



*The*  
**INAUGURAL  
ADDRESS**

**THAT CHANGED THE WORLD**

**DAVID L. JOHNSTON**



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*The Inaugural Address That Changed the World*

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## INTRODUCTION

**A**n inaugural address is a speech that marks the beginning of a new administration. Jesus' inaugural address is the greatest speech in the history of the world. (It is more eloquent than the soliloquies of Shakespeare; more life changing than Lincoln at Gettysburg; and more inspiring than the addresses of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Ronald Wilson Reagan, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, General Douglas MacArthur, or Martin Luther King, Jr.) Most people recognize it as the Sermon on the Mount.

An inaugural address is a speech that marks the beginning of a new administration. The leader reveals his intentions, values, policies, procedures, and the budget to the people. Jesus' Inaugural Address is no exception. This, the greatest speech in human history, is where He outlines the blessing, the principles, the policies, the procedures, and the budget provisions for His never-ending Kingdom. He invites you to His Kingdom.

### **He Is**

The first and most important thing you must know about God is that He is. Do you believe He is? It's not hard to believe in God. In fact, it's extremely difficult *not* to believe in God. That would require becoming a fool—for it is the fool that says in his heart, "There is no God" (Psalm 14:1). Only a fool can look at a work of art and say there is no artist or look at a book and say there is no author.

Likewise, one cannot look at creation and say there is no Creator. The inimitable C.S. Lewis said it this way, “We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere incognito.”

### **God Is a Blessor**

God is a blessor. That’s the second most important thing to know about God. He is a blessor, and He is a rewarder. “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

When you know He is a blessor, you know a lot about God. You know His nature. You know His character. You know you can trust Him. How can we know that God is, indeed, a blessor? It’s simply a matter of history.

God blessed the earth: “...for the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, **receiveth blessing from God**” (Hebrews 6:7, emphasis mine). The earth—not Jupiter, Saturn, or Uranus—He blessed. Is it not beautiful? In Psalm 33:5 David writes, “...the earth Is full of the goodness of the Lord.” Then, in Psalm 104:24, it is written that, “...the earth is full of thy riches.” Isaiah 6:3 states, “...the whole earth is full of His glory.” Every tree, every flower, every plant, every vegetable and fruit, is not only the work of His hand, but is also the beneficiary of the blessing of His hand.

He blessed the animals, the fish of the sea, the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field.

“And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. **God blessed them**, saying, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth” (Genesis 1:21-22, emphasis mine).

How magnificent! God made each of the creatures, every bug, every bird, and every insect *ad infinitum*. Over 350,000 species, each of them designed to be specific and unique:

- Elephants stand on their feet for forty years; eat 200-400 pounds of vegetation per day; have molars that are 12 inches long and four inches wide; pregnancies that last two years; and hearts that weigh 45 pounds. They communicate at frequencies from 14-35 hertz, which is below the hearing range of the human ear.
- Giraffes are six feet tall at birth and have tongues 20 inches long.
- Termites can live up to 30 years.
- Woodpeckers can peck 20 times a second without suffering any brain damage.
- Bees flap their wings at 300 times per second.
- Tunas swim constantly and at an average speed of nine miles per hour.
- Seals often swim for eight months and travel as far as 6,000 miles without touching land.
- Flamingos can only eat when their heads are upside-down.
- Frogs must close their eyes to swallow.
- Pigs can run a seven-and-a-half-minute mile.
- Rabbits talk to each other by thumping their feet.
- Fleas can jump higher than 12 inches, which is comparable to a human being leaping over the Washington Monument.
- Earthworms have neither eyes nor ears.
- Ants have five noses and never sleep.
- Ducks frequently swim while sleeping.
- Polar bears are all lefties.
- Humming birds weigh less than a penny.
- Pigeons have feathers that weigh more than their bones.
- Cows chew 18 hours a day.



- Adult moths never eat.
- Horses can look forward with one eye and backward with the other eye.

Can you imagine such creativity? It's almost never ending:

- Whales and dolphins fall only half asleep—the two hemispheres of their brains taking turns sleeping—so that the half of the brain that is awake can make sure they continue going to the surface to breathe.
- Blue whales can weigh up to 300,000 pounds and can whistle at 188 decibels. (Humans experience ear pain starting at 125 decibels and suffer hearing tissue damaged at 180 decibels.)
- Adult kangaroos can jump 30 feet in one hop, but they are only one inch long when born.
- Electric eels can release up to 650 volts.
- Mockingbirds can imitate any sound.
- Ostriches have eyes that are bigger than their brains.
- Owls can't move their eyes.
- Some insects have blood that is yellow.
- Snails can only move at their fastest pace of 3/100<sup>th</sup> of a mile per hour.
- Tigers have skin that is striped as well as their fur.
- A lion's roar can be heard five miles away.

Why did God create such diversity? Are these simply animal decorations for the planet? No, is the proper answer. He blessed the animal kingdom with such diversity, so they could bless us. Each of these creations has a built-in design to teach us.

“But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the

LORD hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind” (Job 12:7-10).

God blessed the earth, the animals, the fish and the fowl, to be a blessing.

He blessed mankind. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. **And God blessed them...**” (Genesis 1:27-28, emphasis mine).

Imagine creating mankind in “His own image!” What a blessing it is to be made, not equal with God, but in the likeness of God. We are in the same category as God. Only beings in the same category as each other can fellowship. For example, genuine and deep fellowship with a cow is impossible. There isn’t anything wrong with the cow *per se*, but because the cow is in a different category true fellowship isn’t possible. However, mankind can and was made to fellowship with God. This is the ultimate of human relationships. God’s intention is for this relationship with Him to last forever!

### **The Blessing of Marriage**

God blessed marriage. Male and female is God’s idea. Marriage is God’s idea. It is significant that God made for Adam one woman, not ten. Similarly, God made for Adam a *woman*, not another man. Then God set the terms for all future marriages: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and **they** shall be **one** flesh” (Genesis 2:24, emphasis mine). The “they” mentioned in Genesis 2:24 denotes the *one man* and *one woman*.

Proverbs 18:22 says, “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.” This marriage, as defined by God, is what is blessed. In fact, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4).

God blesses both men and women. Males and females stand before the Lord equally. A woman is simply a “wombed man,” albeit

distinctly different mentally and emotionally as well as physically. Men and women do have different functions, but we should believe in the equality of men and women. Both are equal in importance and equal in value in God's eyes.

### **Blessing Is Available for Everyone**

God blesses everyone, Christian and non-Christian. God isn't just nice to Christians: "...he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). He doesn't say that He is just going to give sun to the good guys or withhold rain from the bad guys. In fact, Luke 6:35 says, "...he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." In Psalm 145:9, David exhorts, "The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works." He is a blesser and His blessings abound to everyone. God, who is love, understands that if anyone is going to follow Him it will be because they realize that God is good, and He is right.

