

### The Beatitudes

You would have difficulty finding a modern Christian home that doesn't have a plaque with the beatitudes on it somewhere in the house. These represent, to today's Christians, the pinnacle of Christianity. And they ARE! They do indeed sum up every Christian virtue! **But only if you understand what they MEAN!**

If you read "blessed are the merciful" and what you hear in your head is "blessed are those who never judge", **then the beatitudes have become a tool for evil, not the pinnacle of Christian virtues!** You have studied most of the concepts in the beatitudes in the past eight lessons, and so studying the beatitudes directly will help to summarize everything you've learned.

**The world understands every single beatitude wrong; in fact, their understanding is nearly opposite of what Jesus meant when He spoke those words.** When Jesus said "blessed are the peacemakers", the world is as far from understanding what He truly meant as those who thought He said "blessed are the cheesemakers". The truth is just as far from both groups. Now it's time to see what Jesus really said, in...

#### LESSON 35: THE BEATITUDES

Just like the other lessons on words, we will be continuing to build a dictionary, and using definitions from the other words we've already used. But before we do that, you need to understand what Jesus was doing here.

What were the people like when Jesus came? **Isaiah 42:16-20**. What was Jesus's task when He came to this Earth? **Verse 21**. When He came, how did He do that? **Matthew 5:21-22**. Jesus came to MAGNIFY the law, so people who were blind could see it better.

Now, suppose you looked at a finely detailed topographical map. You would get the general idea just with the naked eye. But if you put that map under a magnifying glass, you could see all the little lines connecting the roads, rivers, and hills and understand the whole thing BETTER! Jesus did that to the law!

When Moses said, "thou shalt not kill", that was only intended to be the BEGINNING of the law, not the last word on it! But Israel didn't want to obey God, so they didn't take it to the next level; they couldn't see how hating their brother without a cause was the same emotion as murder; just on a smaller *scale*. Doing the one means, eventually and in the right circumstances, you'll do the other.

They couldn't see how *desiring* to commit adultery was no different, in principle, than actually COMMITTING adultery (**Matthew 5:27-28**). Jesus came to MAGNIFY that law, and make the DETAILS stand out better. As Jesus started teaching people, one of the first major sermons He gave was this "Sermon on the Mount". And the first words were...

## "BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT..."

...for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (**Matthew 5:3**). In Luke's version (**Luke 6:20**), it says "...Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God." Using the basic principle of Bible study that it complements itself and adds to itself, it is clear this has nothing to do with being financially poor; it is about being "poor in spirit".

These words, like most, are often abused. From these verses and a few similar ones, the idea of "God's poor" sprang into being, giving the idea that God's people are always poor, destitute, downtrodden, and that this is to be expected, and even desired.

God calls people IN sins; He calls them IN poverty and IN bad situations. But He calls them OUT of those things (**James 2:5, 1 Peter 2:9**). If you follow God's way of life diligently, there is no reason any one of us can't be as rich as Abraham and Job, and live in peace and happiness while heading into the kingdom of God.

Of course, most of us only PARTIALLY obey God, so we only PARTIALLY get those blessings. And as I've said many times, God will gladly make you poor and sick your entire life if you make it necessary, in order to teach you the lessons you must understand to inherit salvation. But I'm getting sidetracked. The point is, **this beatitude is NOT talking about being physically poor**. It's talking about being "poor in spirit".

## POOR IN SPIRIT

It's an odd phrase. Logically, you would think if you're "poor", you have less of something; thus, to be poor in spirit, means you have very little of God's spirit. But why would such people be blessed? That makes no sense.

But God's spirit isn't the only spirit you have, is it? **Job 32:8**. What is that spirit like? **Jeremiah 17:9**. Does that spirit get along with God's spirit? **Romans 7:23**. What law does that other spirit serve? **Verse 25**. Can that spirit be made to get along with God? **Romans 8:7**. What has to happen to it? **Galatians 5:24**.

Our spirit cannot get along with God's spirit. The only way for us to win is to crucify that spirit. But if that's the spirit Jesus was talking about, in what way can we be "poor" in it? There is no indication in the Bible that we can ever have LESS of our own spirit, without being sick or dying. But we can put it in a *less important position!* In other words, we HUMBLE that spirit that "*lusteth to envy*" (**James 4:5**).

We can prove this easily, now that we know what to look for, because those who are poor in spirit will inherit the "kingdom of heaven", which is where God dwells. And with whom does He dwell there? **Isaiah 57:15**. It is that "broken and contrite spirit" which readily accepts the promptings of God's spirit. That, as you learned in the last lesson, is the definition of humility.

Do you begin to see how the beatitudes sum up the last lessons? Being "poor in spirit" is simply another way of saying "humble". Humble means that you quickly obey the instructions of God and the promptings of His spirit! Such people will inherit the kingdom of God. Why? **Matthew 23:12**.

People who are poor in spirit may have much money or none; of course, it's generally easier to be humble when you're not rich and powerful, which is why God often afflicts us with poverty to teach us this lesson. But bottom line: does God care whether you're rich or poor – as long as you're poor in spirit? **Job 34:19**.

He doesn't regard the rich more than the poor – but He doesn't regard them less either. He simply doesn't care, and neither should we (**Leviticus 19:15**). This blessing is not for the materially poor, it is for the people who are “poor in their own spirit”, or to put it better, “poor in pride” (**Proverbs 29:23**).

If it's necessary for God to make you literally poor to make you spiritually poor, you should thank Him for it (**Proverbs 16:19, Ecclesiastes 7:8**) – but more importantly, try to figure out WHY God had to do that, overcome it, and become poor in spirit so you won't have to be poor in the flesh!

