

Immeasurably Blessed

The Beatitudes

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Bible Verse: Matthew 5:3-10
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Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 5 as we come to this most important and foundational text in all of the Bible, the Beatitudes in verses 3 through 10. Beatitude coming from a Latin term that means blessed, we're reading about the blessing of God in a message tonight titled, "Immeasurably Blessed." Matthew 5, beginning in verse 3.

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Now, over the past two weeks, we have rather introduced the Sermon on the Mount, going from a satellite view to a 30,000-foot view, you might say. We saw that in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is expounding on the theme of repentance. In John the Baptist's ministry, in John 3:2, John the Baptist said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In the beginning of Jesus' ministry, as Matthew presents it, the opening theme is exactly the same. Matthew 4:17, "From that time Jesus began to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" Repentance, and the kingdom of heaven being the developing theme here and as you go into the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 5, you see that Jesus is continuing on that theme of the kingdom of heaven and really laying forth who it is and who will not enter the kingdom. So in Matthew 5:3 you see "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." In verse 20, Jesus says "unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." You see it again there. In Matthew 6:10, Jesus teaches us to pray and says, "Your kingdom come." In verse 33, he says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you." There is this prevailing, developing, almost omnipresent aspect of the theme of the kingdom of God in what we're reading in the opening chapters of Matthew. And he's not done. In verse 13, it says, "enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction." Verse 14, "the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." You say, well, enter,

enter what? Well, what's everything been about throughout all of this context? It's about entering the kingdom of heaven and you see that even more explicitly as the verbal links come together in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." So, repent. the kingdom of heaven, enter the kingdom of heaven, that's the theme that we're seeing here, and what we saw is that the call to repentance is a call to holiness, to repent from sin and to seek the righteousness of God, and yet at the same time, it's also a call to blessing. Jesus doesn't simply call us to stop committing certain kinds of sin, he calls us to a comprehensive attitude toward righteousness and to experience and share in the blessing that God gives to those that are in his kingdom. This is the satellite view of the Sermon on the Mount.

Well, last time we went in a little further and maybe I should say that was the Space Shuttle view of the Sermon on the Mount, and now then we looked at the satellite view last week, last time, when we saw the specific sections of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus describes life in his kingdom. There's an impact on character, as shown in the Beatitudes, and true conversion, the new birth brings someone into a new position, a new relationship with the world and with God the Father and with his word, and entering the kingdom prepares you for judgment and makes the idea of judgment a prevailing sense, a new theme in your thinking that is never very far from your thoughts, all of these things being the mark of true conversion. Now, as we come and we come into more of an atmospheric view, a jet view of the Sermon on the Mount, now we want to take a jet kind of view, a high-picture view of the Beatitudes themselves because they are very definitely a unit of thought in and of themselves.

And as we've said multiple times, the term blessed means more than just mere happiness. It includes that, but the theme of it is far greater than simply happiness. When Jesus describes someone as blessed here, he is saying that they are on the receiving end of the favor of God; they have received the grace of God in a way that benefits them and does good for them. And so this idea of blessing is not a superficial human emotion based on circumstance, it is a profound statement – oh, this is so important – it is a profound statement of the status of someone that is in the grace of God. There is a statement of your position, your status. If these things are true of you, then you possess the kingdom of God and you are therefore in a firm place, a firm standing of blessing.

And so Jesus pronounces God's favor on those who have this character, and one thing to keep in mind is that this is the cornerstone of the Sermon on the Mount, these Beatitudes, these eight verses that we just looked at, and Jesus, having set forth the character of the one in the kingdom as he progresses through the rest of chapter 5, chapter 6, and chapter 7, he is assuming that character. He is addressing people who have this character and is showing them what life in the kingdom is supposed to be and what they are to be like. The last thing on earth that the Sermon on the Mount is, is a general statement of morality made to unsaved people in general and to all of the world. The world does not have this character and therefore it does not have the ability or the power to live out the specific principles that are found elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount. So, remembering that Jesus is setting forth the character of one in the kingdom in the Beatitudes, and he

assumes that character throughout the rest of the sermon, if you get that foundational piece of information and interpretation in your mind, you're going to go a long way toward understanding the Sermon on the Mount.