Let us be careful not to underestimate the goodness of God. It is only through His goodness and rightness that He will draw intelligent, thinking men and women to repent. Romans 2:4 says, "Despise thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

God blesses in diverse ways whenever He can wisely do so. God has extra blessings for those who follow His right ways. Just in Deuteronomy 28: 1-14 alone, God lists 28 ways He blesses those who observe His words!

God doesn't want you to be damaged. He wants you up, not down. He wants you helped, not hindered. He wants you healed, not hurt. He wants you moving forward, not backward. He is for you, not against you. He wants you blessed, not cursed.

A perfect illustration of the blessing of God as it relates to you is the image of tons of confetti falling on and all around you. This is a picture of blessing in abundance. You want Him working in you, for

He, "...is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20).

God even blesses in death. "...Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth" (Revelation 14:13). How could this be? Here is the answer: "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). God wants His blessing of you to go on into eternity. "...Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

### **True Fellowship with God Requires Redemption**

Genuine fellowship requires more than just being in the same category. It requires likeness of character and that likeness can only be achieved by redemption. Why redemption? Because light and darkness cannot coexist; good and evil cannot coexist; right and wrong cannot fellowship (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Mankind has departed from the high and holy ways of God and must bring himself back, otherwise fellowship cannot happen. This way back is called redemption, and it has been fully provided to us by this wonderful being of God, who loves us immensely and desires our fellowship. However, we must be desirous of this relationship with God. Otherwise, we will continue pursuing our own ways, which are contradictory to His. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). This "going our own way" is what the Scriptures describe as *iniquity*. Our selfish egocentric usurpation of God's proper place in our lives becomes the driving force for both sin and iniquity.

This brings us to the biggest blessing made available to mankind: allowing God to change us from selfishness to love. Love is the essential core of God's nature. It is the opposite of selfishness. According to God, love is the operating system of the soul, every soul. Love takes the risk out of empowerment. Why would God eternalize selfishness and empower it to contaminate every part of the universe? He would

not! That would be like a judge freeing willful, deliberate criminals back into society to continue killing, raping, and kidnapping. Such evil must be terminated, confined, or restricted. Similarly, iniquity must be terminated, confined, or restricted. Only love can be trusted. Here's the big blessing for mankind: "...God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:26).

Jesus came to turn us away from selfishness and turn us toward love, which is the proof of a genuine Christian. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going into a pig pen would make you a pig or having athlete's foot would make you an athlete. Jesus Christ came to do something about this human predicament and to establish a new way of living. He shows us a different path from the wayward selfish path mankind has taken. This new way of living is precisely what Jesus defined and set forth in His inaugural address.

### **Obstacles to Blessings**

God is a blesser; however, there are many obstacles to receiving His blessings. Our contemporary culture tries to convince the unsuspecting that evil is good and good is evil. Isaiah 5:20-21 says, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!"

Unbelief or a distorted and inadequate concept of God will also block blessing. Here's why: "...he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6 NASB).

Blessing is the purpose of Calvary. The Apostle Paul said it this way: "...I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ" (Romans 15:29). Calvary changed the destiny of mankind forever. No wonder the same apostle said, "For I am not ashamed of

the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth..." (Romans 1:16).

For centuries now, lives have been changed by this power, from drunkenness to sobriety, from sinner to saint, from harlotry to dignity, and from bondage to freedom. Shackles are broken. Chains fall off. Satan is defeated. Hell is kept out of the lives of men, women, and children. Good deeds are done.

Blessedness was and is the message and mission of Jesus. This is the primary content of Jesus' inaugural address and the subject of this book.

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed..." (Matthew 5:1-3).

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine" (Matthew 7:28). Welcome now to Jesus' inaugural address.



## CHAPTER 1

# ...AND WHEN HE WAS SET

**A**n inaugural address is a speech that marks the beginning of a new administration, leadership or government. It is intended to inform the people of the incoming leader's intentions, springing from his or her personal values. Likewise, the Sermon on the Mount could easily be interpreted as Jesus' inaugural address. In it, He disclosed His intentions, values, policies, procedures, and budget, all with the motivation of love, which is His core message and mission. He came to bless.

Every inaugural address has its audience. Historically, the audience is made up of both like-minded people and those who are virulently opposed. With Jesus, the crowd was a mixed multitude with a variety of motives, hopes, and responses, yet all were eager to hear the One who spoke with authority. Jesus was just as willing and eager to teach and engage. This was His life. The Scriptures describe the gathering: "And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan" (Matthew 4:25).

### **What History Tells Us**

Overlooking the Sea of Galilee, in what we know now as northeast Israel, people gathered to listen to Jesus speak. This location was of



no special importance and did not receive the name *Mount of the Beatitudes* until long after this event took place. People came from all over the country—from regions as far south as Jerusalem and as far east as the Jordan River. This was a big event, and by this time, Jesus' fame had spread across the nation. He routinely drew crowds by the tens of thousands. Although history did not record how many attended this event, the Bible routinely records gatherings in which five thousand men, not counting the women and children, were taught and fed by this great Teacher.

We must try to grasp the immensity of His audience. This was not simply a multitude, but a plurality of multitudes. Whenever Jesus saw a crowd, something powerful and compassionate stirred within Him. He was moved towards them. “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36).

Crowds gathered with intensity and fervor whenever Jesus came. They were willing to travel. They were willing to forgo food, even for days. Yet, He was not willing that they should go away hungry and faint, not in body or soul. Whenever he saw a great audience, a great crowd, a great multitude, he was always moved—His heart held great tenderness for their need.

“Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way” (Matthew 15:32).

### **Who Were the People in the Crowd?**

Part of this great multitude included His disciples. This does not mean just the twelve, or even the seventy, but to the more than five hundred. It is reasonable to conclude that all the disciples were in attendance. There were also people from every walk of life: the

educated and the illiterate, the prostitutes and the demon possessed, the wealthy and the poor, and the young and the old came to hear the address.

At that time, Judaism was divided into four main camps: the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots. These four groups provided the religious context in which the meeting took place.

The Pharisees believed that holiness was found in keeping the Law of Moses and rabbinical traditions, already well established at that time. These Law-keeping traditionalists found their identity in historic Judaism. The Orthodox sects of today claim to be descendants of this group.

The Sadducees, the liberal branch of Judaism, were much like liberal Jews today. They suspended rules and regulations to fit their lifestyles and modes of thinking. To this day, the liberal branch of Judaism scraps Mosaic Law to live a faith based on their ever-changing, personal comfort.

The Essenes believed the only way to be holy was to remove themselves. They left Jerusalem and neighboring cities and moved into the wilderness. Living as isolationists and nomads, the Essenes dug themselves into the mountains and hid away. The Qumran community, related to the Dead Sea Scrolls, left evidence of the lives of the Essenes.