**“BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN...**

*...for they shall be comforted”* (**Matthew 5:4**). In the version in **Luke 6:25**, it's phrased a little differently *“Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh”*. He also adds a negative in that version, *“Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.”*

Is it wrong to be happy? **Proverbs 16:20**. Clearly not. Was Jesus overly concerned about mourning for the dead? **Matthew 8:21-22**. Why would He make such a big deal about mourners, since He clearly didn't think funerals were important compared to following Him? Mourning the dead is clearly not a big part of a true Christian's life, according to **1 Thessalonians 4:13**. What are we mourning?

Before we can answer the question directly, we have to gather scriptures. What does God do for those who mourn? **Job 5:11**. What do people mourn over? **Proverbs 29:2**. Should we mourn for the world's suffering? **Jeremiah 16:5**.

Clearly, it isn't the world's problems we're mourning over; and whatever we are mourning, it's something God must save us from. What does Solomon say about it? **Ecclesiastes 7:1-5**. That's the first solid clue to the answer – “by the sadness of the countenance” – mourning – “the heart is made better”! So there was something WRONG with the heart, that mourning IMPROVED!

Why did Ezra mourn? **Ezra 10:6**. What did God prophesy the people would be mourning over? **Ezekiel 7:16**. What was Israel going to mourn? **Ezekiel 24:23**. What do we LACK, that we MOURN because we don't have? **Isaiah 59:11**. What does James command sinners to do? **James 4:7-10**.

The mourners who “will be comforted” are those who mourn *their sins*. Why? **1 Corinthians 5:1-2**. Because when you've MOURNED something you can change it! By mourning your sins “the heart is made better”! That's why *“It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools”* (**Ecclesiastes 7:5**). Because a rebuke makes you MORE RIGHTEOUS!

Those who gather in millions of churches worldwide to hear uplifting sermons about how much God loves them in SPITE of their rebellion *are gathering in the house of fools!* And in their “praise and song” services about a false Christ promising them false salvation, they are singing the *song of fools!*

It is to them that Jesus said, *“Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep”*. Their joy and happiness in their delusion today will be turned to mourning when Jesus returns and says, *“I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”*.

Because they refused to hear the hard, unpleasant truths today, because they refused to look squarely at their sins and mourn the wickedness of their hearts, they will be joyous today in their worship of the false Jesus – but they will be gnashing their teeth in bitterness when the true Jesus returns.

On the other hand, those of us who suffer through the reality of our carnal natures today, those who accept the responsibility for their own actions and the consequences of their sins, will not always live a happy, carefree life. And it is those of us who mourn our sins today that Jesus says, *“shall be comforted”*.

A classic case in point is **Luke 18:11-14**. The Pharisee was comfortable and secure in the knowledge that he was better than the Publican; he was rejoicing and “laughing now”. But the Publican acknowledged and repented of his sins; his momentary sadness and regret will be turned to joy. The Pharisee’s joy will be turned to sadness and regret. And then the Publican will have the last laugh.

### “BLESSED ARE THE MEEK...

...*for they shall inherit the Earth*” (**Matthew 5:5**). In the world’s monarchies, rule #1 is “the king is always right”. Rule #2 is “when the king is wrong, see rule #1”. Because of this, what the king says goes. He’s always right simply because he’s king. This is how pagan religions all function – the pope/priest/witch doctor is always infallible, even if he’s wrong. Jesus knew this, and gave us explicit instructions about it in **Mark 10:42**.

There is authority in God’s church, which we’ll study after a few more lessons. But that authority is only valid *so long as God’s appointed leader serves God!* In other words, **the leaders of God’s church are right only when they are right!** They exercise rule not by exercising *authority*, **but by exercising RIGHTNESS.**

When God is working with someone, and that person is growing towards the first resurrection, it is natural that they will become more and more right. And when they disagree with people, they will be right more and more often. And when one is accustomed to being right, it tends to become a habit. He expects it. He relies on it.

After explaining patiently for the hundredth time that no, **Acts 10-11** did *not* give us license to eat slugs and **Galatians 3:10-14** does *not* abolish the law and make it legal to murder or steal, there is a strong temptation to respond to these questions with an attitude of arrogance.

It would be so much easier to tell people “trust me, I’m right”, rather than to tediously re-prove every point for every new person. It is that temptation that first causes leaders to lose their meekness. It’s so easy just to tell them “you can’t understand, these things are too complicated for you – trust me instead”.

As that attitude spreads throughout the church, soon complicated questions are resolved, not based on facts, but by quoting what “God’s apostle said”. Thus settling the question by *authority*, not by TRUTH. This is how EVERY CHURCH ON EARTH settles their religious questions.

They quote the apostle’s creed, Calvin’s commentary, the Catechism, the Mishnah or whatever traditions they put their faith in – and they use the Bible as a secondary source, almost an afterthought, or as the occasional punchline... all while believing their church “gets their beliefs from the Bible alone”!

Gentile kings and pagan priests (Protestant, Catholic, or otherwise) are right *because of their authority*. Those men are right because some *other* man gave them credentials that gave them the AUTHORITY to be right. Did Jesus have any such credentials? **Matthew 21:23-27**.

Jesus had no credentials. He never once asked us to believe Him because of who He was. He asked us to believe Him because He was RIGHT. He did not come to exercise power and authority over the world, He came as a servant, to help others. Specifically, to help them understand the Truth.

He gave us the same mission – to instruct those who are causing themselves problems – but to do it in meekness. By helping them to understand their mistakes (**2 Timothy 2:25**). Proving, rather than telling, the truth. God’s people are not right because they are God’s people. They are right because, and only WHEN, they are right.

People who completely understand that are the only ones whom you would want governing the universe. You don't want a universe of despots; you want a universe of people who love the truth. Rulers who don't have to say, "because I said so" to prove their point. Even Jesus never asked us to believe Him because He was the Son of God – but to believe Him because of the scriptures (**John 5:30-47**).