Now, the Beatitudes are one of my favorite parts of Scripture and I always smile when I say something like that because I say that about most every text that I preach on, but it's true. This is an exquisite passage of Scripture and it is so brilliantly and with such genius structured that it could only come from the mind of God. If you just understand some things about the structure of the Beatitudes, you see even more the splendor of Jesus' words and that's what we're going to focus on here this evening is simply looking at the broad structure of the Sermon on the Mount so that we can see how tightly woven together it is. And we're going to look at three aspects of blessing that Jesus pronounces here in the Beatitudes. First of all, the blessing of godliness, and then the blessing of grace, and the blessing of privilege and exclusive privilege at that. The blessing of godliness, the blessing of grace, the blessing of exclusive privilege, and as you understand the exclusivity of what Jesus is saying here, it has the effect of making you long to make sure that he's talking about you. This is blessing not to be missed and the contrast of judgment is something to be missed so that we want to know that we are in the kingdom and Jesus gives us a description of the character of those who are truly in the kingdom.

So let's look at our first point here this evening, the blessing of godliness, and I never, ever get tired of making this point of interpretation because it's so very, very critical. It is important to notice how the Beatitudes are tied together at the beginning and at the end. There is a golden rope that ties all of these together so that they are not to be considered in utter isolation from one another. They are joined together like bookends in a way that means that everything in between is joined together on the same spiritual shelf. So look at verse 3 with me, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and then look at verse 10, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of heaven opens the Beatitudes. The kingdom of heaven closes the Beatitudes. For those of you that like technical terms, there's a technical term to describe this literary feature, it's called an *inclusio*, like the word inclusion without the "n" on the end. It is an *inclusio*, meaning that it begins and ends with the same phrase and that is so important from an interpretive standpoint and from even the sense of you want to grow in your spiritual life, it's an important aspect of understanding the nature of sanctification itself. The fact that this is an *inclusio* means that this phrase functions like an envelope. It gathers everything together that occurs in between so that you see them all together, not separate.

It is critical to understand that the Beatitudes are a single unit of thought with different aspects to them. The eight Beatitudes are not unrelated characteristics so that verse 3 has nothing to do with verse 4, has nothing to do with verse 5. Uh-uh. That's a technical Greek term that you probably have never heard before. Uh-uh. But you study Greek, you learn little terms like that that you pull out sometimes to impress your friends. Uh-uh. No, the eight Beatitudes are not unrelated classes, as if the poor in spirit were separate from those who mourn because they're joined together and they are to be taken together.

People under the reign of Christ as King, watch this as we go through, in verse 3, they are poor in spirit and they mourn. And verse 5, they are meek. And verse 6, they hunger and thirst for righteousness. And verse 7, they are merciful. And verse 8, they are pure in heart. And verse 9, they are peacemakers. And verse 10, they are persecuted for the sake of righteousness.

You see, beloved, what Jesus is describing here are different aspects of the same people. The same people manifest in different ways at different times, but every true Christian manifests all of these characteristics as a part of being a Christian. And if you think about it this way, you can understand why that must be. A Christian is someone who has been born again, who has been born from above. The Sermon on the Mount demands the new birth. No one can be like this in their character who has not been born again. And so in the fullness of the power and the fullness of the blessing of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit conveys a multifaceted new life to everyone that he saves. And because the source is the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit brings these characteristics and imparts them in the new heart, then we can see why everyone who has the Spirit will begin to manifest each one of these attributes, rather than seeing them in isolation. You know by common experience, an excellent illustration of this reality, the idea of one thing having a multifaceted effect, think about a rainbow. One rainbow, you look in the sky and you say, "Oh, there's a rainbow." There's one rainbow in the sky and yet you also know that a rainbow has seven distinct colors. Every rainbow has the same spectrum of seven colors in it and so one rainbow with seven distinct colors, ah, that helps understand that in conversion everyone who is a member of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, is going to manifest these different aspects of the spiritual reality of the presence of the Spirit in their heart.

Let me give you another biblical illustration if you would turn over to the book of Galatians with me, in Galatians 5. Galatians 5. You read in the familiar passage in verse 22, and actually, I think I did this two weeks ago, but I want to do it again here as well. Let's start in verse 19, just to draw the distinction, the distinction between the carnal man of the world, the unregenerate, unsaved man, with the man who is saved and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Verse 19, "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit," here's our theme, "the kingdom of God." The kingdom of God is shut off to people of the flesh like that, people of the world. And it is so critical that we should also look at 1 Corinthians 6 to realize that Scripture draws very sharp distinctions between those who are in the kingdom and those who are not, and the prevailing ecumenical force in the church today is to blur these distinctions and to make the sins of the world acceptable in the church and to give a false assurance to people who practice these sins and love these sins that they can still be Christians at the same time. Scripture itself has none of it. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, you read this, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality," marking Pride Month with a gladness here from this pulpit, "nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."