Lastly, there were the Zealots, who were in favor of political revolution. These social activists worked and fought for political reform. The Zealots, with their desire to dethrone Rome, utilized the fortress of Masada, southeast of Jerusalem on the Dead Sea, as a refuge from Rome. This ancient stronghold is near the former cities of Sodom and Gomorra. To this day, if you stand at the top of Masada, you can look down and see the ruins and ashes of Sodom. As the Zealots became active against Rome, they were pursued by the Roman army, which built a ramp up to their fortress. Rather than be captured and enslaved by Rome, the Zealots committed mass suicide. Masada is their grave.

This mixed multitude came from the four corners of Palestine. The general population (who had refused to join any of the religious groups) gathered alongside the disciples, the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots. All these diverse groups concentrated around Jesus on the mountain.

### **Getting a Sense of the Setting**

Consider an earlier scene with Moses on Mount Sinai. As thunder boomed and lightning flashed all around him, Moses brought the Ten Commandments and the Law to the Jewish people. God and Moses looked down to see the children of Israel, led by Aaron, worshipping the golden calf.

Now the scene was set on another mountain, the one that would be called the *Mount of Beatitudes*. There was no thunder and no coldness, but a beautiful day with blue skies and a feeling of expectation, void of wrath.

“And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him” (Matthew 5:1). Jesus sat down. He was ready to teach. He was ready to engage people from every walk of life and every religious sect. He sat down, just as Jewish Rabbis do today, to teach their students. He had the chair. He was the chairman. He looked upon His audience with compassion.

### **The Timeliness of the Teaching**

Jesus picked a specific time, place, and audience for His inaugural address. Before looking specifically at each point, there are several overarching themes that are important to understand.

**First, His words showed why a new way was necessary.** The King had arrived to begin His new administration. He would be establishing a completely new set of ideas for a new kingdom. Although He had drawn the masses before through His miraculous healings, this was Jesus’ first public teaching. His compassion and power had gained their attention, and now many were ready to hear

anything He had to say. Each person came with his or her own backgrounds, motives, and expectations. He was there to meet them.

The Old Testament ended with the possibility of a curse upon the land and its people, but the New Testament opens with a blessing. Jesus came to institute new concepts, new ways of thinking, new ways of believing, and new ways of receiving. Repeatedly, He said, “You have heard that it was said by them of old...but I am telling you it is a new day now” (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-34, 38, 39, 43-44). He outlined a new set of principles and new way of life. He presented an entirely new way in His inaugural address.

**Second, His address deals with underlying attitudes instead of conduct.** Many in the audience were accustomed to teachings about outward conduct, but this was a new message. Jesus came to deal with the underlying attitudes that produce outward conduct. He went for the heart. How should people respond when persecuted? What about when spoken against falsely, or lied to, or misrepresented? What were they to think and do, when individual adversaries or entire organizations were set against them? What are *we* to think and do? In His new kingdom, it all starts on the inside, because that is where His kingdom resides—within us.

**Third, He reveals the greatest insight into the mind of God.** These official words of Jesus reveal His heart and mind so that everyone would know His will. When you know what is in the mind of Christ, you know what is in the mind of God His Father. There is nothing “un-Christlike” about the Father. There is nothing “un-Christlike” about the Holy Spirit. All three agree because their characters are identical. In Jesus dwelt the fullness of the godhead in bodily form. The world had already existed, mankind had already traversed the earth about three thousand years, and the King Himself was about to explain, in great detail, what was on His mind. He reveals His thoughts because He desires that we think like Him. We cannot think like Him without knowing His thoughts. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

This was not a lecture given by an idealist, a psychologist, or a historian. This was God-Made-Flesh speaking His mind. Up until this point, people were taught that only a select few could know the mind of God. Jesus came to change that. All could know. *We* could know. That is what makes this address so important.

**Fourth, Jesus teaches there is the only way to true happiness.** To be *blessed*. The Amplified Bible elaborates on the word *blessed*—happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous, with life-joy and satisfaction in God’s favor and salvation, regardless of outward conditions. Blessed means happy. Blessed means you are to be envied. It means you are spiritually prosperous. You are full of life-joy. What a great phrase that is! Filled with satisfaction, knowing that you are living in God’s favor and you are salvaged.

We are to be enviably happy? Yes, regardless of outward conditions, with a genuine sense of internal joy. The world has its system for the pursuit of happiness. We are told to acquire the next thing, then the next thing, in a never-ending chase to obtain things to make us happy. Yet, how can a spiritual need be met with something physical? It cannot. The world is caught up in pursuits of happiness that can never satisfy. Then the King of Glory comes to tell us the way of genuine and lasting happiness.

Solomon should have been happy, right? Look at what he had. He was born into royalty. He had silver sitting around like rocks. He lived in the best city on the planet, Jerusalem. He had the best food. He had more women than can be imaged. He had everything except happiness. What did this king, this teacher, this preacher have to say? “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity” (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

Solomon, with all his worldly possessions, never obtained an internal, genuine consciousness of joy. Therefore, Jesus came to tell us, in His address, how to get happiness. No wonder the exclamation was made, “...Behold, a greater than Solomon is here” (Matthew 12:42).

**Fifth, Jesus' address teaches us what truly pleases God.** Because of the *Sermon on the Mount*, we learn what truly pleases the heart of God. We learn how the children of the Father live in heaven. We learn the principles of the kingdom.

**Sixth, Jesus' powerful speech strikes to the heart of the matter.** The *Sermon on the Mount*, or the inaugural address of Jesus, is designed to get to the heart of all things. It does not focus on the outside, but on the inside where attitudes and motives reside.

Luke 11:39-40 says,

“And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?”

When the Lord Jesus dealt with the Pharisees, the most religious and legalistic of the Jews, He rebuked them for only cleaning the outside of the cups and platters. However, on the inside, their hearts remained voraciously wicked. They had developed their external lives with exacting observance, yet the real problems dwelt within their hearts.

Here came the King to introduce a whole new set of ideas—straight from His mind—that were contrary to the thinking of everyone around Him. In fact, His thoughts were so revolutionary some may have wondered if He had lost His mind. Our culture influences us so much that His truth, which is so juxtaposed, so opposite, seems almost offensive. How can happiness come from poverty of spirit? How can happiness come from mourning? How can happiness come from meekness? Nine times in the first few verses of Matthew 5, Jesus tells us how to be blessed. If these new ideas are not difficult enough, we now hear that we can be happy when persecuted. It does not make sense. Jesus boldly claimed that no matter what the outside circumstances of life may be, that believers could live in blessedness and happiness.

**Seventh, Jesus taught the principles of the Kingdom of God.**

It is essential to understand the laws and principles of any earthly kingdom to successfully live and operate in that kingdom. Likewise, it helps us know if we are operating within God's kingdom and how to change if we are not. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

The subject of Jesus' inaugural address was how to reach true and lasting happiness regardless of circumstances. This is the happiness reported in scripture, a joy that cannot be taken from us. Jesus says He came to give us joy that is absolutely full, a joy that leaves no room for sadness. Jesus challenges us through paradoxes. How is it that the negative can produce the positive? How can we be happy when all the circumstances around us do not appear to be blessings? "And He opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, blessed..." (Matthew 5:2-3).