Jesus was that king who was always right, and yet never used that to prove His point. Furthermore, when someone accused Him of sin, He didn't say "don't you know who I am?", but He committed His judgment to God. That is why God needed to save Him (**Psalms 76:9**).

What have the meek done? **Zephaniah 2:3**. Notice it is the **MEEK who have wrought judgment**. Only people in positions of authority get a chance to do that! But the meek are those who have handled their authority PROPERLY! How? **Psalms 25:9**.

God can *guide* the meek in judgment **because the meek will listen! The meek will consider that they might be wrong, and change – even when the correction comes from their lowliest subject!** The arrogant will respond to any criticism with statements like "I'm the doctor here!", "don't you know who I am?", "how dare you question my authority!"

The meek will listen, and consider the possibility that they can be wrong and that whoever is correcting them might be right – no matter who they are. That is why God can guide them in their judgments; because when they're wrong, they'll listen, change, and apologize – and do better next time. The meek follow the command in **1 Peter 3:15**. That's WHY they can inherit the Earth.

**"BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH DO HUNGER  
AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS..."**

*"...for they shall be filled"* (**Matthew 5:6**). Most of the world believes they love truth and love to learn about God's way. But when you test them, by showing them something God requires of them, most of the time you find they didn't really love truth after all – **they loved the truth they already had and didn't want to hear anything new!**

See, even without the understanding of grace from Lesson 5, everyone instinctively knows that knowledge equals responsibility. And knowing something is wrong makes you responsible to stop doing it. Thus, being ignorant would be a free pass to commit that sin. But is that what the Bible says? **Luke 12:47-48**. Even if we're sinning in ignorance, are we still guilty? **Leviticus 5:17**.

Notice that both of those servants get beaten. The one who was ignorant got beaten a lot less, it is true, but both were beaten! Sin carries its own penalty. God doesn't have to intervene and send lightning to punish you; your own sins will punish you. That's the whole point! God knows that sin causes suffering, and He wants us to learn to avoid it... not because it's been decreed by some special divine plan, **but because it's for our own good and the good of all mankind!**

Grace or no grace, there are certain requirements for the first resurrection; certain things you must learn to do in order to qualify for the position. Ignorance certainly mitigates the penalties, but ignorance can only do so much – at the end of the day, you still have to have acquired certain skills and quit certain sins – whether you knew about them or not. How can you dig out those unknown sins, which by definition, you don't know about – and therefore, can't work on?

What did David ask God to do for Him? **Psalms 19:12**. Did He ask God to SEARCH deeper in his heart, to TEST him, and find those "secret sins"? **Psalms 139:23-24**. Does God know about them? **Psalms 90:8**. How did Jeremiah ask God to help him do this? **Jeremiah 10:23-24**.

To find those secret sins – so that you can see them to get rid of them – you must WANT to find out more about your faults! This is something none of us enjoy, but this is part of that MOURNING we must do today in order to be comforted tomorrow!

To find those secret sins, you have to HUNGER and THIRST after righteousness. Are you hungry when you've got enough to eat? **Job 6:5**. Of course not! You're hungry *only when you realize you don't have enough!* You thirst after righteousness only when you realize what you have *isn't good enough!*

And that's why Paul gave us the command in **1 Corinthians 10:12**. Ironically, so many disobey this command while believing they are obeying it! (Actually, that's a double irony – ironic that they quote it while disobeying it, and doubly ironic because this quote specifically warns *against* quoting something while disobeying it!)

What must you do to walk worthy of the Lord? **Colossians 1:10**. You must INCREASE in the knowledge of God! Have you fully understood God's law? **Psalms 119:96**. How can you become wiser? **Verses 97-104**. God's law was like HONEY to David – and if you hunger and thirst after righteousness, it is to you as well – even when... no, ESPECIALLY when... it corrects you!

Read **Proverbs 27:7**. Those who believe they have salvation as they are, are “full”. To such people, even a honeycomb – God's law – is loathsome. But to those who HUNGER after God's law, even a harsh, bitter truth tastes sweet to them! How beautifully that makes sense of that verse!

You cannot increase in the knowledge of God unless you hunger and thirst after it. And that requires you to not merely accept correction, but to seek it out; not merely to listen when you are corrected, but to invite it, and rejoice in it. Only then can you ever be filled. To the rest God says, “*Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger*” (**Luke 6:25**).

### “BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL...

*...for they shall obtain mercy*” (**Matthew 5:7**). Like the other beatitudes, this is twisted to mean the exact opposite of what God said. To a modern Christian, the words “be merciful” means “be patient, forgive without repentance, be tolerant of rebellious sins, etc.”. Yet to learn God's meaning, we have the very clear explanation in **Luke 17:3-4**. How are we to be merciful? **Luke 6:36**. How does God show mercy? **Matthew 18:21-35**.

We are to show mercy only AFTER we judge someone's sins and they repent. This has no part of the world's understanding of mercy, so when they “be merciful” in the hopes of obtaining mercy themselves, *they behave in the opposite way of what God commanded!*

A good illustration comes from **Matthew 7:1-4**. Based on these words, the world concludes that judging is banned. But these verses are also abused in a different way. God made a promise here that is neatly twisted “For with what judgment YE judge, YE SHALL be judged”. So that means if I judge someone gently, God will judge ME gently!

Well, that's true – that is what God promised. But the twisting happens when people conclude “so if I don't judge people *at all*, *God won't judge me either!*” or, “if I am TOO soft on them, God will be very soft with me as well!” Of course, they rarely use those words. That's just the conclusion they draw: if they ignore, tolerate, forgive, and be “merciful” of the sins of others, God will be equally tolerant and accepting of their own rebellious sins. But that ISN'T how it works! Read **Proverbs 24:24-25**.

