

CHAPTER FIVE - PART TWO

THE BEATITUDES

The Sermon on the Mount was not given as the way of [spirit] salvation for the unsaved, but as the way of [soul] salvation for the saved. The Beatitudes define the characteristics of an overcomer, the qualifications needed for every believer to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Just prior to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, John the Baptist had been preaching, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" He gave instructions on the first qualification needed for the Jews to enter the kingdom. Afterwards, Jesus added to this prerequisite all the requirements necessary to enter the kingdom of heaven in His sermon on the mount.

In **Matthew 3:11, 12**, John the Baptist says,

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Baptizing in water is the act of repentance, of committing oneself to the Lord in putting to death the flesh and walking according to the Spirit. In this case, water symbolizes a cleansing of ones sins. Jesus baptizes Christians with the Holy Spirit and with fire (judgment). So through Christ, believers are presently baptized with the gift of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38**). The Holy Spirit guides us through our lives to qualify for our soul salvation. At the Judgment seat, Christ will baptize with fire, judging the works of all believers as they are tested in the fire.

...each one's work will become clear; for the Day (Day of the Lord) will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If

anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:13-15)

In **1 Corinthians 3:13**, Paul states that if a believer's works are done in Christ (through the power of the Holy Spirit), he will receive a reward and qualify to enter the kingdom of heaven. However, if a believer's works are not done in Christ, then he will not qualify to enter the kingdom of heaven -- he will lose his inheritance and be cast to outer darkness for 1000 years. Then, he reassures the believer that his eternal salvation is secure, yet so as through fire (judgment) during the Millennium.

During Jesus' ministry, He preached, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" (**Matthew 4:17**). The Greek (Strong's #G1448) definition of *at hand* is "draw near" or "approach." During this time, Jesus spoke to His disciples at the top of the mountain, giving them the qualifications needed to enter the coming kingdom of heaven. Initially, we see that the Beatitudes were first preached to the disciples, who then were to go and proclaim it to the Jews. Due to Israel's rejection of the kingdom of the heavens and their subsequent setting aside, we find that the Beatitudes were then directed to the Church who became the recipient to the offer of the heavenly kingdom. Jesus commanded His apostles *to make disciples of all nations* just before He ascended into heaven:

"Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
(**Matthew 28:19, 20**)

Jesus told His apostles to teach *all nations* to observe *all things* that He had commanded them. This included the Sermon on the Mount.

Note that when Jesus preached the Beatitudes, it was directed towards believers, not to the unsaved. For how can the unsaved try to qualify for the kingdom of heaven? They can't, because within them they do not possess the Spirit as a prerequisite to qualify or to run the race. Only the saved, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, can try to attain this qualification.

Jesus' sermon instructs a saved person in this age on what he must do to enter the coming kingdom of heaven in order to live, rule and reign with Christ. His sermon therefore is a plan of salvation for the believer to prepare for the Judgment seat of Christ on that future Day.

Each element of qualification begins with the word "Blessed." The Greek (Strong's # G3107) definition of *blessed* is "fortunate" or "happy." And because Jesus began and ended each element with a positive outcome, it can only mean that He was teaching on how to attain future rewards. These rewards have to do with gaining the inheritance into the kingdom of heaven. Loss of rewards for the believer is not mentioned here, but mentioned later in the Matthew parables.

1) "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The Greek definition (Strong's #G4434) of *poor* is "needy" or "beggar." A Christian who is needy in spirit is one who searches and strives to know God, allowing the Holy Spirit to teach him. He is passionate for the Lord through His Word. And the more a Christian seeks His Word, the more God will reveal to him the deeper truths of His wisdom, wisdom pertaining to His future kingdom and an inheritance. A Christian who is a "beggar" in spirit is one who has put away all pride and hardness of heart. More importantly, he has cleared his mind completely of what he has been taught by man, desiring only the "pure milk" of the Word. One must become humble as a child so that the Holy Spirit will be able to teach him to a level of "epignosis," which is the "super" knowledge of His Word. He must immerse himself with the truth of the Word. As a result of this maturity, the Christian can grow to become pure in heart, holy and without blemish, doing good works acceptable to God.

"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for as such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." (Mark 10:14)

Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and

become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:2-4)

A little child eagerly allows a parent or teacher to train him. The same is required of all Christians in order to inherit the coming kingdom---they must submit to the training of God.