He began to explain how blessedness, happiness, is the way of His kingdom. He came to reveal greater dimensions of blessings from God than we had ever had before. He told us we could be blessed in everything we do. He created the earth and blessed it. He made the animals and blessed them. He formed mankind, breathed into him the breath of life and blessed him. Male and female, He blessed. He is a blesser. He blesses everything. He blesses in life and in death. He blesses or bestows genuine happiness. Jesus came to plant happiness into our thinking. He opened His mouth and taught them blessed—happy, to be envied—are you.

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine" (Matthew 7:28). We have no idea how long this first address lasted. We don't know if they sat all day, if He paused to let His words sink into their hearts, or if they whispered to each other as they listened. All we know is that the masses were completely astonished! The Message bible describes it like this, "When

Jesus concluded his address, the crowd burst into applause. They had never heard teaching like this” (Matthew 7:28-29).

This message is as true today as it was on the day Jesus delivered it. It is the Father’s will that we all walk in the reality of God’s blessings. This is the point to Jesus’ inaugural address. As exciting as this message is for believers, there is more. In Matthew 5, Jesus starts a transition. He begins to speak of salt and light.

“Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house” (Matthew 5:13-15).

We cannot be the salt of the earth or the light of the world until we have mastered the first twelve verses of Matthew 5. It is a progression. The King of all ages, of all worlds, who came to represent His Father and the Blessed Holy Spirit, came to impart concepts and a new way of thinking. Only by following His teachings can we go forth as His ambassadors—blessed, happy, full of light, and full of flavor.





PART 1

# **BLESSED IS...THE BEATITUDES**



## CHAPTER 2

# THE ONLY WAY TO LASTING HAPPINESS: BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

**H***appiness*—the joyful state that has eluded mankind for centuries. From philosophers to psychologists, from clergy to laity, from sages to fools, from academics to comedians, from kings to paupers, people have fiercely debated the big question: what makes people happy? Aristotle, one of the greatest thinkers in the history of Western philosophy, spent a whopping 27 pages of his ninth treatise book trying to define happiness. His conclusion: happiness depends on us. Amazingly, Thomas Aquinas, the popular medieval theologian, agreed with him!

For most people, the source of happiness is hard to define. Now comes Jesus, not the philosopher nor the theologian, but God in the flesh, to fill in the blanks and give the details of the way to lasting happiness. That is why God Himself made sure that the way to genuine blessedness was item number one in His Son's inaugural address.

Thankfully, Jesus didn't leave us baffled with regards to this crucial question that has stumped fine minds for so long. Happiness is the subject of the first be-attitude. It explains the only way to genuine and

lasting happiness. God wants us to be happy so much that He made living blessed the number one item on His Son's inaugural address.

### **A Young Man's Quest for Happiness**

When I was eighteen, I attended a camp meeting in Ontario, Canada. Wednesday evening, I went forward to become a Christian. I prayed at the altar, but nothing happened. The next morning, I hopped into my rickety old 1952 Chevrolet and drove out of the camp to see some young ladies in the same province. I saw my parents and told them I'd given up on my pursuit of happiness. When I was twenty-two miles away in a little town called Brighton, I heard an audible voice come out of heaven, "David, if you go back to the camp tonight, I'll meet you at the altar at the conclusion of the service." Well, this was mind-blowing. My dad had told me about supernatural stuff like that. At once, I turned my car around and drove back.

My parents happened to be walking around the campsite when I pulled in, so I stopped by to say hello. They asked me if I had decided not to take my trip anymore, and I told them I'd changed my mind and had come back to get saved. They thought I was making fun of them like I had many times before. That night, a preacher from Texas spoke. His text was Matthew 5:6 which said, "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, they shall be filled.*" The moment he gave the altar call, I ran to the altar. I reached the altar spot closest to where I'd been sitting. I had sat only four or five rows back because I had a date with God at the altar that night. For over three hours, I was only vaguely aware of my surroundings as indescribable happiness flooded my thirsty soul, quenching me in an instant. When I came back to my senses, the place was empty except for a little bare bulb hanging over the exit. This Scripture is the one God used to change my life.

On Tuesday night, two days before my divine encounter, I had spent some time at the campgrounds, making friends with the camp "cop." He wasn't a real policeman but a pastor doing camp security

duties. I thought that if I became his friend, I would be exempted from keeping the ten-o'clock-lights-out curfew. He was a nice guy and hanging out with him was fun. I decided to open my heart to him.

I said, "Ah, I tried to find God."

"Really? Where have you looked?" he asked.

"Well, I have read Barclay and Descartes, and have also talked to my dad a lot," I replied.

"If you want to find God, go where God is - at the altar. He will meet you there. Go to the altar in the meeting place over there and you'll find Him," he said confidently.

That's why I went to the altar on Wednesday night. However, when I went back the next night, I met God just as the "policeman" had said. I found true happiness that day, and my life has never been the same since that encounter with God at the altar. Let me give you my testimony in verse as written by Lorrie Cline.

I had walked life's path with an easy tread  
And followed where comfort and pleasure led  
And then by chance in a quiet place  
I met my Master face to face.  
I had built my castles and reared them high  
Until their towers pierced the sky  
I had sworn to rule with an iron mace  
'Till I met my Master face to face.  
With station and rank and wealth as my goal  
My thoughts were for body and none for the soul  
I'd entered to win in life's mad race  
'Til I met my Master face to face.

I met him and knew him and blushed to see  
That his eyes of sorrow were fixed on me  
And I faltered and I fell at his feet that day  
And all my castles vanished away

Melted and vanished and in their place  
I saw not else but Jesus' face  
And I cried, Master make me meek  
To follow the marks of thy wounded feet  
My thoughts are now for the souls of men  
I lost my life to find it again  
Ere since alone in that quiet place  
I met my Master face to face.

In the wee hours of the morning, I walked out of the tabernacle and went to the shore of Lake Ontario. As I sat on an old railroad tie, I stared at the lovely sky for several hours. I became aware that the God who placed all those stars in the sky now lived in my heart. At about six-thirty in the morning, I found my way to my parents' cottage. When I opened the door, they came over and hugged me. We sat down at the breakfast table, and I looked them in the eyes and asked for their forgiveness. A lot of tears were shed that morning as reconciliation took place. For the next ten days, my soul was enraptured by celestial glory, because I had entered into the kingdom of heaven.