If you go to those evil men, thieves, adulterers, slanderers, and say “you are righteous!” (which IS EXACTLY what you are doing if you go to them and say, “I forgive you!” BEFORE THEY REPENT AND

CHANGE), you will be CURSED, and nations shall abhor you! But if you REBUKE those men, you shall be a delight to God, and BLESSED BY HIM FOR IT!

Being merciful to their un-repent-ed-of sins does NOT mean God will be merciful to YOUR un-repent-ed-of sins! But when they DO repent, you should forgive them – for your good as well as theirs (**Proverbs 11:17**). Why? **Proverbs 28:13**.

The goal of any child of God is to rid themselves of sin. And anyone else they can get to be righteous should make them rejoice as well. So covering their own sins, OR SOMEONE ELSE'S, is wrong! Pretending that someone HASN'T sinned, when they have, helps no one – least of all the sinner!

Only those who REPENT for stealing from you DESERVE your forgiveness! And only those who show true mercy – and deny that mercy to those who have not repented – will receive mercy from God.

### “BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART...

...*for they shall see God*” (**Matthew 5:8**). Again, like the other beatitudes, the world thinks they obey this one, while doing the opposite of what it means. They suppose that pure in heart means they “mean well”. And it does! But the world thinks they “mean well” as they commit all sorts of heinous sins. Do they expect God to call them “pure” in spite of that? **Micah 6:8, 11-12**.

Was Israel surprised that God wasn't happy with them? **Micah 3:11**. They really believed that in spite of their innumerable sins, that God would save them! That they “meant well”. And God said, “shall I count them pure”? And answered “no!”, of course. Because TRULY meaning well takes some practice and a lot of work.

What do the pure do? **Proverbs 21:8**. How do you become pure in heart? **Proverbs 20:9**. You must make your heart CLEAN! How do you do that? **Acts 15:9**. It is by FAITH that you purify your heart. But faith isn't just a belief; what is faith? **Hebrews 11:6, 1 John 3:19-22**. Faith comes by obedience; and how does that lead to purifying the heart? **1 Peter 1:22**. What does cleansing our conscience and assuring our hearts before Him do for us? **Hebrews 10:22**. Who will dwell with God? **Psalms 24:3-5**.

Do you see how solid that chain is? The pure in heart are those who have a clean conscience! Those who have a clean conscience are full of faith! And those who are PURE in heart will “*ascend into the hill of the Lord*” and there they will “see God” as the beatitude tells us!

It's simply saying those with a clear conscience will dwell with God; not those who casually “meant well”! Those who truly WORKED to purify their hands and their heart; those who EXERCISED their faith and LABORED to assure their hearts before God! Only THOSE people will “*see Him as He is*” (**1 John 3:2**).

### “BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS...

...*for they shall be called the children of God*” (**Matthew 5:9**). The world believes a peacemaker is someone who gossips, meddles, and cajoles sinners into accepting each other's sins. I can't tell you how many self-styled “peacemakers” I've known who did nothing but stir up strife. Their strategy always revolves around not judging either side and convincing both parties to just “love one another”.

True peace comes from following the commands in **Matthew 18:15-22**. This resolves the problem, by forcing the bickering parties to deal with each other honestly and openly. But the world's solution is always to try and sweep it under the rug, and to get the sinned-against to forgive the sinner without repentance. This never works, since the sinned-against still resents the sin, and the sinner hasn't changed so he will do it again – if not to that person, then to someone else.

Did Israel's false prophets try to make peace? **Jeremiah 6:13-14**. They said "peace", when there *WAS no peace*. Because of the sins of Israel, they needed condemnation, rebuke and correction, not peace! By glossing over the problems and being "peacemakers", they "*healed the hurt... slightly*". It LOOKED like things were better because of the peacemaking, but it was only a SLIGHT improvement, because it was a FALSE peace – and in the long run, it made things much worse! (**Verse 15**).

Why couldn't these false prophets create peace? **Isaiah 59:8**. Can those who follow them find peace? (Same verse). They don't know the way of peace BECAUSE THERE IS NO JUDGMENT IN THEIR DOINGS! Because they teach "thou shalt *NOT* judge!", and there CAN NEVER BE PEACE without JUDGMENT!

That is a fundamental truth! Judgment is REQUIRED to solve problems permanently. You can heal the hurt *slightly* by saying "peace, peace"; by forcing one wronged brother to "hug it out" with an unrepentant sinner, there will be a pretense at peace; but *that is not peacemaking!*

Can the wicked have peace? **Isaiah 57:21**. **So to have peace, the wickedness must stop!** Peace is about a relationship between two beings; between you and your friend, between you and your spouse, between you and God. If any one of the two is wicked **the relationship CANNOT EVER HAVE PEACE. Because "there is no peace for the wicked"!**

It is not making peace to ignore a sinner's faults! It is not making peace to get two people who hate each other to pretend to be friends. It is not making peace to get someone to forgive someone who hasn't repented to them. No relationship can have peace until those involved in it stop sinning, and that requires JUDGING!

Do false prophets – and false ministers – agree? **Ezekiel 13:10-16**. In this symbol, the wall represents the protection God has for Jerusalem. Does God build a hedge around the righteous? **Job 1:10, Isaiah 5:1-7**. Is that hedge – that wall – broken down by sin? **Ezekiel 22:23-31**.

This wall/hedge was damaged by the many sins of Israel. God was looking for a man who would repair the hedge and stand in the gap, and couldn't find one; instead, He found false preachers who were patching the wall with low-quality mortar. Rather like repairing a brick wall by using mud from the front yard – it will look patched until it rains or until you bump it. Then it will crumble. That's what these people were doing when they "made peace" *without making righteousness!*

## MAKING PEACE WITH GOD

Making peace with sin is what this world and its churches are best at; and is most proud of! That's exactly what Paul condemned in **1 Corinthians 5:1-2**. They were proud they had "made peace" with this sinner. And not only should we *not* make peace with sin/sinners until they repent... should we even feel sorry for them until they repent? **Jeremiah 16:5, Deuteronomy 13:6-8**.

