

The Meaning of Christ's Eight Blessings

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For thousands of years the Father caused it to be prophesied that His Son would come to the earth as a human, and in part, introduce Yehovah as the Father—we know that. But also, Christ came to tell us and show us how we ought to live. How we should live a righteous, Godly life and as we know, He lived a perfect life. So, given that understanding that He came in part to show us how to live, you would think His first sermon would have special importance. That it would set the tone for His ministry, as to how the Father wants His children to live.

His first recorded sermon began with what is commonly called the Beatitudes. But it's interesting that the words *beatitudo* or *beatitudes* is not found in the Bible. You can do a little search and ask the question, "What does the word beatitudo or beatitudes mean?" The Encyclopedia Britannica—although there are other sources obviously—note that the word *beatitudo* is a name from two Latin words; *beati* and *sunt*. Translated into English those Latin words mean "blessed are". That comes from the Latin Vulgate translation that has been in use now for a couple thousand years; not quite 2000 years. But the word Beatitudo is purely a Catholic term.

The plural, *beatitudes* generally refer in the world to Christ's blessings at the beginning of the sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 or the sermon on the plain in Luke 6. Basically, they are statements of blessedness. Rather than use the Catholic term, *beatitudes*, it's probably more important to call them "The Eight Blessings". There is disagreement among scholars as to whether Matthew 5 and Luke 8 refer to the same event or whether they refer to two separate events. The reason for that is, in Matthew 5 Christ is on a mountain talking to the disciples, in Matthew 5. In Luke 6 He is on a plain talking to the disciples and the multitudes. So, there is a degree of disagreement among scholars as to whether it's the same event or different events.

In Matthew there are eight blessings listed, but no woes. In Luke there are four blessings and four woes, so there are some differences. However, both accounts show that Christ began His first recorded message with these blessings. Therefore, I think it is logical to conclude that these blessings must be very important for Him to begin His first recorded sermon with them. Whether it was on the plain, on the mountain or whether it was the same event or separate events, it's obviously the first recorded sermon in Luke and Matthew so it must be important.

The fact is, today more than ever, as God's people we need to focus on first principles, first things, the most important things. What could be more important than the opening remarks of Jesus Christ in His first recorded sermon. What we are going to do today is explore these the meaning of these eight blessings—this is the title of the sermon:

The Meaning of Christ's Eight Blessings

We are going to have eight points—eight blessings. The fact is, all of Luke’s blessings are found in Matthew 5 so we’re going to concentrate on Matthew 5.

It’s important to note that each blessing comes in two parts. The first is a description of who is to be blessed. Then following that there is a description of how they are to be blessed—the “who” and the “how” —in each of those eight blessings. We’ll begin in Matthew 5:1.

Matthew 5:1 *And seeing the multitudes, he [Jesus Christ] went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:*

2) And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying ... (KJV)

Some have also called these eight blessings, “The Eight Teachings”, based right here on that scripture where He taught them. So, either way, we are going to cover the eight teachings or eight blessings. The first one is:

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, verse 3.

Who is to be blessed? The *poor in spirit*. How are they blessed? It tells us.

3) ... for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (KJV)

So, we need to define our terms here. Let’s first define what *poor in spirit* means; what is it referring to? The Greek word for *poor* is Strong’s #4434. It has an interesting literal meaning. It means to “to crouch as a beggar or a pauper”. Somebody who is very low and who is begging for something. That’s the Greek word for *poor*. The Greek word for *spirit* we are familiar with, that’s Strong’s #4151, it’s the word *pneuma* and it can mean “breath” or “breeze”; but also, in this context, a more appropriate definition which is one of this word’s definitions, can mean “mental disposition” or “mind; “poor of mind”. Therefore, *poor in spirit* is not referring to the financially poor. That is not the meaning of this verse. Remember, in Matthew 26:11 Christ said “You will always have the poor with you”. You can just use that as a reference. Christ said “Look, you are always going to have the poor— that’s just a fact”. But here, Christ adds a spiritual dimension to the word *poor*.