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. (Colossians 2:8-10)

Because of the leaven that was placed in the Word by the tares (false teachers), the Word was taught in a contaminated and distorted way. Only by and through the study of God's Word with the guidance of the Holy Spirit are we able to have a full understanding of the Truth and be transformed like Christ. Only then can we be found worthy to inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Our qualification requires continual determination and action to gain understanding of His Word. If we passionately desire to know Him, God will do His work in us that will eventually change us into the likeness of His Son. We will never be the same again --- nor will we want to!

2) "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Mourning reflects a determination to please the Lord and to walk in Him. It is an act of maturity. There are several reasons why a faithful Christian mourns. When he sins, he feels conviction from the Holy Spirit and he

mourns. Christian sorrow leads to repentance and confession of sin, which leads to soul salvation (**2 Corinthians 7:10a**). He mourns because he yearns to be delivered from his body of death, constantly fighting off the flesh, the world and the devil. Carnal Christians, who live for the world and have no obedience to God, will not mourn when they sin. Since they do not walk in the Lord, they feel no conviction when they sin, nor do they confess it. Rather, they laugh at their sins.

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” (James 4:8-10)

A faithful Christian will experience mourning during times of conviction and chastening. Mourning therefore is a continual experience for the faithful believer. We must see mourning as a step into maturity, realizing that we care and hope for something much bigger than what this world can offer --- living with Christ in the kingdom of heaven.

A faithful Christian mourns when he is rejected and persecuted for the Truth. He also mourns because he is in the midst of an evil generation and he finds no comfort in this world. He is an outcast here, set apart from the world and surrounded by many enemies. He mourns for the Lord, awaiting His return.

Because of Israel’s continual sin, God will bring great affliction upon them during the Tribulation in order for them to repent. At Christ’s second coming, every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him and they will mourn. And the martyrs who will be killed for the Word of God during the Tribulation will mourn under the altar of God, awaiting His vengeance.

When will the believer ultimately be comforted? It will be in the age to come as we see recorded by the Spirit of the Lord:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the

brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,

To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;

That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified. (Isaiah 61:1-3) [See also Jeremiah 31:12, 13; Revelation 7:17]

For those who overcome and endure to the end, in the age to come the mourning will cease and joy will take its place.

Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.

A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.

Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. (John 16:20-22)

3) “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

Man’s secular view regarding the reason great kings and leaders prosper is because they are proud men, cunning, powerful, boisterous and disputant. But God says that they will be cut off, their fortresses devastated and their streets made desolate. God affirms that at the end of this age, the meek will be the ones to inherit the earth.

The Hebrew word *meek* (Strong's #H6035) is translated "humble" or "mild," and is derived from a verb meaning "to be afflicted" or "to be bowed down." It is also frequently used to refer to the poor or oppressed. The greatest example of meekness is seen with Jesus when He was unjustly accused, persecuted and crucified on the Cross. Yet, when accusations were made against Him, He did not defend Himself, nor was He full-tongued or threatening, but meek and quiet (**Matthew 26:62, 63; Isaiah 53:7**). It signifies strength of character during persecution. Jesus' silence marked His innocence.

God expects the same characteristic from Christians. Such character is rooted in a strong faith in God and obedience to His commandments. Consequently, a Christian cannot progress spiritually until he learns to be meek. When we are meek, we look to the Lord who provides power by His grace. When God permitted Satan to afflict Paul, it was done to prevent pride. God's answer to Paul's prayer to remove the affliction was this:

"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (**2 Corinthians 12:9**)

Paul gladly submitted to the Lord, saying:

Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (**2 Corinthians 12:9, 10**)

The principle of not defending ourselves against accusations, but remaining humble and gentle will keep us from becoming prideful and aggressive. We are to remain peaceable and pure, not causing strife, but looking to the Lord for His strength.

God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (**James 3:6a**)

The characteristic of meekness separates us from the accusers or persecutors, who are proud men looking to exalt themselves rather than

exalting God. But the humble and meek have put on the image of Christ and have the fruit of the Spirit.

But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats or be troubled. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct (meekness) in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:14-17)

In **Psalms 37:11**, we see that *"the meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."* God views the humble and meek Christian as one who is teachable, who is willing to hear His Word and abide by His commandments. But the proud are not teachable, their hearts are hardened, their eyes and ears are shut, they are self-centered and cause strife.

