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God's Beautiful Attitudes

556-B

Series: The Beatitudes

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

God's Beautiful Attitudes

Welcome to our final look at the Beatitudes. This is lesson sixty to be exact. The title is God's Beautiful Attitudes. We will attempt to scurry through the previous 60 lessons by viewing the subject this way:

- I- The Perspective – Looking Down
- II- The Principles – Looking Back
- III- The Process – Looking Ahead

Our objective is not to reteach sixty lessons, but to step back and look for some mountaintops to remember. We want to gain an overview of the whole passage. When you are in the midst of a huge forest, you are in awe of the stately trees. But that awe is even more accentuated when you get into an airplane and fly overhead. You are then able to see the miles of massive forest. You see the plan of the Creator. You see the shading and the effects of time and the contrast. Then the forest is seen in its whole perspective.

We have been in the Beatitudes for so long that we may have lost perspective. We may be thrilled by each towering oak of truth, but in closing we need to climb up into God and look down at the whole forest. We need to stand in awe of the majesty of the blessed life God has designed for each one of us.

We must remember first of all what it means to be blessed. The Greek word is "*mercarious*" (which means joy that is self-contained). It can best be pictured by the Greek's description of the Isle of Cyprus, Hay Mercadia, they called it, the Happy Isle. They said it was an island so fertile, so rich and so perfect in climate that all one could ever need was found on its shores. It was self-contained joy, serene and untouchable. It was joy that was found within.

Now let's contrast this with our word happiness. The prefix "hap" means chance. Man's happiness depends on the chances and changes of life. But God's blessedness is self-contained.

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It is joy that comes from within. It is self-contained joy that is unaffected by the chances and changes of life.

So Jesus begins, "Oh what bliss, what self-contained joy, how blessed the man or woman who is..." He then proceeds to paint image after image of God's kind of joy. These images stand in stark contrast to the things in which the world finds its pleasure. You will never reconcile the Beatitudes, God's Beautiful Attitudes, with the world's principles of happiness. What fellowship has darkness with light? If self-contained joy resists and even reacts in reverse to what man, apart from God, is looking for, it is no small wonder that God's Beautiful Attitudes can only be produced in you by Christ.

So we ask this question, "If this is God's blessed life, are each of these blessings a separate entity, or is there a divine thread woven through them creating a pattern seen only from God's vantage point?" I believe they are divinely interlocked, each depending on the other, each one building on the other. Any taken outside of the other will lose much of the luster of its purpose. We will use these Beautiful Attitudes as a vantage point to measure how much control God has in our lives. I want to give you the list one at a time and then a capsule definition. As we progress through them, you can rate your own spiritual maturity by how fully these evidences of God are supernaturally manifesting themselves in your life. You may find one area that stands out with a need above the others. At the end of the lesson, I will give you a suggestion concerning what you can do about it.

First of all, make a chart of the eight Beatitudes. Put little arrows beside them to tell you whether or not that is an attitude that has to do with man's attitude towards God, man's attitude towards man or man's attitude towards his own heart. In the case of the last two, it is a conglomeration of all of the above. As I read these, I will give you a capsule definition. To make this chart you will have these columns. What is God's Beautiful Attitude? What is its definition? How do you evaluate yourself at this present time in your life relative to that quality? What is God's solution, and how can you become more of the person that, in God's sight, you are? Here are some of the definitions. The last column is blank. We will fill that in at the close of the lesson.

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<u>The Beatitudes</u>			
	God's Beautiful Attitudes	Definition	Self-Evaluation
1-	Poverty of spirit		
2-	Spirit of grief or mourning		
3-	Spirit of meekness		
4-	Spiritual hunger		
5-	Spirit of mercy		
6-	Spirit of purity		
7-	Spirit of peace		
8-	Spiritual persecution		

1- Poverty of spirit. Poverty of spirit is a life that sees itself in the light of who God is and is humbled. This person then sees in himself what he in Christ can become and is encouraged.

2- Spirit of grief or mourning. It is a life brought to tears by all that breaks the heart of God.

3- God wants us to have a spirit of meekness. This is a life that is increasingly devoid of hostility and increasingly controlled by quiet gentleness. This is a spirit of meekness.

