

Pure in Heart, Peacemakers and Persecuted

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[0 : 00] These words from verse 8 down to verse 12. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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

You know, just as you can't pick and choose, you know, which parts of the Bible you're going to, you know, going to adhere to, going to obey. So for the Beatitudes here, the blessings, this list of blessings, every one of these blessings that Jesus declares that characterise a Christian, characterise a Christian who's walking with the Lord in faith and obedience and love, you can't choose some and not the rest.

Because the blessings that we find Jesus speaking of here in the cell on the mount, these blessings cover the whole of the Christian's relationship with God and with others.

[1 : 23] And as we progress through the Sermon on the Mount, I know there'll be a little delay in that progression in the next few weeks, but anyways, as we do, God willing, progress through the sermon, then, you know, I hope that we see the beauty of divine logic.

This divine logic that flows from first to last. Even as we see here in the Beatitudes here, that there's divine logic going from first to last in the description of the Christian and the grace that the Christian is to exhibit in his faithfulness to God.

And let's just look at that logic for a moment. When you go to the first description we read there in verse 3, the poor in spirit. Well, the poor in spirit, of course, are those who have nothing.

They know they have nothing to bring to God for their salvation. They know, we know that we're sinners. And therefore, as a result, going to the logic, they mourn. Those who are poor in spirit mourn.

They mourn over their sin. And those who truly mourn over their sin are the meek, are the humble. Because they recognize, you recognize who know the Lord Jesus as your Savior, you recognize that it's nothing in yourself that's won for you salvation.

[2 : 39] You have that meekness, that humility before God because you know that you are in the presence of the One who's rescued you from your sins. You know the saving grace that's changed you.

And therefore, when you know that saving grace that's changed you, you'll hunger and thirst the more for righteousness. And the more you hunger and thirst for righteousness, the more you'll be merciful towards others because you know that God has been merciful to you.

That hunger, that thirst to know God and to know mercy towards others. And so, having that hungering, that thirsting for God, having that purity of heart that we'll look at in more detail later as you see God.

You see God by faith. And seeing God and seeing Him by faith, being a peacemaker. Again, we'll develop what that means, what it means that when Jesus is telling us here, what does it mean to be that peacemaker?

And of course, in having the gifts of grace, in being that peacemaker, in being poor in spirit, in being those who mourn for their sin, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, that's the, as it were, the conclusion of the divine logic.

[4 : 00] The conclusion is persecution, persecution, persecution. But at the same time, as being persecuted, notice, there's rejoicing.

Rejoicing that you are part of the worldwide church, that you're going through what the Lord's people are going through, who themselves are suffering for the sake of the gospel. And that's the divine logic that we see in this first part of the Sermon on the Mount. This divine logic that we're to experience in our own lives. Your own life as a Christian, if you've given your life to the Savior.

So what have we got here? We've got a challenge. We've got a challenge to your faith in practice. And of course, a challenge when you realize, when I realize, that each day we fall so far short of the ideal that Jesus teaches us here, and surely then it's for each one of us who knows the Savior, to strive, to strive to know these blessings of God in your life, in your walk as a Christian, so that the more you glorify God and deny self, as you live for Him in the midst of a dark and hostile world. And so as we go through these beatitudes, these blessings, then, well, where do we reach? We've reached verses 8 to 12. Well, we've looked at them very, very briefly in terms of the logic of the progression of what Jesus is teaching here in blessing.

[5 : 31] But I think we need to unpack a wee bit more these blessings. So let's look at verse 8 in terms of the pure in heart. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Now, of course, we know we're all sinners. We know we're all sinners. Each one of us falls short of the glory of God. We know in our nature that we're sinners. We have a sinful human nature. But the wonderful truth that comes with the gift of salvation is that sinners are changed, made right with God, acceptable, made acceptable to a holy God.

How? Well, of course, through the righteousness of Christ. That righteousness of Christ clothing you. When He took upon Himself your sins on the cross so that sin no longer has that dominion over you.

Why? If you're a blood-bought Christian, the blood of Christ has bought you, you have that righteousness of Christ clothing you. Yes, you know you'll still sin.

[6 : 38] But sin no longer has that power over you. But then you might say, well, what about this pure heart? I mean, is Jesus saying something like, you know, the Christian can attain to a moral and spiritual perfection so that he cannot sin?

