

# CONNECTED and EFFECTIVE

Connected to God; connected to our purpose; connected to our community  
Effectively expressing the love and light of Christ to the people in 'our world'



Notes for your edification

by

Geoffrey Bull



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## Course Outline

### The purpose of this course:

To help individual believers learn how to be CONNECTED and EFFECTIVE – connected to God; connected to our purpose; connected to our community – to express the love and light of Christ to the people in ‘our world’

This is a course designed to help you:

- To learn how to draw near to the Lord to know Him and allow Him to be seen through your **individual** character and personality
- To know what your **unique** gifts and calling are in Christ and to function according to His purpose for **you** in ‘your world’
- To be distinct, influential and effective in expressing Christ as **you** connect with the people in ‘your world’ and bring them life and light in Christ.

### Key Verses:

1 Cor 15:28     ... *“that God may be all in all.”*

2 Pet 1:2-4     ... *“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”*

### Acknowledgements:

- Some diagrams and themes used in the introduction chapter to this course have been drawn from The Ultimate Intention by DeVern Fromke.

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## Lesson 1 Introduction

...“that God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28)

### God has an eternal plan

God has an eternal plan and purpose for Himself, His Son, the Holy Spirit and for each and every person in the world, and He has sovereignly ordained that our co-operation with Him is integral to the fulfillment of His eternal plan.

So in this introduction we will start off by looking briefly at the eternal plan and purpose of the Father, so we can understand what it is He ultimately wants to achieve and how this is to be accomplished.

As His plan involves us we will then look at how we as *unique individuals* fit to His plan in and what He expects of us individually as well as corporately.

In discovering our part in His plan we will see there is a process or a progression that is involved. There are basically three words that sum up this progression:

**Character – Conduct – Influence** or, in other words, **Intake – Output – Effect**

Let’s explain what these three words represent:

- Character or input – first, our identity established in Christ, abiding in Him, knowing Him intimately, being built up in Him, knowing who we are in Christ and coming to understand that He, and not self, is our point of reference. ... *“For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things”* (Rom 11:36)
- Conduct or output – then, reaching out and relating to the people in ‘our world’ as well as the wider community and expressing Christ through our unique personality in a way that reaches these people, taking into account their varied cultural or ethnic backgrounds.
- Influence or effect – finally, seeing our community drawn and won to Christ through our testimony and the light, truth and love we have shared.

In order to help us in our study of this progression one of the things we will do is draw upon the parallels that are found between Matt 5:1-16 and the epistle to the Ephesians.

<b>Matt 5:1-16</b>	<b>Ephesians</b>	<b>Content</b>
Matt 5:3-6	Ch 1-Ch3	Character or intake – our identity established in Christ
Matt 5:7-12	Ch 4-Ch6	Conduct or output – expressing Christ through our conduct
Matt 5:13-16	Eph 5:8-9	Influence or effect – bringing light and life to a community in darkness

Although our main focus will be on the teaching Jesus presents in Matthew 5:3-16, it is most useful to also give some consideration to the letter to the Ephesians because it will provide some depth to our understanding of the beatitudes. Ephesians provides a wonderful overview of God’s eternal purpose for His church – from before the foundation of the world through to its consummation in the fullness of

Christ. *Before* the world was formed and *before* the division of nations (into Jews and Gentiles) occurred, we were all chosen in Christ.

To bring us in line with His original purpose and plan He made us alive from sin, by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. By breaking down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, male and female, master and slave, bond and free, He made us one new man in Christ and purposed that we might grow up into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

The emphasis in Ephesians is both on our individual salvation and growth and, to an even greater extent, on our wholeness and effectiveness as a community of believers in bringing light and life to our community. So Ephesians is the gospel of both the individual and the church formed by the individuals. It explains the Father's eternal purpose to establish through Jesus Christ, His Son, a new people, His church, who will take the light and life of His love into a dark world.

The responsibility of this new community is to be built up in Christ (**character**), to walk in Christ (**conduct**) so that it can bring life in place of death; unity and reconciliation in place of division and alienation; wholeness, purity and righteousness in the place of corruption and wickedness; love and peace in the place of hatred and strife; and to stand steadfast and strong against all forms of evil (**influence**).

Our identity in Christ expressed through our walk in unity, love, purity, wisdom and mutual submission, bringing light to those in darkness is how we, individually and collectively as the church, bring glory to the Father.

... *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them"* (Eph 2:10) ... *to the praise of His glory"* (Eph 1:12).

... *"to Him be glory in the Church"* (Eph 3:21).

### **God's eternal plan and purpose**

Our main focus in this study will be directed towards gaining a better understanding from the Word of this progression (Character – Conduct – Influence or Intake – Output – Effect), but in order to put everything into its desired context let's first start at the beginning with God's eternal plan; so let's look at the "big picture".

Eph 1:2-4 ... *"Grace to you and peace from God **our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and **Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him."*

To understand God's eternal plan and purpose it is vital to see that we start, not with God as Creator, or Saviour, or the Almighty, or any other name that expresses one of His attributes and not at the creation of man, but before that, before the foundation of the world, with God as the eternal FATHER.



So we start in the Father's heart – not **with** the foundation but **before** the foundation of the world – starting right at the beginning, in eternity past, when His plan was initiated.

So Paul, by revelation, starts out in Ephesians with ... "God our **FATHER** and the Lord Jesus Christ". He is the FATHER – the first Cause of all causes.

It is not with God's varied activities, nor with His attributes that Paul started; but with the Person, who He chiefly is, the FATHER. So it's God's FATHERHOOD that is seen to be the ultimate and deciding factor which determines all His plans and actions.

It was not man's fall and separation from God that determined all things; it was not God's desire for a kingdom, nor even His plan for a new creation – but it was God's paternal being and nature which determined His primary desire, His eternal purpose, His supreme dedication and finally the ultimate realisation which will bring Him that satisfaction of which His Father-heart is so worthy.

You see, the fact that He is the **FATHER** automatically implies He is progenitor of a **family**. So, according to His plan, we'll find that we begin with the eternal Father in eternity past and end sometime in the future and go on into all eternity with a vast family which will bring to Him and His eternal Son honour, glory, pleasure and satisfaction.

Yes, soon after creation man did fall in sin and is in need of salvation through God our Saviour. Yes God is Creator of man and creatures, the heavens and the earth. Yes He has established a kingdom and rules as King. But it is the **Father** and His **vast family** that alone gives proper meaning to all that is included.

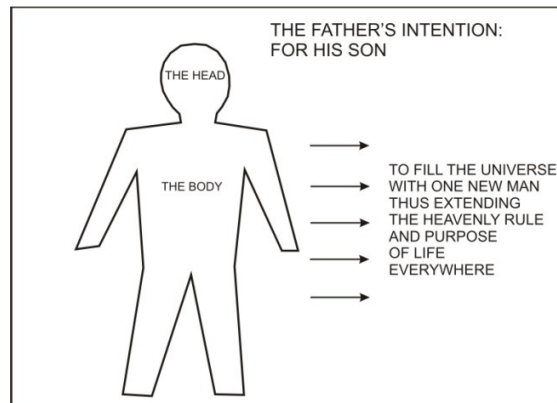
So now, if we look at Paul's words in Rom 8:28-30 (JB Phillips Translation) we'll see they have more meaning, as they help us understand what a Father would determine and purpose and ultimately intend:

*... "And it is plain, too ... that at last we have realized our full sonship in Him ... Moreover we know that to those who love God, who are called according to His plan, everything that happens fits into a pattern for good. God, in His foreknowledge, chose them to bear the family likeness of His Son, that He might be the elder of a family of many brothers. He chose them long ago; when the time came He called them, He made them righteous in His sight and then lifted them to the splendor of life as His own sons."*

**Manifestation of the sons of God:** According to the Father's eternal plan there is a great day coming, a day for which all of creation is waiting with bated breath. For this day of the manifestation of the sons of God, there is a deep groaning throughout all of nature. What a day it will be when the corporate Son – Christ the Head in union with His body, the church – will be unveiled.

This is the day Paul speaks of in Rom 8:19 ... *"for the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God."*

What untold splendor will be realised when the Holy Spirit pours forth light as never before upon the Head of the corporate Son. Such light will break forth upon the entire universe announcing the glory of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit!



This will be a day when we will fully understand the true meaning of Paul's prayer in Eph 1:16 – 23:

*... "I ... do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."*

Revelation in the knowledge (ἐπιγνώσει upon knowledge) of Him – in that day we will see Him and intimately and fully "know" Him, and truly be one with Him.

1 John 3:2 ... *"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is."*

"Like" is the translation of the Greek word ὅμοιοι (*homoioi*) which has the deeper meaning of being "assimilated into and conformed with". We will be "like" Him in that we will be "assimilated into and conformed with" Him. Fully one with Him.

What a glorious hope we have set before us! As stated in Eph 2:7 ... *"that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."*

And then we, His vast family that He planned in eternity past, will understand that we are His glorious inheritance!

Christ the Head and us, the church, His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all!

But that's not all! There's more to this marvellous day! Remember Jesus words in:

John 14:9 ... *"Jesus said to him, Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*

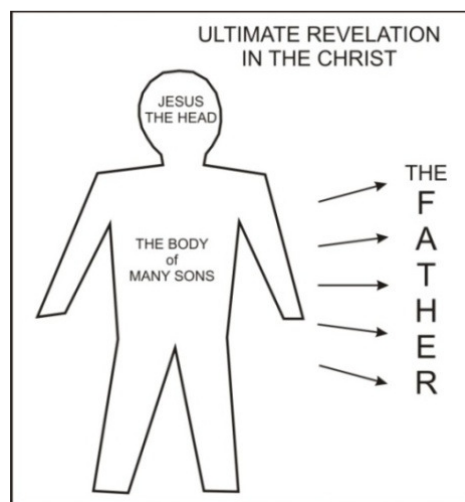
John 12:45 ... *"He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me."*

John 1:18 ... *"No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him."*

Col 1:15 ... *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."*

This great day when the Father's eternal plan will finally have been realised will be not only the revelation of the Son but also of the Father through the Son.

**The Father revealed:** Yes, it is in this light that the whole of creation will recognize the corporate Son (with each individual son conformed to the image of the Firstborn), and it is this which will finally bring the supreme revelation of the heavenly Father who has wrought the purpose of His heart. What a day of glory!

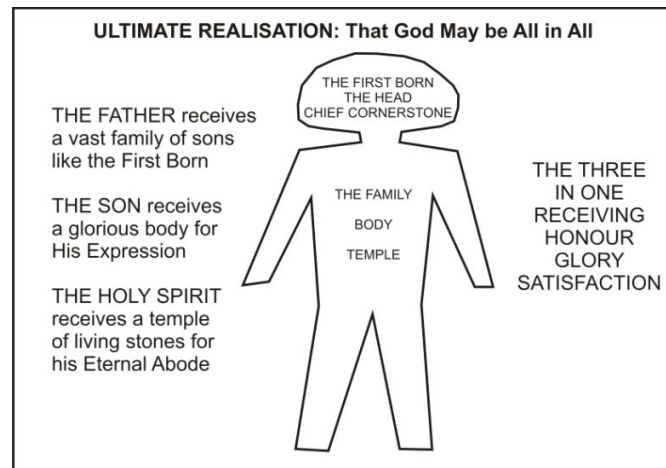


**That God may be all in all:** The great hour of realisation is drawing near when:

- the Father will have a family;
- the Son, a body; and
- the Spirit, a temple.

As the Father fashions this unique corporate Body for His Son, the habitation of the Spirit is also being framed together and growing up into an holy temple, and this is God's family, His masterpiece of Self-revelation. This will bring about the ultimate realization:

1 Cor 15:28 ...***"that God may be all in all"***.



How perfectly this family will express the delight of His heart, and bring forth the pleasure and satisfaction of which He is so worthy. It will express:

- God's LIFE through the Body,
- His LIGHT through the temple, and
- His LOVE as never known among men through the members of His family.

***From the eternal viewpoint God sees this as already complete.*** Spiritual reality has an outstanding characteristic; it bears no marks of time. The time factor vanishes the instant we move into the Father's eternal viewpoint. As we learn to live in the eternal with Him, we shall see how the future becomes reality now (2 Cor 4:16-18).

As Watchman Nee once said ...*"For the ultimate reality is always before God, and God speaks of His church in the light of that reality. The time-factor in the Bible is one of the greatest problems to the human mind, but it vanishes from the horizon when once our hearts have been enlightened to know the glory of His inheritance in the saints."*

With that understanding and seeing things from the Father's own eternal viewpoint – a Father and His desire for a vast family conformed to the image of His Son, through whom He is revealed – now, our dedication can be nothing less than co-operating with Him to realise His glorious plan and ultimate intention.

So this then is our call: let us not only live ***for*** the ultimate, but let us live ***in the ultimate***. Then life's purpose is not a goal set before us in the future; it is a present, living, reality in which we participate ***now***, even as God does.

### **From eternity the paternal purpose in the Son**

We need to see clearly that there is an eternal purpose hidden in the Father which has never been involved in time. This is something that moves on the eternal level, and is not affected by sin or time. We need to see how the eternal Son is related to this eternal purpose of the Father.

We have been so prone to relate Christ to the redemptive activity that we have hardly appreciated or understood how He is related to eternity and the Father's purpose.

To see the eternal Christ in the right perspective we can simply ask the question:

...“if man had never sinned, would all things have been summed up in Christ? (Eph 1:10).

The answer comes through Paul in his letter to the Ephesians where it is clear that the Father intended for His Son to be a means of accomplishment, not because sin entered, but even if sin had never entered. Consider these statements from Eph 1: 3-10:

- vs 3 ... blessed us ... IN CHRIST ...
- vs 4 ... chose us IN HIM before the foundation ...
- vs 5 ... predestined us to adoption ... THROUGH JESUS CHRIST ...
- vs 6 ... made us accepted IN THE BELOVED ...
- vs 10 ... the summing up of all things IN CHRIST ...