4- God desires that we have spiritual hunger. It is a life that starves for God and all He is as the only thing that can sustain him or refresh him. Spiritual hunger.

5- The spirit of mercy. This Beatitude encourages entering into the sufferings of others until you experience their hurts and are moved with compassion to help alleviate their sufferings. It is a spirit of mercy.

6- A spirit of purity. This is holiness of thought that reflects itself in sensitivity to evil and the rejection of all that defiles.

7- A spirit of peace. This is a life devoid of bitterness and strife. It is evidenced by the absence of personal rights. It is a life whose purpose is to bring men to peace with God. It is to have

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peace within and peace with one another the Two Mile Island way.

8- Spiritual persecution. This is a life that is so identified with the cross of Christ that its very presence produces conviction in others often followed by harassment. This harassment is responded to with love.

If you were to outline these qualities and their promises and begin with the first then go backwards through the promises that are given with each one, it would read something like this:

The blessed man is one who knows who he is and weeps over it with a gentle spirit desiring only God, reflecting God by meeting needs, pleasing God by staying pure and making and keeping harmony even while pressured and pressed from without. This man has an audience with the King who will comfort him, grant him an inheritance, fill him with spiritual treasures, forgive him, reveal Himself to him and give him His character and give him His glory. What a progression. What a life.

This all begins with being poor in spirit. To be poor in spirit is the first priority. You cannot have the others until you have this. The Amplified Bible says to be poor in spirit is to rate yourself insignificant. Barclay says, "it is one who has realized his utter helplessness." Pink says, "it is one who realizes he is nothing, can do nothing and has need of all things." To be poor in spirit is the beginning of the blessed life.

The best illustration is one I shared in one of the first lessons of this series. I used a story about a friend who owned a 55 Chevy. As people drove by his house, they could see this car parked out in the front yard in all of its splendor. The fender was falling off. The windows were broken in. Best of all, the tires were flat. As people looked at that car, they would think, "When is the junkman coming?" He would assure everyone, "The junkman cometh."

About that time, the son comes out of the house. He says, "Have you seen my new 55 Chevy?" People would respond, "Your what?" The son would reply, "Yeah, I just bought it. It's gonna be a classic! I'm gonna paint it, put in new upholstery, put in a new engine, new tires and when I get through, it will be the most beautiful car you have ever seen."

If you stopped to think about it, there is a real truth stuck in the middle of that. He is right. The difference between what you

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see in that 55 Chevy and what he sees is two-fold. He sees it not in how it is, but in how it will become. His eyes see it in what it will become. Secondly, he sees it through the eyes of one who gave everything he had to buy it.

This is how God sees us. Apart from Him, we are a bunch of 55 Chevys. The fenders are falling off. The tires are flat. The windows are bashed in. It doesn't run and never will apart from Him. But God looks at us, and through His eyes He sees a classic. He sees one that, as it is restored to His image, will have all of the beauty, all of the majesty, all of the power set apart unto itself. He sees us that way because He sees us as what we can become and because He paid everything He owned to buy us. That is what it means to be poor in spirit.

When we came to Christ, we came in utter helplessness, utter sinfulness, utter humility and utter abandonment. We learned that as we have therefore received Christ Jesus our Lord, we are to so walk in Him. We can become proud. We can become arrogant. We can become self-satisfied.

In dealing with this a few lessons ago, we dealt with the principle of making the Spiritual Switch. This is the process of looking at nature, looking at life and looking at the Old Testament to draw spiritual conclusions. We made the Spiritual Switch concerning what it meant to be poor and found out why God allows there to be poor people. The primary reason is to teach truth. The truth is, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." When you look at poor people, you can learn what it means in the spiritual realm to be poor.

A poor man is vulnerable to humiliation. He is dependent upon others. The poor man is visibly aware of his needs. This man must accept his relative insignificance. He must become sensitive to the downtrodden of life. He gets excited over the simple things. He grows through oppression. He takes life one day at a time. By making the Spiritual Switch, we can see that these are the qualities that must exist in the man and the woman who are poor in spirit. To be poor in spirit is to lose that arrogant image of a self-made man and come like a broken down 55 Chevy and ask God to turn you into a classic.

