Matthew - Commentaries by Andrew Miller

Meditations on the Beatitudes and Christian Devotedness, Matthew 5:10: The Beatitude of Position

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VERSE 10-12. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Were it not that we leave the children of the kingdom in a hostile world, we might here conclude our " Meditations," in the full assurance of their perfect blessedness. Seven times blessed is divine completeness. But however blessed, however happy in the divine presence, however fit to inherit the earth in its bright millennial day, however fit to reign with Christ in the higher regions of glory, they still stand in this world just where they stood before they were born of God, and surrounded it may be with the same persons and circumstances as they ever were.

This we may see every day. The home that was once cheerful and happy is now a cheerless wilderness. How often the young convert has found himself an alien and a stranger in his father's house-the very house in which he lived all his unconverted days! But now, he being completely changed, the family not, he has no fellowship with their ways, and they have none with his. All changed; opposition is inevitable, and persecution in some way or other, especially if he reaches the sevenfold blessedness of his Master's image. " Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3:12.) " Hold thy peace, art thou wiser than thy father and thy mother, than thy brothers and thy sisters, must we all give in to thee?" may be the lightest form of persecution experienced. Still it is resistance to the grace of God and the Spirit of Christ, as -manifested by the young convert. He must now pursue his path alone.

So far, it will be observed, we have spoken chiefly of the character of God's children, now we turn to meditate for a little on their position in an evil world. The moral character of those who belong to Christ, rising in grace to the seventh beatitude, must necessarily arouse the spirit of persecution, and expose them to trial, until the kingdom of heaven is set up in power and glory. Had no special blessing been pronounced on this condition of things, the disciples might have been ready to say that their state was anything but blessed; that the benediction of heaven on their character only brought down upon themselves the hatred and oppression of mankind. True, this would have been natural, not spiritual, walking by sight, not by faith; but what will unbelief not say and do? much unbelief still lurks in the hearts of believers. But oh, the grace, the rich, the abounding grace, of our Lord Jesus! He pronounces those twice blessed who are exposed to persecution from the world. This completes the beautiful picture of His people's character and condition, and adds great interest and fullness to every circumstance of their position while the kingdom is in abeyance.

" Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This must have been a strange language to those who were looking for outward glory, or a reign of peace, a paradise on earth. But the Lord plainly sets before His disciples what their new position would be in this world, and the more distinct their likeness to Himself, the heavier would be their persecutions. But He especially refers in this first blessedness of position, to the first group of beatitudes, which are characterized by righteousness; as the last three are by grace. " Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Every new-born soul must have the sense, more or less, of its own nothingness, and a sincere and earnest desire to be found in obedience to the will of God. This is righteousness, and the righteousness which brings persecution in this life. For example, a Christian who is walking with the Lord, fears to do what is wrong, he desires to do what is right; he seeks to maintain a conscience void of offense towards God and towards man. This is the breastplate of righteousness. But he is offered, it may be, certain preferment in his position if he will agree to do something, which he fears not to be right. The offer may be a tempting one and he is needy; but no; he waits on the Lord; he brings the matter before Him; light shines, the tempter's object is seen, he positively refuses; righteousness prevails, but he suffers for it. He is misunderstood, is called foolish, or it may be fanatic and madman. He not only loses what was offered, but what he had; he is no use, he is turned out. Still he can say, My present loss, under the righteous government of God, will prove my eternal gain. He has a clear conscience, a happy heart: he is drawn closer to the Lord in dependence on Him. " Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." When the king returns from the far country, and calls His own servants around Him, what will it be to hear Him say, " Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" Matt. 25:21.

Here, O my soul, pause a little. Let thy meditations be deep, patient, and prayerful, on this most practical subject. Consider, weigh well, I pray thee, the many ways in which thou mayest be

faithful or unfaithful I Are there not many shades of practical unrighteousness in the affairs of this life? But they must all be brought up again and measured by a righteous standard. How solemn, though how blessed the thought, of being manifested before the tribunal of Christ-of having every thought, word, and act, brought into the light, examined and estimated there. Dost thou expect to hear Him say, " Well done, thou good and faithful servant?" I press not for an answer, but let thy heart answer to Him. Be manifested before Him now: seek to do the whole will of God in all things, and during all thy earthly days. After what the Lord has said of blessedness here, what must it be hereafter, when He will have everything His own way, and when every blessedness shall have its full and everlasting reflection in us! Now, may we fear to sin, though we may have to suffer for it.

We have now come to the closing beatitude of the kingdom of heaven. It goes back and takes. up the last three of the seven, which are characterized by grace-the graces of mercy, pureness, and peace. Thus the different graces of the divine life which ought to shine in all the children of God, are here assembled under the heads of righteousness and grace-that which is right before God, and that which is grace towards man. " Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

The promised blessing to the sufferers for Christ's sake has some sweet and precious peculiarities in it. Nor need we wonder at this; what name like His? There is nothing higher, nothing better; they who have His name have all that God can give; they have every blessedness that will ever be possessed throughout the endless ages of eternity. The promise, observe, is directly personal. " Blessed are ye"-not in the abstract, " Blessed are they." He is looking at the disciples around Him, and knowing what they would have to pass through, He speaks direct to their hearts, and gives them to feel His personal interest in them, and their personal nearness to Himself. This must always be the case when we suffer for His name's sake. This is a much higher thing than suffering for righteousness' sake, though the two may often go together. Many an upright mind has suffered for righteousness' sake, who knew not the Savior's love or His saving grace. Naturally upright, they would not stoop to deceive, and suffered for it. Even natural uprightness is too straight for the crooked ways of this sad, deceitful world. Oh, how difficult and trying is the path of the Christian in the midst of it all! He must live and walk by the word of the Lord and in communion with Him, if he would be preserved from a defiled conscience and a feeble testimony.

Suffering for Christ's sake is the result of speaking about Him to others. Not merely a decided no, when we are asked or enticed to do what is wrong, but an earnest heart that watches every opportunity to speak about the blessed Lord and salvation; and if possible to those who would put difficulties in our way. There are always plenty of worldly-wise Christians near us to check zeal and hinder faithfulness, by what passes under the fair name of prudence.

There is a time and place for everything, it may be suggested, and there is no use in offending others, losing your influence, and throwing away your prospects for life. Surely we are not called upon to be always speaking about Christ and the gospel; you may cause your good to be evil spoken of. Such fair speeches and plausible reasons may come from the lips of some lukewarm Christian or mere professor, and so far, at least for a time, may do the enemy's work. The voice is his, from whose lips soever the words may come, and ought to be treated as such. Certain we are it is not the voice of Jesus; and His sheep hear His voice and follow Him.

When Christ is precious to our hearts, such. reasonings have no power. We see Him to be worth infinitely more than all that the world can do or give. The fair words of prudence fall to the ground; grace triumphs. Christ is before the soul; He commands all its energy; His love inspires the tongue; the lips cannot be refrained; His name burns in our hearts, it burns in our words, and we long for it to burn in the hearts and on the lips of others.

Speakest thou thus, my soul, of thyself, of thine own ways, or of what thou oughtest to be? My answer is plain and ready. I speak of myself and of all others. The rule is one. In the proportion that Christ is before the soul; in the proportion that He commands it; in that proportion will be our faithfulness and our sufferings. It may not be bodily suffering, or even worldly loss; but a very narrow path will be left for such to walk in, and a wide path of rejection. Save for those who are in the same narrow way, such an one would be alone and despised in the world. You may speak of religion in a general way, of preachers, of churches, of missions to the heathen, of societies for doing good, and be popular; but speak of the Lord Himself, of His precious blood, of the full assurance of salvation, of oneness with Him in heaven, of separation from the world, of standing apart from all its shows and entertainments, and you will rapidly reduce the number of your friends. And as far as the enemy can gain power, you will be reviled and persecuted for His name's sake. It may be nothing more than cold rejection, a contemptuous sneer, but the same spirit would lay the fagots. and silence the witness in the flames of martyrdom. Who were the most implacable enemies of the Lord and His servant Paul? The most religious men in Israel. Is the world or human nature changed? We believe not.

But here thou art anxious to inquire, O my soul, and I wonder not, why there is so little persecution for Jesus' sake now? There may be more than thou art aware of. The Christianity that is positive and aggressive, and pursues its path outside the camp where Jesus suffered, must taste the bitterness, or rather the sweetness, of persecution. Such Christians will be avoided, if not despised, by those in favor with the world. The outside place, the unworldly life, is a stinging rebuke to the time-serving, or merely professing Christian.

Such witnesses are everywhere spoken against, and frequently by those in high places who know little or nothing about them; they are unjustly characterized as the secret propagators of heresy, as seeking to draw away and deceive the simple; and held up under the grossest misrepresentation-to the scorn and derision of all Christendom. So far this may be harmless, thou wilt say; true, it opens no dungeons, it breaks no bones, it kindles no fires, it sharpens no swords; but how much further would the spirit of persecution go if let loose? Let the history of the church say. He who stoops to defame his fellow Christians because they differ from him on certain points of doctrine and practice, is not far from the spirit of Rome, which was the first to persecute for a difference of opinion.

But all this was anticipated by the blessed Lord, and graciously provided for. He thinks of everything. The saints are never dearer to His heart than when despised and suffering for His sake. " Blessed are ye," is His own sweet word of comfort to their hearts, " Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Should they suffer unto death, heaven will be their immediate home. " Great is your reward in heaven." And they will also have the honor of following in the footsteps of those who suffered as the heralds of His coming-who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. As this was true of the prophets, and is true of Christians in all ages, so will it be true of the Jewish remnant who shall be slain for their Messiah's sake in the last days. Rev. 6:9-11.

In rising from these meditations, O my soul, see that thou hast learned this lesson well. Be careful what thou sayest of the Lord's redeemed, and how thou attest towards them. They are not only dear to His heart; He delights in them. Grieve Him not by any unkindness to them. If plain speaking or faithful dealing with some be needful, let all be done in love and tenderness. " Let brotherly love continue." That must never be interrupted, though brotherly kindness may, with the Lord's sanction.

