

Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit, Not the Poor in Body

Matthew 5:3; Isaiah 6:5

November 1, 2020

Greg L. Price

The subject of today's sermon would rate at the top of the list of most despised truths found in Scripture: Our utter unworthiness before a holy God. The world rather promotes your goodness and worthiness. It denies God's Law is an absolute, unchangeable moral standard of God's Law because it denies there is an eternal, unchangeable, good, sovereign God.

In this wicked worldview everything in life must promote YOUR desires, YOUR ambitions, and YOUR choices rather than the glory of Almighty God. Obligations, duties, and vows may be dispensed so that you can be true to yourself; for all decisions are determined by this standard: "What is best for ME? I am good, deserving, and worthy." "It's YOUR decision to engage in sexual relations with whomever you choose. It's YOUR decision to give birth to the child or not. It's YOUR decision to be the sex/gender that you want to be. It's YOUR decision to marry whomever you want (even if both of you are the same gender)." This false religion of self-worship will not save you from God's condemnation. It actually prepares you for God's everlasting judgment in hell.

This first Beatitude (or blessing) makes clear that salvation begins with God granting to you the grace to sincerely confess your own moral poverty and unworthiness in yourself. You cannot come in saving faith to Christ while offering to Him your own goodness, merit, or worthiness. The kingdom of heaven is closed to all such people. Jesus said that an evidence of your being accepted in God's sight (justified) is not proclaiming your goodness and worthiness, but in beating your chest and crying out to Him, "God be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:9-14). You cannot become rich in Christ until you see that you are poor in yourself. You cannot be healed in Christ until you confess you are sick (yea dead) in yourself. You cannot be strong in Christ until you acknowledge that you are weak in yourself. You cannot inherit Christ's glorious, everlasting kingdom if you do not admit that you deserve His condemnation in hell for your sin. Why would you look in faith to Jesus if you believe you are already good and worthy in yourself? That is why this blessing in Matthew 5:3 must be your first step in coming in faith to Jesus Christ.

Today we will seek to answer these two questions: (1) What Is It To Be Poor in Spirit? (2) What Is Promised to Those Who Are Poor in Spirit?

I. What Is It To Be Poor in Spirit?

A. The blessedness of the poor in spirit ("BLESSED").

1. "BLESSED" is not a subjective happy feeling within you; for we do not have a happy feeling as we truly confess our moral wretchedness before a holy God. To the contrary, we are heart-broken, ashamed, and sad over the sin we have committed in breaking God's good and holy commandments. Jesus is not proclaiming what the poor in spirit will feel like (happy), but rather He is revealing what God Himself declares about the poor in spirit—they are blessed.

2. This is God's pronouncement of your blessedness, not a happy feeling going on inside of you. This is God's declaration that you, who are poor in spirit, are blessed by Him and the promised reward for all those who are blessed by God follows: "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).

B. What a "poor in spirit" Christian is not.

1. The grace to be a "poor in spirit" Christian is not for just super-saint Christians, but is the gracious gift to all who are born again. There is no such thing as a true Christian who is not poor in spirit. It is a grace that all those who are effectually called by God possess. It is a grace purchased by Jesus Christ for all His

people for whom He died. All these graces in Matthew 5:3-12 identify the character that God graciously grants to all of His elect when they are brought in faith to Jesus Christ—not some, not many, not most, but all. Though the degree to which you manifest this grace in your words and deeds may differ with highs or lows in your life or may differ from one Christian to another; nevertheless, the inward substance of that grace is the blessing of every single child of God (without exception). In that sense, these blessings are similar to the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). These blessings are a description of the true Christian—a poor in spirit Christian, etc.

2. A “poor in spirit” Christian is not one who is necessarily poor as to money or possessions. There are those who are both poor in riches and poor in spirit (like Lazarus the beggar in Luke 16); and there are also those who are rich in wealth and yet poor in spirit (like Job). Financial wealth or the lack of it is not that which determines whether one is poor “in spirit”. Jesus does not say poor “in body”, but rather “poor in spirit”. There is no blessing promised here for those who are “poor in body”, but rather for those who are “poor in spirit”. God despises a mere OUTWARD religion and worship (“in spirit and in truth”).

3. Therefore, when priests or monks in the Church of Rome take a vow to be “poor in body” thinking that is a blessed state, they have missed what Jesus was saying (there is no evidence of such a vow in Scripture; 1 Corinthians 13:3). This is a “poor in spirit” Christian.

4. Likewise, in **economic Marxism** all that is important is the OUTWARD material poverty of the oppressed—the workers (the poor in body and not the poor in spirit). We are to care for the poor in body around us, but the character and nature of a Christian is that he/she is poor in spirit. Likewise in the present manifestations of **social and racial Marxism** (BLM, SJWs etc.) all that is important is that which is OUTWARD (the oppressed vs. the oppressor as defined by one’s OUTWARD group identity in the color of skin, gender, sexual preference, and religion or the lack thereof)—not that which is INWARD or spiritual.