Give yourself a grade, not comparing yourself to someone else, but based upon what God wants you to become relative to the time you've had to walk with Him. He won't measure a two

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month old or a two year old with the same measuring stick as some of those who are spiritual senior citizens to whom much has been given and much will be required. The problem with rating yourself with being poor in spirit is if you think you have become this, you probably aren't. You take it from there.

Next, God says that the man who sees himself from God's vantage point learns how to cry. How many of you know how to cry? This, too, is an enigma to the world. The world says that strong men and women don't cry. The Word says they must; or the real strength, the strength to mourn, is not yet theirs. Those who cry are in good company. Hagar wept. Esau wept. Jacob wept. Joseph wept. Hannah wept. Jonathan wept. Saul wept. David wept. Peter wept. Mary wept. Jesus wept. You may recall that the biggest problem most of us have, men in particular, is to think that it is weak to cry. We don't know how to mourn over sin and mourn over the needs of people. Some of you may remember this poem:

WHEN WE CRY

When women cry we wonder why
And oftentimes we groan,
And with pious condescension
We respond with eyes of stone.

Sometimes we grin, sometimes we scowl,
We don't know what to say,
And so we do the ultimate,
We look the other way.

We, so confused or hostile,
Unable to relate,
Consider they will overcome
If we will only wait.

Oh fools we are, we cannot see
The tears these ladies shed
May be the signal from the Lord
Our senses may be dead.

"We're men!" we cry, "And men don't cry!"
And so throughout the years
We've bottled our emotions
And hidden all our tears.

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We've sneered and laughed and failed to love
When weeping filled the air
And given indication
No maturity was there.

Yes, fools we are to try to see
Such manly standards kept
While overlooking one great phrase
That echoes, "Jesus wept."

So the characteristics of the man who weeps is one who understands what God cries over and cries over the same thing. You may remember that God cried over three things. The Scripture says that God cried when others were hurting. Remember Jesus at the grave of Lazarus. He wasn't crying over Lazarus' death, He knew He would raise him from the dead, He was crying over the hurt of Lazarus' family.

God cried over sin and its effect when Jesus wept over Jerusalem, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I would have gathered you, but you would not."

Jesus cried over doing the Father's will in Gethsemane. Great sweat drops of blood poured from His brow as He said, "Father, not My will, but Yours. If it be possible, let this cup be cast from Me. Nevertheless, Thy will be done."

He gave us one more reason to cry. We are supposed to weep over our own sins. We are to learn that godly sorrow worketh repentance.

How blessed is your life when it comes to tears? Can you cry over the things God cries over? Do you ever grieve over your own sins until godly sorrow worketh repentance? Give yourself a grade in this area.

Having become vulnerable to grief, God's man or God's woman is asked, "Can you be meek?" To the world, meekness is weakness, but to God, it is the ultimate in strength. Let's look at the definition again. Meekness is the absence of a defensive or hostile or retaliatory spirit and the presence of quiet gentleness that accepts without conflict the will of God in all things, even the details of life. There are three things meekness is not. Meekness is not natural; it is supernatural. Meekness is not weakness; it is strength. Meekness is not programmed behavior; it is the Spirit of God working a miracle in the life of the Christian.

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In the lesson concerning meekness, I gave you a test and asked you to decide whether or not you are meek in the check out counter at the grocery store. I asked whether or not you are meek on the freeway. I asked whether or not you are meek when you are short changed at the drugstore.

We asked ourselves then to look at meekness from God's perspective. We found three things. We found out how to be meek when our reputation is challenged. In I Peter 2 we were given the illustration concerning how Jesus responded with meekness when His reputation was challenged. In John 12, we learned that Jesus was not self-exalting. He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey when you and I would have ridden a majestic horse. In John 18, Jesus was non-retaliatory. Peter said, "Lord, what is one ear for all of eternity?" Jesus said, "Put it back." In John 19, Jesus was non-defensive when He could have called ten thousand angels to deliver Him. Instead, He had the strength to know when to be silent. He was not bitter in Luke 23. He said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." He was not grudging in John 21. Jesus forgave Peter, restored him and entrusted him with even greater responsibility.

