

Blessings



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Blessings

*Abridged and adapted from the Classic Bestseller
Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*

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“Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”—Matthew 5:2, 3.

These words fell on the ears of the listening crowd like some strange new teaching. They were different than anything they had ever heard from the priests or rabbis. They could see nothing in it to flatter their pride or feed their ambitious hopes, but there was some kind of power in this new Teacher that held them clinging attentively to His every word. The sweetness of heavenly love seemed to flow from His presence like the fragrance from a flower. His words fell like “rain upon the mown grass, like showers that water the earth” (Psalm 72:6). While this Man seemed to read the secrets of the soul, He came close to them in tender compassion. Their hearts were open to hear Him, and as they listened, the Holy Spirit began to unfold something of the deeper meaning of that lesson which people living in every age of history so desperately needed to learn.

In the days of Christ, the religious leaders felt that they were spiritually rich. The prayer of the Pharisee, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men” (Luke 18:11), expressed how most of the religious leaders of the day felt and, to a great degree, the whole Jewish nation. But in the crowd that surrounded Jesus, there were some who felt a sense of their spiritual poverty. When Christ revealed His divine power to Peter in the miraculous draft of fish, Peter fell at the Savior’s feet and cried out, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8)!

In the same way, as they sat in the presence of the holy Teacher, some of those in the multitude gathered on the mountain felt that they were “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17). They longed for “the grace of God that brings salvation” (Titus 2:11). In these souls, Christ’s words awakened hope. They saw that they were still under the blessing of God.

Jesus had presented the cup of blessing to those who felt they were “rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing” (Revelation 3:17), but they had turned with contempt from the gracious gift of God. Those who think they are basically good, and are content with their condition, don’t see a need for forgiveness or for Christ’s righteousness. Pride feels no need, so it closes the heart against Christ and the blessings that He came to give. There is no room for Jesus in the heart of these people. Those who feel like they are good and decent people will not ask in faith and receive the blessing of God. They feel that they are full, so they go away empty. Those who know that they cannot possibly save themselves or attain to any level of righteousness on their own are the ones who appreciate the help that Christ alone can give. They are the poor in spirit who He says will be blessed.

Those who are forgiven by Christ must first be made sorry for their sin, but this is God’s work. Those Christ forgives, He will make sorry by the Holy Spirit. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convince us of sin. Anyone whose heart has been moved by the convicting Spirit of God will see that

there is nothing good in them. They will see that all they have ever done is mingled with selfishness and sin. Like the poor publican, they stand far off, not even daring to lift up their eyes to heaven, as they cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13)! These are the ones who are blessed. There is forgiveness for the repentant because Christ is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)! God's promise is, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you" (Ezekiel 36:26).

Speaking of the poor in spirit, Jesus says, "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This kingdom is not an earthly kingdom, as Christ's hearers hoped it would be. Jesus was revealing the kingdom of His love, grace, and righteousness to His listeners. The purpose of the Messiah's reign was to teach people how to become more and more like Christ. His followers are the poor in spirit, the meek, and those persecuted for righteousness' sake. The kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Although it is not finished yet, the work that Christ has started in them will make them qualified "to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints" (Colossians 1:12).

Everyone who has a sense of their deep spiritual poverty, who feels that they have nothing good in them, can find righteousness and strength by looking to Jesus. He says, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden" (Matthew 11:28). He appeals to us to exchange our spiritual poverty for the riches of

His grace. We are not worthy of God's love, but Christ is our guarantee. He is worthy and more than capable of saving anyone who comes to Him. Whatever your past experience may have been, and however discouraging your present circumstances may be, if you will come to Jesus just as you are, weak, helpless, and desperate, our compassionate Savior will meet you a great way off and throw His arms of love around you, covering you with His robe of righteousness. He presents us to the Father, clothed in His own white, spotless robe, pleading His own righteousness to God on our behalf, saying, "I have taken the sinner's place. Please do not look at this disobedient child, but look at Me instead." While Satan wages war for our souls, rightly accusing us of sin and claiming us as his prey, the blood of Christ pleads with greater power.

"Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength... In the Lord all the descendants of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory" (Isaiah 45:24, 25).

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

The mourning Christ is speaking of here is a true heart sorrow for sin. Jesus says, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself" (John 12:32). As one is drawn to look to Jesus Christ, dying on the cross for their sins, they begin to discern how sinful the world really is. They see that it is sin that bruised and crucified the Savior. They see that, while they have been loved with unspeakable tenderness,

their life has been one of continual ingratitude and rebellion. They have forsaken the best Friend they could possibly have and abused heaven's most precious gift. They see that their sins have repeatedly crucified the Son of God over and over again, bringing continual agony to His bleeding heart. They are separated from God by a gulf of sin, which is broad, black, and deep, and they mourn their sins with a broken and sorrowful heart.

This is the kind of mourning that "shall be comforted." God reveals our guilt to us in hopes that we will flee to Christ, be set free from the bondage of sin, and rejoice in the liberty of becoming a son of God through Christ. In our sorrow, we can come to the foot of the cross and lay our burdens at the feet of Jesus.

The Savior's words also have a message of comfort to those who are suffering from various kinds of illness or loss. Our sorrow is not for nothing. God "does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men" (Lamentations 3:33). When He allows us to suffer through various trials and tribulations, it is "for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:10). If we will hold onto faith and patiently accept the trials that seem so hard to bear, these same trials will eventually prove to be a blessing. The cruel blow that destroys the joy of earth will be the method God uses to turn our eyes to heaven and eternal life. There are so many who would never have known Jesus and would have missed out on eternal life if they had not been

afflicted by some trial. Sorrow has led many lost souls to seek comfort in Him!

Trials of life are the tools God uses to remove the impurities and roughness from our character. Their chopping, chiseling, shaping, buffing, and polishing is a painful process. It is hard to be pressed against the grinding wheel, but the stone must be shaped to prepare it for its place in the heavenly temple. The Master does not exercise such careful, thorough work on any useless material. Only His precious stones are polished to bear the resemblance of those in the palace. The Lord will work for all who put their trust in Him. Precious victories will be gained by the faithful. Precious lessons will be learned. Precious experiences will be realized.

Our heavenly Father is always mindful of those who are suffering under various sorrows. When David went up Mount Olivet “and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot” (2 Samuel 15:30), the Lord was watching him in pity with a sympathetic eye. David was clothed in sackcloth, and his conscience was tormenting him. The outward signs of his humiliation revealed his deep remorse. He approached God in tearful, heartbroken utterances. As he presented his situation to God, the Lord did not ignore the plight of His servant. David was never dearer to the heart of God than when, broken and guilt-ridden, he fled for his life from his enemies, who had been stirred to rebellion by his own son. The Lord says, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent” (Revelation 3:19). Christ lifts up the

remorseful heart and refines the mourning soul until it becomes His home.

But when difficulties arise, and we are burdened by the trials of life, many of us are like Jacob! While God is reaching out to us, we think it is the hand of an enemy. In the darkness of trials, we often wrestle blindly against God until our strength is gone, finding no comfort or deliverance. As the morning light dawned, one divine touch finally revealed to Jacob, who he was fighting with – the Angel of the covenant. Here, weeping and helpless, he fell on the mercy of God to receive the blessing that his soul longed for. We also need to learn that trials result in benefits to us, so we must not despise the trials the Lord sends our way or try to resist God when we are corrected by Him.

“Happy is the man whom God corrects... He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole. He shall deliver you in six troubles, yes, in seven no evil shall touch you” (Job 5:17-19). Jesus comes to all who are afflicted with healing and comfort. His presence can brighten the life darkened by bereavement, pain, and suffering.

God does not want us to stay overwhelmed by the sorrows of life with broken hearts. He longs for us to look up into His face of love, for healing and strength. The Savior stands by many people whose eyes are so blinded by their tears that they do not recognize Him. He longs to take our hands, to have us look to Him in simple faith, letting Him guide us. His heart is open to our grief, sorrow, and trials. He loves us with an everlasting love, and with loving-

kindness, He longs to embrace us. If we would learn to keep our hearts focused on Him, constantly meditating on His love for us, He would lift us above the daily sorrows and trials that plague us, giving us much needed peace. We must remember this in our suffering and sorrow, and learn to rejoice in hope. The Bible says, “this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith” (1 John 5:4).

