

Blessed of God – Part IV

(Matthew 5:7-9)

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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

Today we will continue the "Blessed of God" series of messages taken from the first section of Christ's Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, Chapter 5 of verses commonly referred to as the Beatitudes. Today's sermon, being the 4th in this series (following the Introductory message), is cleverly titled "Blessed of God of Part 4." We'll resume our verse by verse study of Matthew 5 where I left off the last time I spoke by beginning with verse 7.

So look with me again in Matt. 5 and let's start our reading back at vs. 1.

Matthew 5: 1-3, 7 -12:

And seeing the multitudes, he (Christ) went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: ²And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

³Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Now the same pattern that begins here in verse 3, is repeated as we go forward. You'll notice in each verse that (1) Christ sets forth a characteristic or quality which applies in some measure, in some degree, to each and everyone one who is supremely (or eternally blessed) of God. He describes them as "the poor in spirit," "they that mourn," etc. Then (2) each verse concludes with Christ's description of some aspect of their eternal blessedness. E.g. of "theirs is the kingdom of heaven," "they shall be comforted," etc.

Now before we continue, I want to briefly remind you of some facts that guide our understanding of these verses. I elaborated on these extensively in the previous messages of this series. So today, I'll briefly review these 3 underlying principles:

1. That the ðblessedö spoken of in this context includes those who:
 - a. are made blessed in the righteousness of the Son. That is they are the redeemed, justified by the blood of Christ shed at the cross of Calvary. Their eternal blessedness has been secured based upon the merit of His finished work ó (His perfect satisfaction to God's justice in His obedient life and death ó His righteousness) ó being imputed (charged or reckoned) to each and every one of them. As is quoted in Romans 4:6: "***Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works***" – That is, with no contribution from or through the sinner ó a work done totally outside of the one being blessed.

and

- b. (the eternally blessed in this context) have also been brought to spiritual life so as to relate to and experience (in some measure) that which is being described.
2. These characteristics are not set forth as things we should strive to manifest in order that we might be blessed of God. No, Christ is describing that which is found to be true of those who are the blessed ones, because they have been blessed.
3. That we've properly understood each of Christ's descriptions of the eternally blessed of God when we see how (in light of the whole of scripture) that its meaning is one that must be applied and can only be applied to those who have been redeemed by Christ and given life to look to Him alone.

Now with those guiding principles, let's pick back up on our reading in Matthew 5, with our text for today, beginning in verse 7 where it reads:

⁷Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. ⁸Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. ⁹Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Let's look at each verse now, beginning back with verse 7:

⁷*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*

Here, the word *merciful* and *mercy* has reference to being (or showing) pity or compassion. So those who obtain *mercy* experience compassion or pity. It's noteworthy that the Greek word for *merciful* is not the same as the word translated *merciful* in Luke 18. There, in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, the justified publican's prayer was simply, "God be merciful to me a sinner." There the word *merciful* means to be propitious ó that is, "God, show me unmerited favor based upon satisfaction being made by Christ to God's justice so as to appease His wrath." That's propitiation. We know that no mere human can accomplish propitiation before God ó can satisfy the holy demands of God's uncompromising justice. No, it took a God-man, whose shed blood was of infinite value.

It's also interesting that the word *shall* ó as in *they shall obtain mercy* ó has to be considered in context. Sometimes, this word, *shall*, carries the connotation of something that shall take place in the future. In this context, (*they shall obtain mercy*), it is a declaration of the certainty of something. God often says through His word, "I will," and "they shall," not to denote the time of an event, but rather to describe its certainty. Such is the case here.

Now we know that the only certain obtaining or experiencing of compassion or mercy from God (that is of an eternal nature, that would exclusively describe those who are eternally blessed), is that kindness or compassion (*mercy*) that is found in the *mercy-seat* ó that is, in the propitiatory work of Christ at the cross.

As with the previous verses, this description, *the merciful*, doesn't describe a moral virtue, but rather, describes the fruit and effect of that which Christ merited for those whom He lived and died. In the context, we readily see that this then can't be speaking of a general sense of mercy and compassion that men of various religious persuasions manifest, but rather that mercy, that compassion that only the eternally blessed of God manifest. Now knowing this, I believe this refers to the mercy or compassion that flows to others from believers as they participate in the ministry of the Gospel ó a ministry designed to communicate to others where eternal mercy is to be found, communicating to others their desperate need for the pure,

untainted mercy of God in Christ ó for salvation conditioned on Him and Him alone, for righteousness imputed without works!!