The humble He guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way. (Psalms 25:9)

Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; though they join forces, none will go unpunished. (Proverbs 16:5)

Pride was the characteristic that Satan possessed, causing his fall.

*How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!*

For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the Mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'

Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit. (Isaiah 14:12-15)

The humble Christian is able to mature in the Word and become more like Christ, thereby able to qualify to rule and reign in that future Day. Jesus Christ, as our greatest example, says:

“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:29)

When Jesus made the triumphal entry into Jerusalem at His first coming, it was to signify His sacrifice as a humble Servant to God the Father. The Son of God rode in on a donkey, humble and poor. But when He returns the second time as King of kings, He will be clothed in royal apparel with crowns on His head, riding on a white horse coming with a rod of iron (**Matthew 21:1-11; Revelation 19:11**). The humble will be exalted!

4) “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

The Hebrew translation for *righteousness* (Strong’s #H6664) is “just, holy, innocent.” Presently, Jesus Christ is the only One who is truly righteous, without sin. Yet by practicing righteousness, we also will be declared righteous. Our righteousness is not declared through our own works or deeds, but through works approved by God emanating from the fruits of the Spirit. When one seeks righteousness through Christ, he is learning this from the Word of God and then allowing the Holy Spirit to work through him.

And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger and He who believes in Me shall never thirst.” (John 6:35)

“I am the living bread which comes down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall

give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”
(John 6:51)

In **John** chapter **six**, Jesus refers to His flesh as His Word (the food, the bread of life) and His blood (the drink, the fountain of waters) as His Spirit. Without His Word and without His Spirit, we cannot do righteous works approved by Him, nor can we enter the kingdom of heaven in that Day. So when we hunger and thirst for righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, we are eating and drinking (in a figurative sense) of His Flesh (the Word) and of His Blood (the Holy Spirit) to attain holiness — *we are transforming like Christ*. This is the requirement for attaining the crown of righteousness in the age to come.

“Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.” **(John 6:27)**

Consequently, when one eats the food of the world and not of the Word of God, that food will perish and the believer will not attain age-lasting (Millennial) life in the kingdom. But when a believer hears and does what the Word of God says in accordance to holy living, then he will be declared righteous and possess age-lasting life in the heavenly kingdom.

The precepts of the beatitudes paves the way to possessing the righteousness of Christ. And God says that this is not difficult to do, but attainable, being born of God through faith in Christ (**1 John 5:3-5**). We cannot accomplish this on our own, but we can accomplish this through Christ who gives us strength.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13)

In **1 Peter 1:14-16**, the Word commands us to be *obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”*

Christians, who make up the body of Christ, are to be holy because Christ is holy. The Spirit of Christ dwells in our spirit and because we house the Spirit, we are the Spirit's temple and therefore should be holy.

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17)

Christians are called to seek the Word and allow the Holy Spirit to lead them into a pathway of holy living. And because the Spirit of Christ dwells in our spirit we ought to practice walking in holiness by putting away sin.

If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him. (1 John 2:29)

He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. (1 John 3:7)

However, believers who live unholy lives are neglecting their gift of the Holy Spirit and are following the devil's pattern.

The wicked man does deceptive work, but he who sows righteousness will have a sure reward. As righteousness leads to life, so he who pursues evil pursues it to his own death. (Proverbs 11:18, 19)

To hunger for righteousness is to abide in the higher knowledge of the Word (**Luke 4:4**). To thirst for righteousness is to receive the Holy Spirit in faith. (**John 7:37**) Both are required to mature and to qualify for the crown of righteousness. Faith and works are a necessity for attaining righteousness — they go hand in hand. If we say we have faith, but do not read and mature in His Word, how can we know how to be righteous in God's eyes? An impossibility!

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:13, 14)

Solid food is the mature Word of God, able to give those who digest of it the skill of righteousness. Furthermore, hungering and thirsting for righteousness according to His Word is a condition that must be met in order to inherit the kingdom.

Do you know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? (1 Corinthians 6:9)

In **Matthew 6:33**, our Lord Jesus Christ urges the disciples to *seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*. Melchizedek, who is a type of Christ, is called the king of righteousness in **Hebrews 7:11**. He was priest and king of the Most High God and is a type of our future King-Priest Jesus Christ, the One who will give the power of an endless life. Jesus Christ is the King of Righteousness and is our greatest example.

