The BLESSED Life

Pursuing Kingdom living in a pagan world

MAN OF THE WORD MANUAL • SPRING 2023

THE BEATITUDES

MCBC Man of the Word Spring 2023



THE BEATITUDES

Тнеме

Our theme for the Man of the Word this spring is a verse by verse look at *The Beatitudes*. This booklet is a ten-week study designed to challenge us as men to follow our Lord's teaching.

THEME PASSAGE

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when [people] insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:3–12)

MANUAL

Each week's resources consist of:

- SCRIPTURE MEDITATION A passage pertaining to the week's article to be read and considered during the week
- BOOK READING D. A. Carson's JESUS' SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND HIS CONFRONTATION WITH THE WORLD
- M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE A way to keep on track in reading through the Bible in 2020 using the M'Cheyne system
- PERSONAL REFLECTIONS A week-by-week place to record what God is teaching you
- ARTICLES Testimonies and devotionals related to the theme, written by Mount Calvary Baptist Church men

Don't let these materials become daunting. Let whatever you do be a delight. If you can't keep up every component, choose the ones that you can use consistently and stick with them.

TIME

10 weeks: January 29 - April 8, 2022

GOALS

- 1. To learn, from our Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.
- 2. To draw benefit from a wisely written book *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*.
- 3. To edify fellow Mount Calvary men through prayer and accountability.

EVENTS

Men's Prayer Breakfasts: January 29, March 4, April 8

My Prayer Partner (name, phone number, email):

MAN OF THE WORD PROGRAM

The leadership of Mount Calvary Baptist Church created the Man of the Word program in obedience to the command of 2 Timothy 2:2: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." This ministry functions under the leadership of Pastor Mark Minnick and Pastor Jerid Jones. The following men are the current Man of the Word officers.

President	Roger Bradley
Vice President	Phil Sterr
Treasurer	Ken Still
Manual Director	Jacob Nicholson
Food Director	Jared Rush
Project Coordinator	Randy Smith

We are grateful to Pastor Mark Minnick and Pastor Jerid Jones for their encouragement and leadership and for their vision for the men of Mount Calvary Baptist Church. We would also like to express our gratitude to the men who have donated their time, energy, and gifts by writing spiritually edifying articles for our growth and encouragement.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." **Matthew 5:3**

BOOK READING

Chapter 1: Matthew 5:3–16 "The Kingdom of Heaven: Its Norms and Witness"

Jan. 29	Genesis 30	Mark 1	Esther 6	Rom. 1
Jan. 30	Genesis 31	Mark 2	Esther 7	Rom. 2
Jan. 31	Genesis 32	Mark 3	Esther 8	Rom. 3
Feb. 1	Genesis 33	Mark 4	Esther 9,10	Rom. 4
Feb. 2	Genesis 34	Mark 5	Job 1	Rom. 5
Feb. 3	Genesis 35, 36	Mark 6	Job 2	Rom. 6
Feb. 4	Genesis 37	Mark 7	Job 3	Rom. 7

PERSO	NAL REFI	LECTION		

SPIRITUALLY BANKRUPT

By Steven Frederick

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God."

—Matthew 5:3

I have read those words many times over the years, but I have never understood the impact of those words on my spiritual perspective. Let's unpack the word "blessed" because that is not typically a word that we use every day. We have heard our Pastor discuss this word in detail when speaking about the Psalm 1 man and how that man is blessed when he walks after the counsel of the Word. We learned that this man is "most favored" because he listens to God's counsel.

Are we supposed to conclude that we are most favored to be poor? We have all seen beggars along the road asking for something. A genuine beggar does not say that he has everything he needs or that he can do it on his own. Instead, a true beggar cries that he is desperate and bankrupt apart from someone giving him something. That beggar does not come with his résumé of why he deserves compassion or pity. Rather, he is helpless, hopeless, and utterly destitute. A Scriptural example of this would be the man on his way to Jericho who was attacked and left for dead until the Good Samaritan helped him. Apart from the Good Samaritan, that man would have perished.

Are we supposed to take from this verse that we are to count it a blessing and be happy to be a beggar? Yes! This verse does not paint the picture of our financial or physical state but of our spiritual condition before the Lord. Our spiritual condition is the same as a beggar. We are spiritually destitute and hopeless unless God sheds His glorious light in our hearts. With this perspective there is no room for self-sufficiency or pride.

This mindset is completely different from that of the world's idea of happiness. The world proclaims that happiness is found in riches, merriment, leisure, and abundance. However, the Bible declares the exact opposite to that. As we see in Scripture the path to deep soul joy is to recognize our utter spiritual bankruptcy before God and to accept His

free and unmerited grace. This stands in stark contrast to what the Laodicean church said of itself in Revelation 3:17: "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing." But God responds with, "You do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." May we come with humility and simplicity understanding our utter hopelessness before God apart from Him.

The last part of our verse promises, "For theirs the kingdom of heaven." Jesus is teaching us that those who are kingdom citizens not only understand just how spiritually impoverished they are but will experience full and abundant life now and forever because of taking Him at His word. Do we have anything we are trusting in when coming to the Lord to show Him that we deserve His favor or kindness? Do we recognize our utter spiritual bankruptcy apart from God's amazing grace? Our hope is found completely in Christ and his saving work with absolutely nothing in our hands we bring. We are only sinners saved by God's amazing grace.