In short, I believe the õblessedõ of God are õmercifulõ as they participate in the ministry of the Gospel (distinguished from all counterfeits in that therein is the righteousness of God revealed). These called õmercifulõ are privileged to serve as ambassadors of Christ, to promote to others the basis or ground for the application of the very mercy of God that the eternally blessed are privileged to behold in Christ ó a mercy that they uniquely obtain or experience. This same mercy is extended to others in acts of mercy or compassion as we faithfully declare the good tidings of the Gospel ó of how God is eternally merciful to sinners in Christ and in Him alone.

Like me, some of you may have experienced or heard it said that if a man truly loves a woman and vice-versa, they are compelled to express it in some way. Theyøve fallen in love and now somethingø different ó they have a new relationship. This expression of love is not something they have to strive to do. Rather itø a natural outcropping of their special new found affection.

In a similar fashion, these blessed of God, they have also been brought into a new relationship. Paul wrote in 2 Cor 5:11: ***“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.”*** Can we really do any other? I mean if weøre really convinced that the Gospel wherein Christ righteousness is revealed is the only way ó that justification before God comes by way of righteousness imputed and no other way ó Can we live in a world where weøre surrounded on every hand by sincere, moral folks who we care deeply about, but who are merrily going along on the broad way that leads to destruction and not, in an act of compassion and mercy, actively seek to persuade them otherwise?

Now we know that only God can give them spiritual life to see what we see ó but we also know that He has determined to use the means of His Gospel. The latter part of I Cor 1:21 reads: ***“..it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”*** God, who ordains and determines the end from the beginning (Isa 46:10), also ordains the means. Knowing this, can we not help but be about His business in support of the ministry of reconciliation ó declaring to men how sinners are reconciled unto God based

solely upon the righteousness of God in Christ being imputed, or reckoned to them?

I believe this is the nature of being merciful that is attributed here to the redeemed, the regenerated, the eternally blessed ones of God that which is an inevitable result and effect from having obtained or experienced the mercy of God in Christ. Now like all graces and gifts of God, we need to cultivate this. Just as surely as a physically born infant feeds and grows, so all who are born spiritually, the children of God, get fed spiritually and thereby grow. Where there is life, there is and will be growth in grace. And I encourage us all to seek to grow as servants in serving Christ in this way supporting the Gospel as conduits of mercy.

When I pause to think of what great mercy has been bestowed upon me I am ashamed that I am not more engaged in sharing the Gospel, and in supporting the ministry of the Gospel in whatever capacity I am able as a functioning member of the body. It is our reasonable service, knowing that we walk on this earth surrounded by those who remain deceived in the religion of this world the religion of works resting in a false refuge wherein they perceive salvation conditioned in some way, in at least some degree on that which proceeds from them. Whether resting on a decision, on perceiving themselves to be less obstinate than others, on their willingness to receive Jesus or something of merit or whatever it is it identifies such a person as not having yet obtained mercy and heading down the broad road that leads to eternal destruction.

But the good news is that even in my ashamedness over my meager efforts in support of the ministry, there is a silver lining. I can rejoice in knowing that even this concern is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. I am speaking of the God-given compassion, the merciful concern toward others that Christ says is true of the blessed of God or of those who have experienced or obtained mercy in Christ. Now I am not just referring to a concern for the eternal welfare of men. As we know, multitudes from all religions exhibit that sort of concern to some degree. Rather, I am talking about a desire to spread the one, unique message of the Gospel for therein is revealed the only means of mercy or the propitious work of the Savior or the righteousness of God in Christ.

And although I concede that this ðbeing merciful,ö this compassion towards others, may be broader than this one explanation I’ve zeroed in on; I am confident that whatever else it may encompass, it will likewise reflect an extension of mercy and compassion that can only be attributed to one who has been redeemed and given faith to behold God’s mercy in the mercy seat ó the unmerited favor of God based upon the satisfaction made by Lord Jesus Christ in His vicarious, substitutionary life and death on the cross of Calvary.

Turn with me for a moment to Titus chapter 3. Paul is writing to Titus here and in verse 3 he writes:

“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. ⁴But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour (His mercy and compassion) toward man appeared, [⁵Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy (this is the same word for mercy meaning compassion found in Matt 5:8) he saved us, (i.e. ó out of our lost state of darkness) by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;] ⁶Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; ⁷That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Now keep this passage in Titus 3 in mind as we look at the next verse in Matthew 5 ó verse 8:

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

There are several different original Greek words used in the New Testament that are translated ðpure.ö Often times it has reference to being holy, or uncontaminated, or pure from defilement as Christ is spoken of as being ðpure.ö Here in our text the word ðpureö is different. It speaks of a cleansing.