"Behold the days are coming," says the Lord, " that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:5, 6)

When we put on Christ, we put on righteousness. And like Paul, believers who endure to the end will be rewarded the crown of righteousness in that Day.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7, 8)

5) *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”*

One of the characteristics of the Spirit is *mercy* — an active part of the believer showing compassion either by word or deed to another. Mercy is the act of kindness emanated by the Holy Spirit that renders help to those who are suffering and are in need (**Galatians 5:22**). The need may be material, physical or spiritual and is given freely. Christians who are merciful to others will obtain mercy from Christ and save their soul at His Judgment seat.

The merciful man does good for his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh. (Proverbs 11:17)

Because of God's divine grace, He had mercy on us even when we were spiritually dead in trespasses and sin. While we were yet His enemies, He gave His Son so that we may have life in the age to come. We also, having the Spirit of mercy in us through Christ, should reflect this compassion to everyone, whether friend or foe, so that we may obtain mercy as well.

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-7)

The challenge is to be merciful to all, whether we think they deserve it or not. We should not pick and choose who to be merciful to for God has commanded that we be merciful to all. God has shown mercy to all, whether friend or foe.

Concerning the gospel they (Israel) are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers...For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. (Romans 11:28-32)

But at His judgment seat, those who were not merciful during this age will not obtain mercy from Him. They will be cast out of the kingdom — *For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.* **(James 2:13)**

6) ***“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”***

Believers who are "pure in heart" have allowed the Spirit to lead over their conscience, feelings, thoughts, desires and pleasures. When we love from a pure heart, our inner thoughts and feelings are sincere and clean. In fact, all that we do and say should come from a pure heart. Our faith and our works should be sincere and pure.

Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

(2 Timothy 2:22)

The only way a believer can be "pure in heart" is first by a process of spiritual growth which can only come from the study of the Word of God. Second, a believer must confess his sins, so that he is forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness. As he matures, the believer practices doing good works, allowing the Holy Spirit to work through him. This transformation, therefore, includes dying to the flesh and living in the Spirit. And this is a daily process. As a result of this, one can grow to become pure in heart, holy and without blemish. This is part of one's transformation. Jesus says that only the "pure in heart" will ascend into His Millennial kingdom and stand in His holy place:

Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place?

He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the Lord,

And righteousness from the God of his salvation. **(Psalm 24:3-5)**

The pure in heart "*shall see God.*" As mortal beings we cannot see God with our human eyes, for we will die. Just as Moses was not able to see God's face on the mountain but just a glimpse of His back, nor can any other mortal being see God (**Exodus 33:20-23**). We cannot begin to comprehend what Moses experienced in that dramatic encounter, but even more astonishing is when the "pure in heart" stand before the Lord in that Day, they will be able to see Him face to face in the kingdom of heaven and live!

7) "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*"

A peacemaker is a believer who possesses godly wisdom and who meekly shows it with good works. The main characteristic of godly wisdom is that it is pure, meaning free from defilement. Godly wisdom is also peaceable, describing a spirit of tranquility and calmness, yet it is undivided, unwavering and consistent. A peacemaker's good works are shown by his peaceable conduct towards others, one who allows the Holy Spirit to control his tongue; and, one who makes peace with all and does not promote or involve himself in disputes.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (James 3:17, 18)

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

In addition, peacemakers should make every effort to live peaceably with others who do evil towards them. By doing so, they encourage others around them to aspire to the good.

Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord." (Romans 12:17-19)

Christians are presently undergoing child-training as sons (**Hebrews 12:5-8**), with a view to a future adoption (**Romans 8:14-23**) as only “sons” are able to rule and reign with Christ. If a Christian is submissive to this child-training and spiritually grows to sonship then he can become a peacemaker, striving to be peaceable to all men and bringing rival parties together. Then, Christ one day when He redeems the inheritance will choose him as His bride and adopt him as a firstborn son of God.

8) “*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*”

Not only are we called to live righteously, but to patiently endure persecution for living righteously.

For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently?