"But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." (Isaiah 66:2)

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Matthew 5:4

BOOK READING

Chapter 2; Matthew 5:17–48 "The Kingdom of Heaven: Its Norms and Witness"

Feb. 5	Genesis 38	Mark 8	Job 4	Rom. 8
Feb. 6	Genesis 39	Mark 9	Job 5	Rom. 9
Feb. 7	Genesis 40	Mark 10	Job 6	Rom. 10
Feb. 8	Genesis 41	Mark 11	Job 7	Rom. 11
Feb. 9	Genesis 42	Mark 12	Job 8	Rom. 12
Feb. 10	Genesis 43	Mark 13	Job 9	Rom. 13
Feb. 11	Genesis 44	Mark 14	Job 10	Rom. 14

PERSONA	AL KEFLE(TION		

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." —Matthew 5:4

Brethren, we all have mourned, and we all certainly need to be comforted. So, what did Jesus mean by these words? To be "blessed" is to be happy—not in the world's sense of good circumstances, but an abiding inner peace and joy. To "mourn" is literally to grieve deeply at a funeral over loss of a loved one. To "be comforted" accords with our normal usage of the word: to be consoled, relieved of emotional pain, to find hope where all was dark and gloomy before. This beatitude can be interpreted in two ways: 1) to find relief during times of any deep emotional pain, and 2) to turn sorrow over sin into joy through His forgiveness (2Co 7:10). "Comfort" literally means to "call near"; we see this more fully expressed in Matthew 11:28: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." True biblical comfort arises by coming to Jesus and finding His rest!

This wonderful promise can be applied in all our afflictions. Our God is the "God of all comfort" (2Co 1:3) and has given us the Holy Spirit, our "Comforter" (Joh 14:16).

The people of the world—without Christ—seek happiness everywhere but in Jesus. They see mourning as in opposition to their happiness; in affliction they murmur and complain. But, thankfully, this is not our lot as Christians; instead, God enables us to glory in tribulation (Rom 5:3). Affliction and happiness are not only compatible, but our trials are necessary fuel for true happiness in this life. They a) awaken in us a clearer sight of our sin (Job 33:27–28), b) purge away all our dross (Isa 1:25), c) lead us to deny all self-reliance (Luk 9:23), d) drive us to Christ (Mat 4:10; 1Sa 7:3), e) acquaint us with His strength and power (Deu 9:29), f) teach us His ways (Psa 119:71), g) make us more fruitful in His service (Col 1:9–10), and h) work in us compassion for those who are afflicted (Heb 10:32–34).¹ Surely God does bless us through tribulations.

How are we comforted in the midst of afflictions? "There must be application and working of comfort out of God's Word upon the soul by the Spirit. The Spirit must set it on strongly and sweetly that the soul may

¹ Abstracted from Thomas Brooks (1608–1680) in "The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod."

be affected."² Sometimes God is merciful in our providences, not giving us what we deserve. He lifts the trial when we learn what He is teaching us through the trial (Jam 1:2–4). In addition, He always is preparing us for heaven—the place of our final comfort, the place where all our tears are wiped away (Isa 25:8, Rev 21:4). "He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). He has given us His Word, His Holy Spirit, and His church—surely we lack nothing needed to abide in His joy.

But coming to God's comfort is not always easy because we face a devil who uses the world to entice our flesh. 1) Overpowering emotion and 2) an inordinate focus on the malady can hinder our sight of God's comfort—even when His Word (with its promises), Spirit, and church are all around us. We need to open our spiritual eyes. 3) We seem to forget that mortifying our sin and growing our faith are two of God's primary purposes in dealing with us day by day; we need to cooperate with His work in us rather than to murmur and resist (Phi 2:12–15). 4) Too much attention is given to outward means of comfort ("If only I had this...") and not nearly enough on the glories of Christ Himself (Isa 51:12). "For every look at your [trouble], take ten looks at Christ"—practicing that old saying from McCheyne (1813–1843) will bring us more consistent victories.

Uses

- 1) Pray more. "When you, my dear brother, meet with opposition, encounter it with prayer. Exercise more faith. Antagonists ought never to hinder your going forward in the cause of Christ."—*Charles H. Spurgeon* (1834–1892), "Cheer Up, Comrades!"
- 2) Do not judge God by His providences. "God's hand of mercy may be open to those against whom His heart is set, as you see in the rich fool (Luk 12:16–21) and Dives³ (Luk 16:19–31)...And His hand of severity may lie hard upon those on whom He has set His heart, as you may see in Job and Lazarus."—Thomas Brooks (1608–1680), "The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod"
- 3) Meditate more on the Scriptures. "The more severe and confounding your trials and bereavements may be, the more should that blessed

² Richard Sibbes (1577–1635), "The God of All Comfort" in Free Grace Broadcaster #194.

³ Dives – Not strictly a proper name, but a Latin adjective meaning "rich," which occurs for the rich man in Luke 16 in the Vulgate (Jerome's Latin Bible, New Testament 384 AD, Old Testament 405 AD).

book be endeared to your hearts—of which every true disciple will say with the afflicted psalmist, "This is my comfort in my affliction" (Psa 119:50)."—James Buchanan (1804–1870), "The Bible and Consolation"; from Free Grace Broadcaster #217, Comfort in Affliction

- 4) Rightly understand this truth: "'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' (Rom 8:32). Here is the unfailing guaranty...of perpetual reassurance to the drooping spirit of the tried believer. If God has done the greater, will He leave the less undone? Infinite love can never change. The love that spared not Christ cannot fail its objects nor begrudge⁴ any needed blessings."—A. W. Pink (1886–1952), "The Great Giver"; from Comfort for Christians
- 5) Comfort others. "Has Jesus given you an excess of comfort? Go and pour its overflow in some stricken heart. Remember one purpose of God's comforts: 'That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God' (2Co 1:4)."—Octavius Winslow (1808–1878), "Christ, the Fountain of Comfort"; from Free Grace Broadcaster #217, Comfort in Affliction
- 6) Praise God in the midst. "O friends, if you are afraid of being overcome, take to praising God. If you are in trouble and do not know how to bear it, divert your thoughts by praising God. Get away from the present trial by blessing and magnifying His holy name...It would be the best possible thing if you were to say with Martin Luther, 'Come, let us sing a psalm and startle the devil.'"—*Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892), "Comfort in All Tribulation"; from Free Grace Broadcaster #194, The God of All Comfort*

"Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

—2 Corinthians 13:11

Note: All referenced titles are available without charge from www.ChapelLibrary.org

⁴ **begrudge** – give reluctantly or resentfully.

"Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth."