God and the world are not at peace. God is righteous, and the world hates righteousness. In **2 Corinthians 5:18-20**, Paul tells us God has given us a "ministry of reconciliation". I've heard this grossly abused, just like the verse about peacemakers, to justify not judging sinners.

We ARE trying to make peace between the world and God. We ARE trying to reconcile them. But how can we accomplish that? Can we get God to accept them as they are, if we pray enough? **Jeremiah 14:11-14, 15:1**. Can we get God to ignore their sins, and give them salvation? Of course not. For God and the world to reconcile *the world must change!* (**Job 22:21**).



**We aren't trying to mediate between the world and God, and reach some sort of a *compromise!*** Because a compromise implies that both parties are equally wrong *and only one side is wrong here!* Truly reconciling any two people requires you to judge the sinner, and get him to repent to the person he wronged.

How did we become alienated from God? **Colossians 1:21**. So the world has sinned in rejecting God, and therefore God is the party who was wronged. He is the one to whom they must repent. Jesus reconciled us with Him *by getting rid of our wicked works – paying for the ones that are past, and teaching us to AVOID the ones that would have happened in the future!*

Reconciling the world to God is no different than reconciling two brothers. Get the party who was wrong to repent and apologize, and you've been a peacemaker. Should those skills be present in every true church? **1 Corinthians 6:5**. When you become a skilled peacemaker, you'll be qualified to *"...sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel"* (**Luke 22:30**).

And thus, you'll have fulfilled one more of the qualifications necessary to become, as this beatitude promises, "the child of God", prepared to *"...sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne"* (**Revelation 3:21**).

**"BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE..."**

*...for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"* (**Matthew 5:10**). At this point, the simple one-liners that work so well on a plaque get a bit more verbose. To get the full text of this one, read **Matthew 5:10-12** and **Luke 6:22-23, 26**.

This seems to be the most obvious of any of the beatitudes. What could be simpler – those who are persecuted are blessed! What could be complicated about that! And yet... I don't believe I have ever met anyone who was persecuted for righteousness' sake. I mean, perhaps losing a job or a friend, or getting yelled at once in awhile, or perhaps even cheated because of what you believe in, but really – persecuted?

Bitten, slapped, beaten, thrown to lions, shipwrecked... anyone? Run out of town on a rail? What does Paul say? **2 Timothy 3:12**. Why hasn't that happened to today's Christians? **John 7:7**. Should it be happening? **Matthew 10:16-23**. How was Paul persecuted? **2 Corinthians 11:24-28**. Why did that happen to him? How did he get persecuted? **Galatians 4:16**.

Imagine what it will take to be so persecuted you have to leave town. Has that happened to anyone you know? **Hebrews 12:4**. Is that sort of persecution something you should WANT? **Acts 5:40-41**. Does God promise protection for those who earn this sort of persecution? **Isaiah 54:13-17**. Who will answer for us when we are called to judgment? **Luke 21:15**. How will we do that? **Titus 1:9**.

Persecution won't come suddenly upon the true church; the true church will BRING IT. It will EARN the right to "suffer for His name". It will be WORTHY of it! We won't wake up one day in a world that is suddenly intolerant of Sabbath-keepers as many assume. Our world is devoted to tolerating EVERYTHING, and even our unusual beliefs are accepted because "judging is wrong".

What ISN'T accepted is US judging THEM. They don't care if we keep the Sabbath or worship the true God! They wouldn't care if we worshipped a donkey head and ate nothing but roaches! **They care if we JUDGE them, and show them their salvation is a sham! That their religion serves the devil! THAT they will care about!**

We know things – you know things – that will get you hated by the world. Christmas/Easter is pagan. Their loved ones aren't in heaven. God is not a trinity – that's Satan's godhead. Going to church on Sunday is the

mark of the beast. All these Protestant churches are daughters of the great whore, and Catholicism IS the great whore.

The USA deserves the punishments God has brought upon it, and when Europe conquers and enslaves it – probably in your lifetime – the true Christian will surrender to them because, beast or not, they are a more righteous nation than the USA. They deserve the blessings God gave us more than we do.

THOSE things will get you hated. THOSE things will get you persecuted! Gently pleading with sinners to “love God” *cannot ever get you persecuted!* In case you hadn’t guessed, what we’re really talking about here is speaking the truth in your heart. This is the truth – the cold hard facts – about modern Christianity.

Speaking the cold hard facts to your friends and family – the truth in your heart – will earn you persecution from them as well, and THAT is how **Luke 12:53** will be fulfilled. When you testify of the world that its works are evil, and speak the truth in your heart, only THEN can you qualify for the blessedness in this beatitude;

**Matthew 5:11-12** *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

You can’t receive that blessing without enemies “for the truth’s sake”. You can’t have enemies until you speak the truth in your heart, and testify that their works are evil. You cannot suffer persecution without doing that, and without it you are probably not a true Christian (**2 Timothy 3:12**).

## “YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH”

The world ends the beatitudes before this verse, but it should be studied with them, for the last one connects directly to this statement. What does the “salt of the Earth” mean? Does anyone understand it? You can’t, without understanding more about salt than most people do. Read **Matthew 5:13** and **Luke 14:34-35**.

That tells us, contrary to modern medical dogma, that “salt is good”. It also tells us WE are the salt of the Earth. So what does that mean? What is salt good for? **Job 6:6**. What sort of food “needs salt”? Bland, tasteless food – stuff that isn’t really flavorful. Properly grown, good quality food doesn’t require salt.