So Scripture just makes this profound statement, not just about physical sins, but attitudinal sins of anger and envy and strife and division, and says people like that are not in the kingdom and emphasizes, Paul said there in Galatians, "I've told you this before and now I say it again." The repetition of teaching is so critical on these things. And so we're left, as we study the Beatitudes and the nature of those who are in the kingdom of God, we're immediately sobered and chastened by what Scripture says. These things and these people who practice these things are not in the kingdom of God. They are under the wrath of God, Romans 1:18 through Romans 3:20, and this is true of Jew and Gentile alike. And Scripture does not hold out a false promise of this broad toleration of all kinds of sin, and in the month in which we're speaking and the days in which we live, it's so important for us to frame our thinking by Scripture and not by the increasingly decadent life in the world around us. That's why this is so important for us to see the Beatitudes for all that they're worth.

Now going back to Galatians 5, I went on a tangent of a tangent, what we're looking at is the fact that the Beatitudes are meant to be interpreted as a single unit; one true conversion manifesting itself in the eight different ways found in the Beatitude. We see the similar theme, you see the same kind of theme, the same kind of singleness with a plurality of aspects to it in the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. Look at it there with me, "But the fruit," singular, "But the fruit of the Spirit is," singular, And then, as you know, nine different virtues follow in its wake. Single fruit with nine different aspects attached to it, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law." And so all of this simply to help us understand that by the grammatical structure of the text, by the nature and theological understanding that a single Spirit is at work in producing conversion in everyone who he saves, recognizing that in nature and in Scripture we see these aspects of something singular having multiple aspects to it, we see clearly how the Beatitudes are describing different aspects of the same spiritual life.

Now why is that so important and why have I belabored the point here? We are not at liberty to look at certain beatitudes and say, "Well, that one doesn't apply to me. I'm not like that, but it doesn't matter that I'm not like that. The fact that I have no desire for spiritual growth, I have no desire for truth, that doesn't mean I'm not a Christian. After all, there are seven other beatitudes that I'm doing pretty good at." Well, that's foolishness. That's not the way that it works. And so, beloved, when you and I understand this text, when you and I examine our lives in light of this text, we are not free to pick and choose the ones that we like and the other ones that convict us to set them aside. If they convict us, we need to take that seriously. We need to examine our hearts. We need to confess our sins and not act on a false understanding of the Beatitudes that say, "You know, six out of eight ain't bad. Two out of three ain't bad." That's not the way it works at all. The Beatitudes all apply to everyone who professes Christ. The Spirit of God produces this in everyone that he saves; eventually, in some way, over the course of time, you find these things coming out.

Now, just to step back for a moment from it all and to just place this in some kind of theological context. When Christ saves someone, and when Christ becomes King over a soul in his kingdom, he does this, he places a pervasive and comprehensive principle of new life in that soul, a new life that comes from the Spirit of God, a new life with multifaceted power. And Christ, in the one that he saves, in the woman that he saves, he manifests his presence in many ways and thoroughly transforms a man's character over time. And it's not, beloved, and this is just so vital in pastoral ministry to say again and again, you cannot be deceived in your own life or as you observe others by someone who flourishes quickly under a confession of faith, a profession of faith, but then just as quickly seems to die out and wander away. Jesus warns us about seed that falls onto thin soil like that, that sprouts up quickly but has no lasting root. It's the mark of a false conversion and churches are filled with this problem everywhere. And so of course we emphasize these things. Of course we emphasize the permanence of true conversion. Of course we emphasize the perseverance of the saints and continuing in the faith because it's so common for people to fall away by outward testimony, and it's so common to see this, and it is so common for those same people to be reassured and given a false assurance, "You made a profession, you walked the aisle, you were baptized, you were baptized by Pastor Big, you must be a Christian. It's okay. Don't worry about your sin." This is all damnable, destructive deception that the Sermon on the Mount gives no room for and so it's important for us to earnestly interact with this material over the course of the next several weeks and let the Spirit of God have its way with us and with you. And my encouragement to you, those of you that are in the room, those that enjoy this over the live stream, is to just adopt a posture in your heart right now that yields to the Spirit of God and says, "Whatever you have for me in this study, have your way with me. If I'm not a Christian, make that plain to me. If the absence of the marks of spiritual life are so evident, make it plain to me. I will receive the rebuke from you, O Spirit of God, the conviction of it, and I ask you to lead me to repentance." If you are earnest and yet struggle with assurance, ask the Spirit of God, you know, "Show me these things and give me assurance if my salvation is real."