The Lord grant that our meditations on these beautiful beatitudes may leave an indelible impression of the Savior's character, not only on the whole life of the writer, but also of the reader. So shall we answer to the divine emblems here spoken of; "salt" and "light"-the preservative principle or energy in the place where light has already come, where truth is already professed: and the blessed activities of love that go out in the light of grace and truth to a dark benighted world. Be this thy mission, O my soul, unweariedly, unchangeably, that many may be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith which is in Christ Jesus. Acts 26:16-18.

Meditations on the Beatitudes and Christian Devotedness, Matthew 5:9: The Seventh Beatitude

VERSE 9. Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God. The mission of the children of God in this world, has a character which far exceeds, we fear, the measure of our intelligence, faith, and practice. There is a dignity -a moral beauty and glory connected with it, which we too often fail to appreciate. It emanates from God the Father; it partakes of His own moral attributes; it is the reflection, however feeble, of the blessed Lord, who was the perfect reflection of the divine glory. Every thought, every feeling, of His heart breathed the perfect rest, and rose to the height of the absolute purity and peace of the Godhead. The seven beatitudes shine in all their divine perfectness in the lowly path of the Son of man-Emmanuel, God with us. And He being our life, the features of His character should be produced in us, by faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

This is the believer's mission whether of Jewish or of christian faith. In our meditations we muse on both; but chiefly on the application of truth to the latter; though we rejoice in the assurance that Israel will manifest the character and be crowned with the benedictions of all the beatitudes, in the latter day. However valuable they may be to the Christian now, they look forward to the setting up of the kingdom in power and glory, and will have their complete fulfillment in that future day. But in the meantime, the Christian should seek to shine in all the graces which are here pronounced " blessed." They ought all to be found in every Christian, though some will be more manifest in one than in another.

Mark then, my soul, and weigh well, what thy mission is, and how it should be characterized. And see that thou beginnest well. Let thy first step be a right one; this is always important. Thou must begin with God, and work out from Him. There is no such thing as working up to God, thou must work from Him. This only is the right way. First learn thy own nothingness in His presence; be weighed and measured there. Thou wilt find a just balance for self nowhere else. Oh, how many things, unworthy of the Christian, this would save him from! In place of being characterized by humility, dependence, and obedience, as the blessed Lord was, we are, from lacking these graces, self-willed and self-sufficient. But having learned thy lesson well at the Master's feet, thou wilt be fitted to go forth and bear testimony for Him, according to the portrait here given of the believer. Because of the dishonor done to His name, thou wilt mourn; and like Him, thou wilt meekly bow to that which may be personally trying, and calmly leave things in His hands. Thou wilt also seek to do the will of God, to be merciful to those around thee, and to walk before God with a pure heart. And this brings us to the last of the seven beatitudes.

"Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God." It is not, observe, they who live in peace, walk in peace, or keep peace, that are crowned with the divine blessing, but they who make peace-" peace-makers."

The distinction is important, as many who have a peaceable nature are the least qualified to make peace, and are in danger of being unfaithful for the sake of peace. But peace-making is quite another thing. It is the grace of the Lord Jesus in blessed activity, pouring oil on the troubled waters-on the tumultuous passions of men. And this, mark, without compromising the holiness of God, or saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. It may occasion much self-denial, much anxiety, much waiting on God, much disquiet to one's own mind. The most opposite feelings, convictions, interests, affecting character and happiness for life, may have to be dealt with and weighed in the balances of the sanctuary. But the peace-maker must be impartial; he must see that "mercy and truth meet together, that righteousness and peace kiss each other." There must be truth as well as grace, purity as well as peace. Time must be given for God to work: peace cannot be forced. But wherever there is the smallest possibility, consistently with the holiness and truth of God, of bringing peace into a scene of trouble and sorrow, the Christian should remember his privilege and calling, and if in the scene, should reckon upon God for guidance and blessing. " Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

But is every Christian, it may be asked, called to be a peace-maker? Every one has the grace and the privilege of the grace in Christ Jesus for this blessed work, but all have not used it alike. The quality or measure of grace necessary in a peace-maker, depends upon his own state of soul in the presence of God. Are the other features of the Lord's character manifest, we would inquire? Is he enjoying, for example, the blessedness of the last beatitude? " Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." This is the divine preparation for a peace-maker. He must be right with God Himself, and breathe the sweet peace of communion with Him.

The pure in heart are at peace with God through the precious blood of Christ. Cleansed from all sin-whiter than snow-they see God, and have learned much in the divine presence that fits them for peace-making. He who walks with God must live in the spirit of self-judgment-must judge all that belongs to himself naturally, and thereby gain complete control over his own spirit, temper, words and ways. The pure heart is a peaceful heart, loves peace, and earnestly desires the peace and happiness of others. Love rules in such hearts, and overflows in truest charity to all who are in a condition to need the peace-maker. But sound spiritual judgment is necessary, it will be said, in cases of dispute and discipline. Most true; but who so fit to judge spiritually as those who judge themselves, and walk in the light as God is in the light? The sixth beatitude, we have no doubt, is the true preparation for the exercise of the God-like grace of the seventh; or as James says, "First pure, then peaceable." Chapter 3:17.

But what shall we say of those who forget their heavenly mission of peace, and often cause trouble? who, in place of being well shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and carrying peace with them at every step, carry a spirit of fault-finding and contention? Few such there are, we humbly trust; but troubles do arise, and the elements of discord must be at work. Yet this may be done by a mistaken zeal for what is called truth and righteousness. With some minds, a mistake is magnified into an offense; an inaccuracy of statement, into a deliberate falsehood; and different things being put together, a grave charge is constructed and made against one who is unconscious of his guilt. And both up to a certain point may be right, but who is to judge between them?

Oh, for a son of peace at such a moment! A little wisdom, a little patience, a little charity, a little consideration of human infirmity, a little waiting on the Lord, might save the weak, and satisfy the scruples of the strong. There is no moral or doctrinal evil in the case, it is only a question of apparent inconsistencies, which some minds are too quick in censuring, and others too slow in detecting. But less than we have just described, has sometimes caused trouble and heart-burnings, which time itself has failed to heal. Thank God, they extend not beyond our present condition of infirmity; all is peace in the paradise above. But a little of that sweet peace brought down by the hand of faith into our present imperfect state, would only be Christ-like, and would save us from many a sorrowful heart and bitter tear. " Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God."

But there is another class less excusable, who forget so far their peaceful mission as to manifest no small disappointment if they suppose that their services are not appreciated. Displeased and unhappy in themselves, they draw others into their sympathies. A party spirit is apt to spring up, and sorrow must be the result. Wounded vanity, ministerial jealousy, will be found at the root of all such troubles. What could be more sad than for a servant of the Lord to be more concerned for his own importance, than for the peace of his brethren? But self in some of its ten thousand forms is the prolific source of all our troubles, both spiritual and social. Could we but sink self, and care only for the Lord's glory in walking worthy of that sweetest of all titles-" They shall be called the children of God "-all would be peace and love.

How unspeakably important then it must be for every believer to consider well this expression of his character. What can make up for its absence? What can excuse its opposite? Nothing. He who sows discord from whatever motive, in place of keeping and making peace, has missed his way as a child of God. True, a Christian may be the occasion of much dispeace in certain circles through his faithfulness to Christ; but that is quite a different thing. Satan may stir up many against him because of his whole-heartedness for Christ. Indeed he may expect this, as our Lord says in Matt. 10:34, " Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." Still, he will study to give no offense, and, if possible, take none. He will keep clear of strife and contention, meekly suffer for Christ's sake, and pray for the unbelieving and careless around him. The assemblage of the seven beatitudes with which God has enriched him, should now shine forth according to the position in which he finds himself. A little prudence, a little patience and waiting on God may go far to silence the strife of tongues, to calm the ruffled temper, to remove opposition, and to win hearts for Christ. None of the Christian graces so distinctly reveals God in His children as this peace-making spirit. " They shall be called the children of God."

That which God is, and 'delights in, is seen in them. The moral resemblance is manifest, and their sonship is declared. So let thy sonship be verified, O my soul, always, earnestly, fervently pray!

God is the great Peace-maker. This is what He has been doing, what He is doing, and what He will do until peace is established forever in the new heavens and the new earth. He delights in the title " God of peace;" which occurs seven times in the Epistles. He loves peace: strife and contention cannot dwell with Him. When the demon of strife enters, the God of peace retires. Without peace there can be no edification.

When the birth of Jesus was heralded by the heavenly host, they proclaimed, " Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." And during His lowly path of peacemaking, God was in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses. He is the great Reconciler; and hath committed to His ambassadors the word of reconciliation. And thus the blessed work should go on.

" Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." The true ground of peace between God and man was laid in the great work of the cross. There God was glorified, and

there His good pleasure in men was manifested. Christ made peace by the blood of His cross: and when His blessed work was finished, He returned to His Father, leaving behind Him the full blessing of peace for His disciples; " Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The peace which He made on the cross, and His own personal peace which He enjoyed with His Father while passing through the sorrows of this world, He leaves as the rich legacy of His love for all who believe in Him.

What a legacy! thou mayest well exclaim, O my soul; and what a legacy for thee, and forever! Peace with God forever! and nothing less than the sweet peace of thy Lord's own mind in His Father's presence. Such is thy peace, thy portion; and see that thou goest forth as filled and clothed with peace; and that all thy paths may indeed be paths of peace.

Oh! that all who read this paper may know in their sweet experience what this blessedness is Surely it is to be in the presence of God, cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus-reconciled to God through the death of His Son. He has no charge against us now. Christ has answered for all. Peace is established on the solid ground of accomplished righteousness. And this is the immediate, sure, everlasting portion of all who believe in Him. He has bequeathed it as the birthright of all who are born of God. Read it for thyself, my fellow-sinner, in John 14, and believe it for thyself, and trust in Him for thyself; and make good use of thy legacy, it can never grow less by the most extravagant indulgence, or the most liberal distribution. Seek to share it with all who will accept it-to scatter it freely in the cottages of the poor and in the mansions of the rich.

