

- D. It is essential to produce/maintain unity (Phil.1:27; 2:1-4).
 - 1. *"Each counting other better than himself"* (2:3; Romans 12:16).
 - 2. Lowliness and meekness produce harmony and peace (Ephesians 4:1-3)
 - 3. It is therefore a bulwark against discord and division.
- E. It enables one to render his greatest and most godly, righteous, joyful and rewarding service (Matthew 18:4; John 13:17).
 - 1. VIP's James and John sought pride of place (Matthew 20:21-28).
 - 2. There are many barriers to Christian service, but poverty of spirit helps us to overcome those barriers and fit us for effective service in God's kingdom (2 Timothy 2:24-26).
 - 3. The largeness of our ability to serve depends upon the spirit that fills and rules our hearts: i.e., pride vs. true humility (Galatians 6:1,2).
- F. It is the grace which enables us to be finally exalted (Psalm 138:6).
 - 1. We thereby avoid God's displeasure and receive his rich divine grace: *"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble"* (James 4:6, 10).
 - 2. Humility precedes honor, exaltation and makes possible the most glorious hope: Resurrection to eternal life with God, Christ and the angels in heaven (Philippians 2:9-11; Luke 14:11; 18:14).

CONCLUSION —

- I. We may never reach perfection on earth in humility, or the other Christian graces. But an extremely important question is, Are we striving toward it with *"all diligence"* (2 Peter 1:5-9)? Are we truly going that direction and growing wholeheartedly?
- II. To the proud, haughty, self-sufficient, the first beatitude may mean little or nothing. But to a meek, lowly believer, going the second mile and turning the other cheek are important duties and wise responses to evil during crucial tests: *"Why not rather take wrong? Why not rather be defrauded"* I Cor. 6:7)? Does this seem out of step with your mental outlook and manner of life? Do you prefer to defraud or be defrauded?
- III. If we are "wise and understanding," we will remember that only the poor in spirit enter God's kingdom, are fitted to serve in his kingdom, and qualified to remain in his kingdom where we are guarded and kept by faith so as to be welcomed into *"the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"* (James 3:13; 1 Peter 1:3-9; 2 Peter 1:5-11).

--Charles E. Crouch

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT -- LESSON ONE

"Blessed Are The Poor In Spirit"

Matthew 5:3

INTRODUCTION —

- I. The greatest sermon ever delivered, by the greatest preacher who ever lived, began with the words, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit...."*
- II. The multitude Jesus saw on that mount in Galilee in the first century was not likely much different from any multitude he might face today. (Matthew 4:25; 5:1,2).
 - A. An inner circle of disciples, the casual curious, and the critics. A general cross section of mankind: Successes, failures, literate, illiterate, the disappointed, sorrowful and others.
 - B. All alike were seeking the same thing: Happiness or contentment.
 - C. He was moved with compassion and spoke with authority, for he was the greatest authority who ever spoke on the human predicament. (7:28,29; 8:1).
 - D. He is still the greatest authority on human happiness and he would still speak the same true words with the same compassion and authority.
- III. POVERTY OF SPIRIT IS THE FIRST KEY TO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, AND ALSO A KEY STONE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER AND JOY (Matthew 20:25-38).

DISCUSSION —

I. WHO ARE THE TRULY BLESSED PEOPLE?

- A. Happiness is not born of outward circumstances or conditions (Luke 12:15).
- B. Neither is it a result of what one fails to have.
- C. Blessedness depends primarily upon **what we are**.
 - 1. Not the house, but the man who lives within it.
 - 2. Not the garments, but the woman who wears them.
 - 3. Not the car, but the person who drives it.
- D. Jesus said, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit."*
 - 1. You may say, "Perhaps he is right; but I cannot work up much enthusiasm for it!"
 - 2. But you are surely half convinced: "Wretched are the proud in spirit!" (Revelation 3:16-18).
 - 3. Perhaps our dullness of interest is because we do not understand Jesus.

II. POVERTY OF SPIRIT IS A QUALITY POSSESSED BY ALL TRULY HONORABLE PERSONS, FOR IT IS A QUALITY WHICH PRECEDES HONOR (Proverbs 18:12; Matthew 23:11,12).

- A. It is "the state of being humble in spirit; freedom from pride and arrogance."

1. It is to be "lowly, unassuming, unpretentious."
 2. Its synonyms are "lowliness, meekness."
 3. The opposite of "pride, arrogance, conceit, vanity."
- B. One who is full of himself and self-sufficient cannot be called poor in spirit.
1. Augustine and others have named pride as the greatest of all sins. Why?
 2. Is pride the devil's greatest device (2 Cor. 2:11)?
 3. **Pride destroys the right relationship between God and man** (Psalm 10:4; Romans 1:21,28; etc.).