Look, I have no interest whatsoever in creating doubts in the heart of those who are truly redeemed. That's not my goal at all in saying things like that, but as I said last week, the problem that the Sermon on the Mount confronts us with as we look on the contemporary evangelical scene, and even as we watch and observe people come and go in a local church over the course of years and decades, is that you see people naming the name of Christ and yet manifesting little to no evidence of the fruit of the Beatitudes in their lives. And so, for my part, you know, as I am accountable before God in my own ministry, I just have to say that the only conclusion that's possible to draw from that dynamic all around us is the fact that many who are inside the church building are not actually inside the kingdom of God. They are with us, but they are not of us. And so we cannot trifle with these things because the eternal ramifications of being misled about the true state of your soul are too dire, they are too devastating, they are too destructive to play games with. A pastor or a Bible teacher whose dominating characteristic is that he has an easy ability to make you laugh and feel comfortable is not a reliable guide to spiritual life, no matter who he's associated with. These are not trifling matters and you can't read these things and you can't read the warnings of Christ himself at the end in chapter 7

throughout all of chapter 7 of Matthew, the concluding chapter of the Sermon on the Mount, you can't read this, realize the vast consequences of what he is saying, the vast implications of what he's saying, and say, "Oh, this isn't so serious and let's have a good time together." The waiting line of people trembling on the Day of Judgment, waiting for their time to stand before Christ in his holiness, that's not going to be a joking time and I'm far more concerned to prepare people for that day than I am to have them like me today because that's what matters in the long run.

And so, what we find in the Beatitudes, as we conclude this first point on the blessing of godliness, is that when Christ saves someone, he communicates a principle of godliness to them that manifests itself in these different ways found in these eight Beatitudes in verses 3 through 10. It's a blessing to be under the influence of the Spirit in this way. Now secondly tonight, and another just easily observable matter of grammar that makes these Beatitudes so sweet and pleasant to the soul to contemplate, point number 2, the blessing of grace. The blessing of grace. When God brings someone into his kingdom, what has he done for them, and what will he do for them? We see that laid out in sweet detail here in these eight Beatitudes. And let me ask you a question: as you've read the Beatitudes over the years, have you ever paid close attention to the verb tenses in the Beatitudes? You talk about verb tenses and grammar, this is not the kind of thing that you say, "Really, [yawning] would you get on with it?" No, no, no, no. No, the verb tenses are electrifying in their significance as we study the Beatitudes.

Look at verses 3 and 10 again and notice the verb tenses that are present in the concluding clause of both verses. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven." Verse 10, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven." Present tense, right now, as a matter of aspect of real life living now, there is this aspect of belonging to the kingdom of heaven. Or you could say, to use a different word picture from Scripture, we belong to the family of God and we belong there now. It's not something that in the despicable nature of Roman Catholic theology that says you work and you work and work and then you find out at the end whether you're going to get in or not. No, Christ says that those who are poor in spirit, those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, theirs right now is the kingdom of heaven. They are in and that is a matter of strong assurance.

Now, it opens and closes in the present tense, but notice what happens in verses 4 through 9. How cool is this? Verse 4, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Verse 5, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Verse 6, "they shall be satisfied." Verse 7, "they shall receive mercy." Verse 8, "they shall see God." Verse 9, "they shall be called sons of God." Do you see the contrast, beloved? Opens and ends in the present tense and in between is all of this sweetness of future promise about what will take place in the future, and that has a wonderful impact on the way that we understand and appreciate the blessing of being a Christian, of being in Christ.