Yes, thou canst afford to be liberal, if thou art an heir of peace Thy portion can never fail. Its spring, the heart of God; its channel, the cross of Jesus; its power, the Holy Spirit; the instrument by which it becomes thine, the word of God. But, remember, I pray thee, unbelief heirs nothing but

the righteous judgment of insulted goodness. Unbelief rejects everything that divine goodness has provided-peace, and the God of peace; salvation and the Savior; heaven and its happiness. And this is what so many think of as a mere passive or negative evil. But in God's account, it is the active energy of all evil. It rejects the truth, it believes a lie; it refuses peace, it cherishes hostility; it shuts the door of heaven, it opens the gates of hell; its every breath is defiance, its every act is suicidal.

This is unbelief-the fatal sin of unbelief. But faith, even as a grain of mustard seed, will put thee in possession of the sevenfold blessedness of these beatitudes now, and fit thee for the endless blessedness, and unfading glories of thy Father's house on high. " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Acts 16:31.

Peace with our holy God,

Peace from the fear of death,

Peace through our Savior's precious blood,Sweet peace, the fruit of faith,

We worship at Thy feet,

We wonder and adore,

The coming glory scarce more sweet

Than sweet the peace before.

Meditations on the Beatitudes and Christian Devotedness, Matthew 5:7: The Fifth Beatitude

VERSE 7. Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy. We now enter on what may be called the second section of the Beatitudes. They are evidently divided into four and three-a division not uncommon in scripture. The first four are characterized by righteousness, or that which is due to God: the last three by grace, or the activities of grace towards others. There is great moral beauty, order, and instruction, in these two classes. The division is no doubt divine, and may well engage thy thoughts, O my soul, in happiest meditation. When the sinner is first awakened, brought into the presence of God, sees his true condition there, and learns the vanity of what man is, there must be humbling and breaking down. He will now side with God, and maintain His cause against himself. Repentance is real. He is content to be nothing. Thus we see that the first blessedness is poverty of spirit, and introduces the soul to the other blessings. We will now look at the first of the last three.

"Blessed are the merciful." No word within the compass of our language has a sweeter sound than mercy; and no other word could bring the character of God more fully before thy mind. This leads to thy deepest joy, and thy richest blessing-dwelling on the character of God. He is "the Father of mercies." Mercy is not merely a resource of God, but He is its source—" the Father of mercies." He is the well-spring of all the pity, compassion, tenderness, kindness, and charity, whether temporal or spiritual, which flow through this world of misery. And this mercy, blessed be His name, is from everlasting and to everlasting-without beginning, before time; and when time is past, without end. " The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him." (Psa. 103:17.) But in the meantime, on this "narrow neck of land," this world of sin, between the incomprehensible past and future, mercy flows as a mighty river, and unites, as it were, the ocean of eternity. There is no interruption to His mercy: it is the active principle of His being in this world of sin and misery. " For his mercy endureth forever." Who can speak of the transcendent blessedness of such a truth in such a scene of sorrow as this world is! But for the ceaseless flow of His mercies, it could only be like that place where His mercies are clean gone, and where He will be favorable no more forever. When the ear of mercy is closed, and the arm of mercy is withdrawn, nothing remains but the agonies of despair. But now He delights in mercy, and will delight in it.

" For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." (Rom. 9:15.) God only can say, " I will, I will," and He only has a right to say so. No creature can say, "I will "-God only! but His " I wills " are mercy and compasssion, and are all ours in Christ Jesus forever. Satan may deny it; the poor human heart may doubt it; but the word of the Lord standeth firm and sure, it cannot be broken. " I will sing," says the psalmist, " of the mercies of the Lord forever For I have said, mercy shall be built up forever." Psa. 89

But tell me, my soul, is this rich, tender, everlasting mercy free to all who cry to God for it? Most surely! Are none now who hear of His mercy excluded? Only those who exclude themselves. The door of mercy now stands wide open, and the ear of mercy patiently waits to hear the cry, and quicker far than the electric spark is Heaven's answer. Take a well-known example; and remember that Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

When the poor blind beggar (Luke 18) heard that short sermon, " Jesus of Nazareth passeth by, he cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" What was His answer? Could He say, I have no mercy for thee? Impossible! that would have been to deny the character of God, and the whole truth of the Bible. The fullness of divine mercy was his from the moment of his heart's first utterance. The faithless multitude might rebuke the blind man, and seek to drive him back; but not Jesus. The moment the cry for mercy fell upon His ear, He stood still; and the vast procession stood still, and, if it had been necessary, the spheres too would have stood still. All must give place to this service of mercy. "And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him; and when lie was come near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight; thy faith hath saved thee." Surely this is mercy, full and free; and such mercy is free to all, " For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." And these things are written, remember, that thou mayest believe. The same cry will bring the same blessing to-day.

And here learn also, as a believer, how to show mercy. Give not thy alms to the poor as thou wouldst throw a bone to a dog. With what grace Jesus bends over the poor man, and asks, as if He were his servant, " What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" Far from taking a place of manifest superiority, and causing the poor man to feel as if in a far distant place, He gave him to know and feel that He was dealing with him' in love and grace, and drew the heart of the helpless one entirely to Himself. The Christian must not only be merciful-most merciful, always merciful-but he must learn to show mercy after the manner of his Lord and Master. The way of the world is to patronize, and to be esteemed as benefactors; and many will give for the sake of this honor. But not so those on whom the Lord lays His hand and pronounces blessed. " Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Learn, then, I pray thee, from this narrative both the freeness and the style of divine mercy. He who cries to God for mercy, though physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually poor and blind -the weakest or most degraded of mankind-is instantly answered by Him, "who is rich in mercy." God never has said, and never will say to the cry of the dependent heart, I have no mercy for thee. Hence the absolute certainty of God's mercy to every one who feels his need, and looks to Him to meet it. There is nothing either in the heart or in the circumstances of the sinner that can hinder the flowing spring of mercy, if he only bows at the feet of Jesus in dependence on Him. But there is no possibility of salvation to a single soul, save through the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, His blessed Son.

"He! all ye heavy laden, come!

Here's pardon, comfort, rest, and home,

Ye wanderers from a Father's face,

Return, accept His proffered grace.

Ye tempted ones, there's refuge nigh,

`Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.'

But if you still His call refuse,

And all His wondrous love abuse,

Soon will He sadly from you turn,

Your bitter prayer for pardon spurn.

Too late! too late!' will be the cry-

"Jesus of Nazareth has passed by.'"

Having thus spoken of mercy in a general way, we shall now notice more particularly its true character, and how it is to be manifested by all who have found mercy of the Lord.

MERCY AND GRACE.

In what way, we may inquire, does mercy differ from grace? Clearly they are not the same thing, though they may come very near to each other. They are carefully distinguished in scripture, and we will best learn their meaning by the use made of them there.

Both words, we find, are prominent in the character of God, as proclaimed to Moses-" The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious." He is merciful to forgive, and gracious to help in every time of need. The distinction is also maintained in the most marked way by the apostolic writers. When addressing the church, they wish "grace and peace;" but when writing to individual Christians, they say, " Grace, mercy, and peace." The reason of this significant change not only marks fife essential difference of the two words, but it reveals the peculiar position of the church. It is viewed as raised up in Christ, and in the same place of privilege, blessing, and acceptance as Himself. Hence the word " mercy " is never introduced when she is addressed in this relationship. The blessed Lord Jesus, though in this world as the lowly Son of man, never was, and never could be, the object of divine mercy; but " Grace was poured into his lips," and the richest gifts of heaven surrounded the path of the perfect One. The church is now seen as one with Him. " For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ." The last clause of this verse is a truly remarkable one-" so also is Christ." It shows the perfect oneness of Christ and the church. But for this unity, the apostle must have said, " so also is the church." He is speaking about the church, not Christ: why then say, in apparent violation of the ordinary rules of language, " so also is Christ?" Because the whole body, Head and members, are here viewed as " one body," and in the same place of privilege and blessing. Surely this should be rest, eternal, perfect rest, for the heart; and also the complete settlement of every question as to the heavenly character and relationships of the church. The Lord grant it.

But to return.

On the other hand, individual Christians are looked at as men in the body, and as encompassed with infirmities, passing through conflicts, and constantly needing mercy-and grace too, of course. Hence the apostle says to Timothy and Titus, " Grace, mercy, and peace:" and in writing to the Hebrews, he says, "Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. 4

The term grace evidently conveys the idea of free gift, favor; without obligation on God's part, without claim on ours: or without raising the question of the condition of the one so favored; it may be called the indulgence of love. (See John 3:16; 2 Cor. 8:9, where we have grace in its divine fullness.) But mercy always marks the receiver as a wrong-doer. To be " merciful " is to be ready to overlook or forgive a wrong, at the same time conscious that he to whom mercy is shown deserves a contrary kind of treatment. It answers to what is called among men a tender, forgiving disposition; only it is to be exercised by believers on the higher ground of having obtained mercy of the Lord themselves, and looking forward to obtain it more fully, they are " merciful " to their fellow men.

But thou mayest yet inquire, my soul, what is the promised reward here assured to the merciful -" They shall obtain mercy?" We cannot need mercy in heaven. Surely not. Nevertheless, the promise is future, whether strictly applied to the Jew, or morally to the Christian. Onesiphorus was no doubt a Christian, and Paul prayed for him, "that he might find mercy of the Lord in that day "-the time of future rewards. So filled with gratitude was the heart of the apostle for the special kindness of Onesiphorus, when he risked his own life in finding him out, and in ministering to him in prison, that he prayed for a reward that would be the reflection of, and that would commemorate forever, that noble service of love. This, we doubt not, is the way of heaven, but especially during the millennium. Every service of love, from a cup of cold water and upwards, shall not only be rewarded in that day, but the reward will characterize the service, and thus be held in everlasting remembrance.