Now consider again what we just read in Titus 3:5 ó about how God’s mercy or compassion appeared. It’s ***“...not by works of righteousness we have done... (and I believe that refers to any idea of a righteousness proceeding from us ó whether we credit that with God’s working through us or not) ... but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the holy ghost.”***

Now clearly, if we found within us what some would call õrightheousnessö so as to mean a purity or holiness, (as in the perfect and pure nature of Christ Himself residing within), we would have no need for the Holy Spirit to renew us. That which is perfect doesn't need renewing.

Back in Matthew 5:8, the õpure in heartö refers to those who also obtain mercy. It is those who, according to õHis mercyö (as we read in Titus 3) are saved (out of darkness) by having their hearts (their minds, affections, and wills) cleansed.

Now turn with me over to John 15 and let's look at verses 1-4. There Christ is talking to His disciples and he says:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. ²Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. ³Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you.”

Christ is speaking to His disciples here and first note that He speaks of purging those who are in Him, the branches. This is often explained as a pruning, but the word translated õpurgethö comes from the same word translated as õpureö ó the one that carries the connotation of a cleansing. Note further that in verse 3, Christ says ye are õclean through the word.ö This word, õcleanö is also the same word for the õpure of heartö spoken of in Matthew 5. The word through which they are cleansed is the good news Christ had delivered to them ó the Gospel itself wherein the righteousness of God is revealed. Christ is referring to the instrumental means of regeneration, the word outwardly preached by Him as an instrument by which their hearts are cleansed ó (that is their minds, affections and wills are affected).

Here in John 15, Christ mentions the purging or pruning that takes place for a believer, but then He stops and says, but õnowö (as in õbut alreadyö) you are õclean through the word.ö I believe He is stating that you are cleansed in your heart (pure in heart) by this washing of regeneration, the instrument being the word of reconciliation ó the Gospel. Thereby your conscience is purged from dead works to serve the living God ó the õreal McCoyö as

distinguished from all counterfeits of the One who is appeased and satisfied by Christ's Person and work (His blood) and Him alone.

A person's conscience remains defiled (unclean) as long as they are spiritually dead or without life and void of spiritual senses with which to see, hear, and effectually understand with the heart God's word or His Gospel. That is or the defiled (the unclean or the impure in heart) or they have yet to be delivered out of their darkness and, consequently, remain deceived in thinking themselves to be accepted by God based upon something other than (or in addition to) the blood or imputed righteousness of Christ. That's called unrighteousness. As Heb 9:14 reads: ***“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”***

Any whose conscience has been so purged from dead works or they are among the "pure in heart" spoken of in Matthew 5:8. The Bible teaches that the natural hearts of men are desperately wicked and that none, including believers, are free from the presence of sin. But those who are justified from all sin and are "clean through the word" or that is, through the Gospel, they discover, submit to, and rest in a free and full redemption in Christ, based upon the imputation of His righteousness to them. They have a sentence pronounced on them or that their sins are forgiven based upon the spotless offering of their Savior and Substitute or the blood of Jesus which cleanses from all sin.

Now back in Matthew 5:8, note that "the pure in heart" are those that shall see God. If you'll look back up at verse 1, you'll notice that it speaks of Christ, "seeing the multitudes." In my study, I found it interesting that the root word for "seeing" in verse 1 and "see" in verse 8 have different connotations. Whereas "Christ seeing the multitudes" speaks of a voluntary observation or as in He mechanically looked with His human eye and saw them; the word for "see" in verse 8 means to gaze with wide open eyes at something remarkable. That's precisely what happens when one's conscience has been purged from dead works, when one is given life to rest in Christ's blood and righteousness alone. They marvel at what they learn of God in Christ or finding a sure and certain hope in Him and Him alone or diametrically opposed to that which their naturally, desperately wicked heart presumed to be true in their lost, dead, state of spiritual darkness.

Certainly, this phrase, ***“they shall see God,”*** speaks of a blessed beholding of God throughout eternity to all of God’s elect in Christ, but even today, believers who have been brought by the miraculous, life giving power of God the Holy Spirit to look to Jesus Christ alone as the author and finisher of their faith ó they have had their eyes opened wide to òsee Godö ó to gaze at something so remarkable, knowing the Father by the Son. They see God in this life and in Christ with the eyes of their understanding and will see the incarnate God with resurrected eyes.