The Berkley Translation says: *They who sense spiritual poverty.*

The Good Speed Translation says: *Those who feel their spiritual need.*

The Amplified Bible says: *The poor in spirit; those devoid of spiritual arrogance.*

That’s interesting. Those *devoid of spiritual arrogance*, those who regard themselves as insignificant—spiritually insignificant.

What Christ is saying is, that those are blessed who realize that, apart from the Father and the Son, they are spiritually bankrupt. They realize their spiritual need and as a result, they are spiritually humble; the *poor in spirit* are spiritually humble.

I think by now we should all realize that we are nothing apart from the Father and Son. We see that in Romans 8:5. These are very basic principles, very basic scriptures, but the fact is Christ brought these eight blessings for a purpose and for a reason. As we get closer to the end, they become increasingly important.

Romans 8:5 *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit [mind] the things of the Spirit. (KJV)*

Pay attention to spiritual matters.

6) For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (KJV)

That is where Pacific got its name—Peace. To be spiritually minded is *life and peace*.

7) because the carnal mind is enmity [the enemy of or against] against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

8) So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (KJV)

The spiritually humble realize this. The spiritually meek realize this. Apart from God and Christ—"I can't please the Father. I am of no use to the Father"—our conduct should be the opposite of the typical carnal behavior that we see today. It's sad to say that this typical carnal behavior can be witnessed both outside the church and inside the church—sad to say. In Psalm 39:5, David writes a synopsis of carnal behavior that is very descriptive and very eloquent at the same time. Notice David's humility here

Psalm 39:5 *Behold, thou [referring to Yehovah] hast made my days as a handbreadth [a short distance]; and mine age is as nothing before thee: (KJV)*

The age of a human being compared to eternity is nothing; David realized that. Notice what he says now.

5 continued) ... verily [notice what he says about the human mind] every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.

6) Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: (KJV)

Pride and vanity are something we have to daily watch out for in our character. Pride and vanity are characteristics that we strive to come out of. We must do so every minute of every day because our human nature rears its ugly head and Satan is there to provoke at every opportunity. Reading here in the first "teaching", the fact is, those who are *poor in spirit* find favor with God. I think all of us want to find favor with the Almighty. Let's look at Isaiah 66:1. This scripture reminds me of when I started searching for the

truth in College. I wanted to know what was true and what was not. I studied all kinds of books on the Supreme Being, the origin of the universe, various religions. But the Bible is the only book in existence that says, “the Supreme Being is talking.” The Supreme Being is speaking. The other books all talk about what some prophet or some wise man thinks about life or thinks about the Supreme Being but the Bible is the only one that quotes the Supreme Being and here is an example.

Isaiah 66:1 *Thus saith the LORD [the Almighty, the Most-High], The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?*

2) *For all those things hath mine hand made [that sets things into perspective], and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man [“man” is in italics, this individual, this human being] will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word. (KJV)*

Just what Christ was saying—someone *poor of spirit*. So, you see this first blessing is for those who are little in their own eyes. We know how we compare to God Almighty. We are just insignificant in comparison to God Almighty. That obviously leads to humility. Notice as we go through these eight blessings how often “humility” is at the core of each and every one.

The second blessing or teaching:

2. Blessed are they that mourn.

Let’s go back to Matthew 5:4. Verse 4 tells us the “who”:

4) Blessed are they that mourn: (KJV)

How are those that mourn, blessed?

4 continued) ... for they shall be comforted. (KJV)

We are promised that when we mourn, there is comfort available. The Greek word for *mourn* simply means “to grieve” or “sorrow”. I think we understand that meaning. In this life, we mourn for the death of loved ones. Over the last year, families have lost sons, wives have lost husbands, and we mourn over that. Increasingly we also mourn for the state of the society that we are living in. The daily evil we see. We mourn for that—for abortion and the horrible violence, the hatred of what is good and right. The turning of white into black and black into white and good to evil and evil to good. The diminishing of the knowledge of and the reverence for God Almighty. We see that and we mourn for that. The fact is, in the future, everything is going to be different and we look forward to that day.

Isaiah 61:1 is a time yet in the future, but we are going to bring this to the present day before we’re done in this point.