These statements make absolutely no reference to sin or time. They are matters settled in the Father's heart before the foundation of the world. They are eternal truths that had previously been a mystery down through the ages which Paul was now unveiling: The Father intended for His Son to have a Body to express His life – Himself – in the world **now** as well as before all creation in the ages to come.

So it is clear that the Father's plans and purposes are not determined by man's need, but rather by His Paternal purpose in the Son.

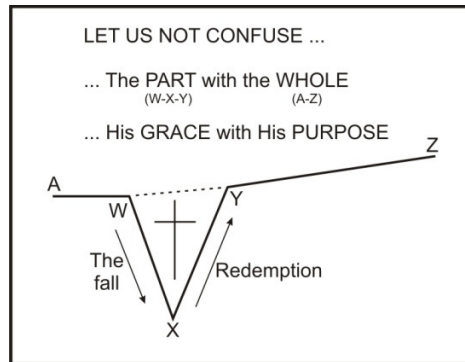
Paul answers in the same passage (Eph 1:3-14) most of the questions we might ask about the Father and His vast family He has marked out for Himself, which is now being realised through His only begotten Son:

- WHO ... He (God the Father) ... v3
- WHAT ... chose us (picked us out as sons for His family) ... vs 4
- HOW ... in Him (Christ - the eternal Son involved in all aspects) ... vs 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10
- WHEN ... before the foundation of the world ... vs 4
- WHY ... for himself as His own (for His pleasure, to the praise of His glory, and for His satisfaction) ... vs 5, 6, 12, and 14
- WHERE ... that we should be “before Him” (Gk. Lit. “in the presence of Him”) ... vs 4

Live in His presence, abide in Him, and know Him so that he may be seen in and through us.

## Living for the whole

2 Tim 1:8, 9 (KJV) ... "God has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own PURPOSE and GRACE, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began".



The Father's PURPOSE is to take us from A to Z, from the initiation of His plan (in eternity past) through to its realization (some time in the future). His GRACE is necessary to get us back on track from X to Y, redemption from the fall, so we could continue the journey to Z.

Although a vital necessity, redemption, getting from X to Y is not the overall objective or purpose.

The goal, His PURPOSE, is to bring into being a host of sons and daughters whom He indwells; through whom He lives and manifests Himself; and in and through whom Christ reigns supreme.

We are beneficiaries of that Plan. God, in His love and grace, has made us part of His plan. But we are not the centre of it; Christ is. We are participants in that plan whom God loves and cherishes. We are God's inheritance (Eph 1:18). His inheritance is His body – the Body of Christ – accomplishing His purpose. And although the Bible records man's fall, that calamity has not done one thing to delay or change God's purpose. His intention was always to have a vast family of sons and daughters. The fall did not deter that plan. God incorporates our redemption into that plan, but the plan's goal is still the same. We are here for the praise of His glory.

Rom 11:36 amplifies this wonderful truth:

... "For **of Him and through Him and unto Him** are all things. To Him be the glory forever"

## Summary

In accordance with the Father's plan, established before the foundation of the world, Christ lives in us to manifest His life through us, now and through the eternal ages. Christ in us accomplishes the Father's purposes. Part of His purpose is intimacy with us, but His plan encompasses more than that. He is working towards His own ends, and we are the vessels through which He works. We are the visible manifestation of what God is doing, with Himself and the ultimate goal: ...*"that God may be all in all"* (1 Cor 15:28).

Our part is to be willing vessels who abide in Him, know Him and express Him, that ...He may be all in all.

2 Pet 3:9 ... *"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."*

Jn 12:32, 46 ... *"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself ... I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness."*

So with a better understanding of the Fathers eternal plan, in this course we will consider our part in co-operating with God in achieving this ultimate plan:

- **Character/Intake** – how we can "put on Christ" and be "filled up to all the fullness of God".
- **Conduct/Output** – how we can release this fullness of God and express the love and life of Christ to those in "our world".
- **Influence/Effect** - how through being the light and salt we will see the lost brought to Christ and the Family grow.

**Our prayer:**

Eph 3:14-21 ... *"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."*

## **Lesson 2 – Character: Our Identity in Christ – filled up to all the fullness of God**

Having briefly considered the eternal plan and purpose of the Father, established in His heart before the foundation of the world, and seeing how we fit into the great plan we now focus on the important matter of abiding in Christ and establishing our true identity in Him ... *“that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God”* (Eph 3:19).

So now to help us on this journey of “putting on Christ” we will commence our study of the parallels we find between Matthew 5:1-16 and the letter to the Ephesians.

### **Foundational and Authoritative Teaching**

Matt 5:1-2 ... *“When Jesus saw the multitudes, He went up on the mountain; and after He **sat down**, His disciples came to Him. And **opening His mouth** He began to teach them, saying”* ...

*“He sat down”* ... in Jesus day the recognised teachers always sat to teach – this signified He was about to deliver an authoritative, structured and logical teaching.

*“and opening His mouth”* ... *“He began to teach”* ... Matthew is not just stating the obvious fact that His mouth had to be open for Jesus to speak. *“Opening His mouth”* is a Hebrew idiom which signified that a matter of great importance was about to be stated. So Matthew is preparing the Jewish audience for a discourse of major significance; and it tells us that we too would do well to pay attention to His teaching.

The importance of the message and authority with which Jesus spoke in delivering the Sermon on the Mount (of which the beatitudes were the first part) was confirmed by the people he addressed:

Matt 7:28-29 ... *“When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.”*

### **“Be” – Attitudes**

This passage from Matthew 5 is commonly known as the “beatitudes” for they are to do with “blessing” and being “blessed”. “Blessed” describes the person who God approves. We are “blessed” or “approved by God” as we follow the pattern God has set out for us to come to know Him and live by His life and strength.

The first thing we need to note is that this passage is really about “Be” – Attitudes because Jesus is emphasizing the importance or priority of following the correct order of “being” before “doing”. “Being” precedes “doing”. We must be established in Christ before we can express Christ. Any expression or action that comes from us that does not find its origin in Christ will be a show of self, and that is damnable and will prove to be useless.

The Father’s eternal plan and desire is that we live by and express His life. At the dawn of creation man was formed ... *“in the image of God”* (Gen 1:26-27) and encouraged to live by the ... *“tree of life”* (Gen 2:9, 16-17). The tree of life is a ‘type’ of Christ (Rev 22:2, 14, 19). So all along, right from the beginning, the Father’s plan has been that we live by and express the Life of Christ.



Eph 1:3-4 ... *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him."*

For us, this starts off when we are born again and Christ takes up residency in us, and ... *"it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me"* (Gal 2:20). Then as we ... *"learn Christ"* (Eph 4:17-24 ) and ... *"put on Christ"* (Rom 13:14) and our identity is soundly established in Him we can then go to the next step of expressing Him in our attitudes, words and actions and allow Christ to be seen in us by those around us. Then the outcome will be that we are salt and light; bringing light to those in darkness and bringing them out of darkness into the light and love of Christ.

You see, we were made in the image of God to live by His life – to be ... *"filled up to all the fullness of God"* (Eph 3:19) so that we can outwardly express Him.

We are to be like a mirror: to reflect a reality other than its own. It would be absurd for a mirror to try and develop a "good self-image". It is equally absurd and unbiblical for us to attempt to do so.

To whatever extent we focus upon a SELF image, no matter how sincerely, we are robbing ourselves and God of that relationship we must have with Him if we are rightly to reflect HIS IMAGE.

The only correct self-image comes from focusing upon and viewing God, not ourselves – for in setting our affections upon Him our lives will be changed and turned from being self-centred to Christ-centred. Self is to be denied that Christ may be all.

2 Cor 5:14-21 ... *"For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;<sup>15</sup> and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.<sup>16</sup> Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.<sup>17</sup> Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.<sup>18</sup> Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,<sup>19</sup> namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.<sup>21</sup> He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

Everything we are as New Creatures in Christ, including and especially our true identity, who we really are, is established in Christ.

So now let's have a look at the parallels between Matthew 5:1-16 and Ephesians, along with a few other passages, as we investigate our true identity.

<b>Matt 5:1-16</b>	<b>Ephesians</b>	<b>Content</b>
Matt 5:3-6	Ch 1-Ch3	Character or Intake – our identity established in Christ
Matt 5:7-12	Ch 4-Ch6	Conduct or Output – expressing Christ through our conduct
Matt 5:13-16	Eph 5:8-9	Influence or Effect – bringing light and life to a community in darkness

In His discourse, as recorded in Matthew 5, Jesus starts with the importance of our **Intake** or building of **Character** (v3-6), and only after that goes on to speak of our **Output** or **Conduct** (v7-12), and finally the **Effect** or **Influence** this has on those around us (13-16).

Likewise Paul in Ephesians (1:1-3:21) shows us that we first need to **Sit** before our Lord and “learn Christ”, “put on Christ”, come to a revelation of who we are in Christ, and then (4:1-6:9) he speaks of our **Walk**, our actions that come from abiding in Christ and listening and learning what He is saying and doing that we may be His arms, legs and voice to carry out His commands, and finally (5:8-9 and 6:10-20) we are to **Stand** and see the victorious effect or influence Christ in us has over the enemy and in being “light” bringing the lost to see and know Him.

#### **Matt 5:3-6: Intake or Character**

Matt 5:3-6 ... “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.<sup>5</sup> Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.<sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

Follow the sequence Jesus provides in this passage ... Blessed are:

- ... “the **poor** in spirit” – state of emptiness and need
- ... “those who **mourn**” – state of loss that causes grieving
- ... “the **gentle** (meek, humble)” – state of lowliness
- ... “those who **hunger and thirst for righteousness**” – state of hunger and thirst

We see here a sequence that starts from the lowest point – brokenness and poverty in spirit – and builds from there. If we want to enter, inherit and inhabit the Kingdom of heaven we must start at the very bottom – in humility taking the lowest seat. That’s why Jesus starts with the “poor in spirit”. This is the foundation – poor in spirit. The beatitudes that follow this one are built on this foundation. In proceeding from “poor in spirit” to “mourn”, “meek” (“humble or gentle”), “hunger and thirst”, and so on, we go from the foundation and build the superstructure in stages. We don’t leave one to go onto something different, we build from the foundation upwards, one upon the other, step at a time. In God’s Kingdom the way up is down.

Luke 14:11 ... “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

1 Pet 5:6 ... *"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time."*

### **Poor in spirit**

So the bedrock or base upon which the foundations of Jesus Christ's kingdom stand is **poverty**, not **possession**. The essential foundation, the basis for our approach to God, is an emptying or laying down of everything and anything of self and self-sufficiency, adopting an attitude of humility and lowliness before Him. For only an empty vessel can be filled up; emptied of self, that Christ may be all. Our Lord Jesus Christ is our prime example, as He was:

Rev 13:8 ... *"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."*

Phil 2:5-9 ... *"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **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. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name."*

2 Cor 8:9 ... *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became **poor**, so that you through His **poverty** might become rich."*

Our starting point is bowing before God and acknowledging that apart from Him we are nothing and can do nothing (John 15:5) – without Him we are destitute, we are "poor" in spirit, we in and of ourselves are a nobody. For:

Rom 3:23 ... *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

Isa 64:6 ... *"Our righteousness is as filthy rags."*

If we are to be ... *"filled up to all the fullness of God"* (Eph 3:19) then it is imperative that our starting point is to bow before Him with penitent hearts acknowledging our spiritual poverty, our absolute emptiness and that we desperately need Him. We bow in humility acknowledging Him as Saviour and Lord. He alone is our all in all. We kneel before Him with a meek, humble, gentle heart that is teachable and ready to obey Him. We bring our thirsty and hungry hearts to Him who is the Living Water and the Bread of Life and seek His righteousness. He is the way, the truth and the life and whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:21).

### **Broken and Contrite**

To understand this more clearly take a moment and look at David's words in his prayer to God (Psalm 51) for forgiveness for stealing Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, and for killing Uriah:

Psalm 51:17 ... *"The sacrifices of God are a **broken** spirit; a **broken** and **contrite** heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."*

**“Broken”** Hebrew word שָׁבַר *shābar* – to break into small pieces, shatter, smash, destroy

The verb *shābar* occurs 147 times in the OT and the place of first mention is in Gen 19:9 ... “So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near **to break down the door**”. Two angels came to Sodom and Lot invited them in and insisted they stay in his house for the night. The evil men of Sodom knew they were in Lot’s house and wanted to get their hands on the angels to perform immoral acts with them, and when Lot resisted them they tried to **break down** the door of his house. They wanted to forcefully **destroy** (*shābar*) the door. Breaking of a “door” in the place of first mention is also important, so as we move on keep in mind that a “door” is the entry point and security gate to the “house”. Satan will always be trying to break open the door to your heart so he can gain entry and be destructive within you. Remember this as we proceed.

After this first mention of the word *shābar* in Gen 19, on several other occasions, in various passages of scripture, it is used with the meaning “**to break the yoke of**”, meaning that God will liberate His people from bondage.

However, of real significance, in a large number of instances (Ex 23:24; Ex 34:13; Deut 7:5; 2 Kings 11:18; 2 Kings 18:4; 2 Chr 14:3; 2 Chr 23:17; 2 Chr 31:1; 2 Chr 34:4; Isa 21:9; Jer 43:13; Jer 52:17; Eze 6:4; Eze 6:66) it is used in the context of **destroying idols** where it means to “**smash to smithereens**” – “**utterly destroy**” the idols.

Keep that meaning in mind while we look at another word used here.

**“Contrite”** Hebrew word דָּכָא *dākāh* – to crush, become contrite, humble

It means to pound, or beat until crushed as into powder. Of significance is the fact that talc, which is a mineral (stone) consisting of hydrated magnesium silicate, when finely crushed or contrited forms talcum powder. So talcum powder is simply “contrited stone”. In its natural form the talc stone is hard and of not much use, but when crushed very, very finely it yields the lovely, soft and smooth talcum powder that we use on babies and which the ladies like to use for cosmetic purposes. Out of something hard and harsh comes something soft, fragrant and beautiful when it is in its contrited, or finely crushed form.

