

MATTHEW
Chapter 5:1-12

Technical Notes of Matthew Henry

SUMMARY: This chapter and the two that follow are a sermon, a famous sermon--The Sermon on the Mount. It is the longest and fullest continued discourse of our Savior that we have upon record in all the gospels. It is a practical discourse. There is not much of the credenda of Christianity in it, the things to be believed; but it is wholly taken up with the agenda, the things to be done. These Christ began with in his preaching, for if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God. The circumstances of the sermon being accounted for (vv. 1,2), the sermon itself follows, the scope of which is not to fill our heads with notions but to guide and regulate our practice.

I. He proposes blessedness as the end, and gives us the character of those who are entitled to blessedness (very different from the sentiments of a vain world) in eight beatitudes, which may justly be called paradoxes (vv. 3-12).

II. He prescribes duty as the way, and gives us standing rules of that duty. He directs his disciples

(1) To understand what they are--the salt of the earth and the lights of the world vv. 13-16.

(2) To understand what they have to do--they are to be governed by the moral law. Here is,

(a) A general ratification of the law and a recommendation of it to us as our rule vv. 17-20.

(b) A particular rectification of various mistakes, or rather, a reformation of various willful, gross corruptions, which the scribes and Pharisees had introduced in their exposition of the law, and an authentic explication of various branches which most needed to be explained and vindicated v. 20. Particularly, here is an explication

[1] of the sixth commandment, which forbids murder, vv. 21-26.

[2] Of the seventh commandment, against adultery, vv. 27-32.

[3] Of the third commandment, vv. 33-37.

[4] Of the law of retaliation, vv. 38-42.

[5] Of the law of brotherly love vv. 43-48.

And the scope of the whole is to show that the law is spiritual.

(1-2) And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

I. *The Preacher* was our Lord Jesus, the Prince of preachers, the great Prophet of his church, who *came into the world*, to be *the Light of the world*. The prophets and John had *done virtuously* in preaching, *but Christ excelled them all*. He is the eternal Wisdom, *who lay in the bosom of the Father, before all worlds*, and perfectly knew his will (John 1:18); and he is the

eternal Word, by whom he *has in these last days spoken to us*. The many miraculous cures wrought by Christ in Galilee, which we read of in the close of the foregoing chapter, were intended to make way for this sermon, and to dispose people to receive instructions from one in whom there appeared so much of a divine power and goodness. And, probably, this sermon was the summary, or rehearsal, of what he had preached up and down in the synagogues of Galilee. His text was, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. This is a sermon on the former part of that text, showing what it is to *repent*. It is to reform, both in judgment and practice; and he here tells us how, in answer to that question (Mal. 3:7), *How shall we return?* He afterward preached upon the latter part of the text, when, in various parables, he showed what the kingdom of heaven is like (ch. 13).

II. *The place* was a mountain in Galilee. As in other things so in this, our Lord Jesus was but ill accommodated. He had no convenient place to preach in any more than *to lay his head on*. While the scribes and Pharisees had Moses' chair to sit in, with all possible ease, honor and state and there corrupted the Law, our Lord Jesus, the great Teacher of truth, is driven out to the desert and finds no better a pulpit than *a mountain* can afford. And not one of the *holy mountains* neither, not one of *the mountains of Zion* but a common *mountain*. By this Christ would intimate that there is no such distinguishing holiness of places now under the gospel as there was under the law, but that it is *the will of God that men should pray and preach everywhere*, anywhere, provided it be decent and convenient. Christ preached this sermon, which was an exposition of the law, upon a mountain because upon *a mountain* the law was given; and this was also a solemn promulgation of the Christian law. But observe the difference: when *the law was given*, the Lord *came down* upon the *mountain*; now *the Lord* went up. *Then he spoke in thunder and lightning, now in a still small voice*. Then the people were ordered to keep their distance, now they are invited to draw near. A blessed change! If God's grace and goodness are (as certainly they are) his glory, then the glory of the gospel is the glory that excels, for *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ* (2 Cor. 3:7; Heb. 12:18, &c.). It was foretold of Zebulun and Issachar, two of the tribes of Galilee (Deut. 33:19), that *they shall call the people to the mountain*. To this *mountain* we are called to learn *to offer the sacrifices of righteousness*. Now was this *the mountain of the Lord*, where he *taught us his ways* (Isa. 2:2,3; Mic. 4:1,2).