In addition to blessing those who mourn, this blessing is extended to those who also weep with Jesus in sympathy with the world’s sorrow, as well as sorrow for sin. As we learn to mourn for others, we lose sight of selfish interests. Jesus was called a Man of Sorrows, enduring more anguish than language can portray. His spirit was torn and bruised by the sins of men. He worked tirelessly to relieve the needs and sorrows of humanity, and His heart was filled with sorrow as He saw multitudes refuse to come to Him and obtain eternal life. All who are followers of Christ will share the same anguish of heart for the lost. As the love of Christ fills their hearts, they feel His great burden to save the lost. They will share in His suffering, as well as in the glory that will be revealed when this life is over. Those who unite with Christ in saving the lost, and drink with Him in bearing their sorrows, will also share with Him in the joy of their eternal redemption.

Through His suffering, Jesus was able to console us because in all our “afflictions He was afflicted” (Isaiah 63:9). Every time one of the human family suffers, He feels the pain, and because “He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid

those who are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18). Everyone who has suffered for Christ can share in the honor of comforting those who suffer various kinds of affliction, for “as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:5). The Lord gives special grace to those who mourn, and this grace may melt hearts and win souls. His love opens a door into the wounded and bruised soul, becoming a healing ointment to those in sorrow. The “Father of mercies and God of all comfort ... comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4).

“Blessed are the meek.”—Matthew 5:5.

The order that the blessings are given in, follow the order of growth in the Christian life. We feel our need of Christ, then we mourn for our sins, then we will follow Christ into the school of affliction, leading us to learn meekness in the school of Christ. Neither Jews nor pagans believed that responding to mistreatment with patience and gentleness was admirable. The statement made by Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that he was the meekest man on earth, would not have been regarded by the people of his time as a compliment. Instead, it would have inspired pity or perhaps even disapproval. But Jesus places meekness as one of the top qualifications for getting into His kingdom. In His own life and

character, we can see the divine beauty of the precious grace of meekness.

Jesus, who was the brightness of the Father's glory, "did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:6, 7). The Creator and King of the universe agreed to suffer through all the humble experiences of life walking among humans, not as a king, to demand the honor He deserved, but to serve His creation. In Christ, there was no stain of pride or prejudice. He was not cold and impersonal. While Christ had a nature greater than that of the angels, His meekness and humility attracted people to Him.

In all that He did, Christ did not consider His own wants or needs. He submitted all things to the will of His Father. When His mission on earth was about to close, He could say, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4). And He bids us, "learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself" (Matthew 16:24). We must take our own will out of the driver's seat and learn to let go of our selfish interests.

Those who dwell on Christ in His self-denial and humility will be constrained to say with Peter, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 10:8)! In Christ, the rebellion and self-confidence that we are so proud of are seen in their true sinfulness, as emblems of our slavery to Satan. Human nature is always striving for expression and

looking to gain attention and popularity, but those who learn from Christ are emptied of selfish pride and no longer strive to win the esteem of others. There is peaceful silence in the soul when our selfish nature is yielded to the Holy Spirit. Once we give Christ control, we are no longer anxious to have the highest place. We have no ambition to elbow our way into the spotlight. Instead, we feel that our highest place is at the feet of our Savior. We look to Jesus, waiting for His hand to lead us, listening for His voice to guide us. After the apostle Paul had this experience, he said, "I have been crucified with Christ; 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 faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

When Christ makes a home in our soul, the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds at rest. Even though the Savior's life on earth was lived in the midst of conflict, it was a life of peace. While angry enemies were constantly pursuing Him, He said, "He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him" (John 8:29). No storm of wrath could disturb the calm that His perfect communion with God provided.

Similarly, He says to us, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you" (John 14:27). "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29). Jesus says, "Enter the field of service with Me, working to glorify God and

uplift humanity, and you will find that the yoke is easy and the burden is light.”

