

the
Beatitudes

CHARLES
SPURGEON



WHITAKER
HOUSE

All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

THE BEATITUDES

(Also published under the title *God Will Bless You.*)

ISBN: 978-1-60374-698-4

Printed in the United States of America

© 1997, 2012 by Whitaker House

Whitaker House
1030 Hunt Valley Circle
New Kensington, PA 15068
www.whitakerhouse.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Spurgeon, C. H. (Charles Haddon), 1834–1892.

God will bless you / by Charles Spurgeon.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-88368-422-5 (pbk.)

1. Beatitudes—Criticism, interpretation, etc. 2. Spiritual life. I. Title.

BT382.S68 1997

241.5'3—dc21

97-38811

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical—including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system—without permission in writing from the publisher. Please direct your inquiries to permissionseditor@whitakerhouse.com.

This book has been printed digitally and produced in a standard specification in order to ensure its continuing availability.

CONTENTS

1. The Most Blessed Teaching.....	5
2. Being Poor in Spirit	17
3. Inheriting the Earth	34
4. Righteously Filled	52
5. The Hunger and Thirst That Are Blessed	69
6. The Importance of Mercy	90
7. Having a Pure Heart	110
8. Being a Peacemaker	129
Appendix—An Exposition of Scripture:	
The Beatitudes and Beyond	149
About the Author.....	171

1

THE MOST BLESSED TEACHING

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. 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 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.

—Matthew 5:1–12

One enjoys a sermon all the better if he knows something about the preacher. It is natural that, like John in Patmos, we should turn to see the voice that spoke to us. (See Revelation 1:9–12.) Turn here then, and learn that the Christ of God is the Preacher of the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount

The Question Inherent in the Sermon

He who delivered the Beatitudes was not only the Prince of Preachers, but He was beyond all others qualified to discourse upon the subject that He had chosen. Jesus the Savior was best able to answer the question, “Who are the saved?” Being Himself the ever blessed Son of God and the channel of blessings, He was best able to inform us who indeed are the blessed of the Father. As Judge, it will be His office to divide the blessed from the accursed at the last, and therefore it is most fitting that in gospel majesty He should declare the principle of that judgment, so that all men may be forewarned.

Do not fall into the mistake of supposing that the opening verses of the Sermon on the Mount set forth how we are to be saved, or you may cause your soul to stumble. You will find the fullest light upon the matter of how to be saved in other parts of our Lord’s teaching, but here He talks about the question, “Who are the saved?” or, “What are the marks and evidences of a work of grace in the soul?” Who should know the saved as well as the Savior does? The shepherd is the best one to discern his own sheep, and the Lord Himself alone infallibly knows those who are His. We may regard the marks here given of the blessed ones as being the sure witness of truth, for they are given by Him who cannot err, who cannot be deceived, and who, as their Redeemer, knows His own.

The Beatitudes derive much of their weight from the wisdom and glory of Him who pronounced them; therefore, your attention is called to this at the outset. Someone once said that “man is the mouth of creation, and Jesus is the mouth of humanity,” but we prefer to think of Jesus as the mouth of Deity and to receive His every word as being encompassed with infinite power.

The Occasion of the Sermon

The occasion is noteworthy; the sermon was delivered when our Lord is described as “*seeing the multitudes.*” He waited until the congregation around Him had reached its largest size and was most impressed with His miracles, and then He took the tide at its flood, as every wise man should. The sight of a vast crowd of people ought always to move us to pity, for it represents a mass of ignorance, sorrow, sin, and necessity, far too great for us to estimate. The Savior looked upon the people with an omniscient eye, which saw all their sad conditions. He saw the multitudes in an emphatic sense, and His soul was stirred within Him at the sight. His was not the transient tear of Xerxes when he thought on the death of his armed myriads, but it was practical sympathy for the hosts of mankind. No one cared for them; they were like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus therefore hastened to the rescue.

He noticed, no doubt, with pleasure, the eagerness of the crowd to hear, and this drew Him on to speak. A certain writer has well said, “Every man in his own trade or profession rejoices when he sees an opportunity of exercising it; the carpenter, if he sees a goodly tree, desires to have it felled, that he may employ his skill on it; and even so the preacher, when he sees a great congregation, his heart rejoices, and he is glad of the occasion to teach.” If men become negligent of hearing, and the audience of a preacher dwindles down to a handful, it will be a great distress to him if he has to remember that, when many were eager to hear, he was not diligent to preach to them. He who will not reap when the fields

are ripe for the harvest will only have himself to blame if in other seasons he is unable to fill his arms with sheaves. Opportunities should be promptly used whenever the Lord puts them in your way. It is good fishing where there are plenty of fish, and when the birds flock around the fowler, it is time for him to spread his nets.