5. All religions and philosophies that propose a heaven on earth through mere OUTWARD changes are damnable. The Jewish religion of Christ’s time was so focused on the OUTWARD acts of religion that they had forgotten where true religion and faith begin—in the spirit, in the inner man. Changing the external person and his/her OUTWARD circumstances will not change that person’s soul (which is where sin begins according to Jesus, Mark 7:21-23). Jesus knew there is no blessedness and no permanent change to a person or to a society apart from the powerful work of God’s grace in changing their INWARD thinking, choices, and desires through regeneration and sanctification.

6. If we do not properly define the problem (namely, sin), we will blind ourselves to the only remedy and salvation from sin and hell: Jesus Christ. Sin is inward and outward transgression of God’s unchangeable Moral Law as summarized in the 10 Commandments. Marxism defines sin as being something merely OUTWARD, like being identified with a group of people who have light skin. SJWs (Social Justice Warriors) and BLM (Black Lives Matter) believe that the remedy to sin is to destroy the OUTWARD oppressors and their institutions (all which God Himself created—light skin, males, heterosexual marriage, and Biblical Christianity). The sin of racism is now defined (by these racial and social Marxists) as being born into the wrong group—a group with light skin. You cannot atone for that sin—it is unpardonable because you cannot change the color of your skin. All that you can do according to these Marxists groups is to pay penance daily by being an activist and showing your sorrow by tearing down all those OUTWARD institutions established by God (the family, church, and state). This is really a war against the Lord (one which they cannot win, Psalm 2).

C. What is a “poor in spirit” Christian?

1. The Greek word for “poor” is not just one who does not have the comforts of life, but is one who does not have the necessities of life. It is the person who is in abject poverty, penniless, and starving.

2. The “poor in spirit” Christian is one who knows and believes that he/she is bankrupt spiritually without any goodness or righteousness acceptable to God (due to the pollution of sin within). In other words, Jesus blesses those who truly believe they have absolutely nothing to offer God by way of

goodness, obedience, righteousness, or worthiness in themselves unto a holy God. He blesses those who know, believe, and confess they are penniless beggars in their souls, having nothing to commend themselves before an absolutely holy God. How different is the view we have of ourselves apart from the grace of God. As long as we do not murder or commit adultery, as long as we come to church, and as long as we try to take care of the ones we love, we are good people. But that is not God's view (Romans 3:10-12). There is no hope for us or our marriages unless we begin here. Merely focusing on the outward will fail—we must be poor in spirit.

3. Only Jesus is good, righteous, holy, and worthy; for He is fully God and fully man, and lived a sinless life that He might offer Himself as a perfect substitute for all of the sins of His elect. When you confess your unworthiness before God and trust in Jesus and His complete and total worthiness as your sinner, you are forgiven all sins and imputed the perfect righteousness of Christ.

4. The Lord does not reveal to you your unworthiness in yourself in order to drive you away from Him into a hopeless state of condemnation, but in order to drive you into His open and loving arms, who alone is worthy to save you (Revelation 5:12).

5. Listen to the testimony saints who were poor in spirit: Job (Job 42:5-6); Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5); Peter (Luke 5:8); Paul (Philippians 3:8).

6. The "poor in spirit" Christian is not one whom God calls to live in condemnation for past or present sins (Romans 8:1). One does not forget his/her past sins for we magnify the grace of God—Paul says he was the chief of sinners. Recalling our past sins teaches us to hate them). But one does not live in the anguish and condemnation of those past sins. You will not be more forgiven more in heaven than you are right now.

II. What Is Promised to Those Who Are Poor in Spirit?

A. Present blessings in the Kingdom of Grace ("is").

1. Those who are "poor in spirit" are the wealthiest of all people, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven". The wealth of Bill Gates is like a drop of water from the ocean compared to the ocean of your wealth in Jesus Christ. For you are the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. All that is Christ's is yours (1 Corinthians 3:21). All you own on earth is nothing compared to the kingdom of heaven that is yours.

2. Consider the **present blessings** of that kingdom that are yours: justification, adoption, and sanctification. **Present communion** with Jesus Christ at home and on the Lord's Day. **Present suffering** for Christ is a blessing of God to all those who are poor in spirit (Matthew 5:10-12). **Present manifestation** of Christ's power in judging and subduing His enemies unto Himself, and ushering in a kingdom of peace that will fill the earth in which all nations and rulers will be brought into the Visible Church of Christ and will serve Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords (Psalm 72:8-11).

B. Future blessings in the Kingdom of Glory.

1. A new heaven and a new earth wherein perfect righteousness and peace dwells. A kingdom in which there is no sin, no temptation, no death or disease (perfect glorified bodies), no wars, no division among brethren, no sorrows, but rather blessed, uninterrupted communion with Jesus whom we shall see and know face to face. Without the future kingdom of heaven all our faith, hope, and obedience now would be in vain. There would be no hope outside this world. We might as well join the SJWs. Jesus ascended there and so shall we at death and then with our bodies at His Second Coming.

2. One reason God sends suffering, afflictions, heartache, persecution, and disruptions in families, churches, and nations is to keep our hope fixed upon the glories of that everlasting kingdom of glory—that we not put our hope in this world (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Copyright 2020 Greg L. Price.