Is that the kind of teaching? The kind of teaching that John Wesley put forward when he claimed it was possible for Christians to completely defeat sin in the present life and live holy lives just as Jesus lived, a life of sinless perfection?

Is that what Jesus is teaching here? Well, no, surely not. Surely not. Christian perfectionism is a heresy. And it's completely unbiblical, of course.

What does John tell us in 1 John 8? If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves. And the truth is not in us. Or when Paul was writing to the Galatians, Galatians 5, 16 to 17, he told the Galatians that they must be at war with sinful desires that are real within them.

So surely when Jesus is speaking here, when he's teaching about those who are blessed, having that pure heart, blessed are the pure in heart, surely what Jesus is showing here is that the Christian is someone who has that, you know, that unhindered commitment to the gospel, that commitment that's wholehearted, a commitment that's not, you know, sullied by the filth of the world.

[8 : 16] It's that desire we were thinking of earlier with the children, that desire to have that clean heart, that cleansing within, that purity of heart and that has a purity of commitment.

That's why we sang from Psalm 51 when David penned that psalm after his adultery with Bathsheba and he sought God's forgiveness. What did he write? What did we sing?

The children were hearing, create in me a clean heart. Oh God, renew a right spirit within. David had allowed himself to be sullied by the world.

He'd allowed, we would say, impure thoughts to direct his impure actions when he lusted after another man's wife and he committed adultery with her and he recognized, you know, after he committed that sin, that he had committed sin.

He knew that he had become impure in thought and action. What does he do? He comes before God. He seeks God's forgiveness. And in seeking God's forgiveness, he expresses that heartfelt desire for God to create a pure heart, a clean heart within him.

[9 : 30] And that surely has to be your cry and my cry when we come before God with that desire for a clean heart, a heart that conforms to God's will and not my will.

A heart that desires to obey God's word and to obey God's law. And surely then, following the divine logic, that purity of heart comes from someone who's truly hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

That desire for a pure, clean heart comes from somebody who is that humble, meek Christian who knows the mercy of God. The Christian who seeks to be done with lesser things to his mind set and things above.

The Christian whose heart's desire is to walk that narrow road and to know that blessing of holiness without which no one will see God.

Because it's surely that purity of heart that defines, as we were thinking a few weeks ago, defines that happy man, that blessed man, the man who, remember we were using the words at Laffle Mackenzie, who believes firmly, prays fervently, walks patiently, labours abundantly, lives holily, dies daily, watches his heart, guards his senses, redeems his time, loves Christ, and longs for glory.

[11:00] In other words, the person who fixes his eyes on Jesus. The person who seeks to live for his saviour. The person who has that purity of heart when he knows, and in his heart knows that Jesus is all and in all.

And knows that the world is us nothing. And so it's a challenge. It's a challenge for each one of us today to be rid of the sin of pollution that would contaminate your heart and sin.

And to be freed from the lure of anything that would draw you away from that walk, that close walk with your saviour. A desire to be rid of all the roots of evil that grow in your heart and drag you away from a wholesome walk with the Lord Jesus.

I keep saying it's a challenge, it's a daily challenge. That fostering of a pure heart, that clean heart, that, you might say, that total disposition to have that single focus on the saviour.

And not to be sidetracked by the impurities of anything that would lure us away from that wholehearted walk with the Lord Jesus.

[12:18] Now, of course, that doesn't involve the moral aspects of our mind. We saw that in the prayer of David. And it's very interesting. When Paul is writing to Timothy, he actually speaks of purity.

He speaks of purity, in fact, twice. Speaks of purity as a grace to be exercised in a young minister. 1 Timothy 5.2, for example, when Paul writes to Timothy in Timothy's relationships with the women of the church.

And in that context, urges Timothy to exercise his pastoral care and he uses the same word. He uses the purity word. To exercise his pastoral care in all purity.

Now, of course, there's so many aspects of, other aspects of impurity that lure you away from a wholehearted following of the Lord Jesus. These idols that blur your vision of the one true God in all his holiness.

Idols of our own choosing that come between you and come between me and God. And when we rather prefer the values of the world that make you stumble and fall in disobedience and sin.

[13:36] These idols that we set up in our heart that take the place of the one true God. And so, yes, to pray that you, that I, that we'd be delivered from setting up these idols in our heart.

