these beatitudes can be perverted.**

**Some of the other beatitudes have been difficult to grasp, but this last one is the crowning paradox of them all. It is equivalent to Jesus saying His burden is light. How can a burden be light? If it is light it is not a burden is it? Yet Jesus calls us to take up the burden of the cross which is a very costly act, yet one which leads to much joy and happiness. What could be more paradoxical-a crushing burden that lifts you to the skies. Being exceedingly glad when you are hated and despised. Jesus knew this was a hard statement to believe and understand. That is why He states it twice. It is so incredible. All other beatitudes are in one verse each, but this one takes three verses to state. It is both the hardest to grasp, and the one offering the fullest reward for time and eternity.**

**It is hard to grasp because it contradicts our feelings and thinking. We feel that as Christians in America we are more blessed than any Christians ever, because we live in a tolerant society where we are free to worship as we please without penalty or interference. We feel so sorry for those Christians in Russia and China who have to suffer so severely for their faith, and we pray for them to be able to have the blessings we have. Yet, this beatitude would lead to us to believe they are the blessed ones. They are the gloriously happy Christians, and it is we who have the crumbs of blessedness. This is very hard to believe, and certainly there must be some mistake we feel.**

**Yet if we look at the other side of the coin that Luke gives us, it points to the same conclusion. In Luke 6:26 Jesus says, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets." If everyone like us and praises us as such wonderful people, it may be because we never disturbed them, but only tickle their ears and make them feel comfortable in their sins, like the false prophets. But if we are attacked and slandered, we show ourselves loyal to Christ. Yet, Paul says we are to live peaceably with all men as much as lies within us.**

**Let's be honest and admit that this is confusing. Sometimes I think we feel we would be better off if Jesus had never explained to us how to be happy. We feel like the students who teacher said she was going to give them an epitome of the life of Paul. She said, "You may not know what an epitome is. It is in its signification synonymous with synopsis." The explanation is harder to grasp than the original difficulty. So happiness is hard to understand, and how to gain it is a problem, but after Jesus explains how to do it, it seems harder to grasp than ever. This is because some truths are not a matter of logic, but of life. You cannot analyze this beatitude and demonstrate the truth of it on paper. It can only be proven in life and experience. It calls for the courage to step out and take a risk for Christ. As long as we play it safe and sit in silence so we don't rock the boat, we can**

**never know the joy of bearing the burden of the cross. We must speak out against the sin and injustice in our society. We need to renounce sin in ourselves, and denounce it in others, and take the consequences.**

**A football referee was once asked about a certain player in the game he had refereed. "I can only say this, I never have to pull him out from the bottom of a scrimmage. I often have found him on top of a pile of players, where he had jumped after the man with the ball had been stopped by another player. He never was the first to make the tackle." So many of us are like this in the game of life. We jump on the band wagon if someone else takes a stand and bears the burden of the impact, but we are never the first to make the tackle. The result is we miss much of the joy, excitement, and adventure of bearing the cross. Lest we jump to the false conclusion that we are to find happiness in going out and starting trouble, let us look at two important points of this beatitude. First-**

## **I. THE REQUIREMENT.**

**In both verse 9 and 10 Jesus qualifies His statement by saying that persecution must be for righteousness sake, and for His sake, and the evil slander must be false. In other words, any suffering that you must endure because you are a trouble maker, or because you rub people the wrong way by your obnoxious attitude and actions, does not increase your happiness. The people of God through the centuries suffered much opposition and persecution, not because of their righteousness, but because of their lack of it. Sometimes persecution is the judgment of God on His people for their sin and indifference.**

**It is false to assume that persecution is a blessing in itself, or proof of one's righteousness. Many of the false cults faced the same persecution in Rome, as did the Christians. Jesus is saying that only those who meet the requirement can reap the benefits of this beatitude. The suffering must be because the persecutor hates the**

righteousness of the persecuted, and is opposed to Jesus Christ. The accusation must be false. For example, in the early church Christians were charged with cannibalism because of the words said at communion about eating of the body and drinking the blood of Christ. They were charged with immorality because they called their meal together a love feast. This was interpreted to mean a sex orgy, and Christians were linked with the immoral cults. Their practice of giving a kiss of peace did not help clarify things at all, and so all manner of evil was spoken against them, but falsely in ignorance, or malicious hatred, and, therefore, they were blessed.