We learned how to be meek when our authority was challenged. We looked at Moses. His authority was challenged in Numbers 12. Moses, by example, gave us these insights. Don't retaliate. Don't rejoice when your enemies are punished, but rather pray for them. Pray for mercy and grace for them. Plead with God for them and wait upon them until they are restored.

We learned how to be meek when our possessions are challenged. We looked at Abraham and his conflict with Lot. We saw that Abraham knew a soft answer would turn away wrath. There was no strife; he simply relented. Abraham gave Lot the best, and God gave Abraham something better. That is what meekness is.

Meekness is a life so grieved over sin, so attuned to its relative unimportance apart from God, that it quietly serves and responds to the glory of God. Meekness is the one quality that Jesus actually announced that He possessed. How meek are you? This is God's goal for your life.

When you have God's kind of meekness, you have God's kind of hunger. Do you know what it means to be hungry? There are three kinds of hunger. How many of you ate this morning

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because you were hungry? There are three kinds of hunger. The first is responsive hunger. With this kind of hunger, the stomach sends signals to the brain falsely to say you are hungry. There is a sense of smell that adds to it. When you smell something cooking or baking in the kitchen, your stomach tells you that you are hungry. Or perhaps, you see something hot and juicy on television, and you become hungry. When you listen to your friends talk about a delicious chocolate pie they had last night and how good it was, you then begin to get hungry. There is the sense of taste, too. Nobody can take just one bite. This is not real hunger.

There is relative hunger that draws conclusions about its needs based upon past experiences. When it is nine o'clock in the morning I have to stop and eat something. I'm not hungry, it is a habit. Every evening when I try to study, my stomach says, "Can't study must eat. Can't study must eat." It is a pattern. I'm not really hungry. Every Sunday at 12:01, just as the pastor is trying to wrap up his message, all of a sudden everyone's stomach says, "Lunch time, lunch time, lunch time." The rest of the week it doesn't bother you, but on Sunday it does. This is relative, conditional hunger.

There is a real hunger. Real hunger is the crying out for food or water that only comes when you are starving to death. What Jesus was saying was that the man or the woman who is God's man or God's woman is so starved for the righteousness of God that he lives or acts like a man living in a desert who has not seen food or water for years, and he wants every morsel or drop he can get. Jesus said that when we have that attitude toward the Word of God and that attitude toward being in the presence of God, we will begin to grow by leaps and bounds as a Christian. Why? Because there is a hunger and a thirst for righteousness.

Again, we made the Spiritual Switch to a hungry man and realized that a hungry man is desperate. A hungry man takes nothing for granted. A hungry man lets nothing stand in his way. A hungry man is aware of his weakness. A hungry man will lose his capacity to eat if you don't feed him. All of these things are true in the spiritual realm.

We did learn that God will fill you in proportion to your hunger. God often creates hunger in your life, situations to make you hungry just like He did with the children of Israel, so that He

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can fill you. The level of hunger God wants you to have is intense starvation. Psalm 42,

As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me, "Where is your God?"

(Psalm 42:1-3 NKJV)

Psalm 84 says:

How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts!

My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young—even Your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. (Psalm 84:1-3 NKJV)

There are five things about a hungry man. He is desperate to be filled. He takes nothing for granted. He lets nothing stand between him and his hunger. He is aware of his weakness. He loses his capacity for hunger if he is not filled. Are you hungry? Or, do you take God like snacks and tidbits when you are filled up with the world and want something to just take the edge off? God's man or woman craves the things of the Spirit. He cannot be sustained without them. That is what it means to hunger. He can't be refreshed without them. That is what it means to thirst.

How hungry are you? The ad says that some people will walk a mile for a Camel cigarette. Would you walk a mile to church? Would you walk five miles? Would you rather feed on the Word or the world? Which is the most important thing in your house, your Bible or your refrigerator?

The hungry man finds mercy from God, so he gives mercy to others and receives mercy back. This is the cycle for the next Beatitude, Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.

A few lessons ago we talked about the Boomerang Principle. In Luke 6 God says that there are four things that you get back in life proportionate to how you give. The measure in which you measure will be the measure that people will judge you. The measure you give is the measure you will receive. The measure you forgive is the measure with which you will be forgiven. The

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measure to which you show mercy is the degree to which you will receive mercy both from God and others.