It is the love of self that destroys our peace. As long as selfish interest is alive, we are constantly ready to guard it against insult and injury, but when we lay our selfish nature in the grave, and our life is hidden with Christ in God, we will not be so defensive against worldly attacks. We will be deaf to criticism and blind to insult. “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

Happiness gained from worldly pleasures is as changeable as varying circumstances, but the peace of Christ is a constant and abiding peace. It does not depend on the circumstances surrounding our lives, the amount of worldly goods, or the number of earthly friends. Christ is the fountain of living water, and happiness drawn from Him can never fail.

When the meekness of Christ is revealed in the home, it turns a prison into a palace. It provokes no fight or gives no angry response but instead soothes the irritated temper and diffuses a gentleness that is felt by all within its charmed circle. Wherever meekness is cherished, it unites the families of earth with the great family above.

It would be far better to suffer some false accusation than to inflict our souls with the torture of

retaliating against our enemies. The spirit of hatred and revenge originated with Satan, and it can only bring evil to those who cherish it. Humility of heart, that meekness which is the fruit of abiding in Christ, is the true secret of blessing. "He will beautify the humble with salvation" (Psalm 149:4).

Jesus said that the meek, or humble, "shall inherit the earth." Through the desire for self-exaltation, sin entered into the world, and our first parents lost control of Eden. Through self-abnegation, Christ redeemed what was lost, and He calls us to overcome as He "overcame" (Revelation 3:21). Through humility and self-surrender, we may become heirs with Christ when "the meek shall inherit the earth" (Psalm 37:11).

The earth that is promised to the meek will not be the same as it is now, darkened by the shadow of death and the curse of sin. "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13). "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him" (Revelation 22:3).

There will be no disappointment, no sorrow, and no sin. There will be no one who will say, "I am sick." There will be no more funeral processions, no mourning, no death, no parting, and no broken hearts. Jesus will be there, so peace will be there. "They shall neither hunger nor thirst, neither heat nor sun shall strike them; for He who has mercy on them will lead them, even by the springs of water He will guide them" (Isaiah 49:10).

***“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst
for righteousness, for they shall be filled.”—
Matthew 5:6.***

Righteousness is holiness. It is striving to live like God, and “God is love” (1 John 4:16). It includes obeying God’s law, for “all Your commandments are righteousness” (Psalm 119:172), and “love is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:10). Righteousness is love, and love is the light and the life of God. The righteousness of God is represented in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.

Righteousness is not gained by painful struggles or hard work. It is not gained by giving gifts or making sacrifices. It is freely given to anyone who hungers and thirsts enough to receive it. Listen. “Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat, ... without money and without price,” for “their righteousness is from Me, says the Lord,” and, “this is His name by which He will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness” (Isaiah 55:1; 54:17; Jeremiah 23:6).

No human will ever satisfy the deep hunger and thirst of the soul, but Jesus promises, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20). “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

Just like we need food to sustain our physical strength, we need Christ, the Bread from heaven, to sustain our spiritual life and give us strength so that we can work the works of God. Just as the body is continually receiving the nourishment that sustains life and vigor, the soul must also be constantly communicating with Christ, submitting to Him, and depending completely on Him for spiritual strength.

As a wanderer in the desert searches for a spring of water to quench his burning thirst, so will the Christian thirst for and find the water of life in Christ.

As we discern the perfection of our Savior's character, we will desire to be more and more like Him. The more we know God, the higher our standard of character will become, and the more we will desire to reflect His image. When the soul reaches out to God, a divine element unites with our human efforts, and the longing heart cries, "My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him" (Psalm 62:5).

If you have a sense of need in your soul, if you are burdened by skeletons in your closet, guilt-ridden over past mistakes, and if you hunger and thirst after righteousness, this is proof that Christ is working upon your heart. He is calling you, appealing for you to reach out to Him so that He can send you the Holy Spirit, so He can accomplish in your life that which is impossible for you to do on your own. We no longer need to quench our thirst at the shallow streams, which soon leave us thirsting again. The great fountain is just above us with an abundance of water

which we may drink from freely if we will only rise up just a little higher in the pathway of faith.