Peter warns Christians not to suffer as busybodies or thieves etc. The Christian has to be very narrow in what he calls persecution for the sake of Christ. So much of the opposition Christians face is because of their zeal for some non-essential idea, or man made system of theology. They often have to endure much pain and abuse from other Christians, as well as from the world. The tragedy of it is that it is all in vain, and does not qualify them for the reward that Jesus speaks of here. One is not suffering for Christ because he stands for a position which many others in the body of Christ oppose. Much suffering and persecution is for the sake of self and pride, not for the sake of Christ. Someone said,

He who crowns himself is not the more  
Royal, or he who mars himself with stripes  
The more partaker of the cross of Christ.

The blessedness that comes to the persecuted is a very specialized suffering. We need to examine ourselves if we do suffer, and make sure it is because of righteousness; that is-because we are Christlike. Because the requirement is so narrow, there are few who reach the heights of happiness connected with this beatitude. Narrow is the way and few there be who find it. Next we see-

## **II. THE RESPONSE.**

**Jesus does not say if you are persecuted, reviled, and slandered, you should grin and bear it. That is what we call common sense, but Jesus does not give us any of the common sense, but he gives us the very uncommon advice to rejoice and be glad. Certainly Jesus did not expect Christians to respond to persecution like mad men. But then, who but a mad man can rejoice and be glad when he is hated and opposed. This is contrary to our very nature. We love to be loved, approved, and accepted. Nothing hurts worse than to be falsely slandered, and to be rejected for our very goodness. Yet Jesus says this is to be our response. Is it possible? We don't have to speculate. History is full of testimonies concerning the joy of bearing the burden of the cross.**

**In Acts 5:41 we read that after Peter and John were beaten: "Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name." Paul and Silas sang songs at midnight while in prison. Thousands of Christians have gone to their death singing praises to God. The records are full of men and women experiencing the paradox of joy in suffering. John Chrysostom, the great preacher in the early church, said, "Were any to ask whether he should place me on high with the angels, or with St. Paul in his bonds? I would choose the prison....I count not St. Paul so happy because he was caught up into paradise, as because he was cast into the dungeon."**

**Listen to the testimony of a 20th century Paul of India-Sadhu Sundar Singh. He was a man who suffered constantly for Christ, and yet had the happiest life conceivable. He lived in a miracle world, because the Christ of miracles was ever present with him in power. He writes of his going into forbidden territory to preach. "I often remember that day when, for preaching the Gospel in Tibet, I was thrown into a deep well. For three days I was in that well, without**

food or water. The door was locked and it was quite dark. There was nothing but dead bodies and bones in that well. It was like hell. There I was tempted, 'Is your Christ going to save you, now you have been put in this prison?' But I remember a wonderful peace and joy came to me in those hours of persecution, when my arm was broken, and there was such a bad smell. That hell seemed heaven. I felt the presence of the Living Christ." He goes on to say his arm was healed by a touch, and the door was opened and he escaped. He spent his life bearing the cross and said, "I can say this much from my personal experience, that the cross lifts those who lift it."

To grasp the happiness that can be ours in bearing the cross, we must see Jesus as a double Savior. He saved us from our sins on the cross, but He will also save us from the consequences of sin in the future, and often in the present as well. We need to look back to the cross and His salvation there to gain the courage we need to bear the cross, but we need to look ahead to the victory and reward of the future to sustain us when the going gets tough. There have been some great cases of double salvation in history. Let me share with you one of the most amazing.

A wealthy family in England went for a holiday in the country, and went for a swim in a pool. One of the boys stayed behind when the others left. He got into serious trouble and began to drown. Fortunately the son of the gardener heard the cries for help and came to the rescue. He jumped in and pulled the boy to safety. The parents were so grateful they asked the gardener what they could do for the youthful hero. He explained that his son wanted to go to college to become a doctor. The wealthy family gladly paid his way, and that boy went on to become the famous Dr. Fleming who developed penicillin. When Winston Churchill was stricken with pneumonia, Dr. Fleming was called to treat him, and by means of penicillin was able to save his life again. What do I mean by again? Churchill was the boy that Fleming pulled from the water. He saved him as a boy, and he saved



**him again as a man.**

**Jesus is also a dual-Savior. The salvation He purchased for us on the cross does not save us from life's trials and persecution. Often Christians must suffer just because they trust in the cross and the Christ of the cross. This is the burden of the cross, but Jesus will save us from this also, and the reward will be so great for those who are faithful under the burden of the cross. Happiness is not found in what you have, but in what you hope for. It is the expectation of receiving God's best that gives life meaning when circumstances are far from happy. Being loyal to Christ when it does not pay is the real test. Many of us have never yet been put to this test. We need to ask ourselves honestly: Is Christ so precious to me I would stand loyal against an opposing society?**