So when we put the true meanings of these two words, broken and contrite, back into Psalm 51:17 we can get a clearer picture of what David is really saying when he says ... “a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise”:

A broken heart is one in which all the “idols” (all the things that displace God from first place in our lives) are *broken* or *smashed to smithereens* and God alone is restored to His rightful place as Lord and Master and our “first love”. All “yokes of bondage” must be broken, totally destroyed. We are to be His bond-servants and not servants of sin. So everything that grieves Him in our lives must be dealt a death blow.

A contrite heart is one in which all hardness of heart, arrogance and wrong attitudes and choices are dealt a blow, totally crushed and pulverised, until only the sweet fragrance of our love for God remains

and comes forth. The alabaster “box” had to be broken to release the fragrance of the perfume for the Master to enjoy (Mk 14:3). A contrite heart is a heart of true humility.

This brokenness and contrition of heart is essential when worship is offered to the Lord. It is a timeless principal of true worship. This is the worship that God will cherish and not despise. It is this contrition of heart, the repentance accompanied with love for God and an accompanying resolve to walk uprightly and humbly before God, which he desires of us and which is a sweet fragrance to Him.

Brokenness is evident when you realise you have no bargaining power with God, you stand defenceless before Him and you are totally dependent upon His mercy. It's when you know that you have nothing to offer in exchange for His mercy and grace, but that you can totally depend upon His faithfulness and mercy.

Heb 4:16 ... *“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

Poor in spirit – the condition of entry and citizenship of the kingdom – is acknowledging we are nothing that He may be all. It's coming to the place of Gal 2:20 acknowledging that ... *I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*”

This poverty or brokenness, mourning or contrition of heart, humility and desire to walk uprightly is the only and true **starting point** and **basis for our ongoing journey** if we want to be true worshippers who know their God, are established in Christ, and live as joyful and blessed kingdom citizens, walking in righteousness and truth.

### **The Kingdom of Heaven**

Matt 5:3 ... *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the **Kingdom of heaven**.”*

What is the ‘**Kingdom of heaven**’ as referred to here? Is it the place called ‘heaven’? It can't be – have a look at Matt 13:24-30, 36-43 – there will be no enemy and lawlessness in ‘heaven’. So what does this mention of the ‘kingdom of heaven’ mean? What, where, when and why is it?

**What?** – The Kingdom of Heaven is *invisible* (Luke 17:20-21), *inhabitable* (Matt 5:19-20), *internal* (Rom 14:17) and *inherited* (Matt 5:3). But how can we sum all that up into one definition?

We could come up with some useful definitions but the one offered by R T Kendall, which fits the use of the “kingdom of heaven” in Jesus’ teaching on the beatitudes particularly well, is as follows: ***The rule of the un-grieved Spirit in the believer.*** Look how it fits with the following scriptures:

Rom 14:17 ... *“for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”*

Psalm 89:14-17 ... *“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; lovingkindness and truth go before You. How blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! O LORD,*

*they walk in the light of Your countenance. In Your name they rejoice all the day, and by Your righteousness they are exalted. For You are the glory of their strength, and by Your favour our horn is exalted. "*

Matt 3:2 ... *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

Matt 7:21-23 ... *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"*

Matt 6:9-10 ... *"Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*

God's will is to be ... *"all in all"* (1 Cor 15:28). His will is that we willingly submit to the Holy Spirit as He teaches us Christ, so that we may learn to live by the life of Christ and express Him in our attitudes, words and actions.

John 16:13-15 Jesus said... *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you."*

The "kingdom of heaven", ***the rule of the un-grieved Spirit in the heart of the believer***, is ours and fully operative when we willingly cooperate with the Spirit as participators in bringing about the realisation of the Father's ultimate and eternal plan, that ... *"God may be all in all."*

The Holy Spirit will never abandon us (in John 14:16 Jesus said, ... *"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever"*), but He can be grieved and quenched.

1 Thess 5:19 ... *"do not quench the Spirit."*

Eph 4:30 ... *"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God."*

When we grieve or quench the Spirit He does not abandon us but we forfeit His conscious presence. Only when He is un-grieved are we promised His conscious presence where He guides us into knowing Christ and walking in the liberating truth of the knowledge of Christ. That's when we are truly blessed! When we grieve Him we place ourselves in the precarious position of being "apart", and remember our Lord's words in John 15:5 ... *"Apart from Me you can do nothing"*. That's definitely not a place of "blessing".

If you are “poor in spirit” – broken, contrite, emptied out – you willingly place yourself under the guidance, power and influence of the Holy Spirit, or in other words you are under the **anointing of the Spirit**.

1 John 2:20, 27 ... *“But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know ... As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.”*

The “anointing” is not just a thing reserved for “preachers”, it’s a guarantee for all who are “poor in spirit” walking in a state of brokenness before God. That is the state of true blessedness!

**Where?** – The kingdom of heaven is within the believer’s heart. It is internal.

The “on earth” of Matt 6:10 is referring to us – our hearts.

Luke 17:21 ... *“the kingdom of God is **within you**”*

Col 1:27 ... *“Christ **in you**, the hope of glory.”*

1 John 4:4 ... *“greater is He who is **in you**” ...*

1 Cor 6:17, 19-20 ... *“But the one who joins himself to the Lord is **one spirit** ... Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is **in you**, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God **in your body.**”*

2 Cor 5:20 ... *“we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal **through us**; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”*

Eph 2:13, 19-22 ... *“But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ ... So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are **fellow citizens** with the saints, and are of **God’s household**, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into **a dwelling of God in the Spirit.**”*

The kingdom of heaven is within you.

**When?** – The rule of the King of kings and Lord of lords is NOW and on into eternity. Constant and continual reign. It starts at the new birth and goes on as we are established and come to maturity in Christ.

Nature is **given** (at the new birth) – character is **developed** (as we learn Christ and put on Christ).



Col 2:7 ... "having been firmly rooted and **now being built up** in Him and established in your faith."

2 Cor 3:18 ... "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are **being transformed** into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

It's a lifelong journey in which we grow in Christ, and in which we are being ... "conformed into the image of His Son" (Rom 8:29), so that our identity is firmly established in Christ.

Rom 12:1-2 ... "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy **sacrifice**, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed** by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

We enter now and continue forward as the "**poor**" in spirit having an attitude of **humility**, and **emptied** of everything of self that He might, now and continually, be all in all.

**Why?** – To establish us as fully participating citizens of the Kingdom, established in righteousness, peace and joy, so that as such we may be worthy ambassadors for the Kingdom.

Eph 1:3-4 ... "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, **that we would be holy and blameless before Him.**"

Col 1:13 ... "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son."

Eph 2:1-10 ... "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For **we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Eph 3:16-19 ... "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts



*through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, **that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.**"*

Eph 5:8-10 ... *"for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth)."*

## **Mourn**

Matt 5:4 ... *"Blessed are those who **mourn**, for they shall be **comforted**."*

Remember we are in a progression of building and so mourning is an extension of the brokenness of the poor in spirit. It's taking brokenness to the next level. There is purpose in brokenness which leads to mourning.

The mourning spoken of here is the tears of repentance we cry when the Holy Spirit casts His light upon us and reveals Christ in His purity and holiness to us, which exposes all sin in our lives.

This is what happened to Isaiah.

Isa 6:5 ... *"Then I said, Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."*

The word "comforted" (παρακαλέω parakaleo - verb) used by Jesus in this beatitude comes from the same root word used to describe the Holy Spirit – the "Comforter" (παράκλητος parakletos - noun). It's the Comforter who comforts us. So Jesus is saying here, that as the Holy Spirit gives us a revelation of the holiness and purity of Christ, and we through this gain a vision and sense of our sins and corruption and are brought to tears of repentance (mourning), we are blessed. We are blessed because our loving heavenly Father will see the mourning tears of repentance and He will cleanse us and cause His holiness and purity to flood us and be seen in us. We then will be in a state of blessedness!

The Kingdom of heaven is **the rule of the un-grieved Spirit in the heart of the believer**. He is un-grieved when we are quick to respond to His conviction, mourning the loss of purity and holiness resulting from selfishness and walking in the flesh, and bowing in tears of repentance before Him to ask for mercy in time of need.

Eccl 7:4 ... *"The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning, while the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure."*

Psalm 126:5 ... *"Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting."*

James 4:8-10 ... *"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your*

*laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."*

2 Cor 7:1, 8-10 ... *"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God ... <sup>8</sup>For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while— <sup>9</sup>I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. <sup>10</sup>For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death."*

When we see sin in ourselves that we had previously not seen (the loss of our purity before God) and mourn its presence we are blessed because we know the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, is at work in us. His presence is promised to us. His job is to bring forth the beauty of Jesus to be seen in us.

The very foundation of the nature and character of God is holiness and purity. For the holiness and purity of Christ to be seen in us we need to be quick to "mourn" in repentance whenever impurity in any form in our lives raises its ugly head. To be filled up to all the fullness of God we first must empty out all sin and defilement. So let us be quick to "mourn" and in repentance deal with all sin and allow the Comforter to bring forth the beauty of Jesus in you.

### **Lesson 3 – Character: Our Identity in Christ – filled up to all the fullness of God**

#### **Meek, Gentle, Humble**

Matt 5:5 ... *“Blessed are the gentle (meek, humble), for they shall inherit the earth.”*

Again, we move in our progression from brokenness to mourning to meekness. The result of seeing our sin and responding in mourning and repentance is that we are brought to the state of meekness or humility. To the degree to which we are “poor in spirit”, “broken” before God, and allow Him to fulfill His purpose in us through “mourning”, will be the degree to which we walk in meekness, gentleness and humility. Like climbing stairs, we retain the virtues already learned and developed and then add more, step by step – and with each step we go higher and our view gets grander and grander.

Meekness, gentleness or humility is the opposite of self-righteousness, arrogance, pride, haughtiness or defensiveness. Meekness and humility are other words for being gentle, unpretentious, gracious and self-effacing, submitted, yielded, and teachable.

Meekness or gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit. As we abide in the Vine and His life sap flows in and through us the fruit of the Vine is developed in us – and one of the fruit is meekness or gentleness. As we submit to the operation of the un-grieved Spirit, in other words we fully co-operate with Him, He is free to bring us to maturity in Christ, and His fruit is seen in us. As we meditate upon the Word and the Holy Spirit brings us a revelation of Christ, as Jesus said He would, and as we walk in obedience to the revealed truth so we will find humility, meekness, or gentleness emerging and being a fruit folks see in us.

Matt 11:29 Jesus said ... *“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

#### **The earth**

What is ... ***“the earth”*** referred to in Matt 5:5?

Matthew is writing primarily the Hebrew people so he, quoting Jesus, would have used the Hebrew word אֶרֶץ *erets* for “earth”. It is the word used for “earth” (Gen 1:1) and “country” or “land” (Gen 12:1).

The “earth” as used here by Jesus in the beatitudes has a twofold meaning:

1. The Promised Land – the land or territory promised to Israel (God’s people). This is the land that was promised to Abram and his seed in Gen 12:1.

In those days the world was divided into two areas – the land of Israel in which God’s people lived and worshipped God, and the lands of the nations in which the gentiles lived and worshipped idols.

In the Promised Land was the Ark of the Covenant – the Presence of God. So the “earth” Jesus is referring to in Matt 5:5 is the ***place of the presence and revelation of God.***

So the “land” or “earth” the meek, humble or gentle inherit is the place of God’s continual personal presence and revelation – the place or situation in which we see who He is and who we are in Christ. For us that place is in our hearts. It’s the place where the un-grieved Spirit reigns and gives us revelation of our Lord.

2. The “Earth” or “land” as referred to in:

Psalm 2:8      ... *“Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession.”*

The “*ends of the earth*” include every nation of the world – none are excluded. So the meek, humble or gentle are promised that their inheritance will be the salvation of the nations. In meekness and gentleness they will influence and bring the nations to the Lord – their nation as well as all the others.

So putting the two together we see that as we live before the Lord with an attitude of humility and meekness or gentleness we inherit and therefore dwell in the place of the presence and revelation of the Lord, and as He reveals more of Himself to us the more the fruit of meekness or gentleness will be developed in us, and the more this is evident in us the more this fruit will be seen and will attract the people from darkness to the light. Meekness and gentleness will win the hearts of the lost to Christ – and so we will inherit the people of our land.

2 Chr 7:14      ... *“If My people who are called by My name **humble** themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will **heal their land**.”*

This course is all about Character – Conduct – Influence. Through meekness we receive revelation of who we are in Christ and our place in the purpose of God in reaching those in darkness around us. Growing in Christ and knowing who we are in Christ, expressing Christ in our walk before others, for the purpose of being salt and light in the world so they can come to know Him as their Lord and Saviour.

So as we stand before our Lord in brokenness, poor in spirit, totally dependent on Him, allowing the un-grieved Spirit to reveal Christ to us, and in seeing Him in His purity and holiness we respond in mourning and seek to have every defilement removed so we may stand before Him pure, and as this brings us to our knees in humility, meekness and gentleness – He will be seen in us and the people of our land will be influenced and healed and drawn to Him. We will inherit the “land or earth” of our nation and the nations around.

### **Hunger and Thirst**

Matt5: 6      ... *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”*

Before we look more closely at this beatitude we need to make something clear about the righteousness being spoken of here.

There are two aspects to righteousness.

1. **Righteousness which is imputed or reckoned to us.** These are legal terms – which mean that righteousness is accredited to us. The righteousness of Christ is accredited to us and when the Father looks at us He sees us as righteous. This righteousness is a gift freely given to us in Christ. When we are born again an exchange of nature takes place – old sin nature out and new righteous nature placed in us – we become ... *“partakers of the divine nature”* (2 Pet 1:4). This **righteousness** is associated with **justification**. The Father sees us as righteous in His sight because He sees us justified – “just-as-if-I’d” never sinned – because Jesus has carried away our sin and exchanged it for His righteousness.