What is mercy? How many of you think you are merciful? Mercy is love with hands attached. These hands are dirty hands, calloused hands, outstretched hands. These are hands that are there to catch you when you fall. These are hands that are there to help you up when you are already down. These are hands that are not pointing a finger of accusation, but holding a handkerchief to help dry the tears. These are hands holding a plan to rebuild your life. These are hands holding a Bible to show you how. These are hands holding a plate of food when your stomach cries out. These are hands holding a coat when you are cold. This is mercy.

The root word of mercy means to feel sympathy with the misery of another, especially sympathy that is manifested in action. Mercy is the activity. Compassion is the emotion. Jesus was moved with compassion, so He exhibited mercy again and again and again.

We took a walk with Jesus when we were dealing with mercy. We looked at Jesus when he had compassion on the people who just crossed His path in Matthew 20. We saw the blind beggars sitting by the wayside crying out as the crowds and throngs were walking past, "Jesus! Jesus! Have mercy! Have mercy!" The disciples with all of their spirituality said, "Tell them to be quiet so that we can hear the Master." The blind men were shoved aside, but Jesus stopped. The Scripture says, "Jesus stood still." He turned around and looked at them. He then asked, "What would you have Me do?" The beggars said, "Please help us to see!" The Scripture says that Jesus had compassion on them. It literally means that Jesus for an instant became blind. He went through all of the ordeal that a blind man goes through. He had such compassion that He felt their blindness. He lived their blindness in an instant, and He realized what a blind man suffered. Immediately, Jesus had compassion on them. He exhibited mercy to them. He said, "Here, regain your sight!"

We watched Jesus as the unlovely and the unlovable came into His life in Mark 1. Jesus was preaching as a leper came unto Him. Remember that a leper was a living dead man. It was taboo to even speak or look at them. They were social outcasts. They were spiritual outcasts. The Scripture says that as Jesus saw the man, He instantly, in his mind, became a leper. Jesus, as a leper,

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was moved with compassion. The Scripture says that He spoke to him and touched him. Jesus got His hands dirty and then He healed him.

We saw in Luke 7, Jesus having compassion on those who grieve. His party was moving into the city, and a funeral party was moving out of the city. Instead of worrying about the traffic congestion, Jesus stopped. His eyes met the eyes of a grieving mother who was a widow. The Scripture says that Jesus was moved with compassion. He became a grieving parent. In an instant, He had compassion for this woman. His compassion was turned to mercy and He said, "Thy son shall be brought back to life again!" He healed the dead son and gave him back to his mother.

In Mark 9, we read about a man's son who was demon possessed. The disciples had tried to help him but failed. The psychiatrist had tried to help him but failed. The man came to Jesus and said, "Nothing has worked. Have compassion on me and my son." Jesus, moved with compassion, looked him in the eye and said, "Bring him to Me." Jesus then made him whole.

God's man and God's woman can't walk by suffering without suffering. They can't walk by on the other side of the street. God's man is blinded when he sees a blind man. He is wounded by the hurts of others. He is desperate by the loneliness of others. God's man and God's woman doesn't just feel sorry for these people. He, moved with compassion, does something else. He shows mercy. He does whatever it takes to alleviate the suffering around him. How merciful are you? You say, "This is getting harder." Yes, it is supposed to.

The next Beatitude, and it does get harder, shows God's man or woman, who is learning to be merciful, now coming face to face with the reality that God looks on the heart.

Aspect 1- God now says, "God's man or God's woman must now have a pure heart." You may remember that the word "pure" had five connotations. This is where we got off of the freeway and on to the side roads. To be pure, translated into spiritual terms, had five basic connotations. It meant transparency, purity of motives, a clear conscience, single-mindedness and a clean thought life.

1- God's kind of man and woman has no place in their life for hypocrisy or play-acting. You may remember that we went

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to the Scripture and saw Jesus as He gave the hypocrite of the year award, the Hippo Award. He interviewed the scribes and the pharisees. He gave an award to Double Standard Danny for the poorest performance as an actor in a directing role. He gave a Hippo Award to Limelight Louie and to Stumbling Block Sammy. He said that they shut up the kingdom and kept others out as well. He gave an award to Praying Pancho. He said that this person pretended and said long prayers, but then devoured widow's houses. He gave an award to Davy the Discipuler and said that those he discipled came out worse than he was. He also gave awards to Legalist Lonny and to Self-righteous Robert.