III. *The auditors* were *his disciples*, who *came unto him*. Came at his call, as appears by comparing Mark 3:13 and Luke 6:13. To them he directed his speech, because they followed him for love and learning while others attended him only for cures. *He taught them* because they were willing to be *taught* (*the meek will he teach his way*); because they would *understand* what he taught, which to others was foolishness; and because they were to teach others. It was therefore requisite that they should have a clear and distinct knowledge of these things themselves. The duties prescribed in this sermon were to be conscientiously performed by all those who would *enter into that kingdom of heaven* which they were sent to set up, with hope to have the benefit of it. But though this discourse was directed to the disciples, it was in the hearing of *the multitude*. It is said (ch. 7:28), *The people were astonished*. No bounds were set about *this mountain* to keep the people off, as were about *mount Sinai* (Ex. 19:12); for through Christ we have access to God, not only to speak to him but to hear from him. Nay, he had an eye to *the multitude* in preaching this sermon. When the fame of his miracles had brought a vast crowd together, he took the opportunity of so great a confluence of people to instruct them. **Note:** It is an encouragement to a faithful minister to cast the net of the gospel where there are a great many fishes, in hope that some will be caught. The sight of a *multitude* puts life into a preacher, which yet must arise from a desire of their profit, not his own praise.

IV. *The solemnity* of his sermon is intimated in that word, *when he was set*. Christ preached many times occasionally and by interlocutory discourses. But this was a set sermon, καθίσαντος αὐτοῦ, when he had placed himself so as to be best heard. He sat down as a Judge or Lawgiver. It intimates with what sedateness and composure of mind the things of God should be spoken and heard. *He sat*, that *the scriptures might be fulfilled* (Mal. 3:3), *He shall sit as a refiner*, to purge away the dross, the corrupt doctrines of the sons of Levi. *He sat as on the throne, judging right* (Ps. 9:4), *for the word he spoke shall judge us*. That phrase, *He opened his mouth*, is only a Hebrew periphrasis of speaking, as in Job 3:1. Yet some think it intimates the solemnity of this discourse. The congregation being large, he raised his voice and spoke louder than usual. He had spoken long *by his servants the prophets, and opened their mouths* (Ezek. 3:27; 24:27; 33:22), but now *he opened his own*, and spoke with freedom, *as one having authority*. One of the ancients has this remark upon it: Christ *taught* much without *opening his mouth*, that is, by his holy and exemplary life. Nay, he *taught*, when, being *led as a lamb to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth*. But now *he opened his mouth and taught*, that *the scriptures might be fulfilled* (Prov. 8:1,2,6). *Does not wisdom cry--cry on the top of high places? And the opening of her lips shall be right things. He taught them*, according to the promise (Isa. 54:13), *All your children shall be taught of the Lord*; for this purpose he had *the tongue of the learned* (Isa. 50:4) and *the Spirit of the Lord* (Isa. 61:1). *He taught them* what was the evil they should abhor and what the good they should abide and abound in; for Christianity is not a matter of speculation, but is designed to regulate the temper of our minds and the tenor of our conversations. Gospel-time is a time of reformation (Heb. 9:10), and by the gospel we must be reformed, must be made good, must be made better. *The truth, as it is in Jesus, is the truth which is according to godliness* (Tit. 1:1).

(3-12) Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Christ begins his sermon with blessings, for *he came into the world to bless us* (Acts 3:26) as *the great High Priest of our professions*; as *the blessed Melchizedec*; as *He in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed* (Gen. 12:3). He came not only to purchase blessings for us, but to pour out and pronounce blessings on us. And here he does it *as one having authority*, as one who can *command the blessing, even life, for evermore*. That is the blessing here again and again promised to the good; his pronouncing them happy makes them so, for those whom he blesses are blessed indeed. The Old Testament ended with a curse (Mal. 4:6), the gospel begins with a blessing; for *hereunto are we called, that we should inherit the blessing*. Each of the blessings Christ here pronounces has a double intention: (1) To show who they are who are to be accounted truly happy, and what their characters are. (2) What that is wherein true happiness consists in the promises made to persons of certain characters, the performance of which will make them happy.

Now,

1. This is designed to rectify the ruinous mistakes of a blind and carnal world. Blessedness is the thing which men pretend to pursue: *Who will make us to see good?* (Ps. 4:6). But most mistake the end and form a wrong notion of happiness, and then no wonder that they miss the way. They choose their own delusions and court a shadow. The general opinion is, *Blessed are they* who are rich, and great, and honorable in the world; who spend their days in mirth and their years in pleasure; who eat the fat and drink the sweet and carry all before them with a high hand, and have every sheaf bowing to their sheaf. *Happy the people who are in such a case*, and their designs, aims, and purposes are accordingly. They *bless the covetous* (Ps. 10:3); they *will be rich*. Now our Lord Jesus comes to correct this fundamental error, to advance a new hypothesis, and to give us quite another notion of blessedness and blessed people, which, however paradoxical it may appear to those who are prejudiced, yet is in itself, and appears to be to all who are savingly enlightened, a rule and doctrine of eternal truth and certainty by which we must shortly be judged. If this, therefore, be the beginning of Christ's doctrine, then the beginning of a Christian's practice must be to take his measures of happiness from those maxims and to direct his pursuits accordingly.