Matthew 5:5

BOOK READING

Chapter 3; Matthew 6:1–18 "Religious Hypocrisy: Its Description and Overthrow"

Feb. 12	Genesis 45	Mark 15	Job 11	Rom. 15
Feb. 13	Genesis 46	Mark 16	Job 12	Rom. 16
Feb. 14	Genesis 47	Luke 1:1-38	Job 13	1 Cor. 1
Feb. 15	Genesis 48	Luke 1:39-80	Job 14	1 Cor. 2
Feb. 16	Genesis 49	Luke 2	Job 15	1 Cor. 3
Feb. 17	Genesis 50	Luke 3	Job 16,17	1 Cor. 4
Feb. 18	Exodus 1	Luke 4	Job 18	1 Cor. 5

LIGOT	NAL KEFL	LCTION			

"Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." —Matthew 5:5 (KJV)

The word meek can come across as weak or cowardly, but it is actually the complete opposite. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, Meekness is "showing patience and humility, gentle." The word *meek* is the Greek word *praus*, which means "gentle, mild, or soft; the positive moral quality of dealing with people in a kind manner, with humility and consideration." (Strong's Concordance) Vine's Expository Dictionary defines meekness as "an inwrought grace of the soul exercised chiefly towards God. It is that temper of spirit in which we accept God's dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting"

John MacArthur in His commentary on Matthew describes meekness in this way, "The term sometimes was used to describe a soothing medicine, a gentle breeze, or of colts and other animals whose naturally wild spirits were broken by a trainer so that they could do useful work. Medicine that is too strong will harm rather than cure; a wind out of control destroys. An unbroken colt is useless; Meekness therefore carries the meaning of power put under control."

A well-trained horse will totally submit its power and desires over to the master, by letting him direct it as he desires. One of my relatives just purchased a big, black, beautiful horse with more energy than it knows what to do with. It will take a lot of time and patience to break that horse to make it do the will of the master. In order to be meek, we must allow our Master to have the reins of our lives.

As little children, we may have been taught to be meek by giving our hearts to our parents' full control. However, it is not until we are broken with conviction over our sins, repent, believe, and call on the Lord to be our Saviour and Master of our lives that we can be part of the meek that inherits the earth.

God will continue to bring trials, tests, and circumstances into our lives to grow us in meekness for the rest of our lives. He brings us to our knees through trials so that we are dependent on Him. We will not continue to grow in meekness unless we spend much time in prayer and

reading His Word. Galatians 5:16 says, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."

The two beatitudes preceding meekness, are *Blessed are the poor in spirit*, and *Blessed are those who mourn*. When we come before Him with a broken and poor spirit this results in mournfulness over our sins. This contriteness then transitions into meekness in our hearts towards the Lord. MacArthur states, "Meekness is different from brokenness of spirit. A broken spirit centers on one's sinfulness. Meekness centers on God's holiness."

When I think of people who are meek, my grandparents come to my mind. They were very humble, courteous, longsuffering, respectful, generous, and humble. They worked hard but never drew attention to themselves. They were focused on the Lord and not on themselves. They were not materialistic or envious of others. The pastor of their church, often said that if someone were stepping on my grandpa's foot, that he wouldn't say a word because he didn't want to make anyone feel bad.

Psalm 37 is a great passage that explains in detail what a man of meekness is.

- Vs.1 does not fret because of evildoers, is not envious toward wrongdoers.
- Vs.3 drusts in the Lord and does good; dwells in the land and cultivates faithfulness.
- Vs.4 delights in the Lord.
- Vs.7 does not get upset because of one who is successful in his way, because of the person who carries out wicked schemes.
- Vs.8 ceases from anger and abandons wrath;

The passage goes on to tell about the reward for the meek.

- Vs.11 the humble will inherit the land and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.
- Vs.18 their inheritance will be forever.

Quite a few Bible characters come to mind right away when reading through this passage. In verse 1, I think about Paul and Silas in prison when I read, "Do not fret because of evildoers." Verse 4 says, "Delight yourself in the Lord." Paul and Silas did not fret, but rather trusted in the Lord with delight and singing. After being beaten, they were not angry or bitter. Their meek, godly behavior made such an impact on the jailor, that he got saved. Joseph is also a good example of meekness. He was separated from his family, sold as a slave, falsely accused, thrown

into prison. Through it all, he kept calm, quiet, and submissive to the Lord and his authorities. When he ended up in a powerful position, he did not use his power to seek revenge. He did not have bitterness or hold grudges towards God or his brothers. He was humble and meek, kind, tenderhearted, and gentle in his dealings with them. He was meek in spirit; knowing that everything that had happened in his life was orchestrated by God.

Then there is Moses who was considered the meekest man on earth. In Acts 7:22, it says, "Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds." Yet, in Exodus 4:10 Moses said, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." Moses grew up in a palace of luxury and wealth and could have been a proud man, but God kept him humble. When he killed the Egyptian, he had to escape to Midian. There he became a lowly shepherd living a humble life. The fact that he killed someone probably humbled him with guilt and sorrow. God used that sin to teach him meekness. All through the story of Moses, one can see his meekness over and over. When he had power over millions of people during the 40 years in the wilderness, he had power under God's control. Yes, he did strike the rock instead of speaking to it; therefore he was not permitted to enter the Promised Land. Although he wasn't perfect, he was a good example of leadership for over forty years with very impatient, immoral, and complaining, idolatrous people.

Of course, the perfect example of meekness is Jesus, who "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Phil. 2:7–8) He showed love to His enemies and prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34) He could have called ten thousand angels to free Him from the cross, but prayed, "not My will, but Yours be done." (Luke 22:42)This is the ultimate example of "power under control."