Rom 4:25 -5:1 ... *“He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our **justification**. Therefore, having been justified by faith, **we have peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Rom 5:17-21 ... *“For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of **the gift of righteousness** will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so **through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men**. For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

Rom 6:23 ... *“For the wages of sin is death, but the **free gift** of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Rom 3:21-24 ... *“But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the **righteousness of God** through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being **justified as a gift by His grace** through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”*

Eph 2:8-9 ... *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the **gift of God**; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*

Rom 10:9-10 ... *“if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in **righteousness**, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”*

Rom 8:10 ... *“If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.”*

- Gal 2:20-21 ... *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."*
- 1 Cor 6:17 ... *"But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit."*
- 1 Cor 1:30 ... *"But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption."*
- 2 Cor 5:21 ... *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

As believers we have been made righteous as a gift – this righteousness we cannot work for nor do anything to make it more complete. When we were born again and Christ came to take up residence in us, and we became one in spirit, Righteousness came to reside in us.

2. **Righteousness which is evidenced or worn** – This righteousness is associated with **sanctification**. Sanctification is the process by which we "put on" righteousness – righteousness is transferred from spirit to soul and finally seen in our outward words and actions. This righteousness is an attribute or quality seen in our behavior. The righteousness spoken of in Matt 5:6 refers to the righteousness that is transferred from Christ who is our righteousness within our spirit to our soul (mind, will, emotion – our command centre) so that His righteousness in us may be seen outwardly in our attitudes, words and actions. This is the righteousness Jesus says we should hunger and thirst after in Matt 5:6.

As believers, containers of Christ who is our righteousness, but who still are subject to the sinful pulls of the flesh and have unrenewed mind our desire should be to live and be free from sin in all its forms and its every manifestation, because sin separates us from God. Sin grieves the Holy Spirit, and to live in a blessed state we must not grieve the Spirit. So if we have the desire to be right with God, walking in righteousness, expressing Christ in our lives, and that's what hungering and thirsting after righteousness means, we are blessed.

So the hunger and thirst after righteousness spoken of here is simply the longing to live a holy and pure life. It means one's supreme desire in life is to know God and be in fellowship with Him, walking in the light with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Remember this is a choice, an act of our free will; we can be as close or as far from God as we will. We can choose to live a life of compromise, or settle for nothing less than the best. So let us choose to draw near to Him and ask the Holy Spirit to stir up within us a deep hunger and thirst after righteousness, and enjoy the blessedness of intimate fellowship with our Lord. Jesus said, "If you hunger and thirst ... you will be filled" What a blessed promise!

- Eph 4:22-24 ... *"in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of*

*your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."*

1 Tim 6:11 ... *"But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness."*

2 Tim 2:21-22 ... *"Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."*

2 Tim 3:16 ... *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for **training in righteousness**; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."*

Heb 12:9-11 ... *"Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful **fruit of righteousness**."*

1 John 2:29, 3:7, 10 ... *"If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who **practices righteousness** is born of Him. ... Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous ... By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother."*

Rev 22:11-12 ... *"Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who **is righteous**, still **practice righteousness**; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy. Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done."*

So now with the understanding of the righteousness (of sanctification) we are to hunger and thirst after let us continue on examining Matt 5:6.

If you have ever been sick you will understand that sick people generally don't have much of an appetite.

Years ago when we had dogs we quickly found out that the first sign of them being unwell was the loss of their appetite. Then off to the vet they were taken and sure enough illness was detected and diagnosed and treatment prescribed. As soon as they were well again you could not stop them looking for something to eat! They were hungry and very happy for that hunger to be satisfied!

Spiritually it is exactly the same. Hunger and thirst for righteousness and truth is a sure sign of spiritual wellbeing.

The Psalmist had a good appetite for God; he wanted every bit of God he could possibly get:

Ps 42:1-2 ... *"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God."*

Ps 63:1 ... *"O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water."*

Ps 36:9 ... *"For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light."*

John 4:14 ... *"but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."*

John 6:35 ... *"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.'"*

Our bodies need the intake of fluids for us to live. Thirst is something we have to have to drive us to finding water or something to drink. You can't live without the driving force of thirst. But equally true is the fact that thirst unquenched will ultimately lead to death – so satisfying thirst is also essential.

The same is true about hunger. We must eat to live. We need the motivation of hunger to stir us up to find something to eat. Hunger must be satisfied or ultimately we will starve to death. And it's really nice and we get great satisfaction when the particular thing we're craving for is delivered!

What is your favourite food and beverage? A juicy steak? A spicy curry? Mum's roast chicken with crispy skin? Apple pie and ice cream? Sticky date pudding? Chocolate? Coffee, or coke, or apple juice, or lovely cold water? Whatever it is, you feel so satisfied and blessed when you have fulfilled the hunger and thirst cravings with your favourite food or drink.

In the natural as healthy normal beings we don't have to consciously do anything to make ourselves hungry or thirsty – it just happens naturally. But if it doesn't get satisfied we get very concerned and as time goes on we eventually go into a state of frantic craving for the hunger or thirst to be satisfied, and we'll go to great lengths satisfy those needs. In the natural we're just made this way with a built in automatic something in us that drives the forces of hunger and thirst in us as a natural process.

Now what about our spiritual man? How common is it for folks to naturally or unconsciously hunger and thirst after righteousness? If you go down the road and ask a whole lot of people if they're constantly craving for righteousness what will they say? Probably look at you as if you've just landed from Mars! That's because this kind of hunger and thirst is not natural.

What happens in us in the natural realm, our bodily hunger and thirst for food and drink, which happens without the prompting or work of the Holy Spirit, only happens to us in the spiritual realm through the entry and working of the Holy Spirit. You see, when we have a constant desire burning within us to draw



near to the Lord to know Him and His ways and to honour Him, we have crossed over from the natural to the supernatural. We cannot explain that other than to say we then are in the territory of being led and motivated by the Holy Spirit.

What happens in us in the natural that takes no conscious stimulus to create a hunger or thirst in us only happens to us in the Spiritual as the un-quenched or un-grieved Holy Spirit is free to stir the hunger and thirst for righteousness within us. And remember, doing nothing, remaining passive will quench the Holy Spirit and prevent Him from doing His work in us. We need constantly to be seeking Him, listening to Him and co-operating (obeying) with Him – then He can do His work in us.

Jer 29:13 ... “You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.”

So what we know and can say is that if our spiritual part is healthy, which means we are not grieving the Holy Spirit, we are co-operating fully with Him – listening and obeying His promptings and His Word – and He is free and able to do His work in us, then the hunger and thirst for ... “*the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (Matt 6:33) will be there stirring strongly within us. In that state we are truly blessed! For we **will** be satisfied ... “*filled up to all the fullness of God*”.

This is how the process of being ... “*conformed to the image of His Son*” (Rom 8:29) takes place.

We start and **continue** “broken”, “poor in spirit” co-operating with the Holy Spirit, not handcuffing Him by grieving Him; and as He does His work of refining us we **continually** respond in “mourning” repentance knowing the Comforter cares for us and His discipline is dispensed in love; and as He brings forth the fruit of “meekness or gentleness” we **continue** in this attitude of humility and enter deeper into the place of His presence and revelation; and as we willingly and **continually** submit to His work in us experiencing and responding to the hunger and thirst He stirs within us for righteousness and truth to be transferred from our spirit to thoroughly wash and renew our soul (mind, will and emotions) we will be satisfied and will be brought closer to the place of being ... “*conformed to the image of His Son*” (Rom 8:29) as we are ... “*filled up to all the fullness of God*” (Eph 3:19) and then as Christ is seen in us and others are drawn to Him we will see how we participate in the Father's great eternal plan ... “*that God may be all in all*” (1 Cor 15:28).

### **Continual not sporadic**

The word used by Jesus for hunger is a *present participle* – it signifies *continuous action*. It means blessed are those who hunger and keep on hungering.

Jesus is saying here that you are blessed if you have an appetite and thirst that is not sporadic or occasional, but rather one that continuously keeps you seeking Him and His righteousness. Like a child that is born – he or she eats and drinks regularly and is filled and nourished, and through this grows day by day until maturity is reached.

As we day by day spend time in the Word and fully co-operate with the Holy Spirit and He stirs up the hunger and thirst for righteousness we will be satisfied and will grow in Christ and put on Christ ... *until*

*we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).*

Rom 12:2 ... “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed (**continuous action**) by the renewing (**continuous action**) of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Eph 4:23-24 ... “be renewed (**continuous action**) in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

Phil 1:9-11 ... “And this I pray, that your love may abound still **more and more** in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

Col 3:1-2, 10 ... “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, **keep seeking** the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth ... put on (**continuous action**) the new self who is being renewed (**ongoing process**) to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.”

1 Tim 6:11 ... “pursue (**continuous action**) righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness”.

### **The diet that blesses**

Jesus says we will be satisfied (filled) with that for which we are hungering and thirsting. So what we hunger and thirst for is also very important.

This is definitely so in the natural – we need to be careful as to what we eat and drink. If you try and quench your thirst with a poisonous fluid or eat rotten food you’ll get very ill and may even die. So what we eat or drink is very important. It must benefit us and not destroy us.

In the spiritual realm it’s the same. Jesus is saying if you crave after Me and My righteousness you are blessed because your hunger and thirst will be satisfied with the very thing after which you long. Satisfied here means exactly that – satisfied – filled up – full and overflowing with Christ and His righteousness. That’s the pathway to being ... “*filled up to all the fullness of God*” (Eph 3:19). And that’s a very blessed state in which to be!

On the topic of what we should hunger and thirst after I would like to quote Martyn Lloyd-Jones:

According to the scriptures happiness is never something that should be sought directly; it is always something that results from seeking something else.

...The world is seeking for happiness. That’s the meaning of its pleasure mania, that is the meaning everything men and women do, not only in their work but still more in their pleasures. They are

trying to find happiness, they are making it their goal, their one objective. But they do not find it because, whenever you put happiness before righteousness, you will be doomed to misery. That is the great message of the Bible from beginning to end. They alone are truly happy who seeking to be righteous. Put happiness in the place of righteousness and you will never get it.

... Think of a man who is suffering from some painful disease. Generally the one desire of such a patient is to be relieved of his pain, and one can understand that very well. No-likes suffering pain. The one idea of this patient, therefore, is to do anything which will relieve him of it. Yes; but if the doctor who is attending this patient is also only concerned about relieving this man's pain he is a very bad doctor. His primary duty is discover the cause of the pain and to treat that. Pain is a wonderful symptom which is provided by nature to call attention to disease, and the ultimate treatment for pain is to treat the disease, not the pain. So if a doctor merely treats the pain without discovering the cause of the pain, he is not only acting contrary to nature, he is doing something that is extremely dangerous to the life of the patient. The patient may be out of pain, and seems to be well; but the cause of the trouble is still there. Now that the folly of which the world is guilty. It says, 'I want to get rid my pain, so I will run to the pictures, or drink, or do anything help me forget my pain.' But the question is, What is the cause of the pain and the unhappiness and the wretchedness? They are not happy who hunger and thirst after happiness and blessedness. No. 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.'

This is equally true, however, of many within the Church. There are large numbers of people in the Christian Church who seem to spend the whole of their life seeking something which they can never find, seeking for some kind of happiness and blessedness. They go round from meeting to meeting, and convention to convention, always hoping they are going to get this wonderful thing, this experience that is going to fill them with joy, and flood them with some ecstasy. They see that other people have had it, but they themselves do not seem to get it. So they seek it and covet it, always hungering and thirsting; but they never get it.

Now that is not surprising. We are not meant to hunger and thirst after experiences; we are not meant to hunger and thirst after blessedness, if we want to be truly happy and blessed, must hunger and thirst after righteousness. We must not put blessedness or happiness or experience in the first place. No that is something that God gives to those who seek righteousness. Oh, the tragedy that we do not follow the simple teaching and instruction of the Word of God, but are always coveting and seeking this experience which we hope we are going to have. The experiences are the gift of God; what you and I are to covet and to seek and to hunger and thirst for is *righteousness*.

### **Character or Input**

In this part of this study we have been considering CHARACTER or INPUT – learning who we are in Christ and putting on Christ, so that His character may be formed in us. In Matt 5:3-6 Jesus has laid out the principles by which we will seek and find Him. The holy Spirit helps us learn Christ and put on Christ as we approach Him continually in an attitude of brokenness and poverty, empty and in need of filling, mourning and repentant, ready to learn and obey, in meekness and humility ever ready for more revelation of Christ, and hungering and thirsting after the righteousness and truth that is ours in Christ – that we may be renewed in our minds and put on Christ.

### **Ephesians 1-3**

Now let us take these principles from the beatitudes and see how they align with and apply to what Paul teaches us, by the Holy Spirit, in Ephesians concerning the character of Christ being formed in us.

In Eph 1:3 he tells us that our heavenly Father (the one who has birthed us into His family) has ... ***"blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."***

So when we were born again, the moment we believed and the life giving Seed, Christ, was birthed in our spirit, along with Him came every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. What a deposit! What an inheritance! Talk about inheriting the kingdom of heaven! Talk about being blessed!

Then in the next few verses (1:4-6) he tells us the Father's eternal plan is for us to live in Christ, holy and blameless before Him, and that we would be brought to the place of adoption or recognition as mature sons and daughters. That's the characteristics the Father desires in us – holy and blameless, attaining ... ***"the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ"*** (Eph 4:13).

For us to live the holy and blameless life and to grow to maturity so that Christ may be seen in us, all the spiritual blessings have to flow out from our spirit to wash and renew our souls (the mind will and emotion part of us). Our soul is our "command centre" – the place where thinking, reasoning, deciding and feeling takes place. So as we are renewed and "put on" Christ in the command centre (our soul), He will be seen in us through the attitudes, decisions, expressions we make. His character will be seen and will be operating in us.