These idols that so spoil your walk with God. So pray. Pray that God will do for you as he promised his people in the time of Ezekiel the prophet.

And God declared, I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols and give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. And you know where these, these idols lurk?

Well, where do they lurk? They lurk in your mind. They lurk in your heart. They lurk in your affections. Well, where they are, come before God. Seek his forgiveness and seek his cleansing. Seek his cleansing and purifying you from those sins that have driven you away from the Saviour. and be an example. Be an example to others in your growing in that purity of heart.

[14:41] Growing in your cleansing of heart. Growing that heart, growing in that heart commitment to the Saviour. Because when we think of the Lord Jesus, think of him.

Focus your eyes on him. See him in the purity of his heart. Because Jesus had that clean heart. Jesus showed no impure actions that stem from any impure thoughts.

No. Jesus had that single focus on doing his Father's will and doing it in all purity of commitment. Because Jesus came to obey his Father's will fully.

Even to the point of going to the cross for you. That dying on the cross. That dying on the cross that there showed that pure heart of the Saviour.

On the cross Jesus showed the glory, his glory in his pure, unadulterated love for the Father and love for those for whom he came to die.

[15 : 43] So look to Jesus. Gaze on him. Gaze on his glory. Look on his majesty. Look on his beauty. Because you're seeing his purity.

Look and that's the more that you see Jesus as you fix your eyes on him. the more you will be committed to serve him in all purity of motive and purity of purpose and purity of commitment and a purity of heart that's not going to compromise with the world and allow the impurity of a sin-disease world to hamper your devotion to God.

And so I challenge you as I have to challenge myself each day and to do so in the sincerity of your heart. Ask yourself. I have to ask myself. Is there anything in your life which is compromising your profession of faith in the Lord Jesus?

Is there any sin that you're harboring that actually allows impurity to enter your heart? Well, come before God.

Come before him in the sincerity of conviction. Pray for his forgiveness. Pray to be washed clean from your sin. Pray to have that blessedness of blessing that Jesus informs us there at the end of verse 8 to see God.

[17 : 08] You who are in Christ, you who are united to Christ, well, you see him by faith, don't you? And the promise of seeing him in all his fullness and all his glory when Jesus returns.

So now, yes, now you see him by faith. Your eyes are fixed on him, yes. He's made himself known to you through his word.

But you know, on that resurrection morning, you'll see him in all his glory. Think of Job. Job. In Job 19. When Job spoke of that truth.

Job 19, 25 to 26. For I know that my Redeemer lives and at the last he will stand upon the earth and after my skin has been thus destroyed yet in my flesh I will see God.

Some of you here were at the funeral of the late John L. Mackay just a few days ago and we were reminded of that truth. The passage that was read and addressed, the passage from Revelation 21 and 22.

[18 : 19] Revelation 21 verse 27. That nothing, and it's speaking of the glory of the new heaven and the new earth but nothing unclean will ever enter it, will ever enter the new Jerusalem.

Nor anyone who does what is detestable or false but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of life and then these words a few verses later in Revelation 22.

They will see his face. That's the eternal blessing of those who are pure in heart. blessing for you who will see the Lord Jesus face to face because of what he has done for you.

You will behold the face of the Saviour who loved you and gave himself for you. That you, yes, in glory, yes, and in the new heaven, the new earth, yes, there will be that sinless perfection.

You'll serve God in purity. You'll worship him in complete purity. You'll praise him in absolute purity. And we have to say with rejoicing that that eternal prospect is such that eye hasn't seen nor ear heard the things that God has prepared for his people in the perfection of glory.

[19 : 41] Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. But then secondly, peacemakers, blessed, verse 9, blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God.

And again, you know, just go back to this divine logic. The pure in heart, those hungering and thirsting in righteousness, having that heart's desire to know God, that heart's desire to do God's will, that heart's desire to be like Jesus in commitment to our heavenly Father.

there's that logic, divine logic. James, the brother of Jesus, wrote of that logic. James 3, 17 to 18, but the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere, and a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

peace. So you might be saying, well, what's James saying here about peace? Well, okay, it must have to be an echo of what Jesus was preaching in the sermon when Jesus speaks of peacemakers.