^{*}Scripture references quoted are from NASB except where noted.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

Matthew 5:6

BOOK READING

Chapter 4; Matthew 6:19-34 "Kingdom Perspectives"

Feb. 19	Exodus 2	Luke 5	Job 19	1 Cor. 6
Feb. 20	Exodus 3	Luke 6	Job 20	1 Cor. 7
Feb. 21	Exodus 4	Luke 7	Job 21	1 Cor. 8
Feb. 22	Exodus 5	Luke 8	Job 22	1 Cor. 9
Feb. 23	Exodus 6	Luke 9	Job 23	1 Cor. 10
Feb. 24	Exodus 7	Luke 10	Job 24	1 Cor. 11
Feb. 25	Exodus 8	Luke 11	Job 25,26	1 Cor. 12

PERSONAL	KEFLECT	ION		

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

-Matthew 5:6

Do you know a teenage boy? My children are not quite to the teen "age" group but many of my friends and siblings have teenagers and they have testified to me about the appetite of their teenage children. I remember when I was a teenager and I could eat whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted and it didn't seem to matter I was always hungry in what seemed just a matter of minutes!

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. There are many passages in which we are called to be righteousness and we are also pointed to our inability to be righteous.

"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" Mt 5:20 kjv.

"There is none righteous, not even one. Rm. 3:10 quoting Psalm 14, where it says "there is none who does good not even one."

If this is something we cannot due, it is unfair for the Lord to call us to it unless he provides us a way, and He has! All believers are promised the Holy Spirit and when we are in fellowship with Him, He directs us to be hungering and thirsting for righteousness. This is something I believe we can all improve upon because the Lord points to the ones who work the hardest on righteousness and says they do not have enough. The other reason we can be assured that we each need to improve on this is the very picture in the verse of hungering and thirsting. Every healthy person gets hungry multiple times a day and thirsty even more. What a challenge that is to our righteousness.

The Lord says, "for they shall be satisfied." This same word is used when the disciples tell Jesus that there is no way the crowd of 5,000 can be filled out here in the wilderness, but then in the following verses, we are told that the crowd was filled and they had leftover (Mark 8:8;Mt. 15:37). The passages on the feeding of the crowds by Jesus are a remarkable comparison as it parallels bot the impossibility of the situation (we cannot hunger and thirst for righteousness on our own,

they could not feed 5,000 with what they had) and the satisfaction at the conclusion (they were filled and there was left over).

This satisfaction in righteousness is a blessing of the Lord and we need Him to be able to do it. We are encouraged to be dependent on God for this and when we can empty ourselves and stoop to the level where we are needy beggars asking the Lord for help then we will be satisfied like a rich man at a banquet table.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." **Matthew 5:7**

BOOK READING

Chapter 5: Matthew 7:1–12 "Balance and Perfection"

Feb. 26	Exodus 9	Luke 12	Job27	1 Cor. 13
Feb. 27	Exodus 10	Luke 13	Job 28	1 Cor. 14
Feb. 28	Exodus 11-12:21	Luke 14	Job 29	1 Cor. 15
March 1	Exodus 12:22-51	Luke 15	Job 30	1 Cor. 16
March 2	Exodus 13	Luke 16	Job 31	2 Cor. 1
March 3	Exodus 14	Luke 17	Job 32	2 Cor. 2
March 4	Exodus 15	Luke 18	Job 33	2 Cor. 3

Person	IAL REI	FLECTIO	ON			

THE CYCLE OF MERCY

By Michael Frederick

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

—Matthew 5:7

In the motion picture "Follow me, Boys!" Lem, the main character in the story, volunteers to reach out to the boys of Hickory by leading a Boys Scout Troop. He's an immediate success because he sees the potential in the boys. Even for a particularly troubled boy named Whitey, Lem is optimistic. Whitey, the son of an alcoholic is too prideful to admit he needs the troop. But Lem's continued interest in Whitey eventually wins him over. When Whitey's father suddenly dies, Whitey receives Lem's request to be their adopted son.

Mercy is exactly like that, showing kindness to someone in need. The storyline of Scripture speaks of mercy from beginning to end. It's like a thread one could trace all the way through. Or maybe a better picture would be the metal that supports a building. Sometimes it's exposed; sometimes it's hidden. Without it though there would be no building. Similarly, there would be no redemptive story were it not for mercy—specifically God's mercy. This may be one of the defining characteristics of God. He loves being known as one who is merciful. It's a favorite self-description. Because it is such an important theme, it is also a huge theme. Thankfully our verse limits us to the human response to God's mercy. We see how showing mercy perpetuates receiving mercy.

God begins the cycle. Like Lem pursuing Whitey in "Follow me, Boys!" God pursues us relentlessly. We can be compared to Israel in that we were lost in a desert, in a howling wilderness. God encircled us; He cared for us; even made us the pupil of his eye (Deut. 32:10). He takes the first step. Our condition is pitiful, similar to that of Israel's—even dirty, abhorrent, helpless. What was said of that nation is true of us—"no one looked with pity on you to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you. Rather you were thrown out into the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born" (Ezek. 16:5) What a sorry condition, and yet, God stepped in. He said to us "live!" He cleaned us up; he made us numerous, successful. He is responsible for the first step because we are utterly helpless.

The next act falls to us. In God's wisdom He has seen fit to entrust us with a step in the process. What is that step? It has actually been pinpointed already in our study of the Beatitudes. It requires assuming a certain heart posture—being poor in spirit. We are poor in spirit because we believe all that the Bible teaches about our own spiritual bankruptcy. This in turn causes us to throw ourselves upon the raft of God's mercy. God delights when we do this.

After richly availing ourselves of God's abundant mercy, we then help others avail themselves. This follows naturally from the previous point, that we must throw ourselves upon the raft of God's mercy. Though we realize that stations in life vary, we are convinced that everyone's deepest need is the same. Every person is truly helpless, dirty, abhorrent. God expects us to do something about this. He doesn't want us to either deny or ignore the needs of others. He wants us to acknowledge them, just as he does. And then, He wants us to be creative about meeting those needs.

God is the only one who can fully meet their needs but we can be God's channel of mercy. The Bible consistently elevates the importance of people's physical and spiritual needs, though the spiritual may be the more important (Matt. 10:28). When Jesus is moved by compassion, he not only meets spiritual needs but also physical (Matt. 20:34). Reflecting years later, James and John will agree: "If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?" (Jam. 2:15–16; also see 1 John 3:17). We can't prioritize one at the expense of ignoring the other.