But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth.” who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return;

when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed. (1 Peter 2:20-24)

In this day in age, faithful Christians are increasingly outnumbered by the wicked and unfaithful. Therefore, persecution against faithful Christians is prevalent. Faithful Christians struggle with revilers, rejecters of the truth, spiritual warfare, heretical doctrine and practice, and spiritual apathy.

But God is the Overseer of our soul (**1 Peter 2:25**), our Protector, our Guardian, the One who watches over us. Observing how Christ handled unjust punishment gives us insight as to how we also may endure such trials.

But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats or be troubled. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct (meekness) in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:14-17)

Satan, as the father of unrighteousness, lurks in the midst of Christians. Therefore, we must be careful with our choices. When we choose to live righteously, we choose Christ, and when we choose to live un-righteously we choose Satan. There is no in between. This is why we are not to associate with the unrighteous (**2 Timothy 3:5-8**), because they entice us to follow in their evil ways. And because there is so much evil in this world, Christians who chose to live godly will inevitably suffer persecution.

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:12-15)

If we remain patient and faithful during persecution, God will deliver us through it all, just as He delivered Paul.

"And out of them all, the Lord delivered me." (2 Timothy 3:11)

God does not promise us that He will keep us from persecution, but that He will deliver us through it. God teaches us how we should conduct ourselves in times of persecution---*rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse (Romans 12:12-14).*

When we bless those who persecute us with acts of kindness, we are encouraging them to aspire to the good, and perhaps bringing them to conviction and repentance. If we remain godly and faithful through persecution we will inherit the kingdom in the age to come.

9) “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

When we are strong in the faith and trust in the Lord to help us through persecution, we will be victorious. Knowing this, we are to be joyful that persecutions come our way as this gives us the opportunity to show our faith and righteousness in Christ our Lord. It is easy to repay evil with evil to those who persecute us. The challenge will be to bless them, be kind to them and pray for them. When we do this — great is our reward in heaven.

The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me.

For I have kept the ways of the Lord, And have not wickedly departed from my God.

For all His judgments were before me; And as for His statutes, I did not depart from them. I was also blameless before Him, And I kept myself from my iniquity.

Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness, According to my cleanness in His eyes. (2 Samuel 22:21-25)

Christ says that a faithful and mature Christian should *expect* persecution when ministering the Word of truth, the Word of the kingdom, to other Christians, *for so they persecuted the prophets before you*. It is those who preach this truth to others whom Satan seeks to destroy, and who will encounter persecution from other Christians. These revilers and rejecters of truth attack because they are blinded to the Truth, being carnally minded. Satan uses them to try and bring down the faithful and destroy the message. And though this is disheartening, we must remember what Christ said --- we are blessed. We are called to suffer for the Word of God and for doing His will. All who truly wish to live for Christ will inevitably have to suffer persecution from the mouths and hands of man. **(1 Peter 3:13-17; Acts 5:41; 9:15, 16)**. And a Christian should view persecution the same way Christ did, who endured the Cross and despised the shame - *for the joy that was set before Him*. The joy of ascending the throne together with His bride far outweighed the persecution and humiliation. Christ tells us to *“rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven...” (Matthew 5:12)*.

Christ stood on top of the mountain when He gave His incredible sermon. This account pictured for us His position as King and Priest, placed high above the mountain to lead and teach His people, an event that will soon be realized. As disciples of Christ, we are considered the salt and light of the world. Salt is good when it retains its flavor. When we strive to attain all the characteristics set forth in the beatitudes, by word and by deed, then we will be worthy disciples. God commands Christians to model the characteristics of Jesus Christ --- to be holy and set apart without blemish and to remain steadfast in the ministry for Christ. We are the light of the world. Christ says,

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

Our ministry for Christ should not be hidden, but should be made apparent to all; to be revealed in godly behavior and in spreading the Word of truth.

What constitutes good works pleasing to God? Good works must emanate from the Holy Spirit, according to the Word of God. These works are revealed in **Ephesians 5:8**, **Galatians 5:22** and **John 15:1-5**. Abiding in the will of the Lord is not based on feelings or emotions, but on the act of applying our minds to Scripture and then applying His Word to our daily life experiences.

Do not be deceived. Our good works and stewardship for God must be done in word *and* in deed. Along with righteous living, we must not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, or hide our service for fear of rejection from man. For Christ says,

"For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."
(Mark 8: 38)

Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine...Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. (1Timothy 4:12, 13, 16)