This is clear from many passages of scripture; we quote one of exquisite beauty. "And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great." (Rev. 11:18.) The small as well as the great will be remembered on that blessed day. What grace! What a day that will be! May we think of it now in all our service for Him!

But thou mayest say with many, what can I do? If I am only there myself, I shall not think of a reward. Stay, my soul, see that thou venture not on wrong ground here. Many may speak thus as an excuse for spiritual indolence and worldliness. What is the teaching of the Lord in these beatitudes? Surely that the vital principle of each feature here pronounced "blessed," is in every soul that is born of God, though they are not alike prominent in all. We see poverty of spirit in one, and great activity in another. But those who mourn shall be comforted; the meek shall inherit the earth; the merciful shall obtain mercy:

May the Lord lead thee, and all who read this paper, to abound more and more in this heavenly, this God-like, grace of mercy. In the exercise of mercy towards others, thou shalt taste afresh the sweetness of God's mercy to thine own soul. A gracious eye, a tender heart, an open hand, carry with them their divine reward. Who abhors not the character of the steward who was forgiven ten thousand talents by his master, but would not forgive his fellow-servant a hundred pence? On the other hand, who admires not the mercy which shines in the good Samaritan,

who did the neighbor's part? This is the mercy of the gospel, seek especially to shine here-in the mercy that would seek to save the lost sinner; but forget not the mercy

that shines in words, looks, and deeds. Mercy is the great need of mankind-sinners need it, saints need it, all need it. God in Christ Jesus is its source. May we be the channels of its many streams, both to the bodies and to the souls of men.

Meditations on the Beatitudes and Christian Devotedness, Matthew 5:6: The Fourth Beatitude

VERSE 6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. The perfect answer of the Father's love to the various spiritual feelings and conditions of the children is most interesting and instructive. The riches of the kingdom are promised to the poor in spirit" Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Divine comfort is the sure portion, in due time, of those who mourn-" They shall be comforted." And, as saith the prophet; " As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." (Isa. 66:13.) The coming possession of the land of Israel is the promise held out to those who meekly bow to the will of God in the land of their strangership, and leave all their interests in His hands-" They shall inherit the earth." And to the fourth class, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, full satisfaction of soul is promised-" They shall be filled."

This is grace, and like the ways of the Lord in grace, from the beginning. His answer meets the felt need of the soul. He creates the desire that He may satisfy it. When the heart desires that which is good, we may be sure that His grace is there. As there is nothing spiritually good in the natural heart, the first, as every good desire after, must come from God. " I will arise, and go to my father," was the effect of grace working in the heart of the prodigal; and he was then as safe as when he was in his father's arms, though he did not know it. So that a good desire is the fruit of grace, and, in a certain sense, the possession of all that is desired. It is like the earnest of the inheritance.

Surely there is great encouragement in these facts to those who are earnestly seeking the Lord, as they say, but who are fearful and doubting as to whether they have found Him; whereas it is just the opposite; Christ has sought and found them, and is causing the heart to feel that nothing can ever satisfy it but Himself. The world, its pleasures, its riches, its society, are all too small to fill it. Even a Solomon found that all under the sun could not fill his heart. At the same time he is made to tell us, in his beautiful song, that a poor out-door slave finding the Messiah, or rather found of Him, her heart overflows with His love. " Thy love," she says, "is better than wine"-better to me now than all the social joys of earth. This must be the work of His grace. No true desire, we know, for the Christ of God can ever spring from our depraved hearts; and sure we are that neither the world nor Satan has put it there: from whence, then, must it come? From the grace of God alone. And the longing desires and expectations He has awakened He waits to fulfill. But He would have us to say with the Psalmist, "My soul, wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defense: I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God." (Psa. 62) It is the word "only" in this beautiful psalm that so searches and tries our hearts. The Lord give us to weigh it up in His presence.

We conclude, then, from these reflections-and reflections they are, for very little is said about pardon, salvation, or redemption, in the Beatitudes -that every desire of the heart after Christ shall be satisfied forever. So far this is true now. May the Lord awaken and draw forth many deep, earnest, longing desires after Himself, in these last and closing days. We will now return to our Beatitude.

As we are all well acquainted with the force of the figure, we can easily see its spiritual application. To hunger and thirst after righteousness evidently means an earnest desire of the renewed mind to do the will of God in this world; and this desire is increased from finding the world opposed to what is right in the sight of God-to righteousness. Hence the intensified feeling of hungering and thirsting. The effect of thus seeking to maintain that which is according to the will of God is great blessedness to the soul. " Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." But though blessedness is the sure reward of righteousness, the righteous path will be one of great trial and many difficulties. The maxim of the world is, not what is right before God, but what is convenient, profitable, or suitable to self. What the mind of God may be on the subject is never thought of; and he who would suggest the inquiry would be set down as unfit for the practical realities of this life.

But this looseness of principle is not confined to the world; we find it in the professing church. How many things are introduced and practiced there, with all the show of divine authority, and made terms of membership, which have no sanction in the word of God? So that he who would seek to maintain the authority and the glory of God, or, in other words, to walk in the paths of righteousness, either in the church or in the world, must meet with trial at every step. Grace must mourn when the will of man is in the place of the righteousness of God. The meekness, also, of the divine life will be in exercise, as looking up, and leaving all to God.

But whatever others may do, the maxim of the man of God must ever be, Is it right? Is it in harmony with the revealed will of God? Not merely is it most practical, most likely to gain the end in view, but is it right? " The righteous Lord loveth righteousness: his countenance doth behold the upright." (Psa. 11:7.) Righteousness, we admit, had a special place with the Jew who was under law, and who was to see that all things were done according to the letter of the law; but surely in the New Testament we have both deeper and higher principles than in the Old, and which were brought out, not so much in the Sermon on the mount, as after the death and resurrection of Christ; and a broader righteousness is looked for, just because we are to reckon ourselves as dead and risen in Him, and not under law, but under grace. Hence the apostle says, in Rom. 6, " Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

As a test of the real character of much that we allow and do, it would be impossible to over-estimate the value of this short and simple question, Is it right? Not that we are to expect an express passage of scripture for everything we do or allow; but we may seriously inquire, is this in accordance with the revealed will of God in Christ? Are we sure that it has His approval? If not, what is it worth? It is worse than useless, it is wrong. It may be a religious observance, or an acknowledged principle in the affairs of this life; but if it has not the sanction of God, better give it up. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is the earnest desire to maintain what is right in the sight of God, though it may expose us to the opposition and oppression of the world, or to that of worldly-minded Christians.

But would not, thou mayest say, my soul-would not this seeking to walk in conformity to a rule or given standard tend to a spirit of legalism? Not in a christian point of view; on the contrary, the word of God is " the perfect law of liberty" to the divine life which we have as Christians. But this leads us to the root of this great subject, on which thou wilt do well to meditate deeply and prayerfully for a little while. Here thou wilt discover the secret of real, holy liberty.

The life of Christ, which is ours, as thou knowest, and in which we are to walk, can never dislike or be opposed to His word. The new nature delights in the words or commandments of Christ; they are but His authority to do what the divine life desires to do. Let us suppose a case. A young Christian, from the purest motives, has an intense desire to go to the prayer-meeting; this would be right—according to the mind of Christ-righteousness. But the way is not clear, he is under another. He quietly waits on God. By-and-by he is told to go -this is what his heart was desiring; he rejoices to obey; it is the law of liberty. The bent of his new life and the word of Christ are one. But take another example. A young Christian is indulging in a worldly state of mind; he is asked to go to the prayer-meeting, but he dislikes going; the will of his fleshly mind is opposed to the will of Christ; His commandments are not at present joyous, but grievous; they are not the law of liberty, but of bondage, he is most unhappy. Thus it is that obedience, walking in righteousness, is perfect liberty, holy joy, and divine power to the life of Christ in the soul. True, the Holy Spirit is the power, but we cannot separate the power of the Spirit from the authority of the word. The desires of the new life, the authority of the word, and the power of the Spirit, go together.

The first epistle of John, especially the second chapter, is a divine exposition of this great practical principle of Christianity. " Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." The words of Christ were the expression of His life when here on earth-that life is thine, my soul-that very life-wondrous, precious, blessed truth! And this shall be thy life forever, and the basis of thy happy fellowship, and of thy divine intimacies, with Christ throughout the countless ages of eternity. " When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." But, in the meantime, suffer His words so to guide and direct thee, that thou mayest walk even as He walked.

Before closing our Meditations on this beatitude it may be well to turn for a moment to Psa. 16; 17 Here we have the same great lines of truth -life and righteousness-but in immediate connection with Christ and the godly remnant in Israel. In the former we have the path of life with God, and that through this world, through death, up to the fullness of joy in His presence. " Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." In the latter we have the path of righteousness in entire dependence on God. Absolute faithfulness in heart and life, both to God and man, marked the steps of Jesus through this world. " Hear the right, O Lord," was His cry, and this should be the Christian's motto-" Hear the right, O Lord." His one grand object was to meet His Father's mind, to do His Father's will, and mark out a path for us, that we might walk in His steps. And here the heart is proved, and the value of the word. " Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. Concerning the works of men; by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." This could only be absolutely true of Christ, and only true of us in so far as we live the life of Christ. Nevertheless, we should be able to appeal to God as to the purpose of our hearts and the desire of our lives.