2. It is designed to remove the discouragements of the weak and poor who receive the gospel by assuring them that his gospel did not make those only happy who were eminent in gifts, graces, comforts, and usefulness, but that even *the least in the kingdom of heaven*, whose heart was upright with God, was happy in the honors and privileges of that kingdom.

3. It is designed to invite souls to Christ and to make way for his law into their hearts. Christ's pronouncing these blessings not at the end of his sermon, to dismiss the people, but at the beginning of it to prepare them for what he had further to say to them, may remind us of mount Gerizim and mount Ebal, on which the blessings and cursings of the law were read (Deut. 27:12 & c.). *There* the curses are expressed and the blessings only implied; *here* the blessings are expressed and the curses implied. In both *life and death are set before us*. But the law appeared more as a ministration of death to deter us from sin, the gospel as a dispensation of life to allure us to Christ, in whom alone all good is to be had. And those who had seen the gracious cures wrought by his hand (ch. 4:23,24) and now heard *the gracious words proceeding out of his mouth*, would say that he was all of a piece, made up of love and sweetness.

4. It is designed to settle and sum up the articles of agreement between God and man. The scope of the divine revelation is to let us know what God expects from us and what we may then expect from him. No where is this more fully set forth in a few words than here, nor with a more exact reference to each other; and this is that gospel which we are required to believe. For what is faith but a conformity to these characters and a dependence upon these promises? The way to happiness is here opened and made a *highway* (Isa. 35:8); and [with] this coming from the mouth of Jesus Christ, it is intimated that from him and by him we are to receive both the seed and the fruit, both the grace required and the glory promised. Nothing passes between God and fallen man but through his hand. Some of the wiser heathen had notions of blessedness different from the rest of mankind, and looking toward this of our Savior. Seneca, undertaking to describe a blessed man, makes it out that it is only an honest, good man who is to be so called: *In whose estimation nothing is good or evil, but a good or evil heart--Whom no occurrences elate or deject--Whose true pleasure consists in a contempt of pleasure--To whom the only good is virtue, and the only evil vice.*

Our Savior here gives us eight characteristics of blessed people, which represent to us the

principal graces of a Christian. On each of them a present blessing is pronounced. Blessed are they; and to each a future blessedness is promised, which is variously expressed, so as to suit the nature of the grace or duty recommended.

Do we ask then who are happy? It is answered,

I. ***The poor in spirit are happy (v. 3).*** There is a poor-spiritedness that is so far from making men blessed that it is a sin and a snare--cowardice and base fear, and a willing subjection to the lusts of men. But this poverty of spirit is a gracious disposition of soul by which we are emptied of self in order to our being filled with Jesus Christ. To be *poor in spirit* is,

(1) To be contentedly poor, willing to be empty of worldly wealth if God orders that to be our lot; to bring our mind to our condition, when it is a low condition. Many are poor in the world but high in spirit, poor and proud, murmuring and complaining and blaming their lot. But we must accommodate ourselves to our poverty, must *know how to be abased* (Phil. 4:12). Acknowledging the wisdom of God in appointing us to poverty, we must be easy in it, patiently bear the inconveniences of it, be thankful for what we have, and make the best of that which is. It is to sit loose to all worldly wealth and not set our hearts upon it, but cheerfully to bear losses and disappointments which may befall us in the most prosperous state. It is not, in pride or pretense, to make ourselves poor by throwing away what God has given us, especially as those in the church of Rome, who vow poverty and yet engross the wealth of nations. But if we be rich in the world we may be *poor in spirit*, that is, we must condescend to the poor and sympathize with them, as being touched with the feeling of their infirmities. We must expect and prepare for poverty; must not inordinately fear or shun it, but must bid it welcome, especially when it comes upon us for keeping a good conscience (Heb. 10:34). Job was *poor in spirit* when he blessed God in *taking away*, as well as giving.