**Samuel Shoemaker, touring Westminster Abbey years ago, heard another tourist say to the guide, "This place thrills me." The old guard said, "Yes madam, but you can't thrill for 30 years." We can sympathize with the guard, for we know it is true that the thrill of life's wonders do wear thin. However, Dr. Shoemaker met another guide on his trip in one of the great Cathedrals. He stood in awe at the splendor of the sun's rays coming through the marvelous stained glass windows, and he knew it was possible to keep the thrills of life alive. You must keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, and your mind filled with the promise of his reward, however, to do so. Take your eyes off Him, and, like Peter, you begin to sink in the stormy seas of life's troubles. If you expect to stay on top and be happy you must keep your eye on Him in all circumstances.**

**William H. Sheldon said, "Happiness is essentially a state of going somewhere, wholeheartedly, one-directionally, without regret or reservation." How many times have you said, "I'll be happy if only I had more of this, or lived there, or had that job, or better health, etc." All of us can think of changes for the better that would make us**

**happy, but who would ever think of saying, "I would be happier if I could suffer this, be hated for that, reviled and despised for my faith." Anyone talking that way would be quickly labeled sick, and they would be shunned rather than persecuted. Obviously Jesus is not picturing the ideal life here. He is simply facing the reality He knows will be a part of history, and He is offering His followers a special bonus if they will bear the burden of the cross, no matter how heavy it gets. We are not to look for persecution, or promote it, but rather, avoid it, but if it comes we are to be ready to pay the price.**

**We can't look at the many testimonies of others, but the ones we have looked at are sufficient to show that this paradoxical beatitude can be realized in life, and the cross can be borne in joy. It is a burden that is light, as Jesus said. As we remember again the cross Jesus bore for our sin, let us renew our commitment to Him, and pray for the courage to stand and speak out for Him whatever the cost. Let us pray for the courage to take up the burden of the cross.**

## **10. HAPPY NEW YEAR Based on Matt. 5:1-12**

**Edwin Markham in his poem The Shoes Of Happiness tells the story of a king in Istanbul who was ill. He called his wise men together to find a cure. They studied the situation and announced that only one thing could cure him, and that was for him to wear the shoes of a perfectly happy man. Off they went, therefore, to find this rare man and bring back his shoes. They went to a rich man, but found him unhappy because of worry over his money. They were disappointed everywhere they went, for they could not find happiness where they expected it. Neither the young nor the old supplied their man.**

**The young were restless that youth should stay;**

**The old were sad that it went away.**

**On they searched finding lovers worried over their beloved, and soldiers unhappy over their dead comrades, and even the wise carefree pilgrim did not fit the bill.**

**But the pilgrim answered with star-still eyes,  
I am not glad, I am only wise.**

**It appeared that the search was hopeless until one morning they met a tramp of a man with laughter on his face, and he was singing as he walked. They had found their happy man at last, and they rushed to him eagerly only to discover that he had no shoes.**

**Markham was expressing his philosophy of happiness. He felt it could only be found by giving up things. He had a point, for Jesus recognized that some people are unhappy just because they are possessed by their possessions. He counseled the rich one ruler to find satisfaction and happiness by giving up his riches. It is possible then to find happiness by the giving up of things. John Oxenham wrote,**

**Some have much, and some have more.  
Some are rich, and some are poor,  
Some have little, some have less,  
Some have not a cent to bless.  
Their empty pockets, yet possess  
True riches in true happiness.**

**In Luke 6:20 Jesus is recorded as speaking to the literal poor and saying, "Blessed (or happy) are ye poor for yours is the kingdom of God." On the other hand, it would be very superficial to conclude that poverty is the biblical road to bliss. The facts of life, and the rest of Scripture no more support this than the other fallacy that riches are the key to happiness. Kim Hubbard said, "It's pretty hard to tell**

**what does bring happiness. Poverty and wealth have both failed. Most of what Jesus taught about happiness does not deal with the absence or presence of possessions at all, but with what a person is in himself. The blessedness, happiness, and joy of Christ was not in anything he had, but in what he was. If our goal is to be Christlike than a happy new year for us will consist in becoming more like Him. Happiness on its highest level is not to be found in what comes to us, but in what we come to be. That is what the beatitudes are all about.**