Isaiah 61:1 *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me [moving him to write]; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek [that's the first blessing]; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted [you think the brokenhearted might mourn? Of course], to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; (KJV)*

Of course, all of us were bound by sin prior to being called.

2) To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; [now notice this] to comfort all that mourn; (KJV)

There is a time when those who mourn will be comforted.

3) To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes ... (KJV)

What does that refer to? Mourning in those days was done by throwing ashes up over your head and on your face and down your shoulders—that was a sign of mourning. So, we are told that there will come a time where beauty will replace ashes over somebody's body.

3 continued) ... the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; [when we mourn, we feel heavy, burdened down] that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. (KJV)

It helps us to be focused on the end result of our lives when we are in a state of mourning and we are grieving; to look forward to the time when all mourning will stop and cease. Christ proclaimed that blessed are those who mourn—what was He ultimately referring to? 1 Thessalonians 4:16 is what we all wait for. This is what we all yearn for. This is what we can't wait for, for this time to happen.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

17) Then we which are alive [thinking that it would happen in his lifetime which he later understood wouldn't be the case] and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (KJV)

Verse 18 is the key.

18) Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (KJV)

Those who mourn will be comforted and the greatest comfort is that our mourning will cease when this incredible blessing comes to pass, when we are made spirit and we will be eternally with the Father and His Son. That is off into the future; what about now? What about mourning now—how can we be comforted in our time of grief now? Christ made this promise.

The Greek word for *comforted* is Strong's #3870. You might just remember that word because there is another word related to it, close by. It's the Greek word Parakaleo and it means 'to call near' or 'to invite to console'. That's the Greek word for *comforted* used here in Matthew 5. Remember the night Christ was betrayed? We have the record of that in John 14, 15 and 16. Once in each of those chapters, Christ used the word *Comforter*. "The Comforter will come." That is Strong's #3875, it's related to #3870. Parakaleo was #3870, #3875 is Parakletos and that means "a consoler" or "a comforter".

The fact is, the Father and the Son, as Christ said the night He was betrayed:

"Remember. We are going to come and dwell in you. We will make Our abode in you."

Obviously, that is through the Holy Spirit and the fact is that this indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the greatest comfort a human being can have. When the Father and the Son are dwelling in us and we go through a trial or a loss and we have them, literally dwelling in us through their Spirit, how great a comfort is that? What could we ask for, greater than that? When Christ said "those who mourn will be comforted", in part He was referring to the fact that He and His Father will dwell with us, once we yield to them and repent and are baptized and have hands laid on us. We can be comforted by their very Spirit in us.

The third blessing or teaching involves the meek. Matthew 5:5.

3. Blessed are the meek.

Matthew 5:5 *Blessed are the meek:* (KJV)

How are they blessed?

5 continued) ... for they shall inherit the earth. (KJV)

That is the blessing of the meek. The *meek* in the Greek is Strong's #4239 and it simply means, in addition to "meek, mild" or "humble". Of course, this is related to the first blessing of those *poor in spirit*; they are tied together. Realizing one's spiritual need, meaning being *poor in spirit*, leads to humility and it leads to meekness. They go hand in hand; they are tied together. In Psalm 37:9 David is writing about this subject and in fact, he uses some of the same words that Jesus Christ used. Obviously, Christ knew that.

Psalm 37:9 *For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD [those who are patient], they shall inherit the earth.
10) For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: (KJV)*

As we know, the Bible tells us that there is a time when the wicked will cease to exist. It will be as though they never were.

*10 continued) ... yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place [meaning the place that the wicked once occupied], and it shall not be.
11) But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. (KJV)*

That's precisely why Pacific has the name Pacific. Peace being a fruit of the Spirit which we all strive for. But David says that the *meek* are going to inherit the earth. Let's investigate that by going to Isaiah 29 and looking at verse 18. Talking about a time yet future.

Isaiah 29:18 *And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book ... (KJV)*

Obviously, the book is not speaking, meaning those who have been made deaf not being able to understand the book, will now have their ears opened, their minds opened, to understand what is in God's Word.