The Lord enable us by His grace thus to walk before Him, with proved hearts and consistent lives, notwithstanding the opposition and persecution we may have to bear. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness-after the whole mind and will of God in Christ Jesus, and practical conformity to the blessed path of the Son of man in this world-we shall surely be filled. This beautiful psalm, observe, begins with, " Hear the right, O Lord," and ends with the grand consummation, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Glorious end I Shall it be thine, my reader? Pause, consider-hast thou faith in Christ? Is His life thine? His practical ways in this world thy delight? Wondrous, blessed hope! What is to be compared with it? To awaken from the long sleep of death, to arise from the ashes of the tomb, and come forth in the radiant beauty and the heavenly glory of the Lord Jesus, is a prospect worthy of thy deepest consideration now. Another, while I write, and a near neighbor, has just passed off the stage of time. His credit at the bank in this world is counted by millions, but, if that be all, many millions, could he take them with him, would not buy a foot of ground in the paradise of God, or one drop of cold water in the regions of hell. How many fall front the lap of luxury to the depths of eternal misery! Nothing can purchase the blessings of heaven, or deliver the soul from the doom of sin, but the precious blood of Christ. It is the sinner's only passport through the gloomy gates of death, and his only title to the mansions of glory. Prayers, penance, charity, with the devout observance of religious ordinances, may pass current in this life, but without Christ and His cleansing blood they are valueless, and must be rejected as counterfeit coin at the gate of heaven. The work that saves the soul is a finished work.

Yes, be assured of this, my dear reader, that no good works are acceptable to God that are not the fruit of living union with Christ Himself. The branch that is wild by nature must be grafted into the true olive, and drink of the fatness of its roots, before it can bear fruit to the glory of God the Father. Have faith, then, in the blessed Jesus; trust His precious blood to cleanse thy sins away; trust to His holy word without a misgiving; and patiently wait His return, when He will do more and better far than thou hast either asked or thought of. " We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:26.

Meditations on the Beatitudes and Christian Devotedness, Matthew 5:5: The Third Beatitude

Verse 5. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth. In our meditations on the third beatitude, we find ourselves in happy company with that blessed One who was "meek and lowly in heart." There is evidently, in this third class, a great advance in the soul's blessedness. The heir of glory has been learning in the school of Christ how to meet the troubles of this life, as He met them. This is a great lesson, and greatly needed. Let us see that we master it fully.

In our first lesson we were shown the true condition of every soul that really knows God, and is conformed to the character of Christ-" poor in spirit." This condition being the result of what the soul sees itself to be in the divine presence, it is chiefly a question between the soul and God. All is blessed and happy there. But in going forth into the world, and attending to the various duties of this life, so many causes of trouble come in our way, that we groan in spirit. This is our second lesson. It is one of daily experience. The great advance in the third class seems to be this: the soul has so grown in grace, that now, in place of a questioning, reasoning, self-willed spirit being manifested in this scene of trial, the disciple meekly bows his head in submission to the Father's will, and learns of Jesus to be meek and lowly in heart; for, after

all, in these circumstances it is a question of either self-will or submission.

The lowly in heart begins to see more clearly that, in spite of everything around him, God is accomplishing the counsels of His own will, and making all things work together for good to them that love Him, and are the called according to His purpose. This fuller knowledge of God and His ways produces a deeply chastened state of mind. Though groaning in spirit, and mourning over the wickedness of man, the rejection of Christ by those we love, and the failure of those who bear His name, the man of faith is quiet and humble! he walks with God in the midst of it all, and refers everything to Him. In the lowest murmur of the enemy, or in his loudest roar, he hears his Father's voice; in the smallest injury or in the greatest outrage, he owns His hand; he envies not the world its pleasures, or the wicked their prosperity; all his resources are in the living God; and he can turn to Him, rest in Him, rejoice in Him, and walk with Him, above the conflicts of this troubled scene. But rest assured, my soul, that this state of blessedness is only enjoyed by those who thus know God, and believe that He is accomplishing the hidden purposes of His love, in spite of the abounding evil and wicked purposes of man. A Father's voice, a Father's hand, a Father's will, a Father's purpose, cannot fail to create and sustain a meek and lowly spirit. Faith has thus forcibly expressed itself in one of our finest songs:-

Is God for me? I fear not, though all against me rise;

When I call on Christ, my Savior, the host of evil flies.

My friend, the Lord Almighty, and He who loves me, God!

What enemy shall harm me, though coming as a flood?

I know it, I believe it, I say it fearlessly,

That God, the highest, mightiest, forever loveth me.

At all times, in all places, He standeth at my side;

He rules the battle's fury, the tempest, and the tide.

No angel and no heaven, no throne, nor power, nor might,

No love, no tribulation, no danger, fear, nor fight;

No height, no depth, no creature that has been or can be,

Can drive me from Thy bosom, can sever me from Thee.

My heart in joy upleapeth, grief cannot linger there;

She singeth high in glory, amid the sunshine fair;

The sun that shines upon me is Jesus and His love,

The fountain of my singing is deep in heaven above."

But if thou wouldst see, my soul, in absolute perfection, the meekness of which we speak, thou must turn in thy meditations to Him who knew deeper sorrow here, and deeper communion above, than any of His people can ever know. While discoursing to the people of the kingdom, and answering their questions, He has the sense of the true state of the people, and of His own rejection as the Messiah, the King of the Jews. What sorrow must have filled His heart! What relief and rest He ever found in His Father's bosom!

We will now turn for a little to Matt. 11:20-30. Here we have the distinct expression and the perfect combination of these two things in Jesus-groaning in spirit because of surrounding evil, and entire submission to His Father's will, with praise and thanksgiving. Scarcely had " Woe, woe," fallen from His lips, when He looked up to heaven, and said, " I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." With the growing, deepening sense of the unbelief of the people whom He loved, and their blinded rejection of Himself as Emmanuel in their midst, He meekly bows to His Father's sovereign will, sees only perfection in it here, and the glory that would follow it hereafter. " Thou hast hid those things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." As it then was, so has it been ever since, and so is it now. Mark well, my soul, what thou art now writing. Thou hast Jesus before thee as the obedient man, and the Father's ways in grace with the meek and lowly. He shields the Person of His beloved Son from the unholy gaze of unbelief, and hides His glory from the pride of man. " No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." All who have dared to penetrate, in the pride of intellect, into the deep mysteries of His Person, have but revealed their own blindness and folly, and exposed themselves to the snares of the enemy. But to the lowly in heart-the worshipping heart-the full blessedness of the knowledge of Jesus and His ways is made known. " The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way.... The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Psa. 25; 37) These passages no doubt refer to the millennial earth, when the God-fearing remnant shall possess it, in association with Christ as their king of glory. It is not said, observe, that they shall inherit heaven, but the earth. The place of their trial and sorrow will one day be the scene of their rest, their glory, and blessedness. The Christian will possess it in a higher way-as one with Christ, who will then feed the poor with bread, and, like the disciples of old; the heavenly saints may be privileged to distribute it.

But, to return, it may be well for the servant-the Christian, especially tried ones-to look more closely into the nature of the discouragements which led the blessed Lord and Master to turn to His Father as His only resource.

He had come to His own, but His own received Him not. The people He loved, and had come to redeem, had no heart for Him.' When John the Baptist came with mournful tidings, they refused to lament; when Jesus came with glad tidings, they refused to rejoice. They would not have Him on any terms. This is the secret of the comparatively small success of the gospel in all ages. The natural heart prefers the enjoyment of present things to a rejected Christ and a heaven that is thought to be far away. The most solemn warnings by John, and the most gracious invitations by Jesus, were alike unheeded by that generation. Enough to break any preacher's heart. When the attractions of grace, the

appeals of love, the threatenings of justice, the miseries of hell, the glories of heaven, fail to arrest or awaken the careless-when the preacher's heart is broken because of the hardness of men's hearts-what is he to do? Retire into the presence of God, and in communion with Him learn his lesson more perfectly, both as to service and submission. This is the only refuge and resting-place for the disappointed workman. Let us now see how the Lord acted.

He knew perfectly the state of the people, and how they had refused the goodness of God, both in His Person and ministry. The inevitable result of such unbelief must be judgment. Accordingly, we read, " Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, be, cause they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida... And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." This is most solemn! A more terrible, a more unsparing judgment is denounced against these highly-favored cities in the land of Israel than on the notorious corruptions of Sodom. But has not this a voice to the highly-privileged gospel-hearer of our own day? Most assuredly it has. No judgment will be so heavy, so unsparing, as that which will ere long fall on apostate Christendom. The higher the place of privilege, the deeper must be the fall of those who are untrue-who have merely the name of Christ, without the reality. And do not such abound now, as in the days of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum? Alas! the answer need not be given; the question rather is, where are the real, the true, witnesses for the glory of His Person and the authority of His word? The thought is overwhelming. What is to be done? What did the Lord do? He. turned to His Father.

" At that time Jesus answered, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." In a word, in place of complaining of the treatment He received from others, and vindicating, Himself, He meekly bows to the sovereign will of His Father, falls into His hands, as Lord of heaven and earth-the wise disposer of all things; and what is the result? Just what it must ever be-He receives the blessing. Not merely a promise, but the possession-" All things are delivered unto me of my Father." And this proves to be the occasion, through grace, of a fuller revelation of God, and of a richer blessing to mankind. " Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How beautiful and precious this is, as an example to us! it is always the way of blessing, both to ourselves and others. When Jesus was despised as a man, rejected as the Messiah, and refused His crown of glory, He did not stand up for His rights, as we would say, but meekly submitted, and looked up to His Father as Lord of heaven and earth. He could leave all in His hands, and wait His sovereign will. In the meantime the blessing flows, like a wave of life, from the ocean of eternal love -it overflows all Jewish limits.

The Gentiles are brought in here. The Father is revealed as the source of all blessing. " Come unto me.... I will give you rest." The poor Gentile as well as the Jew; are you weary and heavy laden? " Come unto me." It is pure grace now. No qualification required, save that you are weary and heavy laden. Come, just as you are, just now; " I will give you rest." The blessed Lord does not here say by what means He will give us rest, but we must trust Him. He can no more trust man, man must now trust Him. There is no other way of blessing now. There is only one question: Is He fit to be trusted? This is all. Trust Him. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Psa. 2:12.