God's word is the wellspring of life. As you seek those living springs, you will be brought into communion with Christ through the Holy Spirit. Amazing truths will be revealed to you in a new way. Bible verses will burst open with new meaning, like a flash of light shining on a dark pathway, and you will find the themes weaving together with perfect symmetry. As the work of redemption is opened to you, you will recognize the Spirit leading your mind into higher trains of thought, with a continual longing for more.

Once the heart has tasted the love of Christ, it continually cries out for a deeper draft.

Jesus said, "the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). As the Holy Spirit opens the truth to your mind, you will gain the most precious experiences and long to tell others about the comfort that Christ has revealed to you. As you meet with other believers, you will have fresh thoughts to share in regard to the character or work of Christ. You will have fresh revelations of His pitying love to impart to those who love Him, as well as to those who do not love Him.

"Give, and it will be given to you" (Luke 6:38). The word of God is "a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon" (Song of

Solomon 4:15). Once the heart has tasted the love of Christ, it continually cries out for a deeper draft, and as you share the message with others, you will receive still more. Every revelation of God to the soul increases our capacity to know and love. The continual cry of the heart is, “More of You,” and the Spirit’s reply is, “much more,” because God loves to do “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Romans 5:10; Ephesians 3:20). Just as the Holy Spirit was given without measure to Jesus, who gave up everything for our salvation, the same Spirit will be given to every follower of Christ when the whole heart is surrendered to Him.

Jesus Himself commanded us to “be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18), and this command is also a promise of its fulfillment. It was God’s pleasure that in Christ, “all the fullness should dwell,” and “you are complete in Him” (Colossians 1:19; 2:10).

God has poured out His love without reserve, like the rain that revitalizes the earth. He says, “let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together” (Isaiah 45:8). “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongues fail for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water” (Isaiah 41:17, 18). “And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16).

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”—Matthew 5:7.

By nature, the human heart is cold, dark, and unloving. Whenever one shows a spirit of mercy and forgiveness, he does not do it of himself, but through the influence of God’s Spirit moving on his heart. “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

God is the source of all mercy. His name is “merciful and gracious” (Exodus 34:6). He does not treat us as we deserve. He does not ask if we are worthy of His love, but He pours the riches of His love on us to make us worthy. He is not malicious. He is not trying to punish us but to save us. Even the difficult trials that He at times permits us to go through will eventually reveal that His providences are only done for the salvation of souls. He desperately longs to relieve the pain and suffering of men and women under affliction. While it is true that God must impart justice, “by no means clearing the guilty,” He will take away the guilt if they will allow Him (Exodus 34:7).

The merciful are “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4), and the compassionate love of God is expressed through them. Everyone who has the heart of Christ will not seek to condemn but rather to reclaim the sinner. As long as Christ dwells in the soul, the spring of love and peace will never run dry. Where He abides, there will be an overflowing of genuine kindness.

To the tempted, the sinful, and the broken people around us, the Christian does not ask, “Are you worthy to receive my help?” They simply ask, “How can I help?” In the crudest character and the most wicked sinner, the Christian simply sees souls that Christ died to save, souls that God has put within our reach to reconcile to the Father.

The merciful are those who show compassion to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed. Job declares, “I delivered the poor who cried out, and the fatherless, and he who had no helper. The blessing of a perishing man came upon me, and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness,

There is sweet peace for the compassionate spirit, a wonderful satisfaction in the life of self-forgetful service for the good of others.

and it clothed me; My justice was like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind, and I was feet to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and I searched out the case that I did not know” (Job 29:12-16).

There are many people whose life is a painful struggle. There are lonely, depressed, and discouraged souls all around us who see their deficiencies and are miserable, but they have no faith and see nothing in life to be grateful for. They feel as if they are living at the end of their rope, and each day adds pressure and strain to their already difficult

lives. To these, a few kind words, a look of sympathy, or an expression of appreciation would be like a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul. A word of sympathy or an act of kindness would lift some of the burdens that rest on their weary shoulders. And every word or deed of unselfish kindness is an expression of the love of Christ for lost humanity.