My brother and sister in Christ, as a believer in Christ, you taste, you possess, you have, right now, his blessings. You have them. You know what it's like to have your sins forgiven. You know something about joy and peace in this life, of purpose, of being

reconciled to a holy God and that something new and powerful has happened to you that is in distinct contrast to the way that you were before your conversion. You have all of that now and right now, as a matter of status, you belong to Christ. Right now, you are a member of his kingdom. Right now, he is changing and comforting you. And that's all spectacular and so far beyond anything that you and I deserve. The present tenses in verses 3 and 10 express that and communicate that truth to you. It's wonderful but there is more. The fact that the majority of the tenses in the Beatitudes, six of the eight, are future tense, shows you something different. It creates hope and expectation in your heart that as good as it is now to be a believer in Christ and to be a member of the kingdom, there are better things yet to come. There is a fullness yet to be received that we do not have right now. Yes, we are comforted now in Christ, but we will be comforted far more in heaven when he wipes away every tear from our eyes. Yes, we have life and blessing on earth now, but believers in verse 5, they will inherit the earth; we will be a member of the kingdom when Christ reigns on earth from Jerusalem. Yes, we know something about present desires for righteousness and when we are glorified and made perfect in the presence of Christ, we will have that imperfection. We don't have it now, we don't have the perfection now, we're not glorified now, but it's coming and it will be even better than our present experience. And so on it goes.

Beloved, this is fundamental to understanding your position in Christ, and it is fundamental to lasting joy in the midst of changing relationships and changing circumstances and changing health and changing finances and everything else that affects us from the outside as we walk through life here on earth. Beloved, yes, we are blessed now but our best life is not now, our best life is yet to come. Our best life is ahead as shown by the multiplicity of future tenses in the Beatitudes. The joy that we have of walking with Christ, if we're Christians, is to use a very crass, earthly analogy, it's like being at a great banquet where you're being served really nice appetizers that taste good, that are pleasant to the tongue, pleasant to the stomach, but all along as you're eating those appetizers, you realize that the filet mignon is still to come, or if you like salmon like I do, that Alaskan king salmon is still to come. These appetizers are only preparatory for something better that's still ahead in the banquet. All of the joy, all of the blessing that we have here in this earthly life is just a spiritual appetizer to stimulate our appetite for the greater things, the better things, the eternal things that are ahead for us in Christ and all of that is taught to us by simple verb tenses in the Beatitudes. I love paying attention to these kinds of things in Scripture because you can learn so much from the most basic things that you don't need a theology degree to understand, you don't need to know Greek or Hebrew to understand these things, you can just see it by basic principles of language and work out the implications and say, this is a literal feast for my inner man. I never get tired of that.

Turn to 1 John 3. 1 John 3 and you see this same equation of possession now but more to come. Possession now but more to come. You can think about this as, again, I'm just trying to use different illustrations to give a picture, like when a couple gets engaged and the girl has the engagement ring on her fingers. She looks and the ring is beautiful and brings joy to her and is an expression of the token of love that the man has given to her but the engagement ring and what it represents is as good as it is now, it's a promise of

future things, right? It's a promise of better things to come. It's a promise of a fullness of a relationship and an enduring relationship of decades, not simply an expression of the flames of emotion in the moment. It's a promise of better things to come. We're surrounded by all kinds of illustrations that help us understand that there are good things that lead to better things and being a Christian is a good thing that leads to better things and the better things are what are the predominant aspects of our hope and joy, not the things that we enjoy that kind of come and go in earthly life.

1 John 3, you see, the exact same thing, and if we took time, we could no doubt multiply other passages to make us think of more and more like this. But 1 John 3:1 and 2, one of my favorite passages in Scripture, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us," we have it now, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are," or as it reads literally in the Greek, "and we are." There's just an emphasis and almost a surprising exclamation, "Isn't this wonderful love of God that we would be called children of God, and not just called, we are right now, we're children of God!" What kind of love is that, that sinners like you and me would be rightly denominated as those who are in the family of God, that have a holy God, the Creator of heaven and earth as our Father? This is our Father's world. I rest me in that thought.

Verse 1, chapter 3, 1 John, "The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him." Now look at verse 2, and keeping in mind what we're talking about here, about the present and yet future aspects of redemption. Verse 2, "Beloved," I love the way John speaks with such tender affection to his readers. It's an expression when he speaks that way since he was writing under the holy power and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, a term like that gives us a reflection of the attitude of God toward those that are saved, the attitude of God toward those that he has redeemed, "Beloved." The Father himself comes and speaks to us through the word and addresses us as beloved. We're children of God. He loves us. Beloved, God says. He says, "Beloved, we are God's children now," now look at the future part that comes in, "and what we will be," see the future aspect of it again, "what we will be has not yet appeared." We don't have it yet. It hasn't been made known to us in experience. We don't possess it yet. We have this wonderful possession of being the children of God, but there are other aspects of our salvation that we have not yet entered into. What will that be? What could possibly be better than being a Christian now? Oh, by comparison, it's, you know, the glory we have now will be dwarfed and overshadowed by the glory to come. Verse 2, he says, "but we know that when he appears we will be like him, because we shall see him as he is."