18 continued) ... and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. (KJV)

Christ talked many times about the blind leading the blind and that the religious leaders of the day were blind fools and so on and so forth. There is coming a day when the eyes of the blind will see out of obscurity and darkness.

19) The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor ...

[the Hebrew can also mean the "needy", which was what Christ was talking about in the first blessing—the *poor in spirit*]

.... among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. (KJV)

Psalm 149:1 is a song of praise. The meek are going to be blessed.

Psalm 149:1 *Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. (KJV)*

Verse 4, out of the NIV.

4) For the Lord takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with victory. (NIV)

That is a mouthful because the opposite would be true also. If He crowns the humble with salvation, would he put a crown on the head of somebody who was arrogant, haughty, elevated the self, looked down on others and judged them? That's not what this implies at all. The humble are the ones who are going to have a crown placed on their head. The day is coming when the meek and humble will be blessed by inheriting the earth. Those of us who can develop humility—it's something we should strive for every day—we will be inheriting the earth in a way that we will be helping our elder Brother and our Father, rule the earth, as eternal spirit beings. They are to serve and to help; not to rule with a rod of iron and walk around with a swagger stick, barking orders at people to elevate the self, but rather to help all of mankind in the millennium. But notice the thread through all of this; *meekness* and *humility* are the characteristics that our Father is looking for. We need to keep that in mind.

The fourth teaching or blessing:

4. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Matthew 5:6 *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:* (KJV)

How are they going to be blessed?

6 continued) ... for they shall be filled. (KJV)

The Greek word for *filled* can also mean they “will be satisfied”. We have to ask the question, how are those who are *hungering and thirsting* going to be satisfied? Let's go to Matthew 6, same message, same sermon, verse 33.

Matthew 6:33 *But seek ye first ...* (KJV)

When I came into the church, this first phrase was often stopped there and then came a launch into some other subject about the Kingdom of God. But notice the last part.

33 continued) ... the kingdom of God, [the second thing] and his righteousness; (KJV)

To be in the Kingdom of God we have to have His righteousness and be righteous in God's eyes. If we do that:

33 continued) ... and all these things shall be added unto you. (KJV)

We know that over the years, the law defines righteousness. The Law defines righteous behavior. We won't turn here, but Psalm 119:172 tells us that—*all Your commandments are righteousness*. Think with me now; if all the commandments define the righteousness of God Almighty, then, our keeping of those commandments is the key to

our attaining the righteousness of the Father. If His commandments are righteous, we want to be like Him. If we follow in Christ's footsteps, and He perfectly kept the commandments, if we keep those commandments then we begin to attain the righteousness of the Father. Matthew 22: 35 is a very familiar scripture. We are talking about First Principles—hungering and thirsting for righteousness, which is the keeping of God's law and which reflects God's character.

Matthew 22:35 *Then one of them, a lawyer ... (NKJV)*

Today, when we say lawyer, we all have an image in our minds of someone who is maybe—a shyster or shark or something similar. That is not to say there are not good lawyers around, but that's not what the term meant. In those days, a "lawyer" meant someone who was an expert of the Mosaic Law.

*35 continued) ... asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying,
36) Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" (NKJV)*

He was trying to trip Christ up.

*37) Jesus said to him, You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, and with all your mind.
38) This is the first and great commandment. (NKJV)*

Now turn to John 5:24 where Christ is also speaking, to see a thread that we want to develop. We are going to come back to Matthew in just a second.

John 5:34 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my word, and believeth on him that sent me [Who could that be but the Father], hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; [notice the last part] but is passed from death unto life. (KJV)*

This tells us that we can pass, in this life while we're still alive as a human, from death unto life. Remember this phrase, *passing from death unto life*. We do so by understanding Who the Father is and believing what He says. When we love our Father with all our being, we pass from death to life. We will be filled; we will be satisfied. How? By the Spirit of God Almighty, not only in the Kingdom but now in this life by the Spirit of the Father dwelling inside us. Now back to Matthew 22:39 out of the New Living Translation. This lawyer, this expert in the law, was talking to Christ.