### **What Is the Kingdom of Heaven?**

Before we get into the nitty-gritty of the kingdom of heaven, it's important to point out one truth: poverty of spirit is the only route that'll take you there. In Matthew 13, Jesus gives us seven parables about the kingdom of heaven, with each giving us a hint of what it is:

1. Like a seed sown by a farmer that produces a bumper harvest, the kingdom of heaven brings forth abundant blessings (Matthew 13:24).
2. Like a miniscule mustard seed that grows into a huge tree, the kingdom of heaven produces gigantic blessings (Matthew 13:31-32).
3. Like expansive yeast that leavens the whole dough, the kingdom of heaven brings ever-increasing blessings, which engulf a believer's life (Matthew 13:33).

4. Like a fisherman's net that catches all kinds of fish, the kingdom of heaven brings in all sorts of people into everlasting happiness (Matthew 13:47-50).
5. Like a house-master who brings out old and new treasure out of his storeroom, the kingdom of heaven oozes blessings from its limitless divine stores (Matthew 13:52).
6. Like an ecstatic man who discovers hidden treasure, the kingdom of heaven imparts rapturous joy (Matthew 13:44).
7. Like a man who foregoes everything in order to buy a precious pearl, the kingdom of heaven can only be accessed by those who sacrifice everything for its sake (Matthew 13:45-46).

What then is the kingdom of heaven? Why would you want to be poor in spirit so you might inherit it? The kingdom of heaven is the greatest treasure anybody could ever have anywhere at any time. Not only is it desirable, it's jam-packed with joys of every kind. If you are in the kingdom of heaven, you have the best of everything that exists now and throughout all eternity. No wonder the scriptures say, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:11).

Since the kingdom of heaven is the greatest of all pleasures, it calls for the greatest commitment. Mark 8:36-37 puts it this way, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" God's kingdom is so valuable that, once you get it, nothing else matters. Let me state it another way: nothing on the planet comes close to the value and joy of being in the kingdom.

### **How to Enter the Kingdom of Heaven**

God's desire is for broken humanity to find hope, healing, and joy in the kingdom. He wants you blessed and perpetually ecstatic even if you're being persecuted. The first characteristic Jesus describes of kingdom-dwellers is that they are *poor in spirit*.



Being poor in spirit does **NOT** mean being in a state of financial or physical poverty. It's poor in spirit, not poor in your pocketbook. If all that was required to enter into the kingdom was financial poverty, then a lot of people would be in the kingdom! Clearly, that's not what it's about. Instead, being poor in spirit means to have a humble and contrite spirit.

First, God declares, "For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isaiah 66:2). God is searching for people who are poor in spirit and tremble at His word. Proud people do not tremble at the Word of God. Self-sufficient people don't care about the Bible, but those who are poor in spirit do. Poverty of spirit opens a new vista for mankind. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

Psalm 34:18 says, "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." God is close to the brokenhearted. What a proclamation! Anyone, whether president or pauper, who wants to come into God's kingdom, must enter the same way. You must lose your life to find it. This was Paul's testimony—that death brings life (Galatians 2:20).

In Luke 18:9-14, Jesus uses the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican to illustrate how few are willing to take the route of brokenness, and of an impoverished spirit. At the core, the problem with the Pharisee's prayer was that he was putting himself before God. In fact, he is described as "praying with himself" so his prayer didn't go anywhere but to his own ears.

This idea of "enthroning oneself" is still just as popular today. Self-improvement is not just a buzzword; it is a massive, multibillion-dollar industry that is bent on producing self-confident and self-reliant people. The world says you should believe in yourself, build your ego, get ahead, and be above everybody else. God comes along and says, no, it's the other way around. The way up is actually down. A

humble heart that is willing to die to self and to joyfully serve others characterizes being poor in spirit.

Jesus' concluding remarks are clear: everyone who exalts himself shall be abased, while everyone who humbles himself shall be exalted. Becoming poor in spirit is the way to happiness and promotion.

### **How to Become “Poor in Spirit”**

Thankfully, the Scriptures, as always, point out clear steps to take to become spiritually destitute and attain happiness.

First, we must desire God more than anything else. The kingdom of God is not for casual seekers—you must desire Him more than anything, more than anyone, and even more than life itself. Hebrews 11:6 says it this way, “...for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”

You'll only find God if you passionately pursue Him, and He will draw close to you. My search for God led me to philosophy books and, ultimately, to the altar at a camp meeting where I met Him. This is a universal truth: if somebody genuinely wants to find God, they will.

God made these serious declarations: “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you saith the LORD...” (Jeremiah 29:13-14). “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you...” (James 4:8).

In our pursuit to become poor in spirit, we must not only draw near to God, but we must also let go of all our sin. Because of our sin, we cannot possibly reach a holy God. The good news is that Jesus bridged the gap between sin and God through the cross, so that you and I can reach Him in spite of our sinfulness. To truly desire God more than anything else includes letting go of all forms of sin.

James 4:8-9 says, “...Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.” If you are holding onto a known sin, you'll never find God. To find

Him, be broken hearted, humble yourself, and ruthlessly deal with sin in your life.

Likewise, it is important to check the motives of your heart. Unlike man, who focuses on outward appearance, God looks at the heart. To receive blessings from Him and partake of all the joys of heaven, you must get your motives right. Purity of heart leads to spiritual poverty. Also, be single-minded in your pursuit of God. Not only does James 1:7-8 say that a double-minded man will not receive anything from God, but that he is unstable in all his ways.

Pursing God takes a clear and focused heart, but we must also allow emptying and brokenness to occur. In contemporary American Christianity, we don't hear much about the process of emptying oneself to experience the fullness of Christ. Too many have bought into the self-improvement movement that preaches self-exaltation and self-gratification. Unfortunately, drugs, alcohol, or the acquisition of material things can never satisfy the ego. Happiness has **nothing** to do with arranging the stuff around you. Happiness is a mental, emotional, and spiritual condition inside you. God's route to success is the opposite of what most modern-day philosophers teach. He urges us to stop pumping up our egos and instead mourn and surrender our own will to His perfect one. Of course, to do all of this, humility is essential.

Humility is simply a DIY attitude adjustment. According to Webster's dictionary, *humility* is "a modest or low view of one's own importance." It IS something you can teach yourself to do, and it is far better to humble yourself than to have God do it for you! If you humble yourself, He will lift you up. That's a firm promise from His word. James 4:10 says, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."

How high is He going to take you? How full is He going to fill you? The answer, my friend, is that He's going to take you into the kingdom of heaven. He's going to take you to the highest level, to an

intoxication of joy, which is enduring, unlike the fleeting joy you feel when you feed your ego.

Jesus' way to happiness is a condition produced in us; it doesn't require praise or kudos. Since it's an internal, completely fulfilling condition, it doesn't require anything from anybody. No one can knock it out of you, no matter what they say or do. You become indomitable. You won't try to lift yourself up again because He will lift you up. You don't have to push and shove to get promotions. You don't have to do what everybody else does to manipulate people and get payoffs.