But what does that salt do? A few small grains transform that tasteless food into something quite pleasant. Even though, by weight, it’s only a very tiny percentage of the overall dish – a fraction of one percent, usually.

Now if the Earth represents a plate of food in this metaphor, a plate of unrighteous, lukewarm, “bland” food, WE – true Christians – represent the SALT of that Earth. The fraction of one percent that allows the entire Earth to be palatable to God!

Will God tolerate an entire city of gross sinners if He finds a very small percentage of righteous men? **Genesis 18:22-33**. If a city of – I’m going to guess – 1,000 people had only TEN righteous men in it, God would not destroy the city. Ten grains of salt – much less than 1% – would be enough to make even Sodom, that famously wicked city – tolerable to God.

But as it happened, God could only find ONE person – Lot. Next time you have a bland plate of food, try putting one solitary grain of salt on it. Doesn’t help much, does it? And so it was with Sodom. And so it was with the pre-flood world in **Genesis 6:5-7**. Noah was the only grain of salt there among perhaps 2 billion people, so He tossed the entire plate into the compost pile and cooked a new one!

Interestingly, Sodom was sorely lacking in salt, and when Lot's wife looked back, and her heart returned longingly to Sodom, what did she turn into? **Genesis 19:26**. Also interestingly, when the pre-flood world was so deficient in salt, it was the OCEAN – **salt water** – that flooded the world.

## BUT IF SALT LOSES ITS TASTE...

That was the primary meaning of the salt metaphor. But Jesus extended the metaphor, adding that if the salt “loses its taste” it is “good for NOTHING” (**Matthew 5:13**). It is a little known fact that sea salt or rock salt, which is all that existed in those days – can, if overheated or left out in the elements, even if kept dry, lose its saltiness. Even though it will continue to look just like salt.

Jesus says WE are the salt of the Earth; but if that salt – that is, US – loses its taste, how shall WE, the SALT, be salted? And concludes that we cannot be re-salted – exactly as you would expect from **Hebrews 6:4-6**. We are here to make the world seem tasty to God; but if we, who were to be the salt, become listless and lifeless, then, well, “you can't salt salt”.

Then we are good for nothing, but “men cast it out”, and so will God (**Matthew 25:30**). Another little known fact is that salt is an excellent fertilizer; in fact, after the tsunami in India in 2004, everyone expected catastrophic crops – but the fields yielded bumper crops 2-3x higher than normal.

Salt was widely used around the ancient world as a fertilizer. As recently as the 17th century it was a major fertilizer in the British isles, until the British government instituted a heavy salt tax to make it too expensive to use for fertilizing. When used in moderation, it made the land very healthy – I've used it myself as a fertilizer.

Salt contains every mineral known to man, and once the sodium is washed away (and it's one of the first elements to dissolve in rain), the rare trace elements are left behind. It's only deficient in the macro-elements like nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus – which is why they added manure and compost to it, which supplies those in abundance. Thus making a complete fertilizer. Yet if salt had lost its saltiness, it wasn't even good for that.

## GOD MAKES GOOD METAPHORS

God doesn't just casually throw out metaphors like “you are salt”. When He says that, you can be certain God thought about those metaphors before He made us OR salt! It means we are like salt *in every sense*. Even down to such tiny ironies like the way the world thinks salt is the CAUSE of many of mankind's ills, when in fact eating more salt would help most of them!

I won't get into the details about salt, there are several well researched books about the many health benefits of eating good quality, unrefined sea salt. I'll just talk about the way salt acts outside the body. Salt has incredible curative properties. The phrase “rub salt in a wound” has a negative connotation today, and it does hurt a great deal for a few minutes, but then suddenly all the pain stops. And it heals much faster and stronger than it would normally.

Professional chefs often put salt on their cuts. I've had nasty scrapes and cuts from careless horseplay around the ocean, and the sea water, after initial pain, always makes it heal much faster. In the same way, the things we say to people sting at first. Much like what God said in **Hebrews 12:11**, and why He gave us the command in **Colossians 4:6**.

Truth hurts. But truth cures. Just like salt – it stings, but it cures. So our speech should be with grace – understanding they “*know not what they do*” – yet seasoned with salt, giving it the ability to sting and “*cut them to the heart*” (**Acts 7:54**). Is that what the word of God – the word we speak – does? **Hebrews 4:12**.

And finally, when packed in salt the wound is shielded from most bacteria. In this way, the true Christians give the wounded world a chance to heal while they defend it from the forces of decay.

## PRESERVATION

This metaphor would have been easier to understand 300 years ago, when salt was used worldwide for thousands of things. We've all heard of salt fish and salt pork and so on. Meat packed in salt didn't rot, because most harmful bacteria can't live in salt. And we can pursue that metaphor as well.

The plan of God is about salvation; people often forget that salvation comes from the word "to save", and also means "to preserve". What does God do for the saints? **Psalms 37:28**. Is preservation the same as "to keep alive"? **Psalms 41:2**. Do the prophets preserve other people? **Hosea 12:13**. Was John sent to give knowledge of salvation to the people? **Luke 1:76-77**. Did God send us to carry this "word of salvation" to people? **Acts 13:26, 47**.

This "salt of the Earth", is sent to take the knowledge of salvation to the same Earth; those who "pack themselves in salt" will be preserved in salvation (**1 Peter 1:4-5**). Because the forces of decay – bacteria and wicked spirits, which themselves are symbols of each other – have no power against the salt of God which brings salvation and preserves men "*through faith unto salvation*".