So the next thing Paul shows us is how this takes place:

To start off with we must recognize that ... ***"we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them"*** (Eph 2:10). We are **HIS workmanship** – He is the Potter and we are the clay. Our part is to fully and willingly submit to His workmanship. The Holy Spirit has been given to us to lead, guide, teach and mould us and we are to submit to His workmanship. The kingdom of heaven is ***the rule, or working, of the un-grieved Spirit in the believer.***

Then in Eph 1:15-23 we find out that we are to bow before the Father in brokenness, in poverty, in mourning, in meekness, and hungering and thirsting for the revelation and leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit, without whom we will never make it, to come to the knowledge of Christ, the knowledge of who He is and who we are in Him, His calling and purpose for us, to understand how and why He considers us (and all those who are yet to be saved) to be His glorious inheritance, and to know the surpassing greatness of His power toward us to bring all these things to happen so that we can function fully and properly as His body, in full cooperation with and under the headship of Christ. How blessed is that!

In Eph 3:14-19 Paul goes on to instruct us that we in meekness and humility, hungry and thirsty with expectancy to be filled, are to bow before the Father ... ***"from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with***

*power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, **that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.**"*

As we do this His power works within us so that we are brought to the realization of the Father's eternal desire and plan – that Christ be formed in us, so that ultimately ... *"God may be all in all"* (1 Cor 15:28). And we and all the angels can then cry out ... *"to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."* (Eph 3:21).

### **Finally**

Once we have come to this stage in the "progression" and we hunger and thirst for righteousness and we are "satisfied" as the Holy Spirit brings us a deeper revelation of Jesus Christ and He is formed in us, we reach the stage of "walking in the Spirit" and we move from intake to output, from character to conduct – from learning and putting on Christ to expressing Him in our thoughts, attitudes, words and actions. And so now we move to the next section in the discourse on the beatitudes.

## **Lesson 4 – Conduct: Connected to 'your world' – expressing the Christ life**

### **From character to conduct**

In the Beatitudes Jesus set out the order and emphasis of things. In fact in all His teachings His primary emphasis is on **being** rather than on **doing**. Being precedes doing. The character of Christ has to be formed in us before He can be seen in our outwards actions. In Christ, character precedes conduct, and if not, then our conduct will not be a reflection of who He is. ... *it's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me* (Gal 2:20). He is my life and my all and He, not I, is in control. It is not me as a natural person who is controlling my attitude trying to be a Christian in my various ways; it's the Holy Spirit, as I submit to Him, in control revealing the character of Christ in me so that He is the source of every activity. Our whole life is to be an expression or proclamation of who we are – in Christ. To put it simply: if the character of Christ is not formed in us, our actions and attitudes will not reflect Him.

1 John 2:5-6 ... *By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."*

### **Containers Expressing Christ**

We were created to be vessels, containing and living by the life of Christ. As vessels we are not the contents, Christ is. The purpose for containing Him is that He may be expressed through us. We cannot produce His life, we can only live in dependent union and express His life. The frustration comes when the vessel tries to become the contents. This is what happens when we try to become "like Christ". God never wanted us to try and become "like Christ", actors trying to be someone they can never be. He merely wants us to be vessels that contain Him and let Him flow out of us. He wants us to come to the point where we say ... "I only do and say what I see and hear in Christ, as I live in dependent union with Him who is my life". We are to be receivers and expressers of the Person with whom we are in union. Our union with Christ does not mean that we are swallowed up by Him and lose our personality. He will operate through you just like you are, through your unique personality. But it's His life and character operating in and through you the container.

Think of a watering can. The can is there for the purpose of containing and distributing the water to the garden, so that the plants can be watered and have life. You are the watering can and He is the water. As you contain and pour Him forth, the world will see Him and receive His life.

It is a mystery ... Christ in you, the hope of glory. Not your life, but His. Not you attempting to produce His life, but you drawing near to Him, abiding in Him and allowing His life to flow through you and be seen outwardly as you give expression of Him. As you rest in Him and trust Him to live through you, He will be seen in you through your unique personality. Looks like you, just as you are, but it's His life shining through you, to the glory of the Father.

So we start with **being** and then out of who we are in Christ will follow the **doing**. We are told that if we hunger and thirst after righteousness we ... *"shall be satisfied"* (or *"filled"* KJV). If you are filled it implies you are full. You are full of that for which you hungered and thirsted – righteousness. Being full of

righteousness means that means if you are “bumped” that which will “spill” out of you will be whatever you’re full of – and in this case it is righteousness.

So now we move now to the next beatitude in the sequence to where character, who we are, is expressed through our conduct, our doing.

### **First test**

Matt 5:7 ... *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”*

As always, the Lord has purpose in placing this particular beatitude next in the order of what He is teaching us.

God is Holy – that is the foundation of His being – and because He is holy He is righteous, just, merciful and gracious.

Now because He has, in Christ, made us ... *partakers of the divine nature* (2 Pet 1:4) which means that now ... *“it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me”* (Gal 2:20), He expects us to live by and express that new divine nature, and so He says to us ... *“Therefore, prepare your minds for action, be sober, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but according to Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behaviour; because it is written, You shall be holy, for I am holy”* (1 Pet 1:13-16).

In simple terms, God is saying to us, because the nature I have placed in you in Christ is holy (and out of that holiness flows His righteousness, justice, mercy and grace), let’s see that in your outward expressions and actions. This is consistent with what He requires of us as stated by the prophet Micah:

Mic 6:8 (NKJV) ... *“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”*

It is also reflected in the Psalmists words:

Psalm 85:9-13 (KJV) ... *“Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him; that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before Him; and shall set us in the way of His steps.”*

Mercy and truth can operate on earth when heavens righteousness is what fills and occupies us.

Now why has Jesus followed the beatitudes which deal with character (Matt 5:3-6) with this particular one (Matt 5:7) first? ... *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”*

Because this will really test who we **are** – and whether we truly are established in Christ.

Jesus is saying, if you truly are poor in spirit, broken, and totally reliant on Him and are fully submitted to the Holy Spirit to work His work in you (which is what the Psalmist means by “them that fear Him”) ; and you continually mourn and deal with any revealed sin so that only the pure character of Christ may be found in you; and in meekness and gentleness you abide in Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal and bring forth the fruit of the spirit in you; and through hungering and thirsting after righteousness your soul (mind, will and emotions centre) has been filled and established in righteousness – then let’s see it in your actions. Consistent with that righteousness is the justice, mercy and grace of God.

And so the first, and probably hardest, test is the evidence of who you **are**. If Christ has truly been formed in you and ... *as he is so are you in this world* (1 John 4:17), then His character will be evidenced in your attitudes, words and actions. So Jesus’ test number 1 asks: does His mercy freely flow from you?

### **What is mercy?**

To start with, mercy is not just merely possessing or feeling pity, but rather it is being actively compassionate. It is the outward action which gives evidence of those inner feelings and motivations.

Mercy, grace, justice and righteousness are all intertwined and consistent with and complimentary to each other. God’s justice and righteousness are satisfied and dispensed through and because of His mercy and grace.

God’s grace gives us what we don’t deserve – forgiveness and eternal life; His mercy does not give us what we do deserve – punishment and eternal damnation.

Now, imagine yourself to be like a bucket (container) filled with the nature and character of Christ. There is a tap fitted to the bucket so that if it is opened the contents will flow out. In the case of this beatitude the test is:

1. Faced with a situation that demands mercy will you choose to open the tap and dispense mercy? Or will you withhold mercy?
2. If you open the tap will mercy flow out, or will something else, like revenge, be dispensed?

So here the test of character, who you really are, is evidenced by what are you dispensing – mercy or revenge?

The world and the pulls of an un-renewed mind and emotions will lean toward the dispensing of revenge when wronged. Revenge is an outcome of pride being hurt. Pride is the antithesis of humility, meekness and righteousness – all the things Jesus has just been referring to before this beatitude on mercy. That’s why this test is so important and is the first test Jesus puts before us.

Let’s make the test personal: Think about the occasions, recent or old, where someone or a group of people have offended you; said something bad about you; done something really wrong and unfair to you; really upset you; or even simply just annoyed you, got under your skin. What did you do? And if someone in future does something unfair, horrible or irritating to you, what will you do?



Will you react in hatred and revenge, or will you operate in the supernatural and show mercy? What's in you, the container, which will flow out of you? This will be the test of character – of how much the character of Christ has been formed in you – it will reveal the depth of your hunger and thirst for righteousness. It will test whether your point of reference in all things has shifted from self to Christ.

### **How hungry and thirsty are you?**

Your response (or reaction) will be the evidence of your true hunger and thirst for righteousness – your desire for Christ to be all and for Him to be seen in you. And remember, if we are to be salt and light in the world of darkness it is only the light of Christ that will bring them to salvation.

So how do you make the offender feel? What is the effect of your response or reaction on them? Do your attitudes and actions towards them make them feel really bad, exposed, guilty, and shamed? Do you want them to be punished? Do you secretly hope for something bad to happen to them? Do you make sure everyone around them knows how horrible and unjust they have been to you? Do you engage in public prayer that subtly tells everyone about the problem ... “Oh Lord, you know how horrible sister so and so was to me, and all the unkind and totally untrue things she has been saying about me, and You know she said this and did that to me oh Lord, you saw it all, oh lord please help her to not do these horrible things. Lord she really needs your help. And please help me oh Lord, I'm so hurt, she's done me so much damage...”

Or does the grace and mercy you offer the offender them make them feel your love, acceptance and forgiveness? Does your grace and mercy allow you to cover their unkindness, injustice, unfairness, or irritability with love? Do you hide their fault by not acting in a way or not telling others about what has happened so that the offender is not exposed and shamed and made to feel bad or guilty? When you are “right” and they are “wrong” do you refuse to point the finger or to throw the “Book” at them? Even though you may have been hurt and the experience very painful, do you allow mercy to triumph over judgment?

1 Pet 4:8        ... *“love covers a multitude of sins.”*

1 Cor 13:4-5    ... *“Love is patient, love is kind ... love does not take into account a wrong suffered.”*

James 2:13     ... *“mercy triumphs over judgment.”*

Eph 4:30-32    ... *“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”*

The thing most contrary or opposite to the “natural man” – that which is “supernatural” – that which is of the nature and character of the “new man in Christ” – is when you show mercy, cover in love, and totally forgive the one who has offended you.

The merciful are those who understand and know their poverty of spirit; that they have nothing in and of themselves to offer and that their existence is based purely and completely on the mercy and grace of God. They know it is by his mercy and grace that ... *"in Him we live and move and have our being"* (Acts 17:28). And it is only when we come to this view of ourselves that we will have the right view of others and will offer them mercy.

So take a moment and ask yourself, "how am I responding to this first test Jesus has placed before me?"

### **They shall receive mercy**

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

Is this saying we have to show a whole lot of mercy before God will show mercy to us? No, not at all because, for a start, that's impossible. You can only export what you already have. Natural man is full of pride and not mercy. You have to have mercy before you can show mercy. If we have not first experienced and received God's great mercy we will not be able to dispense mercy. Mercy as we have already established is an attribute of God. From His holiness flows righteousness, justice, grace and mercy.

So what does this statement ... *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy"* really mean? Why does Jesus say mercy will be shown to the merciful?

Well to gain some understanding let's start off by looking at Psalms 23 and I paraphrase it here:

*... "The Lord is my shepherd, through His grace and mercy He has purchased me and brought me into His flock, He leads, He guides, He feeds, He is my all, therefore I shall not and do not want for anything. He makes me lie down in green pastures where I am filled with His goodness; He leads me beside quiet waters, the place of His peaceful presence where He restores my soul. He renews my soul, helps me to put on Christ in my mind, will and emotion centre. He guides me in the paths of righteousness where my thirst for Him is quenched and hunger for Him is satisfied so that His name, His character is established in me. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, the place where insults and injustice is thrown at me, I fear no evil, for You are with me and in me; Your rod and Your staff, your gracious directing and merciful uplifting in times of trouble, brings me comfort. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies – those who slander me, say spiteful things about me, irritate me and do unjust and unkind things to me; But that does not phase me in the slightest because You have anointed my head with oil; Your nature and character fills me and My cup overflows with who you are, I am filled with your goodness, mercy, grace and love. And having this assurance of your great love, grace and mercy one thing I know beyond doubt, that which is a certainty, is that Your goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, for I know I can call upon your mercy and grace in time of need, and so I know I will dwell in the place of Your presence, revelation, provision and power forever."*

What Jesus is assuring us in Matt 5:7 is that those who have tasted of His mercy, and experienced His forgiveness will know beyond shadow of doubt that He who is in us can and will flow from us in power to show that same mercy to those who offend us, and that as we live as dispensers of the mercy that flows from Him who is within us towards others, at times when we stumble we can with full assurance know He is also there to forgive us and cleanse us (1 John 1:9) by His ongoing mercy towards us. We shall receive mercy ... *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."*

### **Pure in Heart**

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

The second test is before us and its essential question is: do we have a pure heart? If we have truly "put on Christ" then we will have His heart, and that's what we should reflect.

We have two matters to consider here:

1. What is meant by "the pure in heart"?
2. What is meant by "they shall see God"?

### **Heart**

In order to understand what "the pure in heart" means, let us first look at what is meant by the "**heart**".

1 Thess 5:23 ... *"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

We are made up of spirit, soul and body.

**Spirit** – At salvation, the moment we are born again, an exchange takes place in your **spirit**, the 'old man' is exchanged for the 'new man'. Christ comes to take up residence in your spirit. 1 Cor 6:17 ... *"But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit"*. This work of salvation is instant, perfect and complete.

1 Pet 1:23 ... *"for you **have been** born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God"*.

**Soul** – The **soul** (mind, will and emotions) does not experience any immediate change when we are born again, but does change over time as our minds are renewed. The soul experiences an ongoing process of salvation. This requires that we cooperate with the Holy Spirit as he teaches us Christ and how to "put on Christ" and "walk in Christ" in our daily lives. This process of salvation of our souls will continue until we go to be with the Lord.