You're in the kingdom now. And, in the kingdom, promotion does not come from the east or from the west, from the south or from the north. It comes from the Lord (Psalm 75:6). You see, when He lifts you up, nobody can put you down. If you lift yourself up with some conniving scheme that you carried out, you can fall quickly, especially with a disposition of ego and pride. For pride, the Scripture says, comes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall (Proverbs 16:18). Not so for the poor in spirit, because they're lifted up by God.

Likewise, when God is the one lifting you up there is no need to speak evil of others to make yourself look better. God calls this practice slander, and that is not a kingdom activity. People should have nothing to fear from us. Instead they should be the benefactors of our love and our prayers, because the poor in spirit see through a different optic. Instead of competing with our ridiculers, we feel compassion toward them. The poor in spirit return good for evil. They bless their enemies, but the proud cannot.

When you become poor in spirit, you're also no longer competing, so you easily admit your weaknesses. You have no more cover ups in your life. Transparency is not easy for the egotistic and the proud. Throughout the Bible we see examples of people who accepted their failings and were elevated as a result.

Jacob wrestled all night with an angel and ended up with a dislocated hip. He was beaten in an uncommon wrestling match. Imagine standing toe to toe with an angel. He didn't stand a chance, did he? What happened after he lost the fight and admitted his helplessness? God blessed him. "And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there" (Genesis 32:29).

The prophet Isaiah mourned about his sinfulness. Because of his humility, God sent an angel to touch his lips, take away his iniquity, and transform him. "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5).

Gideon is also an example of a man who could acknowledge his insufficiency. He became poor in spirit because he admitted his weaknesses. "And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (Judges 6:15). In response, an angel reassured Gideon that the Lord was with him and that he was a mighty man of valor. Gideon was not weak anymore, but made strong through God. Paul said it this way, "...for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Peter was once a cocky loudmouth. He was the kind of guy who swam the farthest or climbed the highest. He had to outdo everyone. He was always talking out of turn and jockeying for first place. It was only after witnessing the miraculous catch of fish that Peter became broken and threw himself at Jesus's feet. "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). When you become broken, you're at the threshold of the kingdom of God.

Paul, once a persecutor of the faith, became one of the most humble men in the entire Bible. "I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you:

for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing” (2 Corinthians 12:11). Paul says, “I’m nothing.” Out of that nothingness, he wrote fourteen books out of the twenty-seven in the New Testament. Being poor in spirit means to be without pride, without resources, without selfishness, and without self-reliance. Stop the ego thing. And this is really big news: being poor in spirit is the beginning of the kingdom of heaven. It is not the end of you. It is the end of the unconditioned, undisciplined, unbroken, unyielding ego. Jesus asserts that until you get ego out of the way you can never be happy; happiness can only be found through surrender and spiritual poverty.

### **Evidence of Being “Poor in Spirit”**

The moment you embrace spiritual poverty, grace kicks in. **You will thank God for His grace.** Heaven showers you with bountiful blessings triggered by your inward posture of total dependence on God. “...God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6).

He resists the proud because they don’t think they need God. Even if He wanted to help them, they wouldn’t accept His help because ego doesn’t want to do that. Ego wants all the credit and all the glory for self. Ego says, “*I’m everything, I don’t need God. I don’t need anybody.*” People go on, ruled for a lifetime by an insatiable ego that can never find lasting happiness. Humility is the gateway to God’s grace, His favor, eternal joy, and our souls being transformed by God’s goodness.

Another benchmark of being poor in spirit, is **you will view everything as a gift from God.** Pompousness, arrogance, and ego vanish as you realize everything you have is a gift from above. First Corinthians 4:7 says, “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”

God has freely given you every talent, every mental capacity, and every divine endowment you have so that you use them for His glory and for the good of others. Knowing this, all kinds of dynamics kick in. When a person thinks they did it all by themselves, they will not be grateful to God or anyone else. Secondly, they get all the credit and bask in the glory of their accomplishments. Pride motivated, ego-driven and chest-thumping people spend their entire lives striving as if they must prove something to somebody. It is not the same for those who, in humility, realize they owe everything to God. They lead serene lives filled with gratitude to God and other people.

Once ego **your ego is out of the way**, trying to one-up others becomes a thing of the past. Streams of God-given joy cannot flow freely if ego is clogging the course. Only when you get rid of self is heaven's joy released.

Ego is blind. It doesn't see anything good in other people because it's too busy looking at itself. It's always competing, contending, and jostling for recognition. The merits and contributions of other people are not seen, or if they're seen, they're ignored.

When you attain spiritual destitution, things change drastically because you look at things from a totally different standpoint. **You will now be able to see the goodness in others.** Now that the ego is gone, you can see what God has put in others and encourage them. You can bless them, return good for evil, and pray for those who use you and badmouth you. You can also mercifully look past people's faults and see their deepest needs instead. The ego is no longer the critical binocular tainting your vision. You have new eyes that perceive the goodness in others.

Being poor in spirit also means **you will pray a lot!** If you acknowledge that you're nothing and God is everything, it follows that you'll pray a lot as you lean on Him. You will be desperate to stay connected to Him because you know that once you disconnect, everything falls apart. Indeed, in Him, we move, live, and have our being (Acts 17:28).

Maybe the biggest piece of evidence of being poor in spirit is that **you will be very happy**. How do you react emotionally and mentally to this scripture? "...for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

What is your reaction to these seven words? Is it, "Why does Jesus put that in my face—*without HIM I can do nothing!*?" Or are you able to say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13)? John the Baptist, of whom Jesus said there is no greater man in Israel, understood this. He said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). That may be a hard pill to swallow, until you understand the heart of God behind it. Here's the exciting news: when you decrease and become poor in spirit, He *will* lift you up. He does it for your own promotion, your own empowerment, and your own happiness. Indeed, the lives of those who are poor in spirit are characterized by unparalleled joy.





## CHAPTER 3

# BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN

Jesus continues His inaugural address in Matthew 5:4 with the idea that those who mourn will be blessed. He's progressing toward a crescendo, which began with describing the poor in spirit as happy. First, we enter into the kingdom of heaven by being poor in spirit then we mourn. From there He says we're blessed to: be meek, be merciful, be pure in heart, to make peace, and to be persecuted. It may seem natural for blessings to follow the meek, merciful, the pure in heart, and those who make peace, but first we must deal with a contradiction. The way to be happy is to be sad. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

To understand Matthew 5:4, we must understand what mourning is and what it is not.

First, mourning is not being sad, disappointed, or disillusioned because we didn't get our way. Amnon mourned because he could not fulfill his evil desires with his sister Tamar. Later, when he had raped her, his desires led to death. This is not the type of mourning of which Jesus speaks. It does not result in blessings, happiness, or comfort. It is good for us to understand the many causes of mourning.

**We mourn when we lose a loved one.** This mourning, although followed by comfort, is not the one Jesus spoke of in His address. It gives the believer hope that they will have a futuristic reunion with

the departed loved one in the Lord. “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

We have hope that our wonderful God will end all those things that now grieve our hearts, minds, and bodies. He has an answer for that kind of mourning. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

People will let us down, so **we mourn when we are disappointed.** They won't always show up or do as they promised. Even those we love the most may not seem to come through. “Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (John 11:32).