III. GOD'S VIEW OF HUMILITY IS VASTLY DIFFERENT FROM MAN'S.

- A. What he **requires** of his children includes humility; Isaiah 55:8,9; 57:15; 62:1; Micah 6:8; Matthew 23:23,24.
- B. He desires that we think soberly and honestly of ourselves: Enough, but not too much (Romans 12:3; etc.). Jesus revealed the worth of the individual (Matt. 16:26), and **each child of God should have a wholesome self-respect: Not self-contempt.**
- C. Christian humility is **not** a cowering, crawling, fawning, toadying, grasshopper attitude of faithless base humility toward men (Numbers 13:33). Humility must flavor our character but not dominate it: Christian humility **is to be childlike and teachable:** To know and feel our own unworthiness, insufficiency, deep needs; and to be willing to learn and lean upon a higher, wise and divine power. (Philippians 3:12-15).

IV. EXAMPLES OF HUMILITY CAN HELP US UNDERSTAND ITS MEANING.

- A. Moses, who carried the reproach of Christ (Exodus 3:11; 4:10; Numbers 12:3).
- B. The ten spies came back with a sense of littleness (Numbers 13), but were merely **faithless and poor-spirited, not poor in spirit.**
- C. The one talent man was trusted by his master, but was full of pride and cowardice (Matthew 25:24).
- D. The older brother was a case of "abundant spirit" (Luke 15).
- E. The publican who prayed, not the Pharisee, was poor in spirit (Luke 18).
- F. George Washington helped soldiers move heavy timber (*Minister's Monthly*, 8/66).
- G. Jesus Christ carried the sins of the world (Matthew 11:29).
 1. **In His life** humility was a wonderful/powerful key (2 Corinthians 8:9).
 - a. *"Son of Man hath not where to lay his head"* (Luke 9:58).
 - b. *"I can of myself do nothing"* (John 5:30; Phil. 4:13).
 - c. *"I have given you an example...A servant is not greater than his lord"* (John 13:3-17).
 2. **In His teaching:** "Friend, Go up higher" (Luke 14:7-11).

3. **In His death:** His greatest humiliation, and the supreme example of all (Philippians 2:5-11).

IV. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE POVERTY OF SPIRIT THAT ENRICHES US.

- A. **To know one is poor:** Be conscious one is needy, insufficient, limited, without spiritual power and strength (Jeremiah 10:23; 1 Peter 5:6,7; "I Need Thee Every Hour;" etc.).
 1. See room for improvement and recognize human need of God's help: Awareness of human frailty.
 2. To be childlike, teachable, willing to learn (Matthew 18:3,4).
 3. The Bible says pride blinds, deceives, defiles, keeps many from becoming God's children, condemns, and generates havoc and chaos, not harmony or unity.
- B. **To be attentive to God's voice, submissive to his authority, responsive/obedient to his will, in conversion, salvation,** in worship and in life (1 Peter 5:6,7).
 1. Our wills must be obedient to the will of God (Matthew 7:21).
 2. When Ben Franklin signed the Declaration of Independence he said, "We pledge our lives, fortune and sacred honor."
 3. When we become God's children, we must pledge even more, our all, to Christ, God's Son. (2 Corinthians 5:15).
- C. **To be "a living sacrifice:" A willingness to live and serve according to God's purpose and will** (Romans 8:28, 12:1,2).
 1. This requires a willingness to be inconvenienced, and **to place God's will above self-interest as the primary motive for action** (Philippians 2:3-5).
 2. Willing to carry the burdens of others (Galatians 6:2; Luke 14:11).
 3. Willingness to take second, third, or tenth place, because God's will has been placed above self-interest (Matthew 26:39).

V. THE BLESSEDNESS OF SUCH POVERTY OF SPIRIT.

- A. Jesus said it is the key to happiness (Matthew 5:3).
 1. Do you say, "I cannot get excited or enthusiastic about it"?
 2. **What are the reasons why it is the first key to blessedness?**
- B. It unlocks the door to salvation from sin (Matthew 18:3,4).
 1. It makes hearing and obedience possible (Philippians 2:5-8).
 2. It precedes repentance: Must no longer trust self above God and his word (2 Chronicles 7:14).
 3. It leads to justification (Psalm 149:4; Luke 18:9-14). One full of himself, who is self-sufficient and self-satisfied, is not and can never be full of Christ (faith).
 4. God dwells with the contrite and humble (Isaiah 57:15; 66:2).
- C. Poverty of spirit is essential for effective prayer: It can improve the believer's life if an act of surrender to God's will, and it is a necessary condition of acceptable and powerful prayer (Proverbs 28:9; Luke 18:9-14; 1 John 5:14,15).