

The Beatitudes

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

At the beginning of Jesus's teaching known as the Sermon on the Mount, there is an extraordinary list called the Beatitudes. The word "beatitude" means "blessing," and sure enough, each statement of the Beatitudes indicates that blessings are bestowed by God on those who act in certain ways, or who have certain spiritual attitudes or character qualities.



This month let's take a closer look at the Beatitudes. Here is the Bible passage (Matthew 5:1-11):

Seeing the crowds, [Jesus] went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Now let's look at them one at a time.

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

Here Jesus is talking about those who realize that they are "poor in spirit" and really need God. They are wise enough to recognize that God is real, He is good, He is holy, and He is awesome. They know they do not deserve His loving mercy, but they are humbly willing to accept it and depend upon it. Such people, Jesus implies, are already living in the Kingdom of God, because they have made themselves subject to the King. In Isaiah 66:2 God says, "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word."

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

"Those who mourn" includes everyone who is saddened by suffering some major loss. It might be the loss of a loved one, a career, their health, or their freedom. Blessed are they, Jesus implies, when they turn to God for comfort, because He will surely give them consolation to ease their pain, and strength to carry on in spite of their loss. Before His ascension, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, who in many translations is called "the Comforter," to His followers. Surely the Holy Spirit is able to comfort us and strengthen us to carry on in life.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Many people think that "meek" means the same thing as "timid" or "fearful." It does not. By "the meek" Jesus means those who are humble enough to submit to God's will, rather than to insist on having God submit to their will. You can tell if a person is meek by the way that he prays. If he gives God instructions, even if he says "please," that's not meekness. If he says to God, "allow me to do your will today," or "use me in your service," that is what God is looking for. Another way to say this would be, "Blessed are those who are willingly obedient to God."

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

What are you hungry for? What do you want most in life? Jesus promises that, if what you want most is to be a righteous person—if you really want to be free from sinning, pure and holy before God, as he calls all of us to be, then guess



what—that strong desire will be satisfied. You will become the righteous person you long to be. Jesus is also foreseeing the bread of life and the living water that He will give to those who follow Him, so that they will never be hungry or thirsty again.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

A good picture of this blessing is the parable of the servant whose huge debt was forgiven by his master, but who then refused to forgive the much smaller debt of a fellow servant. (Matthew 18:23-35) Also in other places, the Bible message is simple and clear: if you have mercy on your fellow human beings, God will also have mercy on you.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Purity in heart means single-mindedness or sincerity. As Jesus says elsewhere (Matthew 6:24), “No one can serve two masters.” He says that the greatest commandment is this: Love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your mind and with all of your strength. (Mark 12:30) That doesn’t leave any room for serving self or other gods. And He says, if you are pure in heart, sincere in your love for God, you will see Him. As God says through the prophet Jeremiah, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah. 29:13)

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.



Those who actively work to bring about peace, whether between warring nations or squabbling neighbors, or (especially) God’s peace in the heart of a repentant sinner, will be accepted by God as His children. (What does this say about those

around the world who say they “serve God” by murder and terrorism—can they be called His children? I do not think so.) This world has never been at peace since the Fall in the Garden of Eden, and in a sense it is futile to try to “make” peace—but God says that those who try, please Him.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

There are plenty of people—not just Islamic extremists, but militant people of every religion, including humanism and atheism—who think all Christians ought to be restricted or persecuted or punished just because they are Christians. Sometimes the persecution is violent—in many countries a person can be killed for owning a Bible or professing faith in Jesus. Sometimes it is just oppressive—you may not talk about your faith at your workplace, or you will probably get fired. There is no

longer prayer in our schools, because a few individuals have raised a fuss and gotten it outlawed. Often persecution of Christians is through insult or innuendo—pastors and devoted Christians are almost always portrayed on TV as wimps, flakes, or idiots. But Jesus says, if you suffer because you are a Christian, you belong in God’s kingdom.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

What about you? Are you willing to take the heat for being a strong Christian? If so, Jesus promises that you are “blessed.”

What’s the bottom line? Simply this: if you are sold out to God—loving Him, serving Him, wanting to be with Him and please Him—then you are His, and He is yours, and you are truly blessed. If someone notices, and wants to punish you for belonging to God, accept that, and you will be blessed again.

Here is St. Paul’s further guidance about Christian behavior, in different words, from the 12th chapter of Romans:

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Peace and Blessings to you.

Brother Roland

Blessing verses from the Book of Proverbs

**Blessed is the one who finds wisdom,
and the one who gets understanding,
for the gain from her is better than gain from silver
and her profit better than gold. (3:13-14)**

**Blessings are on the head of the righteous,
but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence. (10:6)**

**The memory of the righteous is a blessing,
but the name of the wicked will rot. (10:7)**

**The blessing of the LORD makes rich,
and he adds no sorrow with it. (10:22)**

**By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted,
but by the mouth of the wicked it is overthrown. (11:11)**

**Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner,
but blessed is he who is generous to the poor. (14:21)**

**Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good,
and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD. (16:20)**

**The righteous who walks in his integrity—
blessed are his children after him! (20:7)**

**Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed,
for he shares his bread with the poor. (22:9)**

**Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always,
but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity. (28:14)**

**A faithful man will abound with blessings,
but whoever hastens to be rich will not go unpunished. (28:20)**

**Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint,
but blessed is he who keeps the law. (29:18)**

If you have a Bible question or a question about the Christian life, send it to me at
Brother Roland, PO Box 14, Fayetteville PA 17222
I'll do my best to answer it, and your question may be helpful to someone else as well.
God bless you!

How Should We Christians Live?

This puzzle features 45 words and phrases that have something to do with entering fully into the Christian life—with “walking the walk.” Don’t use this list to judge others! Instead, try to pick out some of these at which you are doing “pretty well,” and thank God that He has brought you thus far. Then pick out a few areas where you are most in need of improvement, and ask Jesus to help you do better at those. He will. Enjoy the puzzle.

Puzzle:

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Words:

ACCEPT	GIVE ALMS	REPENT
AVOID ALL ADDICTIONS	GIVE THANKS	SACRIFICE
BE CHEERFUL	GIVE WISE COUNSEL	SEEK JUSTICE
BE HUMBLE	HAVE FELLOWSHIP	SERVE OTHERS
BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS	HELP OTHERS	SET A GOOD EXAMPLE
BE SALTY	LISTEN WELL	SHARE
BE SPIRIT FILLED	LOVE MERCY	SHED LIGHT
BLESS	LOVE NEIGHBORS	SHOUT FOR JOY
CLOTHE THE NAKED	MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE	SING HYMNS
COMFORT THE AFFLICTED	MAKE PEACE	TELL THE TRUTH
CONFESS SINS	OBEY GOD	TITHE
DENY SELF	OBEY THE LAW	TRUST OD
ENJOY THE GIFTS	PRAISE GOD	VISIT PRISONERS
FEED THE HUNGRY	PRAY	VISIT THE SICK
FORGIVE	READ THE BIBLE	WORSHIP GOD