There are things in this life that will wear us down, repeated circumstances and concerns that cause us to become weary and full of sorrow. Like the Israelites traveling through the wilderness, we can become discouraged and mourn. Numbers 21:4 says, “...and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.”

Yet, Jesus said to bring this kind of weariness to Him. He will give us rest from our burdens and lighten our loads. Matthew 11: 28-29 says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yolk upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

**We mourn over world conditions.** Many of us carry the weight of what is happening in America and around the globe. We grieve the escalation of our nation's demise and that of others. We look forward to the day when God will make all things as He intended. In fact, all of creation longs for that day.

“For we know that the whole of creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but

ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:22-23).

**We also mourn over our sins.** Jesus spoke of this type of mourning in His inaugural address. This is the kind of mourning that results in the greatest comfort. Let’s take a closer look at His promise of comfort.

There are two categories of sorrow. One guarantees eternal benefit and the other eternal destruction. One brings a change of mind that prompts repentance, and the other leaves a feeling of regret without remedy. We need not shy away from godly sorrow; it’s the kind that preserves life. “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Mourning over our sin brings everlasting comfort. Happy are they who mourn over sin, for they shall receive forgiveness. God, in His mercy, forgives, cleanses, heals, and restores the person who grieves over his sin. Such a mourner is blessed! “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (Psalm 32:1).

Imagine being completely forgiven when we should have been judged and sentenced for our behavior. Imagine being legitimately justified, proven innocent, and set free without penalty. How blessed is that! Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven. It’s gone. It’s out of the way. Our sin is covered. That is happiness beyond measure and comfort beyond compare!

King David spoke of a time when he did *not* mourn over his sins. He covered them up and played them down. He was aggravated and irritated. He experienced physical consequences in his body. His silence wore him down.

“When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy

upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him” (Psalm 32:3-6).

David broke his silence over his sin. He acknowledged his iniquity before God and stopped hiding. When he confessed his transgression, God forgave him. Blessed are they who mourn over their sins and acknowledge their sin and iniquity, because the Lord forgives.

We must ponder David’s words. We cannot treat them as a mere academic exercise or poetic read. *Selah*—we must pause and think them over, allowing them to sink in. If we cover up our sins and fail to acknowledge them, they can damage our minds, emotions, bodies, relationships, and anything else.

Do you want to be happy? Mourn over your sin. You will be comforted. If we want to change our course, we must do as David did and face our sins. If we are godly, we will pray the same way as David did. God is waiting to forgive. He is close to those who are contrite, those who feel their sin and come before Him. When we feel the greatness of our sin, there He is. He is close to us.

Jesus said He didn’t come into the world to condemn it, but to save it. Receive this vital truth:

When a person denies their sinfulness, they go further into more and greater sin. It becomes easier and easier to continue in it. Their hearts become harder and God seems farther and farther away. But, God is not the one who moved. Our sins have moved us from Him, And His voice grows dim and distant. We are no longer tender before Him. God is willing to forgive. He longs to move in close to the contrite heart.

In Luke 15, we have an example of what mourning our sin should look like through the story of the prodigal son. In this chapter, we

see the son go astray and fail, but we also see him repent. Even more important, we see the father's response.

With great determination and a desire to make things right, he headed home, saying, "I will arise and go to my Father, and I will say unto him, Father I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son..." (Luke 15:18-19).

Yet, he didn't make it all the way there before his father saw him in the distance and ran to greet him. That is exactly what God is like. Show me someone who mourns over their sins, and I'll show you someone who is close to God.

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). Real guilt is a gift from God. Guilt is to our souls as pain is to our bodies. What if we ran across a parking lot, in our bare feet, and cut our foot wide open on a piece of glass and felt no pain? We could suffer blood loss, infection, or even blood poisoning. Pain is good. God built pain into the human anatomy as a warning mechanism. When we cut our foot, we feel pain. We know we have a problem, and we know we must fix it. Guilt works the same way—we are aware that we've done something wrong.

A person who pushes guilt away consistently, rationalizes it, or blames someone else is ignoring his need to fix the problem. If he chooses to go to a psychologist for help, he will be given a list of methods to deal with his guilt. He may be advised about rationalization, regression, sublimation, reaction formation, extension, or a host of other mechanical methods to handle his guilt. Yet, the guilt will not leave. Like Shakespeare's fictional Lady Macbeth, he could wake in the middle of the night, screaming, "Out, damned spot!" Lady Macbeth washed her hands over and over trying to remove her guilt over taking the life of the king. Her self-made method did not work.

Karl Menninger wrote the book, *Whatever Became of Sin?* It reflects how our culture has virtually eliminated the concept of sin. Sin is now antiquated and has become a mere "mistake." Our judicial

system even legalizes sin in some instances. We face a cultural crisis where there is no longer an acknowledgment of sin. Therefore, there is no mourning and there will be no comfort. There is no cleansing, no healing, no forgiveness, no recovery, and, as a result, our culture is not sustainable.

I believe the greatest need in America, and around the world, is to be conscious and be convicted of sin. If we think lightly of sin, we will think lightly of the need for a savior. If we see the greatness of sin, we will see the greatness of our Savior.

When I was a kid, we use to walk the railroad tracks. The tracks were just five inches off the railroad tie. One time, my buddies and I were walking the track across the train trestle with a drop off of over 150 feet. Imagine yourself on the track closest to the edge of the trestle. If you were to stumble and fall toward the edge of that precipice but your buddy pulled you back, he didn't just save you from the five-inch trip-off from the track to the tie but from a 150-foot drop! He really saved you! The world treats sin like a fall from the five-inch track, when in fact, the drop is much more severe. No sin, no mourning, and no comfort. The only ones who can be rid of the guilt of sin and receive the comfort of forgiveness are those who recognize and mourn over their sin.

When we sin, we set dynamics into motion. We may think we're getting away with the sin with no consequences, but the truth is that destruction has begun for this life and the next. Mourners will stop their sin and mourn their actions. Happiness doesn't come from the mourning, but from God's response to the mourner. He forgives, He cleanses, and He removes our guilt forever.

Clearly, mourning is essential to receive God's blessing of comfort. The good news is we can learn *how to become a mourner*.

The first step is to **hate sin by understanding its consequences**. Sin doesn't care what God says, and it doesn't care what the Bible says. **Sin causes us to trample God's laws**. A sinful nature says, *my own self-expression and self-fulfillment is all that is important*. Sin's ego

takes over God's position in our lives and is the essence out of which all sin flows. Ego is never satisfied. Feed it and it wants something more. It's always reaching, clutching, grasping, and grabbing. It's never happy and never satisfied. It tramples God's laws.