But this full, flowing tide of grace does not lead to carelessness of walk, as man might say it would. " Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The difference between the two verses is very distinct, and has been often noticed. In verse 28 it is, " Come unto me.... and I will give you rest;" in verse 29 it is, " Take my yoke upon you.... and ye shall find rest to your souls." The one is pure, absolute, unconditional grace to the sinner; the other is the yoke of Christ for the believer. The reason why so few have learned to meet the troubles of this life as He met them, is, because they are not under His yoke, and learning of Him. They are thinking of their own character; how much they have been misunderstood, how grossly they have been misrepresented, how falsely accused, and how unjustly or unkindly treated. They have not learned that their own reputation is the last thing they should think about; that now they have only to care for the character of Christ. Those who are under the same yoke must walk side by side, and step by step. True, the strong one may pull the weak one through, when the chariot wheels sink deep in the sand of the desert; but they must walk together..

The Lord give us thus to learn the great truth of our third beatitude, " Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."

Meditations on the Beatitudes and Christian Devotedness, Matthew 5:4: The Second Beatitude

Verse 4. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." In the different beatitudes, we have placed before us in the most interesting way the beautiful varieties and characteristics of grace. This is also most instructive, and ought to go far in forming our own character after this heavenly model. The second beatitude is perfectly distinct from the first, though both features may be found in the same person. The form in which the divine life expresses itself in the second class, is of a broader and more active character than the first. To be poor in spirit is more a condition between the soul and God alone, and might be possessed in perfection though there were none to mourn over. But to be a " mourner " in the sense of our text, is to be deeply and tenderly affected by the condition-especially the moral and spiritual condition -of others around us. For example: The worldliness of true Christians; the manifest delusion of mere professors; the godless ways of those who may be our near neighbors, accompanied with a deep sense of inability to witness for God in such a scene, fills the heart with holy sorrow. At the same time, this holy sorrow, which is so good and wholesome, and which leads to much prayer and dependence on God, must not be mistaken for a low, complaining, unhappy, discontented, mournful spirit in ourselves, which we may think answers to this beatitude. Not so; such would be little likely to enter into the sorrows of others, or mourn over the dishonor done to God and His truth in this world. They are too much occupied with their own state of mind, and that which immediately concerns themselves.

We may, and ought-if we are poor in spirit and true mourners-to be bright and happy in the. divine presence, where all is peace and joy, and yet have fellowship with the deep sympathies of Him who was "a man of sorrows," in our journey through this world. And the more we know of His Spirit, the deeper will be our sense of what is due to Him, and the keener will be our sorrow when we see so many who set themselves against His authority, and use His goodness for the display of their own pride and glory. But, wonderful grace, the Lord submits to be despised and rejected still: and as a tinge of sorrow colored His path and characterized His sayings in this world, so it must ever be with the godly while the world continues as it is. The Lord patiently waits until His kingdom come in power and glory, and then His will shall be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. Now we have the kingdom in mystery. (Matt. 13) Then it will be in full manifestation. Now demons rule, though God

overrules; then Christ and His saints will reign. Could we at any moment, by night or day, unveil the world, what should we see? From the den of poverty to the palace of luxury-one vast scene of human sorrow. This makes the Christian's heart, however bright and cheerful in the Lord's presence, somber and sad in the presence of such universal misery, knowing as he does its real source.

But pray, my soul, speakest thou thus of thyself, of thine own experience, of what thou hast seen and felt in thy christian course? Could there be this character of feeling without entering, in the Spirit of Christ, into the condition of things around us? It is well never to speak or write beyond our measure: all should be done in the divine presence. Still, it is well to have our hearts challenged. But poor indeed would it be, were it possible to speak of such things unless it be from the depths of the heart's communion with the rejected Lord; and more, from long and varied experience and observation. It can only be tasted when the heart has a true sense of the moral condition of the church and the world. Then we must " mourn" over the fearful effects of sin and apostasy which meet us at every step. We walk in the midst of ruins. Wrecks of every kind lie strewed around us. Blighted hopes, unexpected calamities, with a multitude of little secret sorrows, characterize the land in which we are strangers and pilgrims, so that like captive Israel of old, "by the waters of Babylon," we may " sit down and weep," though we need not hang our harps on the willows; we are privileged to rejoice daily in the blessed hope of the Lord's coming, when we shall be fully and forever comforted.

But to explain. How many hast thou seen floating down the stream of time as on a calm summer day, dreaming only of worldly ease and prosperity, when, suddenly, the wind of adversity rises, and all is changed in a moment. Death enters-the messenger little thought of, little expected, enters-the head of the family is suddenly struck down; all is desolate; nothing now is heard but the wail of the widow and fatherless. But, come these things within the sphere of the Christian's sympathies? Most surely they do, and must so long as we have human hearts. But they are looked at in connection with the groaning creation, and lead us to pray, " Come, Lord Jesus, come." Surely the Lord's heart was touched with such a scene as this, and may not ours? Something like what is occurring daily around us must have been in His mind when He described the rich worldling and his fearful end. " Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then, whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Luke 12:20.

Singularly enough, while writing these lines, a messenger with heavy tidings arrives; a rich man, well known for many years, has died suddenly.

The effect on the mind for the moment is overwhelming. The thoughts run rapidly back over those years; the different times a word was said about the Lord, and the value of the soul are recalled: the confession of their importance, and the promise to think more about them. But who at such a moment can feel satisfied with the measure of his own faithfulness? Did I speak plainly enough, often enough, earnestly enough? conscience will be ready to ask, and it may be to accuse. But all is now of no avail; the scene is closed: the curtain fallen: and we cross not the dark line which separates the two states of being. Still we may heave a sigh and utter a groan over the sad effects of sin, as the Lord Himself did at the grave of Lazarus; yet no uncertainty was there as to the welfare of the precious, immortal soul. Every believer knows something of the value of the soul and salvation, and if both are lost, who would not mourn? Nevertheless, the sphere of thy meditations lies more within the limits of the kingdom, and here thou mayest pause for a little.

Nothing is more fitted to fill the heart with real sorrow than the immense number of mere professors. And surely a responsibility beyond that which attaches to the mere worldling, rests with those who take the name and profess to be the followers of Christ. They will be judged by a different standard. Many foolish virgins now mingle with the wise, and their lack of oil seems not to be discovered until it is too late to buy. The door shut and the lamps out will leave them in hopeless darkness and despair. This, alas! will be the portion of many who now hold a high place in the professing church. But how difficult it is to reach that class, how difficult to speak to them; how difficult to know which is which! All have lamps, but all have not oil. They are self-deceived and may never be undeceived until, with awful surprise, they open their eyes in hell, being in torment. Still, the spiritual eye can see, that while much is made of mere externals, very little is made of Christ, and of that which is due to Him.

Again, the agony of mind peculiar to the sight of such a state of things, with the painful sense that you can render no help, and can only testify against it by complete separation from it all, seeks relief in sighs and groans before the Lord; you must be a mourner with Him, in such a scene. And what may draw forth a yet deeper sigh, you see those there who really belong to the Lord, but who refuse to see separation, either from the natural or the religious world. Thus loneliness in spirit is the inevitable path of a true mourner, his only friends are outside like himself. They mourn together. "Yea, we wept when we remembered Zion." And what was it that drew forth the deep sigh from the "man of sorrows" when here, but the sign-seeking unbelief of His people? "And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily, I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation." It is still the same: something like a sign that appeals to the senses is believed in and eagerly run after, while the blessed Lord in rejection, outside the camp, has as little attraction for the sign-seeking multitude now as then. True, Christ and His cross are not left out, that would be equally unpopular; but gather around His name the glory of the world, and multitudes will cry, " Hosannah to the Son of David;" but when the cross with its shame and rejection is presented and the pilgrim staff, it is " Away with him, away with him."

The mourner must now retire into his secret chamber and breathe out his sorrow into the bosom of his Lord. He must stand aloof from all this sad mixture of the church and the world, well knowing that he will be judged as wanting in brotherly love, and uncharitably affected towards other Christians. He will not have his sorrows to seek; but the Lord knows it all, and he shall be comforted. The time is coming when he will enter into the joy of his Lord, and reap the fruit of his testimony for Him throughout eternity. " Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Every tear that has been shed, every sigh that has gone up to God, every groan that has been uttered in sympathy with a rejected Christ, are all treasured by Him as the memorials of His own grace working in us, and will surely be held in everlasting remembrance.

The Lord grant unto my dear reader, the true knowledge of Jesus, not only as Savior and Lord, but as the Man of sorrows, who went about doing good, though with the deep abiding sense of rejection in His tender, loving heart. May we enter with our whole heart into the sympathies and hopes of our blessed Lord as to this wide-spread scene of sin and sorrow, until He return to fill it with joy and gladness. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Thy sympathies and hopes are ours;

Dear Lord! we wait to see

Creation, all-below, above,

Redeemed and blessed by Thee.

Our longing eyes would fain behold

That bright and blessed brow,

Once wrung with bitterest anguish,

wear Its crown of glory now

Meditations on the Beatitudes and Christian Devotedness, Matthew 5:3: The First Beatitude

Verse 3. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. If ever it was needful for thee, my soul, to weigh thy words in the balances of the sanctuary, and to meditate in its sacred light, surely it is at, this moment. How deeply important to understand the true meaning of the Lord's own words here, and to enter fully into the true spirit of His teaching. Condition of soul and blessing are inseparable; the one depends on the other. This is what thou must learn. It is also well to remember, that it is not by means of great learning or great opportunities for study -valuable as these are-that we know Jesus, understand His word, or see His glories; but by the light and teaching of the Holy Spirit. " He shall glorify me," says the Lord, " for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." John 16:14.