2- A pure heart also meant pure motives. We asked ourselves why we sang on Sunday morning. We asked why we came to church on Sunday morning. We asked why we read our Bible. We asked why we memorized Scripture. We asked why we were here. We looked into Scripture and found that God is pleased with one basic, divine motivation. This is the love of Christ constraining us.

3- Purity means a clear conscience. It means having a clear conscience before God, before men and with men. A clear conscience before God means that we need to understand what 1 John 1:9 says. We all use it. It says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness." It is not so that we can go out and do exactly what we did again. No, it says if we confess our sins, literally meaning that if we agree with God over the gravity of our sins and have plans by His grace to stop it, He forgives us of that sin. The question is, do we understand what it means to have a clear conscience? It means to repent.

Aspect 2- We should have a clear conscience before man. We asked ourselves, "Am I my brother's keeper?" "Am I my brother's conscience?" We looked in Romans 14, I Corinthians 8 and I Corinthians 10. We came back with a resounding answer, "Yes! It does matter what I do and what I say. Even things I am free to do, I cannot do because you might stumble. Even things you might do, you cannot do because I might stumble." We are our brother's conscience.

Aspect 3- A clear conscience with men. We see this in Matthew 5:23-24. This says that if we bring our gifts to the altar and then remember that a brother has something against us,

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we leave our gift, go find the brother and be reconciled to him. To have a clear conscience with men does not mean that you go to your brother in order to clear your conscience. We get it backwards. We go to our brother in order to be reconciled. The conscience clearing is God's business. All our motivations get twisted if we try to do it on our own.

Aspect 4- A pure heart is single-minded. We got off of the freeway and got lost. Single-mindedness involves discerning and deciding purposes of God. We looked at the difference between Satan's lies and God's truth. We got involved with God's truth regarding the character of man, success, marriage, the home, the roles of men and women, authority and discipline, the Word, the Word, the Word, responsibility, heroes, alliances and finally God's truth about the whole matter.

Aspect 5- A pure heart has a clean mind. Most of us wanted to leave town. A pure thought life is important. We looked at what the heart is and what it is that we lust over. We looked at what we lust for. We talked about the case for innocence. The idea is that we must protect our children from the ground up for what goes into their minds. We learned that what we see is what we get. We did a study from the Scriptures about what God says about the eye.

We then did a study on the ten second moment of truth. We learned how to resist temptation by stopping it the second it comes.

We talked about spiritual breathing. This is how we meditate to cleanse the spirit. We then looked at spiritual surgery, which is the cutting away of that which is diseased. We do this by coming to the Great Physician to say, "Help!" We learned that we need to be willing to do whatever He says, including fasting before surgery.

So if man's heart is to be ruled by God, it must be becoming increasingly pure. It must be in a process of losing its hypocrisy with honesty, and its mixed motivations melting into the love of God. We then have a conscience that can no longer stand to be defiled. It is the mind that cannot tolerate compromise. It is the thoughts that cannot stand to dwell any longer on filth and impurity that once seemed so natural. When you reach the pure heart stage, you are in the college of spiritual maturity. To graduate with honors from this college, you must pass a certain

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course. The key is that nobody but you knows what kind of grades you are making.

The pure in heart are God's. God's Son is the Prince of Peace. So God's men and women then become peacemakers. These peacemakers lead men to peace with God, peace within and peace with one another.

All of this leads men to Two Mile Island. This is the place at the center of life where all of the signs read "Yield." We give up our right to retaliation by turning the other cheek. We give up the right to our possessions by giving up our coat and our cloak as well. We give up the right to our time and our strength by going the second mile. We give up the right to our money by giving to those who ask and lending to those who would borrow.

Lastly, the man of peace who reveals the Prince of Peace will be persecuted, harassed, ridiculed, lied about and threatened. Jesus said, "When this happens, rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in heaven. You are in good company. This is what they did to the prophets who were before you."