**Sin slights God's love.** Sin mocks God's love. It says, "I don't need you, God. Get out of my life." Sin is an attempt to elevate the created over the creator, and it breaks fellowship with the One who gave us life. **Sin also grieves the Holy Spirit.** The scriptures tell us not to grieve the Holy Spirit "...whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). The Spirit will not always strive with men.

Romans 3 tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We are created in His image. No other part of creation compares with mankind, but **sin damages our glory.** The Psalmist declared, "What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? ...and hast crowned him with glory and honor" (Psalm 8: 4-5). He has made us in the same category as Himself! As previously stated, He has crowned us with glory. If we want to fellowship with God, we must be in *His* category. That's how He designed us. If His image in us gets tarnished, and tainted, and damaged and damned, we will lose our glory. We will lose our dignity. We lose our position in the universe.

Sin steals our glory, and **it changes us from the image of God to that of a beast.** We fall short, and we move from the image of God to the image of a beast. We are no longer capable of fellowship with God. Beloved, we must learn to hate sin. It removes us from fellowship with God.

The industrialized church has lost track of what sin is. Our pulpits aim to make people laugh instead of weep. This spills over into our daily lives, where Christians can be entertained by the story line of a movie, magazine, or a book that focuses on evil, fornication, adultery, sodomy, stealing, cheating, or deceiving. We begin to take pleasure in sinful things. **Never think lightly of or be entertained**



**by sinful acts.** “That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:12).

We cannot allow outside entertainment by the very things that should cause us to mourn; neither can we allow evil, on the inside, to entertain our minds. The Bible calls this “evil imaginations.” Our imaginations allow us to receive joy from evil desires and thoughts in our minds, instead of going out to perform our sins. In our culture, what was once appalling and disgraceful is now acceptable. This acceptance of sin has infiltrated our minds and emotions. We are conditioned to accept evil as the status quo. This does not promote the mourning that results in comfort.

Instead, **looking to the Cross** will help us become true mourners. It reminds us of when God did His best and man did his worst. At the cross, we are reminded about the price of our sin—the very blood of God.

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:3-5).

Also, to become true mourners, we must **study the Scriptures**. Numbers 32:23, for example, give us this warning, “But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23).

Unfortunately, there is little contemporary preaching about this. Remember the song *Give Me That Old Time Religion?* The song speaks of a faith that taught the truth about sin and the sinner and called us to mourn. If we listened to the old way, we would find the

good path, walk in it, and find rest for our souls. Instead, we seek a way of pleasure apart from God's commands.

“Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 8:12).

Like Judah, most no longer blush over their sins. Don't let this be true of you. We cannot mock God. Our shameless sinning reaps dire consequences. If we go to the scriptures we will be reminded of the damaging consequences of sin and learn to mourn, “Oh my sin, my sin, O God.”

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). Stop justifying and excusing; stop blaming and rationalizing. The greatest problem with sin is its deceptiveness. We have trusted in our own ways and the worldly ways around us. We have plowed wickedness. We must work hard to **eliminate any hindrances to realizing our sin.**

“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men” (Hosea 10:12-13).

Great men are those whose hearts are soft, gentle, sensitive and compassionate. Watch out for your heart. **Do not allow it to be hardened.**

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:12-13).

An evil, unbelieving heart will cause us to depart from the living God. We must encourage each other daily or we will become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. When we first became Christians, we were done with sin. We wanted nothing more to do with it. We saw it for what it was: evil, gross, and despicable. As time went by, unholy, outside influences and our culture infiltrated our thinking. Gradually, the sins we had once detested become commonplace in our lives. Throughout history, however, revival has risen from the hearts of those who recognized their sin. Complacent sinners became mourners, ushering in comfort for themselves as each, in turn, began to mourn. Their mourning produces comfort and gladness.

There are four comforters. Jesus is the first. The second is the Holy Spirit. Jesus said when he went away He would send another comforter. He sent the Holy Spirit to take His place. Next, the scriptures were given as a source of comfort. The final comfort is the fellowship of our brothers and sisters.

When I was a young preacher, I was accused of doing one of two things: either afflicting the comfortable or comforting the afflicted. If the people were comfortable, my preaching afflicted them, but if they were already afflicted, my words brought comfort. There were times when someone came to my office and went on and on about their condition, yet never once did they acknowledge their sin. My job was to help them see it and to get them to a point of mourning. Other times, someone would come to me full of grief and brokenness. They were distressed over their sins and transgressions; they were already mourning. It was then my pleasure to tell them they were in a good condition! They were about to be comforted through forgiveness, cleansing, and recovery. However, this is not only *my* job to warn and encourage others, but it is the job of *every* Christian.

If we watch too much television, listen to worldly music, read today's authors, or skim the magazines in the checkout lane, we have taken in things that deceive and harden us. We walk away soiled and may not realize their subtle effect. We need our brothers and sisters to

keep us sharp and aware. We need their encouragement and exhortation to keep us on the straight path and to help us stay soft toward Godly things. When we separate ourselves from fellowship, we are in danger. The Bible tells us not to avoid assembling together. To do so can produce unchecked hardening of our hearts.

If you want to become a mourner, you must **mourn until the comfort comes**. Blessed are they who mourn sufficiently over their sins, for they shall be comforted. If we confess our sins as mourners do, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We can go to church and be religious, but that will not change the condition of our hearts. We must mourn and endure the pain of confession and repentance. It is promised, eventually, that joy will replace sorrow. “For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm 30:5). Psalm 30:11 says, “Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness” (Psalm 30:11).

When our mourning is complete, and God’s forgiveness and cleansing have done their work, we will know.

First, **our guilt is removed**. When we mourn our sin and are forgiven, there is no longer **any** condemnation. Hallelujah! “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). Romans 8:1 says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

What freedom after mourning! Jesus came to take our guilt, so we could pass from death to life. That is true and lasting comfort.

We will also know our mourning is complete because **we can truly feel we are accepted in the beloved**. God has made us acceptable! The Pharisees hid their sins and pretended to be acceptable, yet they were self-deceived. The man who called out for God’s mercy, on

his sinful estate, went away justified. Through the blood of Jesus, we receive forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.

**We are also at peace with God.** Part of the comfort is peace with God! We mourn until comfort comes and receive His peace that passes all understanding. We know we don't deserve it. We know the sins that sent us into mourning, but still Jesus keeps His word. Blessed are those who mourn over their sins because they will receive the comfort of forgiveness, acceptance, and peace in their hearts forever.

Mourners are sensitive to sin, and they weep over it. Mourners also know the joy of forgiveness.

If you have not been mourning, yet need to, go to God and earnestly begin this process. If you have been mourning, receive God's forgiveness. He desires a people who are sin-sensitive. He wants people who will not allow their hearts and minds to dwell on things that are contrary to His Word. Go to Him and receive your comfort. You will be forgiven. Weeping endures for the night, but joy—real and lasting—comes in the morning!