The merciful “shall obtain mercy.” “The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself” (Proverbs 11:25). There is sweet peace for the compassionate spirit, a wonderful satisfaction in the life of self-forgetful service for the good of others. The Holy Spirit that abides in the soul and is manifest in the life will soften hard hearts and awaken sympathy and tenderness. You will reap that which you sow. “Blessed is he who considers the poor... The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, and he will be blessed on the earth; You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him on his bed of illness; You will sustain him on his sickbed” (Psalm 41:1-3).

Those who give their lives to God in ministry to others have all the resources of the universe at their command. Their life is united to Christ by the golden chain of God’s promises, and the Lord will not fail them in the hour of suffering and need. “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). And in the hour of final need, the merciful shall find refuge in the mercy of the compassionate Savior and will finally be received into their everlasting home.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”—Matthew 5:8.

The Jews were so strict about ceremonial purity that their regulations were too hard to keep. Their minds were filled with rules and restrictions for fear of outward defilement, but they did not perceive the stain that selfishness and sin were making on the soul.

Jesus did not mention the ceremonial purity laws as a condition for getting into heaven, but instead, He pointed out the need for purity of heart. James says the wisdom that is from above “is first pure” (James 3:17). The Bible says nothing that defiles will be permitted into heaven. All who desire to make it into heaven must first become pure in heart here. Those who are learning in the school of Christ will exhibit a growing distaste for careless manners, foul language, and impure thoughts. When Christ abides in the heart, there will be purity and refinement in the thought, attitude, and behavior.

But the words of Jesus, “Blessed are the pure in heart,” have a deeper meaning. They are not only talking about being pure in the way that the world understands purity, simply being free from sexual impurities and lust. We must go beyond this to the hidden purposes and motives of the soul. We must be free from pride and self-seeking – humble, unselfish, childlike.

We can only appreciate what we pattern. Unless you accept the principle of self-sacrificing love in your own life, which is the principle of God’s

character, then you cannot really know and appreciate God. Satan often leads people to view God as a cruel dictator, and many believe him. Sadly, all the selfish characteristics of humanity, including those of even Satan himself, are attributed to the loving Creator. Because people cannot explain His providential ways, God is often accused of being vindictive and arbitrary, but God responds, “You thought that I was altogether like you” (Psalm 50:21). It is the same with the Bible. While the word of God is a treasure house filled with the riches of His grace, its truths are sometimes beyond our comprehension, as high as the heavens.

To the vast majority of people, Christ is “as a root out of a dry ground,” and they see in Him “no beauty that” they “should desire Him” (Isaiah 53:2). When Jesus walked among men, revealing God in humanity, the religious leaders of the day said to Him, “You are a Samaritan and have a demon” (John 8:48). Even His disciples were often so blinded by the selfishness in their hearts that they had difficulty understanding Him. This was why Jesus often walked in solitude in the midst of men. Only heaven fully understood Him.

When Christ returns in His glory at the second coming, the wicked will not be able to even look at Him. The light of His presence, which is life to those who love Him, is death to the ungodly. To the lost, the expectation of His coming is seen as a “fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation” (Hebrews 10:27). When He finally returns, they will pray to be hidden from the face of Him who died to

save them, but those who have become purified through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are changed. These people can know God. Moses was hidden in the cleft of the rock when the glory of the Lord was revealed to him, and when we are hidden in Christ, we can behold the love of God.

“He who loves purity of heart and has grace on his lips, the King will be his friend” (Proverbs 22:11). By faith, we can see Christ even here and now. In our daily experience, we discern His goodness and compassion in the manifestation of His providential guidance. We recognize Him in the character of His Son. The Holy Spirit takes the truth concerning God and Christ and makes it clear in our minds and hearts. The pure in heart will see God in a new and endearing way, as their Redeemer. As they see the purity and loveliness of His character, they long to be like Him and reflect His image. They see Him as a Father longing to embrace a repenting son, and their hearts are filled with a joy that words cannot express.