Now let’s continue with verse 9 of Matthew 5:

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”

Some commentators logically conclude that a òpeacemakerö is one who makes peace. Consequently, they interpret this to refer to those who make peace with their fellow man or those who promote world peace, etc. They are bolstered by the truth that men are indeed incapable of making peace between themselves and God. The problem with this interpretation for me is that many men and women of many different religions ó some of which do not even profess Christ to be their savior ó fall into this description of a òpeacemakerö when they enter into accords between warring nations by signing a peace treaty or become reconciled with an enemy and so on. Clearly this fails one of the principles I believe should guide our understanding. That is ó such an understanding certainly could not be considered to be true (and only true) of the eternally blessed of God. No ó whoever Christ is referring to here as a peacemaker ó they are blessed ó ***“Blessed are the peacemakers...”***

It is true that between God and man, Christ is the one mediator and peacemaker. But similarly, sinners cannot reconcile themselves unto God. But this doesn’t hinder God from giving us the ministry of reconciliation. Look with me at II Corinthians 5, beginning with verse 18, where it reads:

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

Consider how foreign dignitaries or ambassadors of peace try to mediate peace agreements between 2 nations at odds with each other. They present information to the warring factions that would suggest grounds for peace; however, they cannot make peace for them. Yet, we would often call them peacemakers and perhaps even award them the Nobel Peace prize.

Now we see that even though God alone can reconcile sinners unto Himself, He commits unto believers the ministry of reconciliation so to be ambassadors for Christ so as we just read, ***“...as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.*** (And on what basis do we make this plea?) ²¹***For he hath made him to be sin for us,*** (God the father charged Christ with the sins of all of His elect, He) ***who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.***” (Imputing or charging the righteousness of God in Christ to us).

I believe that the peacemakers who are the blessed of God are one and the same as those described here in II Corinthians 5. That is, they are ambassadors for peace as ambassadors for Christ. Knowing the terror of the Lord, we try to persuade men. (II Cor. 5:11). We try to persuade them, beseech or beg them to discover the only way they can be reconciled and justified by God. And if God is pleased to reveal it to them, by faith, they too will have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)

I believe a “peacemaker,” in the context of Matthew 5, is one involved in the ministry of spreading the message of how Christ made peace so as to cleanse us so as to be made pure. As it reads in Col 1:19 so 22: ***“For it pleased the Father that in him (i.e. so Jesus Christ) should all fulness dwell;”*** ²⁰***And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*** ²¹***And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled”*** ²²***In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:”***

Now note that the aspect of the eternal blessing described in last phrase of Matt 5:9 is that ***“...they shall be called the children of God.”*** Wow so what a privilege and we could never exhaust the depth of all that is conveyed in this wondrous title so but I am thrilled to have been adopted. Now how is this aspect of eternal blessedness made manifest so to be a child of God?

Well, we've heard some good teaching lately on I John 3 so I won't elaborate on it but there in verse 10 it reads: ***“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*”** You may recall from our previous study of this passage that we discovered one distinguishing aspect of loving our brother (that is those with the same Father, other children of God) has to do with siding with them in opposition to the religious, but lost world around us. Most notably in not crying peace to others where there is no peace (to use the scriptural language). So the children of God are manifested, at least in part, when they side with the other children of God (their brethren) in refusing to suggest to any that there is peace between them and God based upon something other than (or in addition to) the only ground of peace and reconciliation of the blood or wrought-out righteousness of God in Christ and that being imputed to the sinner without works.

Here we see again how beautifully these verses of Matthew 5 fit together. The merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers of all trusting in (and promoting to others) the good news of the Gospel of salvation conditioned on the finished work of Christ and Him alone in establishing a righteousness whereby God justly justifies all for whom Christ died by imputing (or charging) it to their account.

Finally, to each one who hears this message, “Do you find these descriptions of the ones eternally blessed of God, to be true, in some degree, to your own experience?” That is, are you among the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers of as is uniquely true of those found among the eternally blessed children of God?

If you're not confident these verses describe you, then I hope and pray you'll continue to consider these things, for as we've seen, they are true of each and every one (and only true of each and every one) who has been blessed with spiritual life in Christ so as to lay hold of their sure and certain eternal blessedness of all based upon the righteousness of God in Christ (the merit of His Person and work) being imputed to them.

And to those who, like me, can rejoice in identifying with these descriptions, I encourage us all to consider the great privilege we have been afforded to serve as conduits of His mercy and strive to order our lives accordingly. Having our own consciences purged, cleansed by the blood of Christ and given life to see it ó having been made pure in heart (that is in our minds, affections and wills), seeing ourselves so cleansed by His blood) ó let us be about the work of a peacemaker, fulfilling our reasonable service as ambassadors for Christ, with whom He has entrusted the ministry of reconciliation.

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself ó the Bible.

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