(2) It is to be humble and lowly in our own eyes. To be *poor in spirit* is to think lowly of ourselves, of what we are and have and do. The poor are often taken in the Old Testament for the humble and self-denying, as opposed to those who are at ease, and the proud. It is to be as little children in our opinion of ourselves--weak, foolish, and insignificant (ch. 18:4; 19:14). Laodicea was *poor in spirituals*, wretchedly and miserably poor and yet *rich in spirit*, so well increased with goods as to *have need of nothing* (Rev. 3:17). On the other hand, Paul was rich in *spirituals*, excelling most in gifts and graces, and yet *poor in spirit*, *the least of the apostles*, less than the least of all saints and *nothing* in his own account. It is to look with a holy contempt upon ourselves, to value others and undervalue ourselves in comparison to them. It is to be willing to make ourselves cheap, and low, and little, to do good; to *become all things to all men*. It is to acknowledge that God is great and we are mean [lowly/small]; that he is holy and we are sinful; that he is all and we are nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing, and to humble ourselves before him and under his mighty hand.

(3) It is to come off from all confidence in our own righteousness and strength, that we may depend only upon the merit of Christ for our justification and the spirit and grace of Christ for our sanctification. That *broken and contrite spirit* with which the publican cried for mercy for himself--a poor sinner--is this poverty of spirit. We must call ourselves poor because we are always in need of God's grace, always begging at God's door, always hanging on in his house.

Now, this poverty in spirit is put first among the Christian graces. The philosophers did not reckon humility among their moral virtues, but Christ puts it first. Self-denial is the first lesson

to be learned in his school, and poverty of spirit entitled to the first beatitude. The foundation of all other graces is laid in humility. Those who would build high must begin low, and it is an excellent preparative for the entrance of gospel-grace into the soul; it makes the soil ready to receive the seed. Those *who are weary and heavy laden* are *the poor in spirit*, and they shall find rest with Christ.

They are *blessed*. Now they are so in this world. God looks graciously upon them. They are his little ones, and have their angels. To them he gives more grace. They live the most comfortable lives, and are easy to themselves and all about them, and nothing comes amiss to them. High spirit are always uneasy.

Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of *grace* is composed of such. They only are fit to be members of Christ's church, which is called *the congregation of the poor* (Ps. 74:19). The kingdom of *glory* is prepared for them. Those who thus humble themselves and comply with God when he humbles them shall be thus exalted. The great high spirits go away with the glory of *the kingdoms of the earth*, but the humble, mild, and yielding souls obtain the glory of *the kingdom of heaven*. Concerning those who are rich and do good with their riches, we no doubt are ready to think that *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*, for they can thus lay up in store a good security *for the time to come*. But what shall the poor do who have not the wherewithal to do good? Why, the same happiness is promised to those who are contentedly poor as to those who are usefully rich. If I am not able to *spend* cheerfully for his sake, if I can but *want* cheerfully for his sake, even that shall be recompensed. And do not we serve a good master then?

II. ***They who mourn are happy* (v. 4).** *Blessed are they that mourn*. This is another strange blessing and fitly follows the former. The poor are accustomed to mourn, the graciously poor mourn graciously. We are apt to think, Blessed are the *merry*. But Christ, who was himself a great mourner, says, Blessed are the *mourners*. There is a sinful mourning which is an enemy to blessedness--*the sorrow of the world*; despairing melancholy upon a spiritual account and disconsolate grief upon a temporal account. There is a natural mourning which may prove a friend to blessedness by the grace of God working with it, and sanctifying the afflictions to us for which we mourn. But there is a gracious mourning which qualifies for blessedness, a habitual seriousness, the mind mortified to mirth, and an actual sorrow.

(1) A penitential mourning for our own sins. This is *godly sorrow*, a sorrow according to God; sorrow for sin with an eye to Christ (Zech. 12:10). Those are God's mourners who live a life of repentance, who lament the corruption of their nature, and their many actual transgressions, and God's withdrawals from them. And who, out of regard to God's honor, mourn also for the sins of others and *sigh and cry for their abominations* (Ezek. 9:4).

(2) A sympathizing mourning for the afflictions of others; the mourning of those who *weep with them who weep*, are sorrowful *for the solemn assemblies, for the desolations of Zion* (Zeph. 3:18); Ps. 137:1), especially who look with compassion on perishing souls and *weep over* them, as Christ wept *over Jerusalem*.

Now these gracious mourners *are blessed*. As in vain and sinful *laughter the heart is sorrowful*, so in gracious mourning *the heart* has a serious joy, a secret satisfaction which *a stranger does not intermeddle with*. They are *blessed*, for they are like the Lord Jesus, who *was a man of sorrows* and of whom we never read that he laughed, but often that he wept. They are armed against the many temptations that attend vain mirth and are prepared for the comforts of a

sealed pardon and a settled peace.