Those who are pure in heart are able to see God in His works of nature and in the beauty that fills the universe. In the words of the Bible, they see even clearer evidence of God. They find a revelation of His mercy, goodness, and grace. The truths that are hidden from many of the great intellectual giants of our day are revealed to babes. The beauty and value of the truth, which is not discerned by many worldly intellects, are constantly unfolding to those who have a trusting, childlike desire to know and to do the will of God. We are able to discern the truth only by becoming partakers of the divine nature.

The pure in heart stand as the visible presence of God, living out the time He has allotted them, and they will one day see Him face to face, just as Adam did when he walked and talked with God in the Garden of Eden. “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”—Matthew 5:9.

Christ is the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). It is His mission to restore the peace to heaven and earth that sin has broken. “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). Whoever agrees to give up sin and open his heart to the love of Christ can receive this heavenly peace.

There is no other ground of peace than this. The grace of Christ received into the heart diffuses hostility. It calms conflicts. It fills the soul with love. You cannot make someone miserable who is at peace with God and their fellow men. Envy can find no place in their heart. Evil thoughts will find no room there. Hatred cannot exist. The heart that is in harmony with God shares in the peace of heaven and will diffuse its fragrant influence on all those around it. The spirit of peace will rest like gentle dew on the hearts of those who are weary and troubled with worldly cares and conflicts.

Christ’s followers are to carry the message of peace to the world. Those who reveal the love of Christ by the quiet and unconscious influence of a

holy life are the peacemakers. All who, by word or deed, lead people to renounce sin and yield their hearts to God are the peacemakers.

And “blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” The spirit of peace is evidence of their connection with heaven. The sweet savor of Christ surrounds them. The fragrance of the life and the beauty of their character will reveal to the world the fact that they are children of God. People will recognize that they have been with Jesus because “everyone who loves is born of God” (1 John 4:7). “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His,” for “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of God” (Romans 8:9, 14).

“Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass, that tarry for no man nor wait for the sons of men” (Micah 5:7).

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”—Matthew 5:10.

Jesus does not present His followers with the hope of gaining earthly riches and honor. He has never promised a life free from trial. Instead, He presents to them the privilege of walking with their Master in the paths of self-denial and reproach because the world does not understand them.

When Christ came to redeem the lost world, He was opposed by the united forces of the enemies of God and man. In a heartless confederacy, evil men

and evil angels made war against the Prince of Peace. Even though every word and act He breathed was done out of divine compassion, His contrast to the principles of the world provoked the most bitter hostility towards Him. Because He would not condone any justification for the exercise of evil passions, He aroused the fiercest opposition and hatred. All who will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer the same opposition. There is an ongoing conflict between righteousness and sin, love and hatred, truth and falsehood. Whenever someone expresses the love of Christ and the beauty of holiness, he is opening the door of salvation to Satan's victims of sin, and the prince of evil is aroused to fight back.

All who are filled with the Spirit of Christ will face various forms of criticism and even persecution. While the character of the persecution may change at times, the principle is alive, still fighting and protesting all who preach the gospel of Christ. All who strive to draw closer to God will soon see that the offense of the cross has never stopped. The principalities, powers, and evil spirits in high places are at war against those who surrender their lives to Jesus and submit to obeying His law. So instead of causing grief and sorrow, persecution should make our hearts joyful in some respect, since it is proof that we are following in the steps of Jesus and have laid hold of the gift of eternal life.

While Jesus never promised His people that they would be free from trials in this life, He has promised something far better. He said, "As your days, so shall

your strength be” (Deuteronomy 33:25). “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). If you are called to go through difficult trials in life for the sake of Christ, you can rest assured that Jesus will be by your side, just as He stood with the three faithful Israelites in the fires of Babylon. Those who love Christ may be joyful when attacked and persecuted for His sake, happy to share in His humiliation. Their love for God will make the bitter cup of suffering taste sweet.