What lies ahead in your future as a believer in Christ? It's far more magnificent than you can begin to imagine. It's probably far more magnificent than anything that you've thought about today. What's ahead for you if you are a true believer in Christ, something future that you haven't had yet is the ineffable experience of standing before Christ, seeing him in his resurrected glory, seeing him face-to-face, in person, and your faith has become sight, and you are overwhelmed by the majesty of being in his immediate presence, and having him look on you in the flesh with favor, with love, with forgiveness, acceptance, and welcoming you into the fullness of his kingdom. That's what lies ahead. And when that moment comes, when we see him face-to-face, Revelation talks about that

as well. We'll see his face. We'll see his face. Oh, have you ever really stopped and thought about that? The face of incarnate God, we are going to see him face-to-face. And the reality of that, the power of Christ will so immediately transform us that we will be made like him, that we will go from these frail bodies of decaying flesh, we will go from our besetting sins, our temptations, our fears, our sorrows, it will all be instantly transformed and we will be like Christ in his glorified state, made perfect, not made deity because the creature cannot become like the Creator, but somehow we are going to share in the perfect, resurrected glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we will be like him and he will share all that he has to share with us in that moment and we will be most at home then with him. All of the tribulations and trials and frailty and failures of this life forgotten and consumed in the inexpressible, unspeakable glory of Christ.

When he appears, we'll be like him, because we shall see him as he is. Beloved, that is still future. That's still ahead. That is the blessing of grace that still remains for us to experience. Sin will be banished. You will see God. Now look, step back from all of it and just think about what that tells you about the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father for everyone that he included in his plan of redemption. Think about how wonderful that's going to be, especially after the crushing sorrows of this life that we just kind of have to live with, and realize that this is what God has in store for his children, for those who are in his kingdom. Beloved, isn't he good? Isn't he kind to have prepared such a home for us? Isn't he full of mercy and grace and goodness and patience and love of the highest infinite order for the faltering sinful souls of you and me? Isn't it good to realize that that's what he's like? Jesus Christ is a benevolent King. He is a gracious King. And to be in his kingdom is to be more desired than anything else in the universe. If somebody could give you the worlds, give you all of the stars, give you the moon, give you everything you wanted on earth, any understanding, thinking person would say, "It's not worthy to be compared to the glory that will be revealed to us."

That's what Paul said in Romans 8. Let me turn there because I want to get this passage right. And again, again, and again, and again, you see it in another passage of Scripture what is present compared with what is to come. And in Romans 8:16, we read, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him," present tense, "that we may also be glorified with him," future tense." And then in light of all of these glories that we're considering here tonight, the striking, piercing, encouraging words of Paul in Romans 8:18 take on a fresh significance for us as we contemplate these things. Verse 18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." Present tense, future tense. Suffering now, but glory then. Tastes of grace now, the full banquet yet ahead. I ask you again, isn't he good? Isn't he wonderful? Isn't he merciful to us? Could we ever exhaust the declaration of the praise that is due to his name? He blesses us. He bestows privileged favor upon us and he does that for everyone who comes to him by faith.

My dear unsaved friend, Christ holds out the kingdom of God and calls you to enter in through him and to partake of all of these glorious blessings both now and in the future. It is why he lived, it's why he died, it's why he rose again, is to take away and to satisfy the

wrath of God against sinful souls so that they would be in a position to receive all of these blessings. Now why on earth, why in heaven, why in the name of hell itself would you walk away from that and say, "No, I want my own life today"? What a foolish squandering of spiritual opportunity given to you as the gospel is made known to you. How foolish, in addition, is it to stubbornly harden your heart against the things and the call to holiness, the call to righteousness and say, "I'm okay. I profess Christ and yeah, I'm living an ungodly life with no interest in the things of God, but I'm sure my soul is okay." How foolish and dark is thinking like that? It's the poor in spirit who are blessed. It's those who mourn over sin. The one who is hardened in sin, the one who is unrepentant in the face of known sin that's been brought to their attention by the Spirit of God, the one who hardens his heart, the one who hardens her heart in the face of that is not someone who should consider themselves to be a Christian. They should just say the truth and say, "I prefer my present sin over the blessings of the kingdom, and if that means I'm going to hell, I want to go to hell because I want my sin right now and I don't want anything to do with a message that would cause me to have to repent and forsake my sins and follow Christ. You know, that's not the Christianity I want or that I believe."