They shall be comforted. Though perhaps they are not immediately comforted, yet plentiful provision is made for their comfort. Light is sown for them; and in heaven, it is certain, *they shall be comforted*, as Lazarus (Luke 16:25). **Note:** The happiness of heaven consists in being perfectly and eternally comforted, and in the *wiping away of all tears from their eyes*. It is *the joy of our Lord; a fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore*, which will be doubly sweet to those who have been prepared for them by this *godly sorrow*. Heaven will be heaven indeed to those who go mourning thither. It will be a harvest of joy, the return of a seed-time of tears (Ps. 126:5,6), a mountain of joy to which our way lies through a vale of tears. See Isa. 66:10.

III. **The meek are happy (v. 5).** *Blessed are the meek.* The meek are those who quietly submit themselves to God, to his word and to his rod, who follow his directions and comply with his designs, and are *gentle towards all men* (Tit. 3:2). They can bear provocation without being inflamed by it; are either silent or return a soft answer. They can show their displeasure when there is occasion for it without being transported into any indecencies; who can be cool when others are hot, and in their patience keep possession of their own souls when they can scarcely keep possession of anything else. *They* are the meek who are rarely and hardly provoked, but quickly and easily pacified, and who would rather forgive twenty injuries than revenge one, having the rule of their own spirits.

These meek ones are here represented as happy, even in this world.

(1) They are *blessed*, for they are like the blessed Jesus, in that wherein particularly they are to learn of him (ch. 11:29). They are like the blessed God himself, who is Lord of his anger and in whom fury is not. They are *blessed*, for they have the most comfortable, undisturbed enjoyment of themselves, their friends, their God. They are fit for any relation, any condition, any company; fit to live and fit to die.

(2) *They shall inherit the earth.* It is quoted from Ps. 37:11, and it is almost the only express temporal promise in all the New Testament. Not that they shall always have much of *the earth*, much less that they shall be put off with that only; but this branch of godliness has, in a special manner, *the promise of the life that now is*. Meekness, however ridiculed and run down, has a real tendency to promote our health, wealth, comfort and safety, even in this world. *The meek* and quiet are observed to live the most easy lives compared with the froward and turbulent. Or, *They shall inherit the land* (so it may be read), *the land of Canaan*, a type of heaven. So that all the blessedness of heaven above, and all the blessings of earth beneath, are the portion of the meek.

IV. **They who hunger and thirst after righteousness are happy (v. 6).** Some understand this as a further instance of outward poverty and a low condition in this world, which not only exposes men to injury and wrong but makes it in vain for them to seek to have justice done them. They *hunger and thirst after* it, but such is the power on the side of their oppressors that they cannot have it. They desire only that which is just and equal, but it is denied them by those that *neither fear God nor regard man*. This is a melancholy case! Yet, *blessed are they* if they suffer these hardships for and with a good conscience. Let them hope in God who will see justice done, right take place, and will deliver the poor from their oppressors (Ps. 103:6). Those who contentedly bear oppression and quietly refer themselves to God to plead their cause shall in due time be satisfied--abundantly satisfied in the wisdom and kindness which shall be manifested in

his appearances for them. But it is certainly to be understood spiritually, of such a desire as, being terminated on such an object, is gracious, and the work of God's grace in the soul, and qualifies for the gifts of the divine favor.

(1) *Righteousness* is here put for all spiritual blessings (see Ps. 24:5; ch. 6:33). They are purchased for us by *the righteousness of Christ*, conveyed and secured by the imputation of that righteousness to us, and confirmed by the faithfulness of God. To have Christ *made of God to us righteousness* and to be *made the righteousness of God in him*, to have the *whole man renewed in righteousness* so as to become a *new man*, to bear the image of God, to have an interest in Christ and the promises--this is *righteousness*.

(2) These we must *hunger and thirst after*. We must truly and really desire them, as one who is hungry and thirsty desires meat and drink, who cannot be satisfied with anything but meat and drink, and who will be satisfied with them though other things be lacking. Our desires of spiritual blessings must be earnest and importunate: "*Give me these, or else I die*. Everything else is dross and chaff, unsatisfying. Give me these and I have enough, though I had nothing else." *Hunger and thirst* are appetites that return frequently and call for fresh satisfactions. So these holy desires rest not in anything attained but are carried out toward renewed pardons and daily fresh supplies of grace. The quickened soul calls for constant meals or righteousness and grace to do the work of every day in its day, as duly as the living body calls for food. Those who *hunger and thirst* will labor for supplies. So we must not only desire spiritual blessings, but take pains for them in the use of the appointed means. Dr. Hammond, in his practical Catechism, distinguishes between *hunger and thirst*. *Hunger* is a desire of food to sustain; such is *sanctifying righteousness*. *Thirst* is the desire of drink to refresh; such is justifying *righteousness* and the sense of our pardon.