So how, in our Greenville 2023 context, can we do this? Let me give some concrete examples. I remember on one occasion in seminary, after a teacher made it very clear when a specific assignment was due, I missed the deadline. Ashamed and embarrassed I asked if he would reopen the assignment. And you know what, he did! Perhaps you think he shouldn't have so that I'd learn my lesson. But I tell you, I did learn a lesson—and I think a more important lesson. The lesson I learned is that mercy (which is what I received that day) is a reflection of God. My teacher imaged God that day. On to another example, do you facilitate and encourage your wife to prepare meals for the sick or weak? If so, thank you. I remember back in March of 2021 my family came down with COVID. While I didn't get it so bad Amy got double pneumonia. I remember a sweet individual, after hearing about our sickness, saving she

had a care package waiting for us. On the drive home after picking it up I was so overwhelmed by her kindness that I became tearful. We don't really know the heart of our church family until it's our turn to suffer.

Finally, we come full circle, if our response is what it should be. Mercy is perpetuated. This is actually the point Jesus is trying to make in this Beatitude. In R.T. Frances' commentary on this verse he refers to this as "the principle of reciprocity" (NICOT, 168). Jesus will go on to illustrate it in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Lazarus's pitiful condition should have been noticed and alleviated by the rich man. But during the rich man's whole life he refuses to show one drop of mercy. What is the result? The rich man would be forever without mercy. Not even a drop of water would be given to him. This is very sobering. Proverbs 19:17, flipping the coin over, gives us motivation by speaking to the positive: "One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD. And He will repay him for his good deed." Our guarantee of further mercy depends upon what we do with the mercy we've been shown—do we channel it to others? D.A. Carson observes the three points in the cycle we've covered in this article—that God in mercy is willing to meet our need, that our response includes personally taking advantage of it and then channeling it to others, and that leads to receiving more mercy from the Lord.

"The Christian, moreover, is at a mid-point. He is to forgive others because in the past Christ has already forgiven him. Simultaneously he recognizes his constant need for more forgiveness, and becomes forgiving as a result of this perspective as well" (p. 24).

Because God has met our deepest need, we are excited to show that mercy to others, which then frees God to demonstrate further mercy.

If you haven't seen "Follow me, Boys!" spoiler alert. At the end of the story, after two decades of leading his scout troop and tirelessly investing in the lives of boys, Lem's decaying health brings his career to an end. The climax of the story comes when all of the boys from all of his past troops celebrate his life. It's very moving, because it reminds us of the impact one merciful life can have. The silver screen only echoes what Scripture has already revealed long ago—"happy is he who is gracious to the poor" (Prov. 14:21).

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." **Matthew 5:8**

BOOK READING

Chapter 6; Matthew 7:13–28 "Conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount"

March 5	Exodus 16	Luke 19	Job 34	2 Cor. 4
March 6	Exodus 17	Luke 20	Job 35	2 Cor. 5
March 7	Exodus 18	Luke 21	Job 36	2 Cor. 6
March 8	Exodus 19	Luke 22	Job 37	2 Cor. 7
March 9	Exodus 20	Luke 23	Job 38	2 Cor. 8
March 10	Exodus 21	Luke 24	Job 39	2 Cor. 9
March 11	Exodus 22	John 1	Job 40	2 Cor. 10

PERSONAL REFLECTION							

PURE IN HEART

By Stephen Lemp

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

—MATTHEW 5:8

Brother, I hope in this article to encourage your heart toward purity. Let these scriptures wash over your soul, and by God's grace, may you, in humility, grow in purity of heart as gold kept in the fire is purified more and more.

In *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, the author provides a helpful note on the "double intention" of each beatitude Christ gives in the Sermon on the Mount. The uses of these beatitudes are: 1) so we can properly *identify* the qualities of the truly happy and 2) so we can *know how* we can be truly happy. We can use these beatitudes for both gaining knowledge and making application. In the words of the author, the double-intention of these beatitudes is so that we may know "What that is wherein true happiness consists, in the promises made to persons of certain characters, **the performance of which will make them happy**," (emphasis added), and so that we may know "who they are that are to be accounted truly happy, and **what their characters are**" (emphasis added). I'd like to emphasize here the importance of *being* this kind of person. The *doing* will naturally flow from a life that *is* these characteristics. And it is God alone who can affect any change in who you are, so as you continue, pray back to God the scripture truths you read.

What Their Characters Are

Brother, the truly happy ones are pure in heart. Their hearts are pure of double-mindedness, pure of mammon, and pure of youthful lusts. These three are simply what I found in doing a simple search for the phrase "pure in heart," and I trust the meditations will be a blessing.

Purified from Double-Mindedness

"Purify your hearts, you double-minded" James says in James 4:8. We don't have any further explanation of double-mindedness in the immediate context, but the word occurs at the very beginning of the book (1:8), so that is the context we will meditate on. The context is one of prayer for wisdom (an activity we both should be engaging in daily). The one who is pure in heart is pure from double-mindedness. He prays

and believes that he will receive. He prays and looks for the answer from God. He prays and waits on the LORD. A double-minded man, on the other hand, prays and *doubts* that he will receive anything. He does not disbelieve, for he is a man of some faith, but he is unsure that he will truly receive what he is looking for. That man is like a wave of the sea that has no control over itself. The prayer for his desired end will have no part in bringing that end about.

Purified from Mammon

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). "Your treasure" in this context is specifically the things you "store up... on earth," but we can easily extend the teaching to all the different things you or I may treasure in this world. And for that, I find Ecclesiastes 2 an excellent meditation. This "mammon" could be a pleasure or a possession; or it could be wisdom in this world, status, and fame. Mammon could be success as man sees success. It could be the work of our hands. The Preacher touches on all of these in that chapter, but he found, as Christ states, that "moth and rust destroy, and thieves break through and steal." The pure in heart has none of these things ruling his heart. They have been removed in place of a better master, for "you cannot serve God and mammon."

