

Lesson 11 - BLESSINGS OF GOD'S GRACE (1) Matthew 5:1-12

(Matt. 5:1-2) - Here begins the Lord's Sermon on the Mount. While multitudes were present to hear this sermon (cf. Luke 6:17-26), this message was directed to His disciples, i.e. those who professed to believe in Him. He begins with what is known as the beatitudes - pronouncements of blessings of God's grace in Christ. Although there is much good counsel here, the beatitudes are not addressed to all people merely as guidelines by which to live. They are reserved for those who fit the character described in each beatitude as set forth by Christ, and the characteristics described are not natural to unregenerate people. They are the fruit and result of God's power and grace in salvation all conditioned on and given to us in and through Christ. These characteristics are worked within us by the Holy Spirit in the new birth (John 3:3-7; Gal. 5:22-26).

(Matt. 5:3-12) - This lesson is an overview not only of the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount, but also other beatitudes found in God's Word. We will look at each one recorded here in the next lesson. Each beatitude begins with the word "*blessed*" which means happy and well off. Each one describes the spiritual state and condition of sinners saved by grace. The blessedness (happiness) is found in our spiritual relationship with God in Christ and not in our earthly and temporal circumstances. So, we need to emphasize that in each of these blessings, the Lord describes and refers to sinners saved by God's grace and how this blessedness refers to spiritual and eternal blessedness, not earthly, temporal, or material blessings. Many times what unregenerate people view as material blessings and what they view as proof that God loves and favors them, in reality, can become curses (Luke 12:13-21; 16:19-31).

The character described in each beatitude is of a spiritual nature and, again, not natural to unregenerate and unbelieving people. We need to understand that Satan can counterfeit these characteristics, but he cannot produce them within the hearts of sinners. Only God through Christ by His Spirit can give sinners spiritual life and a new heart to fit the character of one who is spiritually and eternally blessed of God. Each beatitude has with it a promise of God's grace showing the true spiritual nature of each particular blessing.

God's Word declares that there are some people who are blessed of the Lord and some who are cursed by the Lord. Those who live their lives in the grace of God, resting in Christ for all salvation, living and walking by faith, are blessed. Those who live their lives seeking salvation and righteousness by their works under the law are cursed (Gal. 3:10). The only reason any of us sinners are blessed and not cursed is due to the fact that by God's grace "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*" (Gal. 3:13). Certainly all people are recipients of temporal mercies of God - "*The LORD is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works*" (Psa. 145:9; cf. Matt. 5:45). But spiritual and eternal blessings are reserved for a people appointed by God before the world was made unto salvation (Rom. 9:23; Eph. 1:3-4; 2 Tim. 1:9). It is important that we know that the beatitudes recorded in this passage are not the only beatitudes in the Bible. Consider the following:

(1) Blessed are those chosen by God unto salvation and effectually drawn to Christ - "*Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple*" (Psa. 65:4; cf. 33:12; Eph. 1:3-7).

(2) Blessed are those to whom the Gospel of God's grace in Christ, the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of all those whom the Father gave Him, the message of Christ's righteousness

imputed, is a joyful sound - *“Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted”* (Psa. 89:15-16).

(3) Blessed are those whose sins are not imputed to them, but imputed to Christ for their salvation - *“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile”* (Psa. 32:1-2; cf. Rom. 8:33-34).

(4) Blessed are those to whom God has imputed righteousness without works, the imputed righteousness of Christ - *“Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin”* (Rom. 4:6-8).

(5) Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and trust the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory - *“O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee”* (Psa. 84:12; cf. Matt. 13:15-16; Luke 11:27-28).

(6) Blessed are those who fear the Lord - *“Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments”* (Psa. 112:1; cf. 128:1,4).

(7) Blessed are those who have been brought by God in His kingdom and whose strength is in the Lord - *“Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee. Selah. Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways of them”* (Psa. 84:4-5).

(8) Blessed are those who patiently endure temptation - *“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him”* (James 1:12).

(9) Blessed are those who are chastened by the Lord - *“Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of Thy law; That Thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked”* (Psa. 94:12-13; cf. Heb. 12:3-11).

(10) Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord - *“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them”* (Rev. 14:13).