Those who thus *hunger and thirst* after spiritual blessings *are blessed* in those desires and *shall be filled* with those blessings.

They are *blessed* in those desires. Though all desires of grace are not grace (feigned, faint desires are not), yet such a desire as this is. It is an *evidence* of something *good* and an *earnest* of something *better*. It is a desire of God's own raising, and he will not forsake the work of his own hands. Something or other the soul will be *hungering* and *thirsting* after. Therefore *they* are blessed who fasten upon the right object, which is satisfying and not deceiving, and do not *pant after the dust of the earth* (Amos 2:7 and Isa. 55:2).

They *shall be filled* with those blessings. God will give them what they desire to their complete satisfaction. It is God only who can *fill a soul*, whose grace and favor are adequate to its just desires, and he will fill those with *grace for grace* who, in a sense of their own emptiness, have recourse to his fullness. He *fills the hungry* (Luke 1:53), *satiates* them (Jer. 31:25). The happiness of heaven will certainly fill the soul. Their righteousness shall be complete, the favor of God and his image both in their full perfection.

V. **The merciful are happy (v. 7).** This, like the rest, is a paradox, for the merciful are not taken to be the wisest nor are likely to be the richest. Yet Christ pronounces them *blessed*. Those are the *merciful* who are piously and charitably inclined to pity, help, and succor persons in misery. A man may be truly *merciful* who has not the wherewithal to be bountiful or liberal; and then God accepts the willing mind. We must not only bear our own afflictions patiently, but we must, by Christian sympathy, partake of the afflictions of our brethren. Pity must be shown

(Job 6:14) and *bowels of mercy put on* (Col. 3:12). Being put on, they must put forth themselves in contributing all we can for the assistance of those who are any way in misery. We must have compassion on the souls of others and help them; pity the ignorant and instruct them; the careless, and warn them; those who are in a state of sin, and snatch them as *brands out of the burning*. We must have compassion on those who are melancholy and in sorrow, and comfort them (Job 16:5); on those whom we have advantage against, and not be rigorous and severe with them; on those who are in need, and supply them. If we refuse to do whatever we pretend, we *shut up the bowels of our compassion* (James 2:15,16; 1 John 3:17). *Draw out your soul by dealing your bread to the hungry* (Isa. 58:7,10). Nay, a *good man is merciful to his beast*.

Now, as to the merciful,

(1) They are *blessed*. So it was said in the Old Testament, *Blessed is he who considers the poor* (Ps. 41:1). Herein they resemble God, whose goodness is his glory. In being *merciful as he is merciful*, we are, in our measure, *perfect as he is perfect*. It is an evidence of love to God. It will be a satisfaction to ourselves to be, in any way, instrumental for the benefit of others. One of the purest and most refined delights in this world is that of *doing good*. In this saying, *Blessed are the merciful*, is included that saying of Christ (which otherwise we find not in the gospels), *It is more blessed to give than to receive* (Acts 20:35).

(2) *They shall obtain mercy*. Mercy *with men*, when they need it. *He who waters shall be watered also himself* (we know not how soon we may stand in need of kindness and therefore should be kind). But especially mercy *with God*, for *with the merciful he will show himself merciful* (Ps. 18:25). The most *merciful* and charitable cannot pretend to *merit*, but must fly to mercy. The merciful shall find with God *sparing* mercy (ch. 6:14), *supplying* mercy (Prov. 19:17), *sustaining* mercy (Ps. 41:2), mercy in that day (2 Tim. 1:18). Nay, they shall *inherit the kingdom prepared for them* (ch. 25:34,35), whereas *they shall have judgment without mercy* (which can be nothing short of *hell-fire*) who have *shown no mercy*.

VI. **The pure in heart are happy (v. 8).** *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* This is the most comprehensive of all the beatitudes. Here holiness and happiness are fully described and put together.