Scripture knows none of that and the hardened heart of someone who is living in unrepentant sin, every word important there, living in unrepentant sin, is a heart that has forfeited any ground of assurance. If you are unwilling to repent of sin in your life, if you are unwilling to be reconciled to people who seek forgiveness from you, and you are hardened in that, you have no reason or basis for assurance of salvation. No matter how long you've been a Christian, no matter if or when you were baptized, by whom you were baptized, none of that stuff matters because Scripture says, and Paul says in Romans, what matters is the keeping of the law, keeping it not for the sake of earning merit that God rewards with salvation, but the fact that God saves us in order to deliver us from sin and enable us to live a godly, righteous life. That's what salvation is. It's what it does. And if you reject the fruit of salvation, there's no reason to think you possess the root of salvation.

So, the blessing of godliness, the blessing of grace, third and final point this evening, the blessing of privilege. The blessing of privilege, and again, going back to Matthew 5 and remembering that we're just viewing these Beatitudes in an overview sense, we're seeing the structure of the passage as a unit, seeing what it teaches us, and then we'll consider the individual beatitudes in future weeks. By the way, well, let me just say that I can only commend it to you, I cannot commend to you highly enough the work of Martyn Lloyd-Jones on the Sermon on the Mount. That is a book that every Christian should read sometime in their life. It's a big, thick book, but it is filled with a brilliant exposition of this text that every Christian should know and read, and if you're going to be with us over the next couple of months and you're not reading any particular work right now, that is a book you should buy and read along as we go through this passage together in coming weeks. It will be an enormous blessing and a transforming blessing to your soul. Every Christian should read that book without exception, whether you think you like to read or not.

The blessing of privilege, number 3. Notice in these Beatitudes how in every single Beatitude Jesus uses the phrase, "they" or "theirs." Verse 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Verse 4, "those who mourn for they shall be comforted." Verse 5, "the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Verse 6, "those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Verse 7, "the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." Verse 8, "the pure in heart, for they shall see God. The peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Do you see the repetition there? They. Theirs. Theirs. They. On and on it goes.

Here's something for you to know. In the Greek language, there's a use of pronouns that is obviously expressing emphasis; there's a particular kind of pronoun that's used here, too, in each of these sentences. Every one of the pronouns in verses 3 through 10, "they, theirs," every one of them is emphatic by the pronoun that is used. The Greek intensive pronoun is used every time in those eight verses. And not only that, in all eight of those emphases, in all eight of those usages, I should say, the position in the sentence conveys an added emphasis as well. The pronoun is emphatic. The placement in the sentence is emphatic. It's as if Jesus stood up on a rock and emphasized and raised his voice and says, "theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They shall be comforted. They shall inherit the earth."

Why is that so important? Why did I stand up on my tiptoes and raise my voice to emphasize that as well? Not that Jesus did that, but why is that so important? Beloved, the emphasis of these pronouns is making a contrast. Jesus is contrasting those who are in the kingdom with those who are not. The sense of this entire passage is this: the blessing which Christ is describing in the Beatitudes, in these eight Beatitudes, the privileged recipient of divine favor, this blessing is theirs and theirs alone. Only those who are in poor in spirit belong to the kingdom of heaven. Only those who mourn over their sin will be comforted. Only the meek will inherit the earth. And only those who are poor in spirit and mourn and meek and on and on it goes. This blessing is theirs and theirs alone. The Beatitudes shout this emphasis. I couldn't begin to over-stress this point. Those who have been born again are undeservedly and certainly and emphatically blessed. Period. Full stop. But as you take the Beatitudes in the fullness of their structure and meaning and grammar and all of that, it's making such a sobering contrast by comparison, beloved. What it means is that those without this character, they're not in the kingdom. They will not be comforted. They will not see God. They will not be glorified. They are not in the realm of his love. They will not be called sons of God. They will not receive mercy.