The first beatitude, observe, lies at the basis of all the others. It is not only a distinct feature in itself, but it should characterize all the others and all who belong to Jesus. Surely nothing can be so necessary to a soul that has to do with God as poverty of spirit. Not poverty in circumstances merely, or poverty in words and ways, but in spirit-in the heart, the feelings, the inward man, and all before the living God. How often we may have said with reference to one who has injured us, " I freely forgive him, and I will be the same to him as ever, but I can't forget it for all that." This is not being " poor in spirit;" it is being outwardly so, but not "in spirit." It comes from the same root as the spirit of the world which says, " I will have it out with him, I am determined not to be beaten." How different to the state of the blessed man, here described by the Lord-" poor in spirit;" not in outward conduct merely, but in spirit I The outward ways should be the true expression of the inward state. This is God's pleasant sacrifice. " The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psa. 51:17.) This was ever the spirit, in all divine perfection, of the lowly, dependent, Son of man. But the grace that has brought down the proud spirit of man, and laid him in the dust, humbled and broken, before God, has laid the foundation of a true Christian character, and of the soul's richest blessing. True, alas he may one day forget his right place, and the old spirit of the natural man may be allowed to appear for a time, but the Lord knows how to bring him back, and how to break him down again. Nothing can be more sad than for one who has been down in this place ever to leave it, even during a moment's temptation. It is to lose sight of that Christ-like grace which God especially delights to honor in every dispensation.

Turn again, I pray thee, my soul, and muse a little longer on these mysterious, moral depths. Oh! to fathom them with thine own line, to know them in thine own deep experience I Is it thus? When all is gone from us, when we are nothing -nothing at all, even in thought and feeling, then all comes into us from God-God in Christ Jesus; and we are satisfied? Yes, thank God, this is the condition, this the blessing. The robe, the ring, the fairest miter, would not be enough; nothing but the fatted calf, could satisfy the famished prodigal, after he has spent his all. When he was brought down to the husks, and even these kept from him, he thought of his father's house, where only he could find the fatted calf. It must ever be so. When Naomi returned as an emptied one to the land of Israel, she found it was the beginning of barley harvest. When Abram fell on his face before God, then flowed the many streams of grace from the ocean of eternal love. " I will, I will," runs on freely. It is all grace now. " Thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. I will make thee exceeding fruitful... I will make nations of thee... I will establish my covenant between me and thee.... And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." (Gen. 17:1-8.) And so with the leper. When the evil energy of the flesh ceased to work, he was pronounced clean. The priest could now go forth to the unclean place, and bring him into the camp, with the full blessing of death and resurrection, typically seen, and in due time, the eighth day, the consummation of blessing, he comes into his tent. So long as we are seeking to maintain anything of our own, to cherish an unbroken spirit as to some favorite opinion or object, we are resisting God's will and shutting out His grace; but when we are brought down to our real nothingness, and have nothing to maintain but Christ and His glory, the flood gates are thrown open, and grace flows in.

Some have thought that literal poverty, in its ordinary sense, is connected in the Lord's mind with the blessings of the kingdom, and so have parted with their property at once, and become poor for the kingdom of heaven's sake. In place of distributing their income as the Lord's stewards, and as He might call for it, they have entrusted it to others, and taken the place of dependence themselves. The former is certainly a much easier way than the latter; but which is right? To hold property for Christ and His service in this world, and to give it out as a steward according to His mind, is a christian service that requires much waiting on the Master, and great liberty of soul in His presence. A scrupulous conscience would be in perpetual bondage.

The idea is founded on Luke 4 " And be lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." The words, " in spirit," are left out. But there is no ground in this text for such an idea. It is the fruit of superstition, not of faith, and savors of monachism. It is a question of the inner man in contrast with the outer. He who is poor as to this world's goods, may be of a proud unbending spirit, while the rich may be truly humble. At the same time we believe that the Lord has oftener used a man's miseries than his comforts to bring him to Himself, but that is the Lord's doing, and quite another thing. The steward's place is to meet his Master's mind, and not to indulge his own. The difference between Matthew and Luke in presenting the beatitudes, is to be accounted for by the characteristic and divinely arranged differences of the gospels.

" That in Matthew," says one, "gives the discourse on the mount in the abstract, presenting each blessing to such and such a class." " Blessed are the poor in spirit." Luke makes it a more personal address. " Blessed are ye poor." The reason is manifest. In the one case it is the prophet greater than Moses, who lays down the principles of the kingdom of heaven in contrast with all Jewish thought, feeling, and expectation. In the other case, it is the Lord comforting the actually gathered disciples, addressing themselves as so separated to Himself, and not merely

legislating, so to speak. It was now the time of sorrow; for as bringing the promises in His Person, man would not have him.

Returning for a moment to our text, we would only further add on this beatitude, that the Lord here says, that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the " poor in spirit." They are the heirs of the kingdom. The riches of the King and the glories of His kingdom have come down to enrich the "poor in spirit." Who would not be poor in spirit? we may well exclaim. Who would not willingly be self-emptied before the Lord? But oh! the danger of being pre-occupied when the invitation comes. Houses, lands, oxen, the home, the world; and, what is worst of all, deadliest of all-self- self-occupation in a thousand ways! But to the poor in spirit, to those who have reached the end of self, to those who are in the dust before God, yet cling by faith to Jesus and His cross; to those whose reason is silent, whose fair forms of religiousness are laid aside, who can only say, I have nothing now but Christ; all that I sought to maintain is gone-nothing, no, nothing now but Christ. The whole riches of His kingdom, and, better far, He Himself is mine-mine now, mine forever. Praise His name!

Meditations on the Beatitudes and Christian Devotedness, Matthew 5:1-16: Introduction

As all our natural thoughts of blessedness-like the earthly expectations of the Jews -are in perfect contrast with the Lord's teaching on this subject, it may be well for our souls to examine carefully, as in His presence, the true principles of real happiness. Surely our hearts would desire perfect blessedness, which means perfect happiness-the happiness of heaven, not the uncertain happiness, or rather the transient excitement, of earth. From observation, habit of thought, general impressions, we have all shared largely in the popular notions of what constitutes a life of happiness here: but now, with the instructions of the Great Teacher before us, we shall do well to take our place at His feet, and learn of Him the sure and safe way to a life of holiness and happiness here, and of unmingled blessedness hereafter.

Mankind in general would say, " Blessed are the rich, who can surround themselves with every comfort; blessed are the joyful, the high-spirited, the independent, who know nothing of hungering and thirsting." But the Lord, who was from heaven, and knew the character that suited the kingdom of heaven, says, " Blessed are the poor, the mourners, the meek, the hungering and thirsting ones," &c., &c. This is completely reversing the universal judgment of men, and contradicting the cherished thought of every human heart. But what an unspeakable mercy for all classes that happiness does not depend on our circumstances, nor on how much we possess of this world's goods, but on the state of the mind; or, in one word, on character-a character conformed to Christ; for the beatitudes are essentially the character of the blessed Lord Himself. Who so poor in spirit, so meek and lowly in heart, as Jesus? Who so obedient and dependent as man? Who so filled with peace, and uninterrupted in communion with His Father in heaven? He has left us an example, that we should walk in His steps.

But before speaking of the different features of that wonderful character-which ought to be our own-we must notice some of the events in the Lord's public ministry which led to this full and formal proclamation of the kingdom, and the revelation of its fundamental principles. And here, Lord, in studying thy character and teaching, thy miracles, and ways in grace and love, guide us by thy Holy Spirit, reveal thy varied glories to our souls, and form our characters anew, that we may manifest while on earth the heavenly principles of thy kingdom. And let it be thine, for thyself, my soul, in meditating on these beatitudes-on the different features of the faithful One in Israel-to judge thyself in their light, that thou mayest be a true reflection of Him in this self-seeking world. This is clearly thy place and privilege during thy Lord's absence. But thou wilt say, Are not the disciples who are here addressed the remnant in Israel? Most surely; the Sermon on the Mount was preached to His disciples, but in the hearing of all Israel, and sets forth the principles of the kingdom in connection with that people, and in moral contrast with the ideas they-had formed respecting it. The character and conduct of those who are suitable to the kingdom, and the conditions of entering into it, are also proclaimed by the Prophet King.1 But, alas! through the unbelief of the people, and the rejection of their King, the establishment of the earthly kingdom has been delayed, and the church, which is heavenly, has been brought in, and Christians are now the bearers of God's testimony, and witnesses for Christ in the world.

This is the Christian's mission; a truly blessed, but solemnly responsible one. "As my Father

hath sent me," says the blessed Lord, " even so send I you." Here we are told by the Lord Himself that our mission in this world is on the same principle, and of the same character, as was His own. And to this end He reveals to His disciples -not to the apostles merely-the great truth, that in virtue of His finished work, they are brought into association with Himself, as they had never been before; for it is only now, for the first time, that He says, " I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." And now, in the full assurance of their pardon and peace with God, and filled with the Holy Spirit, they were to go forth as the bearers of His message, and ever to be characterized by His Spirit.

We will now turn for a moment to the immediate circumstances which led Him to ascend the mountain, and address the multitudes.

More than beautiful on the mountains of Israel were the feet of Him who came as Jehovah's messenger with such healing and blessing to His people. But, wondrous, precious truth! He was Himself Jehovah. The Spirit of God delights to introduce Him to us in Matthew's Gospel as Jehovah Jesus, as Emmanuel, God with us. Oh! mystery of mysteries!-Emmanuel, God manifested in flesh. Not merely as King of glory seated upon a throne in heaven, but as a babe, born of a virgin, and cradled in a manger; yet the Son of David, the beloved of God. As Son of man He suffered and died, but infinite value was given to His work by the glory of His Person as Emmanuel, God with us. What a resting-place for a troubled soul! For thee, my reader-for all who believe in Him.

For purposes suited to our gospel, the whole of our Lord's history, until the commencement of His ministry after the death of John the Baptist, is here passed over. He then comes before us, in fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah, as a great light shining in the land of darkness and of death. " In the land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." Matt. 4:15, 16; Isa. 9:1, 2.