Four or five lessons ago we looked at the reality of persecution. There are two kinds of persecution, the church at large and the persecution of individual Christians. We looked at the reason for persecution. Paul said the reason man is persecuted is because of the cross. We looked at the results of persecution, eleven good things happen. We looked at the response we need to have when persecuted. Jesus said, "If you are persecuted, you need to turn to your enemies and love them." We need to bless them and do good to them. We need to pray for them also. This will reveal that we are our Father's child.

Here we are at the other side of God's forest of blessedness. This is a life so serene, so godly that it is depicted as self-contained joy. In closing, let's ask ourselves this question. How can we, in an increasing way, move from one level of maturity to another? How can we learn who we ought to be? Who we are not is frustrating unless we can actually begin to become the Christians we need to be. I believe that the secret of the blessed life, the life of Beautiful Attitudes, rests in one basic principle. We, in essence, are asked to become godly in our spirits and in our attitudes. We have been given God's Spirit to enable us and having been given these mirrors from the Word, we know what we need. But, somehow, we still must release this divine activity in

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us until we progressively become what, from God's perspective, we already are.

Let's look at the chart one more time. The last column that I left blank is titled, "God's Solution". I believe it is found best in my favorite verse which is II Corinthians 3:18. It says this,

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.

(II Corinthians 3:18 KJV)

We go from glory to glory, from poverty to persecution, by beholding His glory in ever-increasing splendor.

I believe that the key to it all is that the characteristics of the Christian life are the result of beholding the character of God. The attitudes of God are the results of beholding the attributes of God. Do you want to be like Christ? Look at Him. Do you want to be godly? Behold the character of God again and again and again. Then worship and worship and worship the qualities that only God possesses. You will then become God-like.

Do you want to become poor in spirit? Study the supremacy of God. That was Job's problem. He had so much that he had to become poor until he found that he wasn't God. He found out he wasn't even in God's league. Look at who God is, and you will become poor in spirit.

Do you want to learn how to mourn? Study the patience of God. Study the love of God. Sin will look different to you, and you will cry over it.

Do you want to learn meekness? Study the faithfulness of God. Study the omnipotence of God. If you do these studies, you will learn how to be meek.

Do you want to have spiritual hunger? Study the omniscience of God. You will soon want to know all that He knows, and you will cry out for it.

Do you want to have a spirit of mercy? Do a study on the mercy of God and the grace of God. Never again will you shut your heart to the cries of others.

Do you want a spirit of purity? Do a study of the omnipresence of God. Do a study on the immutability and holiness of God. You will find that His eyes are inescapable. His standards are unchangeable. His purity is unsullied and so must ours be. You

God's Beautiful Attitudes

will long to be as pure as He is.

Do you want a spirit of peace? Do a study on the sovereignty of God. Worship Him for that. When you live on Two Mile Island, you will understand that vengeance is His, and He will repay. You will understand that all things work together for good to those who love Him.

Do you want to learn how to endure spiritual persecution? Do a study on the righteousness and wrath of God. You will understand that God will ultimately triumph. The losers ultimately will become winners.

The key to the beautiful life that is characterized by the Beautiful Attitudes is this, spending much time in the presence of our beautiful God, beholding His beautiful attributes. He alone is supremely unique. He has perfect love. He has perfect presence. He has perfect power. He has perfect knowledge. He has perfect grace. He has perfect mercy. He has perfect unchangeableness. He has perfect holiness. He has perfect sovereignty. He has perfect righteousness.

This is why He alone, in us, can recognize our relative insignificance and be encouraged by it. We can weep over what God weeps over. We can then be strong because of it. We can approach the world with quiet gentleness and produce miracles because of it. We can hunger and thirst for the things of the Spirit and be filled by it. We can so experience the hurts of others that we do something about it. We can possess a heart so clean that it is repulsed by Satan's lies. We can find peace and bring peace to a world that is bent on self-destruction. We can love and pray for and even minister to those whose goal is our destruction. We can do all of this because our supply is unlimited because our supplier is God.

Perhaps we will look in the lessons to come at how to behold and appropriate the character of God more fully. This is the answer. It is all found in Him. Oh, what bliss, what self-contained joy we can have. This is joy that can withstand all of the circumstances of life, because it is joy that finds its power within in the character of a perfect God. It is ours because He is ours.

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