(1) Here is the most *comprehensive character* of the blessed: they are the *pure in heart*. **Note:** True religion consists in heart-purity. Those who are inwardly pure show themselves to be under the power of *pure and undefiled* religion. True Christianity lies in the heart, in the *purity of the heart*, the *washing of that from wickedness* (Jer. 4:14). We must lift up to God not only clean hands, but a pure heart (Ps. 24:4,5; 1 Tim. 1:5). The heart must be *pure* in opposition to *mixture*--an honest heart that aims well. It must be pure in opposition to *pollution* and *defilement*, as wine *unmixed* and as water *unmuddied*. The heart must be kept *pure* from *fleshly lusts*--all unchaste thoughts and desires--and from *worldly lusts* such as covetousness, which is called *filthy lucre*. It must be kept from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, all that which comes *out of the heart* and *defiles the man*. The heart must be *purified by faith* and entire for God. It must be presented and preserved a chaste virgin to Christ. *Create in me such a clean heart, O God!*

(2) Here is the most *comprehensive comfort* of the blessed: *They shall see God*. **Note:** It is the perfection of the soul's happiness to *see God*. *Seeing him*, as we may by faith in our present state, is a *heaven upon earth*. And seeing him as we shall in the future state is the *heaven of heaven*. To see him *as he is*, face to face and no longer through a glass darkly, to see him as ours

and to see him and enjoy him, to see him and be like him and be satisfied with that likeness (Ps. 17:15), and to see him forever and never lose the sight of him--this is heaven's happiness.

The happiness of seeing God is promised to those, and those only, who are *pure in heart*. None but the *pure* are capable of *seeing* God, nor would it be a felicity [good fortune] to the impure. What pleasure could an unsanctified soul take in the vision of a holy God? As *he* cannot endure to look upon their iniquity, so *they* cannot endure to look upon his purity. Nor shall any unclean thing enter into the new Jerusalem. But all who are *pure in heart*, all who are truly sanctified, have desires worked in them which nothing but the sight of God will satisfy; and divine grace will not leave those desires unsatisfied.

VII. **The *peacemakers* are happy (v. 9).** The wisdom that is from above is first *pure*, and then *peaceable*. The blessed ones are *pure* toward God and *peaceable* toward men; for with reference to both, conscience must be kept *void of offense*. The *peacemakers* are those who have,

(1) *A peaceable disposition*. In the same way that *to make a lie* is "to be given and addicted to lying," so *to make peace* is "to have a strong and hearty affection to peace." *I am for peace* (Ps. 120:7). It is to love, desire, and delight in peace; to be in it as in our element, and to study to be quiet.

(2) *A peaceable conversation*. This means, as far as we can, to preserve the peace that it be not broken, and to recover it when it is broken; to hearken to proposals of peace ourselves, and to be ready to make them to others; to do all we can to be *repairers of the breaches* when brethren and neighbors are at a distance [at odds]. The *making of peace* is sometimes a *thankless office*, and it is the lot of him who parts a fray to have *blows on both sides*. Yet it is a good office, and we must be forward to it. Some think that this is intended especially as a lesson for ministers, who should do all they can to reconcile those who are at variance, and to promote Christian love among those under their charge.

Now, such persons are *blessed*, for they have the satisfaction of *enjoying themselves* by keeping the peace and of being truly serviceable to others by disposing them to peace. They are working together with Christ, who came into the world to *slay all enmities* and to proclaim *peace on earth*.

They shall be called the children of God. It will be an evidence to themselves that they are so; God will own them as such and herein they will resemble him. He is the God of peace. The Son of God is the Prince of peace. The Spirit of adoption is a Spirit of peace. Since God has declared himself reconcilable to us all, he will not own those for his children who are implacable in their enmity to one another. For if the peacemakers are blessed, woe to the peacebreakers! Now by this it appears that Christ never intended to have his religion propagated by fire and sword, or penal laws, or to acknowledge bigotry, or intemperate zeal as the mark of his disciples. The children of this world love to fish in troubled waters, but the children of God are the peacemakers, the *quiet in the land*.

VIII. **Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake are happy (vv. 10-12).** This is the greatest paradox of all, and peculiar to Christianity. Therefore it is put last, and more largely insisted upon than of the rest. The beatitude, like Pharaoh's dream, is doubled, because hardly credited and yet *the thing is certain*; and in the latter part there is a change of the person, "Blessed are ye--my disciples and immediate followers. This is that which you, who excel in virtue, are more immediately concerned in, for you must reckon upon hardships and troubles

more than other men." Observe here,

(1) The case of suffering saints described. It is a hard case, and a very piteous one. They are persecuted, hunted, pursued, and run down as noxious beasts are, sought to be destroyed. It is as if a Christian did *bear a wolf's head*, as an outlaw is said to do, so that anyone who finds him may slay him. They are abandoned as the *offscouring of all things*--fined, imprisoned, banished, stripped of their estates, excluded from all places of profit and trust, scourged, racked, tortured, always delivered to death, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter. This has been the effect of the enmity of the serpent's seed against the holy seed ever since the time of *righteous Abel*. It was so in Old Testament times (Heb. 11:35 &c). Christ has told us that it would much more be so with the Christian church, and we are not to think it strange (1 John 3:13). He has left us an example.