Jas 1:21 ... *"Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able **to save** your souls."*

Rom 12:2 ... *"be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*

**Body** – At salvation the **body** does not experience any change. As we grow older so our bodies begin to tire out and wear out, and eventually this body will pass away and return to dust. On that day, when we go to be with the Lord, we will receive a brand new imperishable body. So salvation of the body will happen in an instant sometime in the future.

1 Cor 15:51-53 ... *"Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality".*

So we are made up of the three parts, the totality of which makes up our entire being. Spirit and soul are two separate entities but which together make up our "spiritual" part which is housed in our "body" part. Our "heart" consists of our spirit and soul – our spiritual part. This is the totality of our inner or immaterial being – the part you can't see with the natural eye. It is the centre of our being and the source of every thought, action and activity.

For us to be "whole" and walk in "holiness" the pure and perfect life of Christ resident in our spirit, and with whom we are one in spirit, must be "put on" in our soul part. Our mind, will and emotion area needs to be "transformed" or "aligned" with Christ within. That's what the word means it instructs us to "work out" or "out-work" our salvation.

Phil 2:12 ... *"work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure".*

Allow the Holy Spirit to take that which is within our spirit and allow it to influence and transform our souls, so that we can operate in our entire being in a manner that is conformed to Christ.

So a "whole heart" or "undivided heart" or "united heart" is one where spirit and soul are fully aligned and in tune with each other.

## **Pure**

Now let's consider the word "*pure*". It means the absence of impurity or defilement.

If you see a label that says "pure apple juice" you expect exactly that; not a liquid that has substitutes like artificial colours and flavours, sweeteners and preservatives to make it taste and look like apple juice.

So "pure" in the context of the pure in heart, means a heart in which there is an absence of impurity and defilement – the absence of anything which will grieve or quench the Holy Spirit.

So does that mean that Matt 5:8 is referring to the purging and eradication of all inward sin and the attainment of sinless perfection? Definitely not! This side of heaven that is impossible. Just consider some of the scriptures written to believers on the matter of dealing with ongoing sins and this will be clear.

1 John 1:8 ... *"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us."*

Eph 4:32 ... *"Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."*

Luke 11:4 ... *"And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us."*

If God thought we could attain to sinless perfection in this life on earth then why would He have included passages like these in the Word? You see, He knows we are sinless and perfect in spirit because Christ has become our righteousness, but He knows our souls (mind, will and emotion) have been stained with sin and are in need of ongoing transformation and that we live in perishable, sin affected body. So "purity of heart" is not referring to the attainment of a state of sinless perfection.

So what is "pure" referring to in this passage?

It can be explained by looking at it from two angles – one with the emphasis on integrity, truth or absence of hypocrisy, and the second seeing it as meaning clean and without defilement.

**Integrity or absence of hypocrisy** – according to Jesus this is something the Scribes and Pharisees sadly lacked – they were all about the outward show of conforming to the Law but inwardly were a brood of vipers.

Matt 23:25-26 ... *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also."*

The real gospel is all about the heart – integrity and purity of heart. That's why Jesus had so much to say about the "heart" in His various teachings, stories and statements.

In His discourse which we know as the Sermon on the Mount, just after Jesus has delivered the message of the beatitudes, He includes an important statement which is relevant to our understanding of the word "pure".

Matt 6:22-23 ... *"The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is **clear**, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness."*

The word "clear" is from the Greek word *aploos* which means – single, simple, uncompounded, without fold, sound, and perfect.

Years ago the Lord let me experience something to help me understand the meaning of this word and this verse more clearly. This happened when we were living in the town of Kwe Kwe in the centre of Zimbabwe. We went to a sale at a local trading store and saw a bed cover (bed spread) we really liked. It was packaged up in the normal way – folded neatly and presented in a sealed cellophane package where all you see is the little that can be seen when something is packaged up. The colour and pattern looked

exactly like what we were after, so without hesitating we bought it. When we got home and opened the package and spread the new cover on the bed we were in for a big letdown – we discovered that it was a “second” and there were serious flaws in the patterning, and it did not look good at all. Unfortunately the sale had a “no returns” policy. But I am thankful to the Lord as He used it to teach me something valuable. The bed cover was “folded” and placed in the packaging to hide the flaws and only show the good part so as to make out that the whole item was like the visible part – it was not “without fold”; it was not “single” so that the flaws could be seen and the truth about the flaws made visible.

A “pure” heart is the same as a “single” heart, or a heart “without fold” – it’s a heart devoid of hypocrisy; it’s a heart of integrity; it’s a heart that is open and honest with nothing hidden.

Integrity comes from the word integer. An integer is a whole number – not a fraction. You get a fraction when you divide a whole number into parts ( $\frac{1}{2}$  or  $\frac{1}{4}$  etc). A “pure” heart or a heart of integrity is an “undivided heart” – it is “whole” and “pure” and “without fold”; nothing hidden and without hypocrisy. An “undivided heart” is one in which the soul is aligned with, united with, the spirit in which Christ dwells, and one which reflects Christ in all aspects.

**Clean and without defilement** – this is the second aspect of the meaning of “pure”. The Greek word used here is *katharoi* which means – clean, pure, unsoiled, and void of evil.

A verse very similar to Matt 5:8 ...*“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”* is found in Hebrews:

Heb 12:14 (KJV) ... *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”*.

Putting the two verses together this equates “purity” with “holiness” – without which we will not “see God”.

1 John 1:5-7 ... *“This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.”*

Purity and holiness means no mixing of light and darkness. If we are “pure” it means we are “clean and free of defilement” and He who is holy and pure who dwells in us will be seen in our attitudes, words and actions. That’s why it is important to constantly be checking our thoughts, attitudes and desires to see if their source is in Christ.

2 Cor 10:5 ... *“We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”*

So the “pure in heart” are those who continually check and where appropriate mourn about the state of their hearts – they are the ones who are constantly on the lookout to see where there may be any misalignment of soul and spirit and the need for transformation of soul, and are quick to co-operate

with the Holy Spirit in His soul renewal work. They are those who are poor in spirit – the ones displaying broken and contrite hearts – hearts in which everything that would raise itself up to displace God as number one has been shattered and thrown down, that He may be all in all.

The pure in heart are those who are outwardly seen as pure because they are those who inwardly are “broken” and “mourn”.

They are the ones who understand Col3:1-2 ... *“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”*

This last verse is another way of saying the pure in heart, those whose lives reveal Christ outwardly, will “see Him” – “be revealed with Him in glory”. This leads us to the next thing we must consider – the meaning of ... *“they shall see God”*.

But before we go there, one last thought on “pure in heart”:

2 Chr 15:17 ... *“But the high places were not removed from Israel; nevertheless Asa’s heart was **blameless** all his days.”*

2 Chr 25:2 ... *“He (Amaziah) did right in the sight of the LORD, yet not with a **whole** heart.”*

1 kings 6:7 ... *“The house (Solomon’s temple), while it was being built, was built of stone **prepared** at the quarry, and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any iron tool heard in the house while it was being built.”*

Deut 27:6 ... *“You shall build the altar of the LORD your God of **uncut** stones, and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the LORD your God.”*

In these four verses the words “blameless”, “whole”, “prepared” and “uncut” are all translations from one Hebrew word *shalem*. The root of this word *shalem* (שלם) means – complete, sound, at peace, whole, harmonize. In total it means “being complete and harmonious”.

Asa’s heart was “complete and harmonious” with God, while Amaziah’s was not. The stones for the building of Solomon’s temple, the meeting place with God, were cut and “completed” at the quarry so that they were “complete” and ready for “harmonious” fitting together in the walls of the temple. Moses instructed the people to build the altar of the Lord with stones that were “whole”, for “complete and harmonious” construction.

1 Pet 2:5 ... *“you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”*

Those who are being built up as a spiritual house unto the Lord, those who dwell in the presence and place of revelation of God are those whose hearts are “pure” – “complete and harmonious” with Him.

## Seeing God

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

Now we turn our attention to the meaning of ... *"for they shall see God."*

Ultimately those who are born again and have been made righteous with the righteousness of Christ will be accepted into the eternal presence of God and live with Him throughout eternity. In that sense they will "see God". In fact everyone, pure in heart or not, will see God on judgment day. But in this teaching Jesus is referring to something for the here and now as well as for the future when he uses the term ... *"for they shall see God."*

Seeing God is referring to seeing a measure of His glory here on earth. For example this is what Moses experienced when he had been in God's presence and his face shone (Ex 34:29-35), it's what Gideon experienced in the visitation of the angel of the Lord when the fire sprang up from the rock to consume his sacrifice (Judges 6:11-24), it's what happened to Samson's parents when they saw the flame from the altar go up and the angel ascend to heaven in the flame (Judges 13:15-23), and it's what the three Hebrew men experienced when the Lord appeared in the fiery furnace with them and prevented them from getting consumed (Dan 3:24-27).

Although the Bible clearly states that no man has seen or can see God with the naked eye (John 1:18 and 1 Tim 6:16), we "see Him" and know Him as well as seeing a measure of His glory with the eye of the spirit and in the effects of His presence. This is what we see when we see miracles. We see Him through the eye of faith, but we also see Him in the sense of knowing Him, feeling and enjoying His presence as we fellowship with Him, knowing He is near and with us.

"Seeing God" occurs when we see angels he has sent for our benefit; when we have visions or dreams from Him; when we hear His audible voice or voice in our spirit; when we witness the miraculous; when he answers our prayers; when He speaks powerfully to us from His Word and brings us revelation knowledge. All these things constitute what "seeing God" means to those who are pure in heart.

1 John 3:2-3 ... *"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him **purifies himself, just as He is pure.**"*

The glorious hope and expectation we have that one day we will see Him face to face should be a huge motivating force within us to live in readiness and purity of heart. Jesus promised us that if we walk with pure hearts He will make Himself known to us, He will be present to answer our prayers and He will perform the miraculous for us and through us. And that's exactly what happened when Peter's shadow fell upon the sick to heal them (Acts 5:15).

Psalms 24:3-4 ... *"Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully."*



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

Finally, James sums up our responsibility:

Jas 4:8-10 ... *"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."*

### **Conclusion:**

What the world needs and longs for is:

- not to be judged and rejected but for mercy – for love, acceptance and forgiveness;
- not for hypocrisy and deception but for and purity – honesty, truth and integrity.

So Jesus has presented us with two challenges or questions:

- Have we hungered and thirsted for Him and His righteousness and been filled so that His mercy will overflow and be seen in our conduct and attitudes?
- Have we mourned and purified ourselves so that His purity, holiness, and integrity can be seen in our lives?

If we can answer in the affirmative then Jesus guarantees us His blessing! His mercy and His presence.

## **Lesson 5 – Conduct: Connected to 'your world' – expressing the Christ life**

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

Once again, in the progression or order in which Jesus makes these statements, we advance a step further.

So in looking at this beatitude we need to ask two questions:

1. What is a peacemaker?
2. What is the meaning of ... "they shall be called sons of God?"

### **Sons of God**

We will look at the second one first – "they shall be called **sons** of God".

To understand this we need to make a distinction between being the terms "child" or "children" of God and "sons" of God.

In the Greek there are a number of distinctly different words relating to child, son, infant, babe, offspring and so on, and we will look at the four main ones:

**Teknon** (τέκνον) – means child in the sense of being a descendent or offspring.

Luke 1:7 ... *"But they had no **child**, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years."*

When we were born again we became the children (tekna) of God. God became our Father and we became His children – His offspring.

John 1:12-13 ... *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children (tekna) of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."*

From this word we also have Teknion (τεκνίον) – meaning child but used in the more endearing way as John uses it in 1 John 2:1 ... *"My **little children**."*

**Paidos** (παιδός) or **pais** (παῖς) – means young child. A child, boy or girl, in respect of age ranging from infancy to pre-adulthood.

Matt 2:13-15, 19-20 ... *"Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up! Take the Child (paidion) and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child (paidion) to destroy Him.' So Joseph got up and took the Child (paidion) and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. He remained there until the death of Herod (i.e. for a few years) ... But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to*

*Joseph in Egypt, and said, Get up, take the Child (paidion) and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's (paidiou) life are dead."*

**Nēpios** (νήπιος) – literally means "without the power of speech", an infant, a babe. Also refers to the simple minded, immature, or spiritually immature babes.

Matt 21:16 ... *"And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants (nēpion) and nursing babies (ones that suck) You have prepared praise for Yourself'?"*

1 Cor 3:1 ... *"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants (nēpiois) in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it."*

**Huios** (υἱός) – meaning son, descendent (irrespective of sex) who displays the characteristics of that person's father. i.e. an offspring who has come to maturity and has embraced the father's nature and characteristics.

When Jesus was baptized by John, just before He entered His period of ministry, the Father spoke from heaven to announce His Son, the Man Jesus now mature and ready for service as His representative on earth.

Matt 3:17 ... *"and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son (huios), in whom I am well-pleased."*

Matt 5:44-45 ... *"But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may show yourselves to be sons (huioi) of your Father who is in heaven."*

Eph 1:4-5 ... *"just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will."*

The word used here for "adoption as sons" is huiiothesia (υἱοθεσία) – comes from a combination of two words "huios" (son) and "tithēmi" (place or appoint) and is literally translated "placing in the condition of a son", "appointed as son" – It refers to one who has been trained in the character and ways of his or her father and is recognized as having reached maturity as the father's true representative.

So if we paraphrase Eph 1:4-5 it means: we were chosen to be His children, the born again – in Christ – which made us holy and blameless as He is our salvation, and then He planned for the Holy Spirit to be given to be our tutor to train us in His ways so that we could "put on Christ" and rise from infancy or childhood to maturity in Him as "mature sons" – placed or appointed sons – representatives of the Father – His mature ambassadors. Because this is His will and purpose for us.