The Place of the Sermon

The place from which these blessings were delivered is next worthy of notice: "*Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain.*" Whether or not the chosen mount was that which is now known as the Horns of Hattim is not a point that needs to be contested; that He ascended an elevation is enough for our purpose. Of course, He climbed upward mainly because of the accommodation that the open hillside would afford to the people. Also, the Preacher could readily sit down upon some jutting crag and still be both heard and seen.

I believe the chosen elevation of meeting also had its instruction. Exalted doctrine might well be symbolized by an ascent to the mount. A doctrine that could not be hid, and that would produce a church comparable to a city set on a hill, properly began to be proclaimed from a conspicuous height. A crypt or cavern would have been out of character for a message that is to be published upon the housetops and preached to every creature under heaven.

Besides, mountains have always been associated with distinct eras in the history of the people of God. Mount Sinai is sacred to the law, and Mount Zion is symbolic of the church. Calvary was also at the proper time to be connected with redemption, and the Mount of Olives with the ascension of our risen Lord. It was proper, therefore, that the opening of the Redeemer's ministry should be connected with a mount such as "the hill of the Beatitudes." It was from a mountain that God proclaimed the Law; it is on a mountain that Jesus expounds it. Thank God, it

was not a mount around which boundaries had to be placed; it was not the mount that burned with fire, from which Israel retired in fear. It was, doubtless, a mount all carpeted with grass and dainty with fair flowers, upon whose side the olive and fig flourished in abundance, except where the rocks pushed upward through the sod and eagerly invited their Lord to honor them by making them His pulpit and throne.

I will also add that Jesus was in deep sympathy with nature, and therefore He delighted in an audience chamber whose floor was grass and whose roof was the blue sky. The open space was in keeping with His large heart, the breezes were akin to His free spirit, and the world around was full of symbols and parables, in accord with the truths He taught. Better than a long aisle, or tier on tier of a crowded gallery, was that grand hillside meeting place. If only we heard sermons amid soul-inspiring scenery more often! Surely preachers and hearers alike would be equally benefited by the change from the house made with hands to the God-made temple of nature.

The Posture of the Preacher

There was instruction in Jesus' posture: "*when he was set,*" He commenced to speak. I do not think that either weariness or the length of the discourse suggested His sitting down. He frequently stood when He preached at considerable length. I am inclined to believe that when He became a Pleader with sons of men, He stood with uplifted hands, eloquent from head to foot, entreating, beseeching, and exhorting, with every member of His body, as well as every faculty of His mind. However, now that He was, as it were, a Judge awarding the blessings of the kingdom or a King on His throne, separating His true subjects from foreigners, He sat down. As an authoritative Teacher, He officially occupied the chair of doctrine and spoke *ex cathedra*, as men say, as a Solomon acting as the master of assemblies or a Daniel coming to judgment.

He sat as a Refiner, and His word was like a fire. His posture is not accounted for by the fact that it was the Oriental custom for the teacher to sit and the pupil to stand, for our Lord was something more than a didactic teacher. He was a Preacher, a Prophet, a Pleader, and consequently, He adopted other attitudes when fulfilling those offices. But on this occasion, He sat in His place as Rabbi of the church, the authoritative Legislator of the kingdom of heaven, the Monarch in the midst of his people. Come here, then, and listen to the King in Jeshurun (see Deuteronomy 33:5), the Divine Lawgiver, delivering not the ten commands, but the seven, or, if you will, the nine Beatitudes of His blessed kingdom.

The Style of His Delivery

It is then added that "*he opened his mouth,*" and those who like to raise frivolous objections have said, "How could He teach without opening His mouth?" The reply to this is that He very frequently taught, and taught much, without saying a word, since His whole life was teaching, and His miracles and deeds of love were the lessons of a master instructor. It is not superfluous to say that "*he opened his mouth, and taught them,*" for He had taught them often when His mouth was closed. Besides that, we frequently meet preachers who seldom open their mouths; they hiss the everlasting Gospel through their teeth or mumble it within their mouths, as if they had never been commanded to "*Cry aloud, spare not*" (Isaiah 58:1).

Jesus Christ spoke like a man in earnest. He enunciated clearly and spoke loudly. He lifted up His voice like a trumpet and published salvation far and wide like a man who had something to say that he desired his audience to hear and feel. Oh, that the very manner and voice of those who preach the Gospel would indicate their zeal for God and their love for souls! It should be so, but it is not so in all cases. When a man grows terribly earnest while speaking, his mouth appears to be enlarged, just as his heart is.