The whole country, even to the extent of the ancient territory of Israel, it is said, was excited and aroused by His mighty deeds. These were the faithful witnesses of His Messiahship. The tribes of Israel were thus summoned to the standard of their Messiah. Unbelief was left without excuse. He was not only the light of life shining on the darkness of death, but He was the mighty power of God in healing and blessing. The strong man He had bound, and He was now spoiling him of his goods. The need and misery of man, both as to his soul and body, were the great objects of His mission of mercy. He was there to forgive their iniquities, to heal their diseases, to redeem their lives from destruction,

and to crown them with loving-kindness and tender mercies. (Psa. 103) Thus we read, " And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy: and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people, from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan." Verses 24, 25.

The attention of the whole country being thus attracted, and vast multitudes following Him, eagerly desiring to hear His gracious words, He unfolds the character of the kingdom of heaven, and of the people who would enter into it, in what is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount, which opens with the beatitudes.

Meditations on the Beatitudes and Christian Devotedness, Matthew 5:8: The Sixth Beatitude

VERSE 7. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. We now approach the most heavenly and lofty of all the beatitudes, and in some respects the most difficult to make plain to others. Not, surely, that we should be less acquainted with a pure heart than with a merciful heart, but the object of the pure heart, and the effect of seeing that object, is a blessedness which transcends the power of language. This may be understood from the effect of lower objects which come within our own experience. We look on an object of interest or affection-a face, it may be-a mother's face, for example, as sung our christian poet on receiving his mother's picture.

Thus we stand, we gaze, absorbed with the tender recollections of the past, the bright anticipations of the future, and the passing over of that "little while" which comes in between. And still we stand in silent meditation; the heart moved to its deepest depths; the eye fixed on that countenance

with melancholy delight, until self and all outward things are forgotten. Such deep emotions may be spoken of to a few-very few-but they must remain forever undescribed. We must have both the condition of heart and the object to know their. full meaning; and so it is with the heart's vision of heavenly things-the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. Let us now endeavor to explain.

The moral condition of the heart or soul, is here the important question. God only being pure absolutely, there must be purity of heart to appreciate Him. There is no thought here, we need scarcely say, of bodily sight, for even Jesus is now hidden from our view. It is only with the eyes of the heart or the moral vision of the soul-which is simply faith-that we can see God or appreciate His excellency and glory; and this blessedness is made to depend on the condition of the heart. " Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The purer the heart is, the more clearly it will see God, and the more clearly it sees God, the purer it must become. Thus the one acts and re-acts upon the other.

The purity of heart which is here pronounced " blessed" may be the result of faithfully following in the line of the earlier beatitudes, especially the first of this class, which leads to the contemplation of God in one of the most attractive aspects of His character-divine mercy. From the commencement to the close of scripture, mercy is spoken of as the grand prerogative and glory of God. The Psalms especially speak much of His " mercy and his truth." To Him " belongeth mercy;" " He is plenteous in mercy;" it is "above the heavens;" and " the earth is full of his mercy." Now the simple or normal effect of drinking at this fountain of mercy is to become "merciful," and this grace immediately precedes and leads the way to that moral perception of God, which results in purity of heart.

It may be well to notice here, that we cannot make or keep the heart pure by trying to do so. Were we to look within and make the condition of the heart our study and our object, we should sink down, as many have done, into a state of mere mystical, self-occupation. To be merciful, the heart must have an object that is the perfect expression of the divine mercy; to be pure, it must have an object that is absolute in purity. As the heart is not inherently pure, it can only be accounted so by reflecting a pure object; and that object being Christ, we find in Him the true explanation of a pure heart and seeing God. The heart is purified by faith in Christ, who is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His Person. (See Acts 15:9 Peter 1:22; Heb. 1:3.) What relief, what rest, the heart finds in finding Him! No theories, no analogies, no efforts, no experience can solve the question or give rest to the mind, but Himself-Himself known as the once lowly but now exalted Man in glory.

Now then, my soul, let thine eye rest on Him-the eye of faith, the eye of thy heart. Meditate long, meditate deeply on Him. Gaze now on that " countenance transcendent." Blended there are the rays of all divine perfection, and of every beatific vision. Majesty divine as "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God," mingling its many glories with the sweet and lowly graces of godly sorrow, meekness, righteousness, mercy, holiness, and peace, together with all goodness, wisdom, and love, is the God whom the pure heart sees; but not only sees, its privilege is to bask in the beams of that moral glory now and for evermore.

But see, I pray thee, that Christ is thy one object; a pure heart must be an undivided heart-a whole heart. Thus and thus only shall thy whole body be full of light. All other objects but dim thy spiritual vision. " They looked unto him," says the psalmist, "and were lightened." When darkness is loved rather than light, there can be no perception or appreciation of moral beauty. Such was Israel's blindness, and such it is now, but the day is coming when they shall look on Him whom they rejected, and see. in Him the glories and perfection of the Godhead. Then, truly, shall they see God, and know the blessedness of being "pure in heart."

With the people of Israel, we know, this is future; but what of thine own purity of heart, O my soul? Is it a present, deep, divine, blessed reality? Is thy heart pure? Seest thou God? These are solemn questions, but proper ones; and God forbid that any of us should speak of these things without knowing them personally in the divine presence. But surely we know Him in whom the holiness of God is perfectly reflected. There only we can see God and have communion with Him.

Throughout the New Testament there is much said about purity of heart. It is looked for as the true condition of all Christians, though, alas, all are not "pure in heart." So much is said, and said truly, about the deceitfulness of the human heart in our discourses and papers, that the expression "pure in heart" is supposed, even by most Christians, to be a figure which is not intended to mean what it says, and thus it is passed over. But scripture means a great deal that is most definite by pureness of heart. The apostle in writing to his son Timothy, says, " Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." This passage clearly teaches what we are to look for and expect in all who come to the Lord's table. Only such will suit Him who says, I am " he that is holy, he that is true." The apostle Peter in his address to the council (Acts 15) speaks of the Gentiles as "purifying their hearts by faith," and therefore as entitled to christian

fellowship as the Jewish believers. And in his epistle he says, "seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." The apostle James in his exhortations uses a similar form of expression: "and purify your hearts, ye double minded." John, also, in speaking of the Lord's coining, says, " And

every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he"-that is, Christ-" is pure." Here the Lord Jesus is brought before us, not only as being in Himself essentially pure, but as the measure and standard of purity for us. " Every one that bath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure."

The hope of the Lord's coining has thus a transforming power. In looking for Him and waiting for Him now, we seek to purify ourselves even as He is pure. But when we see Him as He is in the glory, we shall be like Him-perfectly conformed to Him in all things. Now we are transformed by degrees, then we shall be conformed completely and forever.

This is also the teaching of 2 Cor. 3 " But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The meaning is plain and most important; we behold the glory of the Lord in the unveiled face of Jesus—the exalted Man in the glory-and are transformed according to the same image from one degree of glory to another, by the Lord the Spirit. But we are not only transformed into His likeness morally, we are the reflectors of His glory. Now the believer is the glass in whom the image of the Lord should be seen.

Forget not this great truth, O my soul; what can be more important? Oh that this one thought may take possession of thy whole being! What! mirrored on thy spirit and ways should be the moral image of thy absent Lord: oh see that nothing conies between thy heart and Him, that the likeness be not marred! The purer the mirror, the more distinct will each feature appear. O wondrous theme! O mystery divine! O blessing infinite! Language fails to express the heart's joyous wonder in meditating on this highest expression of sovereign grace. To be maintained in outward purity as men reckon, is a great mercy, and one for which we never can be too thankful. Who sees not that Joseph had a purer heart, practically viewed, than Reuben and Judah, and on which have mankind set the seal of their approval?

But to be brought so near to the Lord, and to be so purified by faith as to become like a polished mirror, on which may be reflected His glory, transcends all power to express the praise and thanksgiving due to His most blessed name.

But the day is near when thou wilt see thy Lord face to face, and as He is-in all the deep realities of His love and glory. Then no forgetfulness, no failure, no defilements by the way, shall ever dim the luster of thy mirror, or mar the reflection of His glory. The great promise of the New Jerusalem shall be fulfilled; "they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their forehead." The likeness will then be complete and manifest to all. Higher than this we can never rise; richer in blessing we can never be; and for this consummation of all blessedness, not we only, but our Jesus prays-" that they may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." John 17

And now, in parting with thee, my dear reader, for another month, as we may never meet again, allow me to ask, Is this to be thy eternity of celestial blessedness? Or art thou still undecided in thy soul about the Lord Jesus as thy Savior? Why hesitate? Why be in doubt? The work required has been done by Jesus; done for thee, if thou wilt only believe; done for the chief of sinners. Thou hast nothing to trust to but His finished work. Oh then, believe in Him, put thy trust in Him, wait for Him, never doubt Him, and thy celestial blessing is secure forever. But remember, I pray thee, that without faith-faith in Jesus-there is no blessing, no purity, as we have been seeing, and without purity there can be no heaven for thee. The city of our God is a pure city, and over its pearly gates these words are written, " There shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth." Whatever its inhabitants once were, they are all pure now; and their robes of unsullied white can meet with no defilement there. The confusing mixtures of time-law and grace, faith and works, Christ and the world, flesh and Spirit, are unknown there-purity characterizes everything. The streets are of pure gold, as it were transparent glass; the walls are jasper, and "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." Rev. 21

The Lord give thee, my dear reader, to come to Jesus now; give thy heart undividedly to Him: this is the first grand step towards purity of heart. Oh at once bow at His blessed feet. The dark regions of hell, where the lurid glare of its fire unquenchable will only make the darkness more visible, contrasts awfully with the city of glories. " The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Which of those two places, my dear reader, is to be thine-thine forever? With both before thee, couldst thou hesitate another moment? Surely not. I must now leave thee with the Lord. May thy motto henceforth be "All for Jesus."

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