Purified from Youthful Lusts

"Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). Righteousness, faith, love, and peace—these are what those who call on the Lord from a pure heart pursue, and Timothy is enjoined to join such persons. Here, Timothy is given what he should not do in conjunction with what he should do, and he is given companions ("with those") with whom to pursue those virtues. They are ones who, from a pure heart, call upon the Lord! Your heart is the seat of your desires (lusts). The pure in heart, as opposed to letting youthful lusts sit in control, calls on the Lord (surrendering to Him the rule of his heart), pursues these excellent virtues, and makes those who do likewise his companions.

And I must point out the illustration Paul provides leading up to this injunction. Even in a multi-million-dollar home, there are great vessels (such as to hold jewelry or other precious goods) and lesser vessels (wash buckets). Regardless of the vessel, if it is clean, it may be used for what is honorable. If it is filthy, it will be given dishonorable tasks (or be

thrown out entirely). So, cleanse yourself (your heart) from what is unworthy, you will be a vessel fit for good, "sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work." In light of this "vessel" illustration, Timothy is enjoined to flee from youthful lusts.

The Performance of Which Will Make You Happy (Application)

Brother, do you desire to be happy? Purify your heart! I admonish you like this on good ground, for John too told his readers, "Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him *purifies himself*, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3). Can you do this on your own? No, of course not! But does that mean you don't have responsibility here? No, of course not! You must hope in God. Have confident, expectant hope in the fact that "when he appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (vs 2). And when you thus hope, you will purify yourself.

Do you see the re-affirmation of our primary text in this passage? The pure in heart shall *see* God, and everyone who has the confident expectation of *seeing* Him (and being like Him) purifies himself. The sight of God is our motivation. In our text, it is motivation toward a reward, and here in 1 John, it is motivation from a sort of fear or expectation—"I shall be pure when I see Him as He is, so I must purify myself now." Purify your heart – you shall see God!

Double-minded: brother, are you asking for wisdom but doing so in doubt—fully expecting to make a certain decision before you pray? How can you be blamed, after all, what exactly should you wait for (and there are certainly times when we need to act quickly)? But how can you know whether you have God's wisdom or not? Remind yourself of what wisdom from above looks like ("pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy"—James 3:17), and wait on God. Believingly look for the return on your prayers.

Mammon: brother, purify your heart from the things of this world. Let not pleasures, possessions, wisdom in this world, earthly success, or the work of your hands hold your heart. Set your affections on things above (Col. 3:1).

Youthful Lusts: brother, the desires of your heart that you've had since your youth—let not these desires control you. Flee them. But we have not just a command to stop a certain activity – where you have stopped the pursuit of youthful lusts, pursue the things of Christ! Run to Him. Be

caught up in Him. Purify your heart from anything dishonorable, anything worthy of the slop bucket. Cleanse yourself from what is dishonorable, and let your life be a vessel "useful to the Master, prepared for every good work."

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

BOOK READING

Chapter 8; Matthew 8:1–17 "The Authority of Jesus"

March 12	Exodus 23	John 2	Job 41	2 Cor. 11
March 13	Exodus 24	John 3	Job 42	2 Cor. 12
March 14	Exodus 25	John 4	Prov. 1	2 Cor. 13
March 15	Exodus 26	John 5	Prov. 2	Gal. 1
March 16	Exodus 27	John 6	Prov. 3	Gal. 2
March 17	Exodus 28	John 7	Prov. 4	Gal. 3
March 18	Exodus 29	John 8	Prov. 5	Gal. 4

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

-Matthew 5:9

The redeemed people who make up God's kingdom are blessed not only for possessing qualities which affect their own inner life, such as the previous beatitude, purity of heart, but also for affecting those outside the kingdom by making peace. In His kingdom those are esteemed who are not warmongering and pugnacious, but those who bring God's shalom to people without peace. While this characteristic also extends to peaceful dealings with others both within and without the church, we can see that this applies most poignantly to the work of evangelism. We will consider two aspects of being a blessed peacemaker.

Our first consideration is that a true peacemaker must be personally acquainted with the kind of peace that he seeks to bring to others. While all true believers are positionally at peace with God through the propitiatory work of Christ (Rom. 5:1), our personal experience of walking closely with the God of peace (Phil. 4;4–9) greatly enhances our ability in and sensitivity to sharing the good news with a broken world.

Jesus says in John 16:33, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace." The next part of the verse contrasts this with what we have in the world – tribulation. His expectation for kingdom citizens is that no matter what we experience in this life, each partakes of the heart-affecting peace of Christ. This peace is the shalom of the Old Testament and connotes not only an absence of strife or conflict, but also a complete wholeness and harmony in every sphere of life. This means that even though we may have very real, perhaps very crushing burdens that we bear each day, we still have "rest for our souls," and our burdens are borne as the easy, or well-fitted, yoke of our compassionate Savior. Pursuing growth in the Christian life requires us to make progress in the skill of putting ourselves in the right place and viewing our troubles as from God's own hand. Peace cannot reign in the heart where fear and discontentment wear the crown.

Christian experience confirms that a happy, holy heart most easily and willingly speaks for the Savior. The heart that is walking with God and is not quenching His Spirit has peace inside and is able to spare the time and energy that it takes to effectively serve other people in sharing the

gospel. Where is our focus each day? Are we so focused on ourselves that we can't see the needs around us? These words from a familiar hymn express the desire to serve out of a full heart:

May the peace of God my Father Rule my life in everything, That I may be calm to comfort Sick and sorrowing.

The second consideration is that a true peacemaker is actively engaged in God's work of bringing peace. Perhaps when we think of a "peacemaker" we think of someone in the role of a negotiator or mediator, who goes between two parties in a tense situation. While there is a place for this role at times, the idea here for the blessed is probably more in line with that of an ambassador, who is sent as a representative of the King of kings. After His resurrection Jesus said to His disciples, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21). We are vested with the same authority that Jesus was given by the Father when He was on earth to seek and save the lost. We are members of Christ's kingdom reaching out to those who are liable "to all miseries in this life, death itself and the pains of hell forever" (Cat. 24). It is a sober calling and Christ has left us here not only to exalt the glories of His grace, but to take up His mission by confronting the lost with their need of the Savior. He is the only way to true shalom for life and eternity.