They are *reviled, and have all manner of evil said against them falsely*. Nicknames and names of reproach are fastened upon them, upon particular persons and upon the generation of the righteous in the gross [main body], to render them odious, and sometimes to make them despicable that they may be trampled upon; sometimes to make them formidable that they may be powerfully assailed--things are laid to their charge that they knew not (Ps. 35:11; Jer. 20:18; Acts 17:6,7). Those who have had no power in their hands to do them any other mischief could yet do this. And those who have had power to *persecute* have found it necessary to *do this too*, to justify themselves in their barbarous usage of them. They could not have baited them if they had not dressed them in bearskins. Nor could they have given them the worst of treatment if they had not first represented them as the worst of men. They will *revile you, and persecute you*. **Note:** *Reviling* the saints is *persecuting* them, and will be found so shortly when *hard speeches* must be accounted for (Jude 15) as well as *cruel mockings* (Heb. 11:36). They will say all *manner of evil against you falsely*; sometimes before the *seat of judgment* as witnesses, and sometimes in the *seat of the scornful* with *hypocritical mockers at feasts*. They are the *song of the drunkards*, sometimes to their faces (as Shimei cursed David), and sometimes behind their backs (as the enemies of Jeremiah did). **Note:** There is no evil so black and horrid which at one time or other has not been said falsely of Christ's disciples and followers.

All this is *for righteousness' sake* (v. 10), *for my sake* (v. 11). If for *righteousness' sake*, then for *Christ's sake*, for he is nearly interested in the work of righteousness. Enemies to righteousness are enemies to Christ. This precludes those from this blessedness who suffer *justly* and are evil spoken of *truly* for their real crimes. Let such be ashamed and confounded, it is part of their punishment. It is not the suffering but the cause that makes the martyr. Those suffer for *righteousness' sake* who suffer because they will not sin against their consciences, and who suffer for doing that which is good. Whatever pretense persecutors have, it is the power of godliness that they have an enmity to. It is really Christ and his righteousness that are maligned, hated, and persecuted. *For your sake I have borne reproach* (Ps. 69:9; Rom. 8:36).

(2) The comforts of suffering saints laid down. They are *blessed*, for they now, in their lifetime, receive *their evil things* (Luke 16:25) and receive them upon a good account. They are *blessed*, for it is an honor to them (Acts 5:41). It is an opportunity of glorifying Christ, of doing good, and of experiencing special comforts and visits of grace and tokens of his presence (2 Cor. 1:5; Dan. 3:25; Rom. 8:29).

They shall be *recompensed*. Theirs is *the kingdom of heaven*. They have at present a sure title to it and sweet foretastes of it, and shall ere long be in possession of it. Though there be nothing in

those sufferings that can in strictness merit of God (for the sins of the best deserve the worst), yet this is here promised as a *reward* (v. 12). *Great is your reward in heaven*. So great that it will far transcend the service. It is *in heaven*, future, and out of sight; but well secured, out of the reach of chance, fraud, and violence. **Note:** God will provide that those who lose *for* him, though it be life itself, shall not lose *by* him in the end. Heaven, at last, will be an abundant recompense for all the difficulties we meet with in our way. This is that which has borne up the suffering saints in all ages--this *joy set before them*.

"So persecuted they the prophets who were before you (v. 12). They were *before you* in excellency, above what you are yet arrived at. They were *before you* in time, that they might be examples to you of *suffering affliction* and of *patience* (James 5:10). They were in like manner persecuted and abused, and can you expect to go to heaven in a way by yourselves? Was not Isaiah mocked for his *line upon line*? *Elisha* for his *bald head*? Were not all the prophets thus treated? Therefore *marvel not* at it as a *strange* thing, *murmur not* at it as a *hard* thing. It is a comfort to see the way of suffering as a beaten road, and an honor to follow such leaders. That grace which was *sufficient for them* to carry them through their sufferings, shall not be *deficient to you*. Those who are your enemies are the seed and successors of them who of old mocked the messengers of the Lord (2 Chr. 36:16; ch. 13:31; Acts 7:52).

Therefore *rejoice and be exceeding glad* (v. 12). It is not enough to be patient and content under these sufferings, as under common afflictions, and not to render railing for railing. But we must rejoice because the honor and dignity, the pleasure and advantage, of suffering for Christ are much more considerable than the pain or shame of it. Not that we must take *pride* in our sufferings (that spoils all), but we must take *pleasure* in them, as Paul did (2 Cor. 12:10)--knowing that Christ is herein *before-hand* with us and that he will not be *behind-hand* with us (1 Pet. 4:12.13).