Matthew 22:39 *A second [commandment] is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself.
40) The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments." (NLT)*

Now we reference John 5:24 with the phrase, *pass from death to life*, so now go to 1 John 3:14 and notice the same phrase. *Passing from death to life* was referring to the

first great commandment that Christ mentioned in John 5:24. In 1 John 3:14 we see the same phrase but now it's applied to the second great commandment.

1 John 3:14 *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. (KJV)*

We see in John 5 and 1 John 3, that we have passed, as human beings, from death to life when we keep these two great commandments which define righteousness and which define the very nature and character of God. Jesus Christ kept them perfectly, He was the one Who was talking to this expert in the law. Going back to Matthew 5, it said *hungering and thirsting after righteousness*. What about the "hungering and thirsting" part? The Greek for *hunger* means "to crave" or "to be famished". All of us have been in situations in our lives where we have been so hungry. It could be toward the end of a fast or just getting so hungry that you will move mountains to eat something, or to drink something. You just get to the point where you will do whatever it takes to satisfy that hunger. We will literally move mountains to satisfy this want. The point here in this fourth blessing, is that we must seek righteousness with that same sense of urgency as we do when we are extremely hungry. If we do that, we will be filled and we will be satisfied.

Now let's look at the fifth teaching or the fifth blessing in Matthew 5:7. Who is to be blessed?

5. Blessed are the merciful.

Matthew 5:7 *Blessed are the merciful: (KJV)*

How are they blessed?

7 continued) ... for they shall obtain mercy. (KJV)

This is open ended; it doesn't say now and it doesn't say in the future. They will obtain mercy. The Greek word for *mercy* can also mean, "to have compassion or pity on". In Psalm 18:25 we see the very first part of this verse. It is a principle that all of us must make a part of our lives. In the very first part of the verse is a principle that we have to remember every minute of every day. When we have a tendency to maybe lash out or bark at somebody, get even or get back, remember Psalm 18:25.

Psalm 18:25 *With the merciful, you [he's referring to Yehovah] will show yourself merciful. (NKJV)*

It is a very clear principle. To the degree we show mercy, we receive mercy. If we want to receive mercy, we better show mercy to other people. We won't go there but in Luke 6:36, in Christ's sermon on the plain and the parallel verses to Matthew 5, Christ said, "

"Be you therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful".

If we want to receive mercy, we must give mercy. We know from Matthew 23 that mercy is one of the weightier matters of the law. *Justice, mercy* and *faith* are the weightier matters of the law. The fact is we can be shown mercy by our Father in this physical life, every minute of every day when He forgives our sins. When we get down on our knees and say, “Father, how could I have said that or how could I have thought that or how could I have done that” and we ask for forgiveness, we receive it now in this life. Of course, ultimately—the ultimate state of forgiveness is to have all of our sins forgiven to the point that we will attain eternal life. We will have salvation.

So, the point is, if the Father can show such mercy to us and shower us with such mercy, and we want to be like the Father, should we not show mercy to others? How dare we not show mercy to others and then turn around and beg God to show us mercy. How does that work? If we show mercy to others, then we reap mercy to ourselves unto salvation. The fact is, mercy and humility—there comes this word humility again—go hand in hand.

Micah 6:8 is a very familiar scripture, one we all know by heart. Whenever we read a scripture that says, this is what God wants you to do or this is what God requires from you, our antenna should go up, our ears should prick up.

Micah 6:8 *He [Yehovah] hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (KJV)*

Here we see *mercy* and *walking humbly with your God* in the same verse. Mercy requires humility. Think about that. If we love our neighbor as ourselves and we love our church brothers and sisters as much as we love ourselves, or we love our next door neighbor as much as we love ourselves, do you think it might be easier to show them mercy if we love them as much as we love ourselves? If we look down on our neighbor and we judge our neighbor, or our church brother or sister and we condemn them, look down our nose at them in arrogance, you think it might be more difficult to show them mercy? Well, of course. We see here as we go through this, closing out the fifth one, we see how humility is a constant thread and a constant characteristic of those who are to be blessed.

Now we come to the sixth one.

6. The pure in heart.

Who are to be blessed?