And this is where the blessing comes in. When we act as peacemakers, we will be recognized as displaying the character of our heavenly Father. Being called "sons of God" means that we are participating in the very same mercy and compassion that makes God glorious to sinful, wrath-deserving people that we once were. So take heart! We can be encouraged and count on blessing from above when we enter into the work God has appointed for us.

"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:10

BOOK READING

Chapter 8; Matthew 8:18-34 "The Authentic Jesus"

March 19	Exodus 30	John 9	Prov. 6	Gal. 5
March 20	Exodus 31	John 10	Prov. 7	Gal. 6
March 21	Exodus 32	John 11	Prov. 8	Eph. 1
March 22	Exodus 33	John 12	Prov. 9	Eph. 2
March 23	Exodus 34	John 13	Prov. 10	Eph. 3
March 24	Exodus 35	John 14	Prov. 11	Eph. 4
March 25	Exodus 36	John 15	Prov. 12	Eph. 5

PERSON	Personal Reflection						

"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." — Matthew 5:10

Living in modern America, it's easy to feel like this beatitude was written for someone else. Few of us have been persecuted unto death or even to a degree of feeling like we have experienced loss. Yet Jesus preached this sermon to the multitudes and even said in the very next verse, "Blessed are you," intending the beatitude to be applied to the large company of common people. So what is the Lord intending for us to learn?

Each beatitude contains a description of the people that are being blessed and a description of the blessing. It's easy for us to place a specific emphasis on one or the other for each blessing. For example, the poor in spirit and those who mourn might focus on the blessing they will receive, seeing merely an encouragement to those in a low estate. On the other hand, it's easy to see the beatitudes concerning the pure in heart and peacemakers and as a call to a specific kind of character and quickly neglect any focus on the blessing. But how do we respond when we hear, "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"? Perhaps we start by thinking, "I hope that's never me," skipping any focus on both the character and the blessing. Maybe we see all of them as a call to character and start thinking up ways we can get persecuted. Maybe we simply thank God that those who have endured persecution will receive a special blessing.

So, what would most people say about those who are persecuted? Perhaps "unfortunate" is the first word that comes to mind. But what does the Lord say about those who are persecuted? They are "blessed." But we aren't left to interpret this beatitude with just a single statement. This is the only beatitude that is expanded upon by additional verses in our English translations. This expansion further explains both the nature of the persecution and the nature of the blessing.

Before elaborating, we must stop to recognize that Jesus is not talking about all who are persecuted. Even pagans may be persecuted, but they are not being persecuted for righteousness' sake. We may be persecuted

for possessing righteousness. Not our own righteousness because "all our rights deeds are like a filthy garment" (Isaiah 64:6b), but we possess the righteousness of Christ. We may be persecuted for the practice of righteousness. We may be persecuted for our defense and proclamation of righteousness. In justification, we are declared righteous, and in sanctification, we learn to practice righteousness, and in preaching and evangelism, we defend and proclaim righteousness. For all of these things, and ultimately as Jesus says, "because of Me," the world hates us.

So, who are the persecuted? We all know what extreme forms of persecution look like, from the persecution Paul experienced to the famous martyrs of church history to the less well-known stories that are still being played out today. But Jesus started with a much more relatable description in verse 11, "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me." He focused on the *words* that are spoken against us. Have you bowed your head in a restaurant and heard someone at another table call you names because of it? How have your coworkers responded when you spoke of Christ?

David encountered many persecutions, both physical and verbal. Psalm 35 is an example that outlines many of the offenses of David's enemies, but alongside some descriptions of physical persecutions are nine verses that recount verbal offenses (11, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, and 26). The words of the wicked go beyond name-calling. They rejoice at calamity, they make false accusations and lies, and they mock and slander God's people.

Lest we think this is an isolated application, Jesus reiterates in verse 12, "in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." The prophets were subjected to diverse persecutions, but any who were persecuted at all were undoubtedly attacked first of all by words. Jesus told us in John 15:20, "'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." Jesus Himself, the greatest Prophet, was falsely accused of casting out demons by Beelzebul. How many more words continue to be spoken against Jesus to this very day? In a small way, we too can share in the sufferings of Christ.

Finally, the Lord explains the blessing by giving a single reason, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The first thing we may notice from this is that He repeats the blessing given in the first beatitude, indicating that all of the beatitudes are a single package, collectively describing His

people. It is the only blessing statement repeated, but it is also the first and the last. Consider the other seven beatitudes. If we exemplify all of them, are we not more likely to be persecuted than someone whose life only occasionally exemplifies a few of them? And if we exemplify all of the beatitudes, how much more do we gain by inheriting the whole package? Also, read through the other blessings and consider this. Can the kingdom of heaven really be yours and you not gain the other six blessings to some degree? This should encourage us that the Lord works in us all of these kinds of character as part of our sanctification.

Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake are possessors of the kingdom of heaven. While we may think of this as synonymous with the kingdom of God, our Lord uses the word "heaven" to set our minds on things above. We are pilgrims here, and no matter how great our sufferings in this life, they will only last a short while longer, and then the joys and peace of heaven await us. Jesus concludes in verse 12, "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Our Bibles record so many words spoken against the prophets, and some were even killed for the sake of righteousness, but now they have rest in paradise, and a new heaven in the future. So too, if we are persecuted for righteousness' sake, we are possessors of the kingdom of heaven.

We've seen that Jesus intended a personal application for each of us, but it is worth remembering when we read this beatitude to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are under greater persecutions. Not just missionaries, but the people they minister to. Let us also be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" that Jesus describes in verses 13 and 14, not fearing what man can do to us, knowing that our reward in heaven is great.