But then you might think, but don't we think of peacemaking, you know, the kind of action that a diplomat exercises in seeking to reconcile nations, for example, is that what Jesus is saying here?

[21 : 08] Blessed are the peacemakers? Is there some kind of human reconciliation first and foremost being addressed here? Well, to many people that's what's assumed in these words.

But if that's the case, then that's taken Jesus' words completely out of context. Because what Jesus is saying here isn't about peaceful relations between warring nations, warring factions, even warring individuals.

It's primarily about the peace that God brings to those who are his to enable hostility between God and man to cease.

I think we have to work this out with a little more time. And again, in the context that Jesus is speaking of here. And of course, to apply what Jesus is saying for your response to the blessing of the Christian, that the Christian is the peacemaker.

and of course, following on, the blessing of the reward of being called the Son of God or sons of God. Now, peace.

[22 : 16] Now, you can take forever analyzing this word, but it's not really to analyze a word that we're doing here. It's what Jesus has done. Peace. Peace concerns what the Lord Jesus has done in reconciling sinners to God.

Reconciling God to sinners through Jesus giving his life for us. Making it possible for sinners to be made right with God.

Reconciled to God. We know Jesus is in this context. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Jesus came to bring peace on earth. How? By his death.

Peace that speaks of salvation. That peace that speaks of being made right with God. That peace that speaks of being no longer at enmity with God. God no longer at enmity with those for whom Jesus came to win salvation.

Because through that salvation Jesus has made it possible for sinners to be at peace with God. To have that restored relationship with God.

[23 : 26] A relationship broken by sin. But a relationship restored by the peace giving work of the Lord Jesus. Remember when Jesus this is the announcement of Jesus' birth.

How was that announced? Then angels cried out peace and air. Peace and air. Now many of course Christmas time comes again and you'll hear the usual scoffing of where is that peace? peace. That's not the peace that Jesus is mentioning here. It's about the restoring of that right relationship with God. And if Jesus has come to reconcile man and God if Jesus is the ultimate peacemaker then you who follow Jesus you whose heart's desire is to be like Jesus it's for you to be a peacemaker.

Now I don't mean of course winning salvation for others by your own efforts by your own works not at all but for you to seek the peace of others to seek that others know the peace of God in their hearts through the salvation that the Lord Jesus Christ brings to sinners.

So in being a peacemaker be somebody who prays for others somebody who proclaims the truth of salvation the Lord Jesus alone and you're witness to others by your words and by your actions by the evangelism that God gives us to go out into all the world to tell others of the gospel that's being a peacemaker that's the kind of peacemaker that Jesus says is from someone who's called or who are called sons of God sons of God adopted into the family of God having the rights of inheritance being adopted into the eternal family of God having all the benefits that that adoption brings the benefits of the saving of your soul the blessing of eternal life calling God father knowing the father's love and all its purity and faithfulness you know think are you a peacemaker do you want others to be saved well show it show it by your words show it by your witness now we know that in and of ourselves none of us can save anyone else it's only the drawing power of the holy spirit that transforms somebody's life but surely it's for you to have that earnest desire and that seeking the salvation of others and any of you here who preach surely when you preach when I preach surely it has to be that desire of our hearts to see the conversion of sinners and for all of you who witness to the

[26 : 22] Saviour but make known that the Saviour died for you that you have found peace with God in your heart seek that same peace for others in desiring their salvation their peace with God but then of course we can bring this to the church itself and there has to be peacemaking within the church those who are sons of God who have been adopted into the family of God surely it's for each one of us to practice peace amongst ourselves and surely it's the most horrible of contradictions when brothers in Christ who know the peace of God in their lives those who know that they've been reconciled to God they find it difficult or even impossible to be reconciled to another brother in Christ or sister in Christ you know when the prince of peace is preached when the prince of peace is proclaimed in word and yet the same