**Jesus knew the importance of being happy, and that is why He begins His greatest sermon with a list of ways to be perfectly happy on earth for those who would follow Him and be citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus wishes to each of His followers, not only a happy new year, but a perpetually happy new life. Jesus expected His disciples to be the happiest people on earth. Sometimes this has been true, and sometimes not. Tertullian, and early Christian writer, said, "The Christian saint is hilarious." Jesus said to His own, "My joy be with you." The fruit of the spirit is joy, and time and time again through history Christians have produced hilarious saints. A member of the Salvation Army band was once asked not to beat the drums so loud. He replied, "Lord bless you sir, since I have been converted I am so happy, I could bust the blooming drums."**

**Every person wants to be happy, or if they are already reasonably happy they want to be intensely happy. William James in his classic book Varieties Of Religious Experience writes, "How to gain, how to keep, how to recover happiness is in fact for most men at all times the secret motive of all they do, and of all they are willing to endure." Happiness is not only a result of health and peace of mind, it is also a cause of these values. Philip Gibbs in The Hidden City writes, "Unhappiness affects the internal secretions. It has an odd effect on the heart sometimes. It lowers physical resistance. It debilitates the nervous system and weakens willpower. Sometimes it leads to queer obsessions. Louis Evans went so far as to say, "More people are sick**

**because they are unhappy than are unhappy because they are sick." Happiness is medicine for the body, mind, and spirit of man, and Jesus the Great Physician prescribes this medicine in its greatest potency.**

**If we are to have a happy new year, we must know what happiness is, and how to obtain it. Our Declaration Of Independence declares that all men have certain inalienable rights such as the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. There is no question about our right to pursue happiness, but there is considerable question about the chances of catching it, and the means by which it can be caught. Happy is a word that comes from hap, which means chance. Happiness is a matter of luck for many, and when they wish you happy new year, they mean good luck-we hope you get all the breaks, and that no misfortune befalls you. The happy-go-lucky man is one who trusts to luck.**

**The earnest social worker said to the village reprobate, "Robert, the last time I met you, you made me very happy because you were sober. Today you have made me unhappy because you are intoxicated." "Yes," replied Robert with a beaming smile, "Today its my turn to be happy." Many feel that the essence of happiness is to be intoxicated. It is fools paradise, however, and Paul warns in Eph. 5:15,18, "Be very careful, then, how you live-not as unwise but as wise,....do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." The filling of the Spirit leads to all the values that intoxication offers without any of the dangers and defects. The joy of the Christians at Pentecost led people to accuse them of being drunk. Jesus was also accused of being a wine bibber because of His happiness in relation to sinners.**

**The loss of power in attracting the world to the church is due in large measure to the loss of happiness. Happiness is essential, not only to the health of the individual, but to the health of the church as a whole. All men are looking for happiness, and only when they see**

**examples of the joy of Christ in human flesh will they be attracted to the happiness He can give in forgiveness of sin, and assurance of eternal life. We want to be happy, therefore, as a means to personal health in our total being, and as a means to be used of God for attracting others to God. In this introductory message on the beatitudes it is our purpose to get a broad view of the subject of happiness before we concentrate on the specifics.**

**We are not interested in the purely materialistic concept of happiness. Rousseau said, "Happiness is a good bank account, a good cook and a good digestion." There is some truth in this view, but nothing that is distinctly human let alone Christian. This is the happiness of a dog, a cow, or any animal. We want to look at those philosophies of happiness that rise above the animal level, and which are part of a total Christian view of happiness. These philosophies fall into two basic categories. There are those which find the key to happiness in externals, and those which find it within the mind of man. Let's look at the external system first.**

## **I. EXTERNAL SYSTEMS.**

**J. M. Goad said, "Now happiness consists in activity; such is the constitution of our nature; it is a running stream, and not a stagnant pool." Happiness is doing is the essence of this philosophy, and it is to be pursued by work. Tolstoy said, "The happiness of man consists in life, and life is in labor." Whittier wrote,**

**He who blesses most is blessed;  
And God and man shall own his worth,  
Who toils to leave as his bequest  
And added beauty to the earth.**

**Many are philosophers and poets who expound the doctrine of happiness through creative work. If you want to have a happy new**

**year, you must labor, build, and create. You cannot leave it to luck. You must work to be happy. We can't go into the biblical philosophy of work at this point, but nothing is more clear in the Bible than the truth that work is a part of God's plan for man's happiness. God is a worker, Jesus was a worker, and He urged His disciples to work for the night was coming. "Sweet is the sleep of the laboring man," is the Old Testament proverb. Work gives purpose to life, and gives a person an outlet for creative energy. It brings the reward of satisfaction and material blessings.**