All through history, Satan has persecuted the people of God. He has tortured them and put them to death, but in dying, they became conquerors. They revealed their immovable faith in One mightier than Satan. Satan could torture and kill the body, but he could not touch the life that was hidden with Christ in God. He could incarcerate them behind prison walls, but he could not bind their spirit. They could still look beyond the gloom of the prison cell to the glory of eternity and say, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

It is largely through trials and persecution that the character of God is revealed in His people. Although hated and persecuted by the world, the church is educated and disciplined in the school of Christ. They walk in narrow paths on earth. They are purified in the furnace of affliction. They follow Christ through difficulties, endure self-denial, and

experience bitter disappointments, but each painful experience teaches them more about the guilt and pain of sin, and they look at it with hatred. Taking part in the sufferings of Christ, Christians are destined to partake of His glory. In a vision, the prophet John saw the final victory of God's people and explained, "I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory... standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints" (Revelation 15:2, 3)! "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them" (Revelation 7:14, 15).

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you."—Matthew 5:11.

Ever since his fall, Satan has worked by deception. In the same way that he misrepresented God, he leads people to misrepresent the children of God. Jesus says, "the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on Me" (Psalm 69:9). In the same way, they also fall on His followers.

No one who ever lived was treated more cruelly than Christ. He was ridiculed and mocked because of

His unswerving obedience to the principles of God's holy law. They hated Him for no reason. Still, He remained calm before His enemies, stating that being accused is part of being a Christian, counseling His followers on how to meet malicious attacks, and encouraging them not to lose heart under persecution.

While some may attack our reputation by their words, they cannot stain our character. That is in God's hands. As long as we do not give in to sin, there is no power, human or satanic, that can bring a stain on the soul. Those who keep the heart focused on God will act the same in times of trial as they do in prosperity, when the light and favor of God seem to be shining on them. Our words, motives, and actions may be misrepresented and falsified, but those who keep their focus on Christ do not let it distract them because they have greater interests at stake. Like Moses, we endure as "seeing Him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27). We do "not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Christ sees our situation. He knows when we are misunderstood and misrepresented by others. We must learn to wait in calm patience and trust, no matter how maligned and despised we have been because nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest. Those who honor God will one day be honored by Him in the presence of men and angels.

Jesus said that when men revile and persecute you, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:12). He then pointed His hearers to the prophets "as an example of

suffering and patience” (James 5:10). Abel, the first Christian among Adam’s children, died a martyr. Enoch walked with God, and the world did not know him. Noah was mocked as a fanatic and an extremist. Others were mocked and scourged, put in chains, and imprisoned. “And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35).

All through history, God’s messengers have been hated and persecuted, but through their affliction, the knowledge of God has been spread across the world. Every disciple of Christ is to follow in their steps and carry the work forward, knowing that its enemies can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth. God will bring truth before the world to become the subject of examination and discussion. God will even use the attacks against truth to lead people to look into the gospel of Christ. The minds of all must be stirred. Every controversy, every reproach, every effort to restrict the liberty of conscience is used by God to awaken the minds to look into the truth.

This has often been the result in the history of God’s messengers! When the noble and eloquent Stephen was stoned to death at the instigation of the Sanhedrin council, the cause of the gospel went forward with more power. The light of heaven that shined on his face and the divine compassion breathed in his dying prayer were like arrows of conviction to the bigoted leaders of the Sanhedrin who stood by, and Saul, the persecuting Pharisee, became the chosen vessel of God to carry the name

of Christ to the Gentiles, and beyond. Long after the event, the aged Paul wrote from his prison-house at Rome, "Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife ... not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains," but "in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached" (Philippians 1:15-18). Even through Paul's imprisonment, the gospel was spread, and souls were won for Christ in the very palace of the Caesars. By the efforts of Satan to destroy it, the "incorruptible" seed of the word of God, "which lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:23), was sown in the hearts of men. Through the reproach and persecution of His children, the name of Christ is continually lifted up, and souls are saved.

The witnesses of Christ who have suffered persecution and reproach in this life have a great reward waiting. While many continue to chase after worldly gain, Jesus continues to point them to a greater heavenly reward. But He does not reserve all our benefits for the future life. It begins here. As the Lord said to Abraham, "I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward" (Genesis 15:1)!

This is an abridged and adapted version of the larger book by E. G. White. If you enjoyed this book, we encourage you to purchase and read the full book entitled, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*.

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