Something worth noting – Jesus makes the difference between *young boy* (paidos or pais) and *son* (huios) clear in His reply to the royal official as recorded in John's gospel :

John 4:49-53 ... *“The royal official said to Him, “Sir, come down before my child (paidon) dies.” Jesus said to him, “Go; your son (huios) lives.” The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started off. As he was now going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son (pais) was living. So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. Then they said to him, “Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.” So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, “Your son (huios) lives”; and he himself believed and his whole household.”*

The man’s *young boy* (paidos) was on death’s bed and he asked Jesus to heal him. In answering him, Jesus speaks prophetically when he uses the term *son* (huios) and not *young boy* (paidon) because He knows not only that the *young boy* (paidos) will be healed but that he will live and be well and grow to adulthood as a (huois) *mature son*. This prophetic revelation caused the man and his household to believe and be saved.

### **Mature sons**

Now back to our verse in Matt 5:9 ... *“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called **sons** (huioi) of God”*. That is saying that the peacemakers are those who will be recognized as the **mature sons** of God. Those who are mature in Christ, those who have “put on Christ” and are expressing Him in their conduct – being peacemakers – show themselves to be **mature sons**.

### **Peacemakers**

Now we look at the word “**peacemaker**”. Why does Jesus bring in the matter of peacemaking here at this point?

We have just come from the beatitudes that dealt with mercy and purity of heart. The pure in heart who “see” and “know” the Father and understand His heart of mercy know that the reason for His mercy, the purpose in sending His Son to become a man to take our place on the cross is so that sinners can be forgiven and restored to Him – to be at “peace” with Him. Jesus came as the “Peacemaker”.

Rom 5:1, 11 ... *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ... and not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”*

Col 1:19-20 ... *“For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.”*

Eph 2:13-18 ... *“But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For **He Himself is our peace**, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. And He came and*

*preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father."*

Jesus came to put to an end the hostility between us and God, and us and others – so that there should be no more racial prejudice or people trying to get even with one another.

Peace is a person and His name is Jesus, and he lives in us. If we are filled with Him who is our peace we have the attribute of being a peacemaker, and so that is what should be seen in our responses and actions towards others.

2 Cor 5:18-19 ... *"Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation."*

Rom 14:17, 19 ... *"for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit ... So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another."*

The meek (the humble and gentle) – those who live in the place of God's presence and revelation and see as He sees and value what He values – will be those who operate as peacemakers.

Col 3:12-17 ... *"So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."*

Eph 4:3 ... *"being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*

Jas 3:18 ... *"And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."*

Why is there so much trouble in the world, and why is it so difficult to establish and maintain peace? Well, the answer is simply this: because selfishness, self-centredness, pride, lust and greed all abound. And that's because the heart of man is evil (Eccl 9:3; Jer 17:9; Mark 7:21-23). Very simply, where **self is the point of reference** trouble and disunity will abound. Self only wants what self wants and has no thought for others. They always look at the matter with the questions – is this fair to *me*? Are *my* rights being violated? What will this do to *me*? How will this affect *me*? It's all about *me*.

On the other hand, those who have bowed with broken and contrite hearts and received the Peacemaker as Lord and Master of their lives; those who have mourned over sin and dealt with selfish attitudes and motives; those who are meek and humble who see others as more important than themselves; those who have been filled and walk in righteousness; the merciful; and the pure in heart are those who have put aside everything of self and have **Christ and Christ alone as their point of reference** in all things. Their eyes are fixed on Him and they are prepared to suffer injustice and wrong doings in order to promote peace and bring glory to God. These are the pure in heart who not only “see”, “perceive” and “know” God but they view everything from His perspective – they view as it were through His eyes, and act accordingly. These are the peacemakers. They align with Paul the peacemaker’s words to the Philippians who were experiencing division:

Phil 2:3-5 ... *“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.”*

### **Active or passive**

Peacemaking can involve being either active or passive.

As **active peacemakers** we can contribute to peacemaking wherever we are through being selfless, approachable, loving, accepting and forgiving, and vulnerable and willing to be first to move – initiators of the process of peacemaking.

How do we actively promote peace? We act as facilitators of peacemaking by:

- Actively bringing people with divisions together, like Paul did in writing to the Philippians.
- Not hesitating to approach those who have offended us or those who we have offended, to seek reconciliation.
- Responding immediately and positively when someone else has initiated the action and come to you to sort out a difference.
- Offering to be an arbitrator in a dispute between two parties.

Paul gives us some good advice in respect of active peacemaking:

Rom 12:20-21 ... *“But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”.*

Note that heaping burning coals on a person’s head did not mean you were going to injure them, because in the day in which this epistle was written people would carry a container of live coals with them when travelling so they could kindle a fire and be able to cook their food. Giving them live coals speaks of blessing the person.

**Passively** we can promote peace by choosing to say and do nothing in response to provocation. We can turn a blind eye. We don't have to have the "last word". In love we don't take into account a wrong suffered.

But we need to be cautioned that passivity can also be negative. When someone has come to us to seek reconciliation, by being passive and doing nothing, by withholding positive action and response, we are not peacemakers but the exact opposite.

### **Blessed sons**

Why are peacemakers so blessed? Because they are containers of Him who is their peace; they stand out from the crowd who only know selfishness and pride; in meekness, humility and purity of heart they commit to peacemaking no matter the personal cost; and so they prove themselves to truly be the mature "sons of God"; they have the Father's approval as being His authentic ambassadors – His sons. And hence, they are blessed!

### **The least shall be first**

We now come to the last of the beatitudes.

Matt 5:10-12 ... *"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."*

Verse 11 and 12 are really just verse 10 restated with some minor variations or amplifications to bring a fuller understanding of what Jesus is including in this last beatitude. In Hebrew literature repetition is used for emphasis. It tells you that what is being said is very important – take note.

This beatitude brings us around the full circle. In both the first beatitude, concerning the "poor in spirit", and in this last one, concerning "those who have been persecuted for righteousness sake", their reward is the same – "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." We started our journey by saying that the "kingdom of heaven" is "the rule of the un-grieved Holy Spirit in the believer." So what we see is that throughout our entire journey of life, blessing (God's blessing) begins and ends with one key thing – co-operating fully with the indwelling Holy Spirit so that He can help us "put on Christ" and then bring forth Christ in our attitudes, words and actions. He is our Tutor to bring us forth as the mature sons of God – those who have hungered and thirsted after righteousness, been filled, and who now walk in righteousness.

### **Persecution guaranteed for the righteous**

What this beatitude teaches us is that, as we walk in righteousness and Christ is seen in our conduct, Jesus says we will be persecuted but know that in His eyes you are blessed and your reward is great.

The Greek word dioko (διώκω) translated here as “persecuted” more literally means “to follow” or “to pursue with malignity”. In other words, this is what happens when someone follows you to trap, trip, annoy, mock or malign you. They are out to get you because your righteousness shows them up. Examples of this may be:

- The way the Pharisees constantly tried to trap Jesus with their questions or trying to get Him to say things they could hold against Him to malign Him.
- The way the Judaisers followed Paul always undermining the message of grace which he taught. These persecutors were “a thorn in the flesh” to Paul.
- The way the men from the synagogue of the Freedmen (Acts ch 6 & 7) told lies and used false witnesses against Stephen.
- The way Elijah was persecuted by Jezebel
- The way Daniel and his righteous friends were exposed by the Chaldeans before Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 3:8), and later by the satraps and governors before Darius (Dan 6:4).
- The way the religious folks persecuted many of the early martyrs like John Huss
- The way early missionaries like Hudson Taylor as well as preachers like George Whitfield, and many others, were persecuted for righteousness sake.

1 Pet 5:8-10      ... *“Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”*

So if you are walking in righteousness you will be an enemy of the devil and he and his agents will be out to get you. For those who live righteous lives persecution is guaranteed.

What’s more, there is no promise that the persecution will go away or eventually turn around to where you are applauded and liked instead of being persecuted. The world and especially the “Pharisees” of modern day religion are never ever going to like having the “light” you shine expose their “darkness”. When your righteousness shows up their lack of righteousness they will want to put you down. You will never see the day where the world or the enemies of righteousness are going to say, “How godly you are. Oh you’re so full of God and so pure we really admire you. What a good and righteous person.” Jesus was God in the flesh. No one could be more righteous than Him. Yet see how He was persecuted relentlessly – to the point of death. The fact is, the more righteous you are the greater will be the intensity of the persecution you will face.

Luke 6:26      ... *“Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.”*

Very sadly the “ear ticklers” who propagate “easy believe-ism” and the “come-and-get gospel” have conned many to believe that Christianity and the Christian life is all about God wanting to get you to, and keep you in, a state of wealth, prosperity, unfailing health and blessings without any trouble or



things going wrong, because you can attain a faith so strong that will keep all the bad stuff away and release only the blessed life upon you. They teach that if you're experiencing trouble it's because your faith is not strong enough. They in fact teach the very opposite of what Jesus teaches in this beatitude. They teach that by attaining and having great faith you can keep trouble away and always walk in victory. That is tantamount to saying if your righteousness is so great you'll keep trouble away.

Well if you believe that then you have missed what Jesus is teaching us here and what the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

2 Tim 3:12 ... *"Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."*

Nowhere in the Word are we taught to seek or that we can attain a perfect "garden of Eden" state here on earth. Yes, Jesus went about doing good and healing all, and yes He does want us to live in health and to provide our needs, but He never says that we can attain a state where we will become exempt from persecution for righteousness sake. In fact He says if we truly are disciples of His and walk in righteousness we are guaranteed persecution. But He also assures us this is the place of the highest blessing.

John 16:33 ... *"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."*

### **Persecuted for righteousness sake**

Phil 1:29 ... *"For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake."*

But we need to be really clear about what constitutes persecution for righteousness sake. You see Jesus did not just say you'll be blessed if you are persecuted. You can be persecuted for a number of different reasons. Jesus made this matter clear – He said quite specifically you're blessed if you are persecuted **for righteousness sake**.

So let us briefly discuss the reasons for persecution that are not included and which do not yield blessing. They include:

- Being objectionable, obnoxious, offensive, unpleasant or distasteful
- Dogmatically holding to some religio-political cause
- Being an overzealous "Bible bashing" fanatic standing on street corners yelling statements or holding up slogans on banners condemning sinners
- Acting in a pious "holier-than-thou" manner, or being self-righteous
- Being a troublemaker

We could add many more to the list, and for certain if we behave in any of these manners we will be persecuted and reap trouble – but it will be trouble without reward or blessing from God.

1 Pet 2:20 ... *"For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God."*

Matt 6:1 ... *"Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven."*

It is clear, therefore, that none of these reasons for persecution render us as "blessed". It is only persecution ... ***"for righteousness sake"*** or, as Jesus elaborated in verse 11, persecution ... ***"on account of Me"*** that causes God to consider us and pronounces us as being blessed. Jesus in fact narrows down *"persecution for righteousness sake"* to offense that comes from our association with Him – *"on account of Me."* He is the reason we are persecuted. The world hates Christ because His light exposes their darkness.

John 1:4-5, 3:19-20 ... *"In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it ... This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."*

There is a distinct difference between light and darkness; Christians are different from non-Christians; we have a totally different nature to the unsaved. Jesus said (Matt 10:34) ... *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."* By this He was stating that the Light in Him and His followers would make them stand out against the world of darkness and the light would be repelled, rejected, hated, and fought against.

So this beatitude is really asking the question of us – are you so hungry and thirsty for righteousness, so desirous of living by and expressing the pure and holy life of Christ that you are prepared to face the stigma associated with the name of Jesus Christ? If so, you are blessed and your reward is great.

1 Pet 4:14 ... *"If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."*

For believers, the reality is that it is no longer you that lives, but Christ lives in you (Gal 2:20) and as Paul puts it (Phil 1:21) ... *"for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"*. So when you are persecuted it is really Christ in you who is being persecuted. The pain you feel when you face persecution is really His pain.

1 Sam 8:7 ... *"The LORD said to Samuel, 'Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me ...'"*

So we are not to take the persecution personally. It is not you but God with whom the assailant is angry. It is Christ in you who is being attacked. So we are not to *take into account a wrong suffered* but rather hand the matter to Christ and follow the Masters example and forgive ... *"For they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34).

In fact we are told to rejoice when we are persecuted because there is honour associated with being persecuted for righteousness sake. Our rejoicing is in Him who is our righteousness and the great reward He is preparing for us.

### **The honour and reward attached to persecution**

... *"for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

This statement says that as we stand up for Christ and express Him in our every word and action and are persecuted for His sake we are associated with and considered as being on the same level as the prophets and apostles of old. Hebrews 11 gives an account of these righteous people of old and the suffering they experienced for His name sake. So there is great honour and privilege associated with persecution for righteousness. It signifies the release of an anointing in us equivalent to that which was experienced by the prophets and apostles of old. No wonder Peter says ... *"If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."*

This is the glory Stephen experienced when he was being martyred for righteousness sake (Acts 7:55-56).

In fact immediately following the list of prophets who were persecuted for righteousness sake recorded in Hebrews 11, we are further encouraged by the example set by our Lord Himself:

Heb 12:2-3 ... *"fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."*

James 1:12 ... *"Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."*

Just consider Paul's prayer in Eph 1:17-20 ... *"that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him ... that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the ... surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. Which is in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."*

There is only need for resurrection power if there is first death – the need to be raised. If we want to experience the resurrection power of Almighty God – the power of God that brings life out of death; power to bring sinners to salvation; power to see an mighty move of God in our nation; power to heal and deliver – then simply allow the righteousness of Christ to be seen in you because with that comes persecution and with persecution comes resurrection power and glory.

2 Cor 1:9-10 ... *"indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us."*

True followers of Jesus, those who walk in righteousness, those who Jesus considers as comparable to the prophets of old, are those who live in the perpetual state of laying down and losing their lives that we may bring forth more fruit.

John 12:24-25 ... *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal."*

We do well to remember that we don't get promoted to the rank of prophet or recognised as such by the Lord by claiming to be a prophet, but by walking in righteousness and as a result being persecuted for His name sake.