So you see, you can't break God's metaphors. Today, the world has stripped the salt that God said represents His saints, and distilled it down to sodium chloride. It has removed the health-giving micronutrients and left behind something that looks like salt, tastes sort of like salt... **but isn't true salt**. Today's salt "has a form of saltiness, but without the power thereof" (**2 Timothy 3:5**), just like today's false Christians.... Even in such details, God's metaphors hold true.

## OLD BOTTLES

While we're on that subject it's natural to segue into this one, since the parables are about the same thing. This won't mean much to you now, for it's about a group of people you probably don't know – yet. But one day you will.

Read **Mark 2:21-22**. Here, Jesus says the same thing as He said earlier, "you can't salt salt". Only this time, He uses bottles as a metaphor instead of salt. But who are these "old bottles", which cannot receive new wine? Back up for the context and read **verses 15-17**. At this point the Pharisees interrupted Him with a question. He answered it, then resumed the original topic in **Mark 2:21**.

The purpose for Jesus' statement about old bottles was in response to the criticism of the Pharisees that Jesus was associating with publicans and sinners. His answer was characteristically cryptic because they weren't supposed to understand it – you and I are (**Matthew 13:11**).

The Greek word translated "bottles" actually means "skins" – they hadn't invented glass. Wine was usually stored in earthen crocks (**John 2:6**), or goat-skin bottles which were cheaper and more portable. When new, these skins had a stretching quality; but when old, they got dry and brittle.

Grape juice ferments and bubbles for months before it settles down. The worst of that is finished before it's transported into the bottle, but the fermentation continues for years before it completely stops when all the sugars have been consumed.

New wine still puts off quite a bit of gas, which stretches the skins out. If it's a new skin this isn't a problem – but it will make an old wineskin explode, ruining it and wasting the wine. What can we learn from this?

From the context, the wineskins were clearly Jesus' audience; the old bottles are the Pharisees, who could not receive "new wine", and the new bottles were the Publicans and sinners who could. It logically follows that the new wine represents the truth Jesus was speaking.

When you first learn the truth, it excites you; you want to tell everyone, change the world, stay up all night studying it! This is that bubbling stage of fermentation. The truth does this to those who love it. After a time however, that zeal usually dims and gets more complacent. After still more time, and more compromises, the zeal completely dies.

Some of this is natural, a result of spiritual maturity and the growth of perspective that a great deal of understanding gives you. But most of it is a result of a half-hearted approach to the truth, and a gradual acceptance of a thousand little compromises (and eventually a few major ones).

Once that happens, once a new wineskin, pliable and ready to grow, becomes stiff and brittle, you can't put new wine in it and reawaken that first zeal in it. If you somehow could, the bottle would burst. It simply doesn't have the capacity to start all over again – if it didn't get it right the first time, you can't "*renew them unto repentance*".

Rather than putting new wine in those old bottles, you seek new bottles into which you can put the new wine. When the old bottles – the Jews – who were happy with their religion as it was, "*count themselves unworthy of salvation*", then the true Christian "*turns to the gentiles*" (**Acts 13:46**). Because you cannot salt salt. Not only is it impossible, but they don't want you to salt them!

Read the alternate version of this parable in **Luke 5:36-39**. They have their old wine, it was good enough, and they don't WANT anything new! Were the Pharisees happy with their level of righteousness? **John 5:39**. Was that righteousness good enough? **Matthew 5:20**. Are we to choose who we give the truth to? **Matthew 7:6**. Who are these "dogs" and "swine"? **2 Peter 2:22**. Who is that scripture talking about? **Verses 20-21**.

The dogs and swine are those who WERE enlightened, and who DID escape the pollutions of the world *but were again entangled in it!* Those who had a CHANCE to see the truth, but REJECTED it, and preferred their vomit and their mud! God commands us NOT to cast our pearls before them; and what does a pearl represent? **Matthew 13:45-46**. Amazing how the Bible weaves together, and random parables connect to explain one another!

You cannot take someone who was once the salt of the Earth and has lost their zeal, one who has let their fermentation stop before their mind was transformed into the mind of Christ, and bring them once more to the love of the truth. That's why Jesus went to the publicans and sinners; that's why Paul went to the Gentiles; that's why I devote my efforts to teaching people who have never heard the truth, rather than trying to argue with the members of the Sabbath-keeping semi-churches of God that dot the world today.

I tried going to them for awhile, just as Paul went to the Jews; it was necessary, as Paul said. But they didn't want to hear it. They wanted to keep their traditions, which were closer to the truth than the Catholic traditions, but which in the long run won't help them achieve salvation any better.

God knows this, and when He perceives a person is following a church, and not Him; when they love their friends more than the truth; He starts to take away the understanding He once gave them (**Isaiah 28:8-13**), so they can once more be blinded, and once more be under grace.

If you try (and oh, how I've tried!) to hammer the truth into an old bottle, it will only frustrate you and confuse them, because God will not LET you put new wine into an old bottle, because IF YOU COULD, it would PERMANENTLY destroy them! So follow Jesus' command in **Matthew 15:14**.

## WHY DOES THAT MATTER?

It probably doesn't matter to you. Much. Not now. But one day it will. One day you will run into Sabbath-keeping, holy-day-keeping, unclean-meat-avoiding churches and joyously think "here are brethren in Christ!", if you haven't already. On the surface, it looks like they believe just what the Bible says; they'll certainly tell you they do.

But when you look closer, and start talking to them about anything they don't already understand – and there is much in this correspondence course they don't understand – particularly things from Lessons 4, 5, 13, 18, 21-22, 25-26, 29-31 (almost everything in those lessons would be a shock to most of those churches) – you will see they don't "*hunger and thirst after righteousness*". They don't love truth. They love the truth THEY ALREADY HAVE, and want "no more burden than this".

And you will – you'd better! – argue with them. Provoke them to love and good works. And when they reject you – and they will – go elsewhere. And do it again. Then one day you will learn to recognize old bottles, and learn to respect the decision God has made when He blinds someone.