Lord Jesus is dishonoured through this unity amongst brothers and sisters in Christ it's so important unity in a church unity in a congregation reflects the Lord Jesus who came to bring peace to sinners this unity is an affront to the gospel of peace you're called to peace you're called to let the peace of Christ rule in your heart just as Paul addressed the church in Colossae let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts as one body in Christ unity the peace of Christ dwelling in the body of the church surely that shows the peace that the Lord Jesus has won for you by giving his life on the cross so live live by that grace it's a grace the grace of peace and practice that grace as sons of God for you who know the blessing of sonship because that blessing tells of the privilege that's yours in Christ in him the prince of peace but then thirdly and lastly persecution blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven verse 11 blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely my account rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you the last of the beatitudes and you might think well this seems very much a contradiction but it's not there's no contradiction persecution is a blessing from God blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake theirs is the kingdom of heaven back to our divine logic the poor in spirit who mourn for their sins are the meek who hunger and thirst for righteousness those who are merciful towards others they're pure in heart they're peacemakers all this accumulation of grace we might say that tells of a life that's been touched by a God who's given his love his saving love towards you you have the blessing of the kingdom but look at the conclusion of these blessings persecution reviling hatred hatred of speech hatred of action false accusation even as we've seen so recently in the media and Christians are falsely accused of doing something and imprisonment and danger of death itself but look at what persecution hatred false accusation

I mean are these blessings oh yes because in that persecution whether it's persecution of word persecution of action for the follower of Jesus they're blessings I mean Jesus isn't saying that the Christian is going to be given an easy life this side of eternity Jesus isn't saying you know that persecution itself is devoid of suffering but he does say that those who are persecuted and reviled those who are hated for righteousness sake are blessed what is blessing it's the favour of God it's knowing that rich contentment and even suffering for the sake of the Lord Jesus so you might say what we are Christians blessed in being persecuted look at what Jesus says there in verse 12 he says rejoice be glad because you have the reward of the kingdom before you there's the blessing of persecution knowing that that persecution isn't an end in itself because what's the goal of the Christian the goal of the Christian is heaven the heavenly blessing where there is no more suffering where the light and momentary afflictions of the present age will be no more and yes you have that prospect of eternal glory that far outweighs the experience of suffering and error what Jesus says there towards the end of that section he speaks of the prophets who suffered the prophets now in glory now knowing the joy of being in heaven with the saviour of course think of Jesus ultimately the great prophet ultimately

Jesus suffered the most intense persecution the most intense reviling of man and if we're to be like Christ yes we'll suffer the hostility of others what did Jesus say on another occasion if he hated me he'll hate you and so it's for you it's for me to strive to live as those who are blessed of God yes and the character of the Christian who lives by grace and by faith someone who hungers after God who loves God who's rooted in the word of God who delights to do God's will who loves others and that loving others to seek their salvation and yes demonstrate your faith demonstrate the grace that's been gifted to you and when that happens you'll attract opposition you'll attract opposition from a world that's not poor in spirit but rich in spiritual arrogance a world that doesn't mourn over its sin a world that shuns meekness for pride a world that hungers and thirsts for unrighteousness a world that lacks mercy for others and towards others a world that's impure in heart a world that hates those who seek the peace of

God and others a world that will persecute Christians because of the world's hatred for the Lord Jesus and the word of the Lord Jesus but you know in saying all that I don't know but are there those even here this morning for whom the opposite of these blessings pertains to you well if that's the case repent come to the Lord Jesus come to him who repent of your sin come to him and he'll receive you and welcome you into his kingdom come to him in faith I know the blessings of grace that Jesus tells us of here grace that's gifted to you in love of course grace to be acted on in faithful obedience not for self-glory but for the glory of God and so we pray that

[34 : 44] God's word will not return to empty but accomplish what he desires amen let us pray Lord have mercy upon us as sinners forgive us Lord when we don't exercise the graces that tell of the blessings that you give to us in your love forgive us for these times when we are not peacemakers when we are impure in heart and forgive us Lord for the many times when we fail to honor you in our words in our actions preferring the praise of man rather than giving you praise through all that we do and say so help us Lord we pray to live for you to live lives that glorify you help us to honor you in our words in our actions may that be the prayer of the heart of each one gathered here this morning we pray these things in Jesus name amen well let's close in

Psalm 24 on page 28 verse 1 to verse 6 just three singing verses three stanzas the world and all in it are gods all peoples of the earth for it was founded by the Lord upon the seas beneath who may ascend the hill of God or in his temple stand and the answer the one who shuns false gods and lies who's pure in heart and hand he will find favor from the Lord and from his saviour grace thus are they blessed oh Jacob's God who truly seek your face these verses to God's praise