And what are the words of Jesus to us who are persecuted for righteousness sake; persecuted on account of Jesus? He says:

*... "Rejoice and be glad, for your **reward in heaven is great.**"*

He Himself assures us of a reward in heaven. Wow! Something great to look forward to when we go to be with Him in Glory. For this reason He says, "Rejoice".

1 Cor 3:11-15 ... *"For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a **reward**. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."*

2 Cor 5:10 ... *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be **recompensed** for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."*

Rev 2:10 ... *"Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the **crown of life.**"*

1 Pet 5:4 ... *"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading **crown of glory.**"*

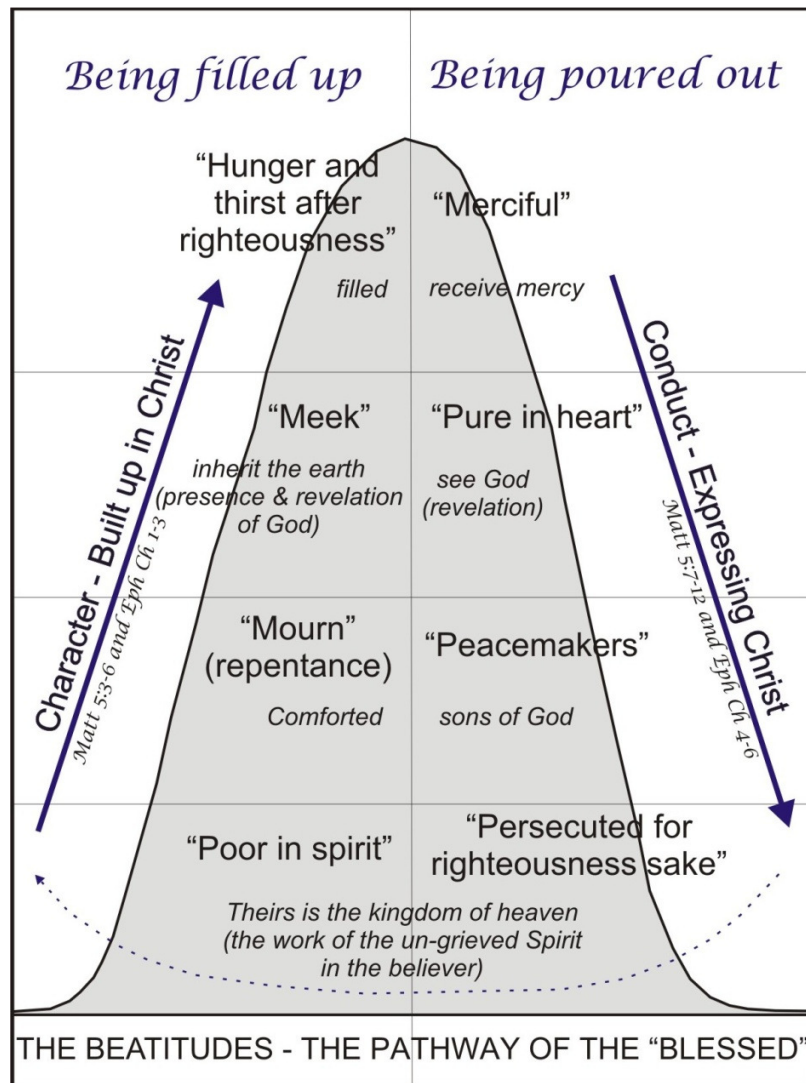
2 Tim 4:7-8 ... *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will **award** to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."*

We have every reason to rejoice because as we walk in righteousness no matter what happens to us we know beyond any shadow of doubt:

- Whose we are, and who we are in Christ
- Where we are going
- What awaits us when we get there

## Conclusion

What we have learned so far in this series of lessons may be summed up diagrammatically:



We start and end and go round and round growing more and more and being poured out more and more as we co-operate with the Holy Spirit as He completes His work in us – that Christ may be seen in us and be poured out of us so that we may be effective as salt and light in this world of darkness.

And finally, Paul sums it up for us:

2 Cor 4:7-18 ... *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you. But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we also believe, therefore we also speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

## **Lesson 6 – Influence: Salt and Light in a world of darkness**

In Christ's discourses He makes use of numerous colourful parabolic illustrations to help us understand and be able to relate to His teaching. In the passage from Matthew under consideration Jesus uses the following: salt, light, a city on a hill, bushel or basket and lampstand.

### **Salt and light**

Salt and light are used by the Lord to explain the influence that was to be exerted by His people on the world around them. In commencing the beatitudes Jesus showed that character, being built up in His ways, was supreme. He then proceeded to show that the reason for developing such character was not simply an end in itself or solely for our own benefit, but for the influence such character exerts.

*"You are the salt of the earth"* and *"you are the light of the world"* refers to those who have embraced what the Beatitudes describe and promise. This is not just anyone who glibly says, "I am a Christian", or "I regularly attend services on a Sunday". It excludes all who are not personally exemplifying the Beatitudes. Salt of the earth refers to those who *are* what the Beatitudes describe and promise. These are believers who inhabit the realm of the un-grieved Spirit; those who *abide* in Christ and express Him in their words and conduct. They are those in whose words, actions and attitudes Christ can be seen.

The influence is twofold, salt and light. These are distinct and different, and yet the figures merge into one thought, "salt of the earth," "light of the world."

**"Salt of the earth."** Why salt? What is the significance of salt?

Salt makes a person thirsty. So one influence of our lives on the world is to create in them a thirst after righteousness.

Salt is a seasoning; it enhances flavours and makes things taste more palatable. Salt sprinkled onto food or cooked into food is quickly absorbed into the food and while it cannot be seen its influence on the flavor is certainly pleasantly noticeable. Love, kindness, mercy, comfort and all the attributes of those who abide in Christ, will bring comfort and hope to a lost, suffering and dying world.

While salt has an aseptic quality (it is free from germs of disease, fermentation or putrefaction) it acts as an antiseptic, preventing the spread of disease or putrefaction. Salt does not cure corruption or decay. It prevents the spread of corruption and decay. If meat is tainted and going rotten, salt will not make it untainted and pure. But salt on the meat will prevent the spread of corruption to that which otherwise would become rotten. Without refrigeration, meat that is not salted would become rotten overnight. So the figure is that of a moral quality operating among and influencing people living in a world where there is a tendency towards evil, preventing the spread of corruption. The impurity of an evil person cannot be cured by a good person, working beside them; but the wrong things the good person will not do, and the undesirable things he will not say will give the other person next to them a chance, because it will check their conscience and make them think about their behavior. Salt is antiseptic.



So our function as believers, the salt of the earth, those who are submitted to the Lordship of Christ, is to live in the midst of humanity in this dark world of sin, and by living there according to the ethic of the Kingdom of God, expressing the character of Christ, to create a thirst for righteousness, to be a seasoning that provides hope and comfort, and to prevent the spread of evil.

It is the Lord's work to cure the sinful heart, only He can do that. However impure and corrupt the heart may be, He can cleanse it, and make it pure. We, His workmanship built up in Christ, are to live such that we give goodness its opportunity, and hold in check the forces of corruption. Our Lord emphasized this clearly with those gentle words of satire, *"But if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again."* So Jesus made it clear that He wants to live in and through us in a manner that will exercise this kind of influence in the world.

Salt that has lost its saltiness really refers to salt that has become contaminated with undesirable ingredients and is no use as salt. This speaks of believers who are not exemplifying what the Beatitudes describe and promise. They are not abiding in Christ. They walk in a manner that grieves the Holy Spirit. Their reference point in life is self and not Christ. And in John 15:5 Jesus stated very clearly that *apart* from Him we are nothing and can achieve nothing of eternal value.

John 15:5      ... *"he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."*

So the assumption which lies behind Jesus statement that you are "the salt of the earth" is that we are abiding in Christ, inhabiting the realm of the un-grieved Spirit, exemplifying what the Beatitudes describe and promise.

"You are the salt of the earth" speaks of the influence in and upon this world of sin for which each and every individual Christian is responsible.

**"Light of the world".** We are not only the salt of the earth, referring to the influence of moral quality; but, "You are the light of the world." This refers to spiritual light which is to radiate from us who are Christ's. On another occasion, in John 8:12, Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world."* So if we put the two together we understand that as we abide in Him, walking in obedience to Him, then we too become the light of the world as Christ in us, who is the Light, is seen.

The Christian is one who has become a partaker of the divine nature. Christ in you, the hope of glory. Christ is the *"true light which ... enlightens every man"* (John 1:9). *"I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life"* (John 12:8). Jesus said .. *"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him"* (John 14:23). So if Christ the Light of life and the Father of Lights have come to take up their abode in us it can truly be said of us that as we walk in Christ and express Him in our attitudes, words and actions we are the "light of the world."

The purpose of a light is not for it to be looked at. Lights are not placed along a street simply so that we can go out and look at them; they are there to light up the street and surroundings. The sun is in the



sky, not to be looked at, but so that its great brightness can illumine the earth enabling us to clearly see all the things around us.

We're not out there shining as lights with the purpose of attracting attention to ourselves so that people will comment on how great we are as a person and give us pats on the back. Our radiating Christ is simply so that people of the world around us can see the transforming work God has done in us, how our lives glorify God, and be drawn to Him. Our light should simply illumine the pathway to Christ; to show that He is "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6).

"You are the light of the world."

Matt 5:18 ... *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."*

We shine "*before men*" – the light of the Christian shining in the world illuminates all the worldly order. The nature of that light – "*in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven*" – enables all to see the true pathway to life eternal. The life of a Christian who personifies the Beatitudes is a clearly recognizable lifestyle; the Christ life. It brings attention to Christ and the fact that He is the way, the truth and the life.

"You" are the light implies that if you are not shining brightly the world will remain in darkness.

Eph 5:8 ... *"you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light."*

We have received light and been made light for the purpose of shining as a light.

### **A city on a hill and a lamp on the lampstand**

Connected to "salt" and "light", Jesus employs two more figures, "a city set on a hill," and "a lamp ... on the lampstand." The light radiating from city set on a hill is provides illumination for the entire area and can also be seen from afar. No individual Christian can fulfill that ideal alone. This greater illuminating power demands fellowship, a corporate relationship. It speaks of the function of the Church as a whole. Every church should be a city set on a hill, illuminating the neighbourhood and the entire district around it. This light will show the way and leave no one without excuse.

2 Cor 4:4, 6 ... *"the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God ... For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."*

Phil 2:15 ... *"prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world."*

Then Jesus moved from the figure of the "city on a hill" into a house, where He considers the figure of a "lamp on a lampstand." The lamp on its lampstand illuminates the home, and its immediate

surroundings. So our lives are to express Christ in a manner that provides light for our immediate family and those who enter our homes.

Another example from the Word which helps our understanding of these figures is found in the Psalms.

Ps 119:105 ... *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*

The light shines way ahead showing you and all the people on the journey with you where the path is and where it is leading to, while a lamp provides you and the person next to you with illumination for each step you take along the pathway.

So every Christian has a double function to fulfill in the world. We, the Church, as a body of believers in our corporate relationship, in the bonds of love, friendship, and service, are to illuminate the distances – to light up the way to Christ and eternal salvation; and then in our individual home, behind shut doors, we are to be the lamp to illuminate our family and guests.

Christ went on further to say that the lamp is not put under a bushel (or basket) but on a lampstand. The reason is obvious. The bushel or basket would conceal any illuminating effect the lamp would normally provide, rendering it useless and leaving you and all the occupants of your home in utter darkness. Alternately, it may even set the bushel or basket on fire and burn your house down! I don't think anyone would want that to happen! The question we must ask ourselves in this respect is, "Am I totally unashamed of Christ presenting His light, or is my lamp hidden?"

### **Summary**

In His Beatitudes discourse, Jesus commences with, and places priority on, what we **are**. Being built up in Christ; coming to full stature in Christ. He then moves on to what we are to **do** as a result of who we are – our conduct; conduct which emanates from who we are. Then finally He speaks of the influence our character and conduct will have in the world of darkness and corruption. The progression is clear; we go from character to conduct to influence.

We are living in a world full of people who are engrossed in darkness and sin. The only preservative they have to help keep them from further decay is our saltiness. What is our influence? Are they able to notice the difference in us?

The only light they will ever receive in this world is that which comes from you and me as believers built up in Christ expressing Him in our attitudes, words and actions. The world is watching us. What do they see?

To conclude this chapter I would like to quote an amazing example from R.T. Kendall's book "The Sermon on the Mount".

I am indebted to Dr. Raymond Brown for this unforgettable story. A minister friend of his was in Calcutta, India, and rushed to get to his train on time. He was running late. If he missed the train, it meant he would have to wait for twelve hours in a crowded city with which he was unfamiliar and where he had no place to stay. As he made his way hurriedly to the station, he had to walk through a market. Doing so, walking

swiftly with his suitcases, he accidentally knocked over a fruit and vegetable stand that was being run by a blind man. Fruit went in every direction—apples, bananas, mangoes, tomatoes and beans. But as this minister was late and so rushed, he hurried on.

He made it in time and was now sitting comfortably in his seat on the train. All he could think about, however, was that blind man and all the fruit that had fallen to the ground. Before the train began to move, the preacher got his suitcases, got off the train and made his way to the blind man's stand. The blind man was on his knees, reaching for his fruit and putting the fruit and vegetables in their boxes in order to be sold. The minister got down on his knees and began to help the blind man, and said to him: "I'm so sorry. I have ruined your day. The fruit are bruised. I will buy them all from you."

They filled the cart and the minister left. As he did so, the blind man shouted at him, "Sir, is you Jesus?" As soon as he heard those words, the minister knew that he had to do what he did. It was righteous behavior.

The final questions each of us has to ask of ourselves are, "Am I prioritizing my time with Christ and His word and walking in submission and obedience so that I may grow in Him? Does my life and testimony bring encouragement and hope to those lost in sin? Does it leave those in darkness and sin around me without excuse?"

Matt 5:18      ... *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."*

**References and Recommended Reading:**

DeVern F, Fromke, “The Ultimate Intention”, Sure Foundation, 1963.

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