

Fanning it into Flame
Sunday, October 09, 2011
The Beatitudes

Matthew chapter 5 begins with a series of declarations of blessedness by the Lord Jesus Christ. It was the beginning of what has been titled The Sermon on the Mount comprised by chapters 5, 6, and 7. The Beatitudes, as they have been called, means *supreme blessedness; exalted happiness*. The person who is characterized by these attributes is not only happy, but fortunate or prosperous.

Matthew 5:3-20 (NIV)

³ *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Some have thought these to be character qualities that we need to strive for, but what I want to propose is that they are byproducts of a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the embodiment at the heart of each one. Once when Jesus was called "Good Teacher" he replied, *"Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone."* He recognized as a man that God alone was good. He was poor in spirit. I won't go through each one, but as you do it's not uncommon to feel like you come short in one way or another. At times like this we begin to ask ourselves how to get further along in God. How can we become more like Christ? How can we grow spiritually? The enemy likes to listen in on these moments and make suggestions that appeal to our old nature to take control. We can think we need to really dig into the Word of God more, pray more, work harder, etc. We can even become critical of others and develop a bad attitude because we don't want to be spiritually anemic. What we don't realize is happening is our trying to do it in our own strength. The motivation is right, but the outcome is wrong. **1 Corinthians 8:1b-3 (NIV) Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.** ² *The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. ³ But the man who loves God is known by God.* True spiritual growth comes from our relationship with God through Christ our Lord. Jesus told the Jews who were reacting to his doing things differently in **John 5:39-40(NIV)**, *"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. **These are the Scriptures that testify about me,**"⁴⁰ *yet you refuse to come to me to have life."* **Psalm 119:11 (NIV)** *I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.* This verse might make it seem like that's the key to our success. We would be just as wrong as the Jews Jesus was speaking to. While it is important to know and study the Word, the real key is having the one who is the Word living in us. **John 1:1 (NIV)** *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

Jesus went on to say in the Sermon on the Mount, *"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. ¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ **In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. ¹⁷ "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*** How can we be the light of the world when Jesus is the light of the world? It's because the one who is light and life lives in us and wants to live through us. As we allow him to flow through us we will grow in grace and knowledge of him. The way he fulfilled the law was by paying the price for the penalty the law required and imputing his righteousness to us. If you're feeling spiritually weak and in need of a real boost, take him at his word and trust that you are more than a conqueror in Christ. Then do as Paul told Philemon in verse 6: ***I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.*** Be supremely blessed in exalted happiness!