Matthew 5:8 *Blessed are the pure in heart: (KJV)*

How are they to be blessed?

8 continued) ... for they shall see God. (KJV)

Think about that concept for a minute. Those who are *pure*—the Greek word for *pure* means “pure”, it can mean “clean”, it can mean “clear”—these are going to see God. What a concept that is. If we can develop a pure heart, some day we will sit in the presence of God Almighty and we will see Him as He is, we will be around His throne and, as strange as that sounds today, God Almighty will talk to us and engage us in a conversation. To be in that position—what a blessing. Psalm 24:1 out of the New Living Translation puts everything into perspective of seeing God as a result of being *pure in heart*. Notice the perspective.

Psalm 24:1 *The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him. (NLT)*

We are just blessed to be here—to even read our Father’s Word.

2) For he laid the earth's foundation on the seas and built it on the ocean depths. (NLT)

This is a question now.

3) Who may climb the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? (NLT)

Who could approach the throne of God Almighty? Verse 4 gives us the answer.

4) Only those whose hands and hearts are pure, who do not worship idols and never tell lies. (NLT)

We see that the only way we can see God, we can be in His presence, we can be at His throne, is to have a pure, clean, clear heart. The problem we have as human beings is that our human nature tells us that we can get away with a certain amount of sin and God will wink at our sins. Or God will turn His head and won't notice or He will cut us some slack because of who we are or how much He loves us. We can kid ourselves. The kidding stops with Psalm 10:10.

Psalm 10:10 *So he [referring to the sinner] crouches, he lies low, That the helpless may fall by his strength.*

11) He has said in his heart, God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see.” (NKJV)

He'll never see my sins.

12) Arise, O LORD! O God, lift up Your hand! Do not forget the humble. (NKJV)

There's that word again. *Don't forget the humble.*

13) Why do the wicked renounce God? He has said in his heart, You will not require an account.” (NKJV)

If there is a characteristic or categorization of a mindset today it is that nobody has to give account for anything they do anymore. I don't care if it's CEO's or Corporations or little kids or teenagers; they are not responsible, somebody else is responsible, somebody else made me do it, it's somebody else's fault.

14) But You [Yehovah] have seen [nothing gets past God Almighty], for You observe trouble and grief, To repay it by Your hand. The helpless commits himself to You [the humble realize they are helpless; without the Father and the Son, we have no hope]; You are the helper of the fatherless. (NKJV)

The fact is, nothing can be hidden from our Father—nothing. As we think, we are. As we do, we are. And God sees it all; our Father sees everything. He knows and He sees. That's why David said—we won't turn there, in Psalm 51:

“create in me a clean heart, oh God, and renew a right spirit in me”.

He had allowed his heart to become polluted and it was anything but clean. The New Testament continues in that same understanding. In 1 Timothy 1:5. Paul is talking to young Timothy, giving him instruction about the commandments of God and the purpose of the commandments.

1 Timothy 1:5 Now the purpose of the commandment is love [what motivates that?] from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith ... (NKJV)

Love must be motivated by a pure heart; in other words, we don't show love to somebody to get something in return. We show love because we truly love that individual and want what is best for them. Love or doing something kind or good to somebody should not be motivated because we want to get something back for ourselves.

I think everybody knows the name Abigail Van Buren—Dear Abby—she's an American writer and a syndicated newspaper columnist and has an advice column. She said something that was profound.

The best index of a person's character is how he treats people who can't do him any good.

The best judge of character is how we treat somebody who can't do anything for us. What Paul is telling Timothy here is that love has to come from a pure heart—to give, not to get. John is often called the Apostle of love or the disciple of love. Here he talking about being pure in heart and what the reward is.

1 John 3:1 *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: (KJV)*

That is a mouthful. To be called to be sons of God Almighty.

1 continued) ... therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. (KJV)

Didn't know the Father.

2) Beloved, now are we the sons of God [the Father], and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him [God the Father]; for we shall see him as he is. (KJV)

Just what Christ said, as the blessing for the pure in heart.