Oh, oh, beloved, if we could only see with our understanding the vast divergent paths of which Jesus speaks in the Sermon on the Mount, that alone would stagger us and permanently transform our view of spiritual life and our desire to be close to Christ and to cultivate our assurance and never violate our conscience with things that displease him. I could see someone saying, "Well, you know, I can't read the Greek for myself. How do I...am I just supposed to take your word for it?" No, don't take my word for it. Don't just take my word for it. Everything I've told you is true about the text, but just keep reading in the Sermon and see the contrast that Jesus makes between those who are in the

kingdom and those who are outside the kingdom at the end of the Sermon. In the same Sermon on the Mount, he's making this very contrast that is pointed out by the grammar of the Beatitudes.

I pointed it out earlier, chapter 7, verse 13, notice the contrasts here. "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." This is an undeniable, direct contrast that there are comparatively few that will enter the kingdom and there are many who will walk the broad road of destruction. They are not in the kingdom. Theirs is not the kingdom. They will not receive mercy. They will not see God. Jesus states this so plainly and as I've said over the years, as I've taught from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is not bluffing, beloved. If I could get anything through the hearts of those who hear this message, anywhere at any time, it would be this point, when Jesus makes this contrast, when Jesus warns about the failure to respond to his word in the Sermon on the Mount, he's not bluffing. He's not saying things that he does not intend to enforce. He means it. He will do what he said he would do, otherwise he would be a liar and violate the very nature of God. He means what he says. Theirs and theirs alone is the kingdom of heaven.

Look at verses 24 to 27. The contrast. "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock." Picture of those who are in the kingdom, those who have been born again, those who have repented at the sound of the preaching of the gospel. Verse 25 and 27, by contrast, "everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and its fall was great." Great. Great. Great. Great. It echoes. The magnitude of judgment and of the fall of a soul that does not respond to Christ, it just echoes in the power of the language of the text of how infinite and how enduring are the consequences of the foolishness of not responding to Christ while you have opportunity presented to you.

Jesus says the blessing of security, the blessing of love, the blessing of grace, the blessing of privilege, it's only for those in the kingdom. Everyone else is outside and their house is going to fall. And so, the admonition that he gives is that while you have breath, take the opportunity that may be passing, take the opportunity to seek the kingdom and enter the kingdom through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ while you can. And if you don't, it's on you. It's no failure of God. Every fullness of blessing was promised to you and you were invited freely to come by one who will not withdraw his promise and yet people harden their hearts and walk away. Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through me."

And so, my friend, I ask you, are you in the kingdom or out? In Christ you are immeasurably blessed with more blessing to come. If you're in Christ this evening, rejoice and be filled with hope overflowing. Are you outside the kingdom? Is your house built on sand? Have you played the part of a hypocrite with no real participation in the

spiritual life of Christ and you're without him? Oh, my. Oh, my. People like you face utter and irreversible doom. My dear friend, don't stay there. Come to Christ. He will not cast you out. Come to Christ. He will give you this eternal life. Come to Christ. He will raise you up on the last day.

Let's pray together.

Our gracious Lord, we acknowledge that you are a gracious King. You have blessed us, and you will bless us still more in the future. Show your favor and keep your promise to us whom you have saved and imparted new life to. Father, still more, show your favor even to those in this room who are presently outside your kingdom. Have they falsely professed Christ, perhaps sincerely but without true conversion? Show mercy to them, Father. The consequences are too great, and here in this room with people we know and love by name, Father, it's just unthinkable that they would not share in this mercy of which we've spoken here today. Be gracious to them. Grant them grace that they may come to thee. Draw them by whatever influence is necessary to bring upon their heart. If it's a gracious influence of love and kindness, let the kindness of God lead them to repentance. If it's some form of adversity or externally or agitation of soul internally, Father, that is necessary to wake them up and to stir them to seek, Father, bring that force to bear upon their souls as well. Whatever it takes, Father, in your wisdom, love and omniscience, do what is necessary that none in this room, none under the sound of my voice would be found outside of the kingdom and hearing those dreadful words, "Depart from me for I never knew you." Father, spare us. Spare us that sorrow. Spare the sorrow to those that we love of our own flesh and blood. Spare it, Father, and show the grace that drips from this wonderful Sermon in the lips of our Lord Jesus. For the sake of souls and for the sake of the blessed name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

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