"Blessed are you when [people] insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Matthew 5:11-12

BOOK READING

Chapter 9; Matthew 9:1–17 "The Mission of Jesus"

March 26	Exodus 37	John 16	Prov. 13	Eph. 6
March 27	Exodus	John 17	Prov. 14	Phil. 1
March 28	Exodus	John 18	Prov. 15	Phil. 2
March 29	Exodus	John 19	Prov. 16	Phil. 3
March 30	Lev. 1	John 20	Prov. 17	Phil. 4
March 31	Lev. 2,3	John 21	Prov. 18	Col. 1
April 1	Lev. 4	Psalm 1,2	Prov. 19	Col. 2

PERSONAL REFLECTION							

"Blessed are you when [people] insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

—Matthew 5:11-12

REVILE

To assail with scornful or abusive language; vituperate. *synonym*: scold.

In July of 64 AD, a fire started and raged for 6 days in Rome. There is no record of how it started or who started it, but Emperor Nero had someone to blame. Using the fact that the fire started next to but did not burn the Jewish sector, Nero picked the one group that seemed to be a growing threat that started among the Jews in Judea. Christians. This accusation started a persecution that would last nearly 250 years till Emperor Constantine made "Christianity" the imperial religion. But Constantine only made the persecution change its form.

1 Peter was potentially written in response to Nero's accusation to encourage the church in the coming days. In 1 Peter 1:1, Christians are referred to as exiles and all references to Peter's location are masked. This could be Peter emphasizing this earth being a temporary home, as all Christians should be looking forward to their eternal home in heaven (1 Peter 1:3–5). Peter expounded on Jesus's 8th beatitude and the glory to come as he sought to encourage and lift up the persecuted church for that day.

1 Peter 4:12–14 says:

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."

Peter continues on to call on Christians not to be ashamed (4:16), but to "entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good." (4:19) Just as Peter looked to the 8th beatitude, we should seek to know Jesus' thoughts of where we should look when temptations and trials come our way. Unlike Peter who had a clear personal memory of Jesus' sermon on the mount, today there are only 2 recordings from eyewitnesses, and one is a sure paraphrase.

Matthew has the most word-perfect telling.

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

It's interesting that Luke in his paraphrasing pinpointed the reviling and heavenly reward. Out of the 4 verses found in Luke 6 of the beatitudes, half of them are used for that 8th beatitude.

"Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.(v. 22–23)

God knew the message he sent through Jesus was going to be spurned. Satan has been trying to undermine God's throne from the beginning of time. The serpent in the Garden, the testing of Job, the priests against Jesus, Nero, the Inquisitions, the list is long, but there will be an end when Jesus returns to claim His throne.

In Matthew and Luke Jesus focused on the mental attacks more than the physical. Since there is only truth in God then these attacks will come through lies and hate. Christians are hated because they have a joy in something other than what can be seen on this earth; because the truth they indwell pricks the conscience of those who do not want to admit there is a God to whom they must bow. In obedience to God, the prophets of the Old Testament told of the destruction to come and the deliverance from it. But God's own people hated those messengers.

But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, (2 Chronicles 36:16a)

There is a refining fire in suffering for Christ's sake. 1 Peter 5:10 says the sufferer will be perfected, confirmed, strengthened, and established personally by God. A greater maturity of faith comes from seeing God in the trials but we need to remember the end goal to have the strength to make it through those trials. That end goal is an eternal resting place with crowns and glory sitting before God. Jesus is constantly pointing us to eternity and the hope of things promised, just like any competitor is spurred on by the prize of winning. Peter calls us to be humble that we will be exalted in God's time (5:6). We cannot be impatient with God.

Because of the price for our reward, there is a call to always do right even in suffering.

For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, (1 Peter 3:17–18)

We will never be alone in this persecution. Many came before us and many will follow us. Take heart in the martyrs, and have faith lest we suffer the same fate of those who do not obey the Gospel of God (1 Peter 4:17).

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. (1 Peter 5:8–9)

APRIL 2 – 8 WEEK 10

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree [firmly] planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers."

Psalm 1:1-3

BOOK READING

Chapter 10; Matthew 9:18-34 "The Trustworthiness of Jesus"

April 2	Lev. 5	Psalm 3,4	Prov. 20	Col. 3
April 3	Lev. 6	Ps. 5,6	Prov. 21	Col. 4
April 4	Lev. 7	Ps. 7,8	Prov. 22	1Thes. 1
April 5	Lev. 8	Ps. 9	Prov. 23	1Thes. 2
April 6	Lev. 9	Ps. 10	Prov. 24	1Thes. 3
April 7	Lev. 10	Ps. 11,12	Prov. 25	1Thes. 4
April 8	Lev. ,12	Ps. 13.14	Prov. 26	1Thes. 5

PERSU	NAL KEFI	LECTION			

CONCLUSION

Blessed is the man who delights in the Law of the Lord. The opening of the Psalms teaches us what a blessed man is and the opening of the Lord's Sermon on the Mount tell us what blessing is in the sight of the Lord. This first part of the year we have been studying the Beatitudes which is a pretty way to say "blessedness" that Jesus taught to His disciples.

The teaching seems to go against all the common wisdom that you would discuss in a worldly class, but when you are walking in step with the Lord you see the ultimate beauty and accurateness of His teaching. Men seek blessing on their own, only to find emptiness and sadness, they seek fame and fortune for themselves and their family and that is the opposite of the Lord's teaching.

We can be sure of one thing, the Devil does not want us to pursue the things in this passage, and he undoubtedly has attempted to prevent you from this study at every turn. I pray that you have leaned on the Spirit to deliver you from any of those temptations and strived to follow the teaching of the Lord.

Additional optional reading

Week 11—Matthew 9:35–10:15; Chapter 11: "The Compassion of Jesus"

Week 12—Matthew 10:16–42; Chapter 12: "The Divisiveness of Jesus"

MATTHEW 5:3-12

The Beatitudes

"BLESSED are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. BLESSED are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. BLESSED are the gentle, for they will inherit the earth. BLESSED are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. BLESSED are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. BLESSED are the pure in heart, for they will see God. BLESSED are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. BLESSED are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. BLESSED are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in this same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."