3) And every man that hath this hope in him [what does he do?] purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (KJV)

As we know, purifying is not a onetime thing. Unlike what the Protestants believe, once you just declare that you believe in Jesus Christ then everything is cool and you can go forward and do whatever you want. Purifying is a lifelong process. First, we have to see the Father as He really is and that takes a very long time. We have been blessed in the last few years, as the Father has opened up the minds of so many to Who He really is; have a deeper understanding of Who He really is and Who His Son really is and the relationship between the two of Them. So purifying is a process and we first have to understand Who the Father really is and then work with all our might to be like Him and like His Son. The Father and the Son share the same nature and the Son came to this earth to walk in such a way—a perfect way—that we have an example to follow. So in order to purify ourselves in this lifelong process, we have to see the Father accurately. We have to work with all our might to be like Him and His Son. Then over time, becoming more and more pure of heart, eliminating the impurities in our heart and then at the end of the day, we will actually see God face to face. What a blessing. Just to sit and look at God and be in His presence, I can only imagine what that will be like. My guess is there will be such an overwhelming feeling of love that you would just almost melt.

Now to the seventh blessing, it involves peacemakers. This kind of hits home with the Pacific Church of God.

7. Blessed are the peacemakers.

Matthew 5:9 *Blessed are the peacemakers; (KJV)*

How are they to be blessed?

9 continued) ... for they shall be called the children of God. (KJV)

In James 3:18 we see how this happens. Let's see how we can become peacemakers. We don't wave a magic wand and have ourselves become peacemakers. We're going to see that it takes work and it takes effort. James said something profound here. This out of the King James and then another quote from a different translation to add a little to it.

James 3:18 *And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. (KJV)*

In other words, the motivation of the fruit of righteousness that we exhibit—the fruits of God's Holy Spirit, the fruits of obeying His law—is sown in peace. Meaning the motivation is peace; not to cause turmoil and trouble. That takes work and effort.

The New Living Translation says:

James 3:18 *And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of goodness. (NLT)*

Seeking peace, pursuing peace, takes effort and commitment. That has to be our motivation. Hebrews 12:14. tells us directly; it's very clear. Talking about peace just doesn't come upon us, we have to work at it.

Hebrews 12:14 *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: (NKJV)*

No one will see God Almighty, no one will see His Son face to face, spirit being to spirit being, without pursuing peace. Hebrews said to pursue peace. Let's see what 1 Peter 3:11 says.

1 Peter 3:11 *Let him turn away from evil and do good; [yes, all of us need to do that] Let him seek peace and pursue it. (NKJV)*

Seeking and pursuing; that takes work, that takes effort, that takes commitment. We are going to see it also takes humility, to seek peace and pursue it. It takes humility. A humble person can find peace. An arrogant person will find nothing but trouble, division and strife. In Philippians 2:3 Paul is telling that to the church at Philippi and to us today.

Philippians 2:3 *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition [that's the opposite of humility] or conceit [selfish ambition and conceit come inward to the self.], but in lowliness of mind [that goes back to the first blessing, poor in spirit] let each esteem others better than himself. (NKJV)*

Do you think it might be easier to make peace with another individual if we esteem them better than we esteem ourselves? Of course. If we look down on somebody or we think they are beneath us and we don't esteem them better than ourselves, it's easy not to care and not want to make peace. The greater church of God needs peacemakers now more than ever before. Our Father is testing us and watching us to see who are peacemakers, versus who condemn those who fight; those who ridicule, those who judge, those who look down their noses at other people or other groups. Our father is watching us to see. Here's the big question in this seventh point about being peacemakers; big question. In the Kingdom of God, will there be any who are not peacemakers? Will God allow somebody to slip in the back door who loves to fight, loves to argue, loves to put other people down, loves to double up the fist and shake it at somebody, condemn people, judge people, look down at other people?

When you think of it and frame it in those terms, people who don't want peace, who refuse to make peace, are not going to be in the Kingdom of God. God is not going to give somebody eternal life who wants to fight all the time and oppose and argue and want their own way. This is why we are named Pacific. We want to associate; we want to fellowship with likeminded people who are peacemakers. Because, as we have seen here, peacemakers truly are the children of God. We want to be that.

The eighth blessing.