Most of your friends and family and ex-church-friends are not old bottles. Not yet. Most of them, like you, never heard the truth, unless you told them. And even if you told them, and they didn't listen, that isn't what makes someone an old bottle. They're simply a part of the deceived world.

What makes them an old bottle is when they HEAR the truth, ACCEPT it, OBEY it... then sometime down the road, they are "overcome by the pollutions in the world" *and yet continue to claim Christianity!* It is when they continue paying lip service to the law, **and yet cheapen and water down every single word God says.**

It is those people whom God says cannot be salted; cannot be wined anew; cannot be mended with a new piece of cloth, and we shouldn't even bother trying. After all, they are sort-of righteous. And Jesus said, "*I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*". Compared to the world, they "*are whole*". And so they "*have no need of a physician*" compared to the idolatrous, adulterous, sinful world (**Mark 2:17**).

## WISDOM AND FOOLISHNESS

Having finished with the beatitudes, there are two other words you should study briefly. This is as good a place as any to do it. To understand wisdom, we start at the beginning – when wisdom was first given to Eve in **Genesis 3:5-6, 22**.

Pay close attention to what happened there; Satan said when they ate the fruit, they would "be as gods, knowing good and evil". So the promise was that eating the fruit would teach them the knowledge of "good and evil". Hence the name God gave the tree! (**Genesis 2:17**).

What's interesting is when Eve heard Satan's statement, she thought it was "... *a tree to be desired to make one WISE*" (**Genesis 3:6**). This gives us a connection between "knowing good and evil" and "being wise". We can improve the connection by reading the story of Solomon's wisdom in **2 Chronicles 1:7-12**.

Solomon wanted wisdom so he could JUDGE God's people. What do "wise men" in the church do? **1 Corinthians 6:5**. What do judges do? **Exodus 18:16**. How should judges judge? **Amos 5:14-15**. What was Israel's wisdom? **Deuteronomy 4:5-8**.

It was the LAW that made Israel wise; it was the ability to judge between GOOD and EVIL that constituted wisdom; and it was the RIGHT to judge between good and evil that Adam and Eve took to themselves. Why weren't they QUALIFIED to judge good and evil? **Hebrews 5:14**. What should they have done first?

**Psalms 111:10.** Is there a place where everything comes from? **Job 28:1-11.** So where does wisdom come from? Can you buy it? **Verses 12-19.** Who has it? Where can you get it? **Verses 20-28.** How did David get it? **Psalms 119:98.**

Is foolishness a synonym for “unwise”? **Deuteronomy 32:6.** Are the wicked foolish? **Psalms 73:3.** The wicked don’t keep God’s law, which is the beginning of wisdom – so of COURSE they are unwise, or foolish! What are foolish people like? **Jeremiah 5:4.** Foolish people don’t understand God’s law – or His judgments!

**The simple definition of wisdom is “the ability to choose between good and evil”.** Adam and Eve weren’t ready to do that, because they had not “exercised their senses”. That’s why God didn’t permit them to eat of the fruit – yet. But wisdom is required to judge righteously; and it develops automatically as a result of living by the law yourself.

That is why, in time, God would have given Adam and Eve of the fruit of that tree; because Satan’s promise “*that you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil*” is exactly the same as God’s promises in **1 John 3:1-2, Revelation 3:21, Daniel 7:22, 27.** The difference is, Satan offered them a SHORTCUT to God’s promises *that didn’t require obedience!* Satan wasn’t lying about the PROMISE, he was lying about THE METHOD REQUIRED TO RECEIVE IT! Just as he does in the world’s churches even today!

Is his path to wisdom different than God’s? **James 3:13-18.** True wisdom brings fruits of RIGHTEOUSNESS. Because true wisdom is nothing more than the ability, skill, or power to choose right from wrong every time. Nothing is more valuable than that. That’s why “... *they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever*” (**Daniel 12:3**).

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The beatitudes truly are the summary of most, if not all, Christian virtues. Yet Satan’s great triumph is not that he has taught lies, but that he has taught the world to so misunderstand the inspired words of God that, to today’s false Christians *the words of God are themselves lies!*

God’s words were inspired; but Satan has so changed the meaning of the words themselves, that when people read the truth, they hear lies in their heads! This is perhaps his greatest achievement. That’s why we have spent so much time painstakingly uncovering the Biblical definition of each of these words.

Peacemaker? Someone who gets sinners to repent to their victims. Merciful? Someone who forgives a sin after the sinner repents. Pure in heart? Those with a clean conscience. The poor in spirit? Those who humble their spirit before the spirit of God. Mourners? Those who repent of their sins. The persecuted? Those who speak the truth in their hearts. The meek? Those who don’t let their success in the other virtues cause them to teach by authority, and not by truth.

These simple definitions are so obvious, and yet so different from what the world believes. It is this careful study of these words that will allow us to lay bare so much of the deception in the deepest parts of the Bible. Until you truly understand what God’s WORDS mean, you can’t possibly understand what His SENTENCES mean – much less His BOOK!

This work is completely non-denominational and is meant to fulfill Christ's great commission to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (**Mark 16:15**). **This publication is not to be sold**; "*freely ye have received, freely give*" (**Matthew 10:8**).

The Bible tells us to PROVE ALL THINGS, and The Simple Answers encourages people to do just that. If you cannot PROVE what you believe, you have no right to believe it! Many of the things we print are shocking because they are different from what you've heard, but if something we say offends or upsets you, we hope you will take the time to set aside your preconceived ideas and PROVE your point from the Bible to see if you truly have been right all these years.

We are dedicated to providing the SIMPLE answers to difficult questions. Please submit questions and/or comments to us using the contact information below.

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