**Canon Liddon, the great English preacher, said, "The happiest days of my life have been those in which I have had the most work to do, with fair health and strength to do it." Spurgeon, the most famous of Baptist preachers, said, "The happiest state on earth is one in which we have something to do, strength to do it with, and a fair return for what we have done." Robert Louis Stevenson kept writing even when he was in terrible pain. He did it because it was his secret of happiness. He wrote, "There is no duty we so much under-rate as the duty of being happy."**

**Helen Keller who was blind, deaf, and dumb, all of her life did so much good because she felt it was her duty to be happy. She wrote, in her book *My Key Of Life*, "But since I consider it a duty to myself and to others to be happy, I escape a misery worse than any physical deprivation." Where did she get her inspiration of such a view of happiness? She wrote, "His joyous optimism is like water to feverish lips, and has for its highest expression the 8 beatitudes." We see then that on paper and in real lives the finding of happiness in externals is consistent with the happiness Jesus would have us possess. What we do will certainly play a large role in determining our happy new year. This is not the whole truth, however, so we need to also consider-**

## **II. INTERNAL SYSTEMS.**

**Centuries ago Cicero said, "A happy life consists in tranquility of mind." You can do all kinds of great work, but if you are filled with fear and anxiety all your labor will not make you happy. Jesus recognized the basic need for peace of mind and heart, and this was one of the greatest gifts He offered to men. "Blessed are the pure in heart," puts the emphasis on the inner nature of happiness. Henrich Ibsen wrote, "Happiness is above all things, the calm, glad certainty of innocence." Here is peace and purity combined. It is the peace of sin forgiven and eliminated.**

**No one can dispute the internal nature of happiness. Jesus says the externals can be such as to make you mourn, and you can be in the midst of persecution, and yet it is possible to be happy because happiness is not dependant upon the externals. This means that the handicapped, the old, and the ill can still experience true happiness, even if they cannot work and create. This is what lead Joshua Liebman to write his book Peace Of Mind, which lead to an avalanche of books on the subject both Christian and secular. The danger of the peace of mind and happiness cults is that they make this partial grasp of truth the whole, and expect to find the ultimate in the mind. This is not new, for Seneca the ancient Roman said, "Unblessed is he who thinks himself unblest." There is basic truth here, for Jesus said, "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." You can build a strong case for the totally internal system of happiness.**

**Epicurus, the ancient philosopher, said, "Whoever does not regard what he has as most ample wealth, is unhappy, though he be master of the world." Paul would not reject this partial truth of a pagan, for he said, "I have learned to be content in whatever state I am." Paul found happiness in the power of positive thinking. The truth of happiness by means of peace of mind is universally recognized. We had a Hindu from India for dinner on one Christmas. He was a vegetarian from a community of vegetarians. He said that the motive behind not eating animals was compassion on all life. Some carried**



**this to a greater extreme than others. Some of his people ate supper at 5:30 rather than 7 or 8 like most. They do this for peace of mind. If they ate later they would need to turn on their lamps, and dozens of bugs would come to the light and be killed. So they eat before the sun goes down, and avoid the needless killing. This gives them peace of mind and makes them happy.**

**We see then that both the external and internal views of happiness are valid in that both do account for much of what we call happiness in human life. Both are recognized by Christians and non-Christians alike. This means that in themselves neither of these systems of happiness are distinctly Christian. The reason we have looked at them briefly is that we might recognize that Christian truth does not eliminate pre-Christian or non-Christian truth, but rather gathers up the fragments and unifies them into a whole.**

**Jesus magnifies the meaning of happiness, and He goes beyond the systems men have expounded so as to be all inclusive. Jesus introduces something strikingly new into the philosophy of happiness with His beatitudes. They are paradoxes in that they include among the happy those that the systems of men exclude. Jesus is saying, even those who are not happy according to the philosophies of men can be happy. Even the unhappy can be happy. That is the paradox of His teaching on happiness. His is the only truly universal philosophy of happiness, for no person needs to be excluded. The happiness He can give is not only universal, but it is unique in that He adds to the external and internal the third dimension of the eternal. The happiness of Christ is lasting, whereas the best that men can offer is temporal.**

**What happens to the happiness in work philosophy when the boss says you are getting a raise because they want your last week to be a happy one? What happens to the happiness in the peace of mind philosophy when tragedy strikes? In a moment all the happiness men**

**can gain by their philosophies can be shattered. Goethe said, "The highest happiness, the purest joys of life, wear out at last." Because this is so we need to move into a new and lasting dimension of happiness in which we grasp and comprehend the teachings of Jesus in the beatitudes.**