8. Those are persecuted because of righteousness.

Look at Matthew 5:10 out of the NIV. This is restated in verse 10 and verse 11 and 12 in a more detailed form.

Who is to be blessed?

Matthew 5:10 *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness ... (NIV)*

How are they to be blessed?

10 continued) ... for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (NIV)

Verse 11, it's restated again.

11) Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

12) Rejoice and be glad ... (NIV)

How are they blessed again, those who are persecuted for righteousness?

12) ... because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (NIV)

When I came into the church, the implication was that once you're baptized, it's like jumping on a greased slide and you just slide into the Kingdom with no problems because bad things don't happen to good people. A lot of us bought into that. In 1 Peter 2:19 we see what the reality is. This is a reality check, just in case we had any doubts.

1 Peter 2:19 *For God is pleased with you, when, conscious of his will, you patiently endure unfair treatment.*

20) *Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you.*

21) *For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps. (NLT)*

Being persecuted for doing what is right; persecuted for obeying God Almighty. Let's look at Paul's example in Acts 14:19. Paul had just been stoned; none of us has been stoned. Paul had been stoned and left for dead, but he wasn't. The Father intervened; Christ intervened. After being stoned, notice what is said about Paul in Acts 14:22

Acts 14:22 *Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith [this is what Paul was doing], and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. (KJV)*

Sometimes we forget that. When trouble comes, we think that's an anomaly, that it's bad—no, it's normal. During the hay day of the World Wide Church of God, the church was basically like the eye of a hurricane. There was very little persecution in those years. That is not the norm and we will find that out firsthand as time goes on. Sadly, there is going to come a time when—let's see what that time is in John 16:1. The night Christ died, He is issuing a warning for us today, referring what he had said previously.

John 16:1 *All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. (NIV)*

This must be very important. "I've said all this because I don't want you to go astray".

2) *They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. (NIV)*

He said the time is coming. Notice how deceived the brethren are going to become in the future. They are so deceived that they will think they serve God by killing those who righteously obey God. Talk about deception. The flipside of that is, should we seek vengeance when we are persecuted? Should we fight back when people say false things about us? I will publicly admit, there are times in the past when I have fought back. If someone came at me or slandered me or said things that were untrue, rather than take it, turn the other cheek and walk away, I did not do that. I got down in the mud and started fighting back and shame on me for doing that. What did Christ say in the

same sermon—the sermon on the Mount? Matthew 5, and in verse 43. How should we react to persecution, slander, lies and falsehoods?

Matthew 5:43 *You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy.*

44) *But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!*

45) *In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. (NLT)*

It takes humility to love those who have wronged or persecuted us and to pray for them and ask God's blessing upon them. It takes the second great commandment—"love your neighbor as yourself". We are going to learn, if we haven't already, to rejoice when persecution comes. Why? Because we are following in the footsteps of our older Brother, the very Son of God. We are told here that the reward is great in heaven for those who do so.

Let's close now. We understand that Christ came to introduce a spiritual dimension to His Father's law. These eight statements of blessings or eight teachings, often called the Beatitudes in the world, introduced Christ's first sermon and introduced His ministry and they show us two things. If you take all eight together, they show two things.

1. What we must become to enter the Kingdom of God.

This is what we must become to enter the Kingdom of God and as I said earlier, what is the thread that runs through all eight? Humility. Humility is a constant thread. We will not be in the Kingdom of God if we do not develop true humility.

2. Our reward for following Christ and His Words. What are they?

We will be comforted
We will inherit the earth,
We will be filled and satisfied,
We will obtain mercy,
We will see God,
We shall be called the children of God.
Great is our reward in heaven.
The Kingdom of heaven will be ours.

Think about this. Christ started His ministry with all eight of these blessings, these teachings of who is blessed and how they are blessed. they set the stage for everything that Christ taught after that point. These First Principles show us to how we should live and the reward for doing so. As we move forward from today, as the world is getting crazier by the day, let's focus on these very important First Principles. Let's not get distracted by things that are not important. Let's pay attention to these very important First Principles and rejoice in the blessings that flow as a result of obeying them.