This characteristic has been observed in vehement political orators, and the messengers of God should blush if the same thing does not happen to them.

“He opened his mouth, and taught them.” Do we not have here a further hint that He here opened His own mouth to inaugurate an even fuller revelation than He had from the earliest days when he opened the mouths of His holy prophets? If Moses spoke, who made Moses’ mouth? If David sang, who opened David’s lips so that he might show forth the praises of God? Who opened the mouths of the prophets? Was it not the Lord by His Spirit? Is it not therefore well said that now He opened His own mouth and spoke directly as the incarnate God to the children of men?

Now, by His own inherent power and inspiration, He began to speak, not through the mouth of Isaiah or Jeremiah, but by His own mouth. A spring of wisdom was now to be unsealed from which all generations would drink rejoicingly; now the most majestic and yet most simple of all discourses would be heard by mankind. The opening of the fount that flowed from the desert rock was not one half as full of joy to men.

Let our prayer be, “Lord, as You have opened your mouth, open our hearts,” for when the Redeemer’s mouth is open with blessings, and our hearts are open with desires, a glorious filling with all the fullness of God will be the result. Then also our mouths will be opened to show forth our Redeemer’s praise.

The Beatitudes

Let us now consider the Beatitudes themselves, trusting that, by the help of God’s Spirit, we may perceive their wealth of holy meaning. No words in the scope of the Holy Scriptures are more precious or more loaded with solemn meaning.

Blessed as Opposed to Cursed

The first word of our Lord's great standard sermon is "*Blessed.*" The last word of the Old Testament is "*curse*" (Malachi 4:6), and it is meaningful that the opening sermon of our Lord's ministry commences with the word "*Blessed.*" He did not begin in that manner and then change His tone immediately, for that charming word fell from His lips nine times in rapid succession. It has been well said that Christ's teaching might be summed up in two words, *believe* and *blessed*. Mark's gospel tells us that Jesus preached, saying, "*Repent ye, and believe the gospel*" (Mark 1:15), and in the passage before us, Matthew's gospel informs us that He came, saying, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit.*" All His teaching was meant to bless the sons of men, for "*God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved*" (John 3:17).

His hand no thunder bears,
 No terror clothes his brow,
 No bolts to drive our guilty souls
 To fiercer flames below.

His lips, like a honeycomb, drop sweetness; promises and blessings are the overflowings of His mouth. "*Grace is poured into thy lips*" (Psalm 45:2), said the psalmist, and consequently grace poured from His lips. He was blessed forever, and He continued to distribute blessings throughout the whole of His life until, as He blessed His followers, He was taken up into heaven (Acts 1:9). The Law had two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, one for blessing and another for cursing, but the Lord Jesus blesses evermore and does not curse.

A Perfect Character, a Perfect Benediction

There are seven beatitudes that relate to character before us. The eighth is a benediction upon the persons described in the

seven Beatitudes when their excellence has provoked the hostility of the wicked; and, therefore, it may be regarded as a confirming and summing up of the seven blessings that precede it. Setting the eighth aside, then, as a summary, I regard the Beatitudes as being seven and will speak of them as such. The whole seven describe a perfect character and make up a perfect benediction. Each blessing is precious separately, more precious than much fine gold. However, we will do well to regard them as a whole, for as a whole they were spoken, and from that point of view they are a wonderfully perfect chain of seven priceless links put together with such consummate art as only our heavenly Lord Jesus ever possessed.

No such instruction in the art of blessedness can be found anywhere else. The learned have collected two hundred and eighty-eight different opinions of the ancients with regard to happiness, and there is not one that hits the mark; but our Lord has, in a few telling sentences, told us all about it without using a solitary redundant word or allowing the slightest omission. The seven golden sentences are perfect as a whole, and each one occupies its appropriate place. Together they are a ladder of light, and each one is a step of purest sunshine.

Each One Rises above Those That Precede It

The first beatitude is by no means as elevated as the third, nor the third as the seventh. There is a great advance from the poor in spirit to the pure in heart and the peacemaker. I have said that the Beatitudes rise, but it would be quite as correct to say that they descend, for from the human point of view they do so. To mourn is a step below and yet above being poor in spirit, and the peacemaker, while the highest form of Christian, will find himself often called upon to take the lowest place for the sake of peace. The seven beatitudes mark deepening humiliation and growing exaltation. In proportion as men rise in the reception of the divine

blessing, they sink in their own estimation and count it their honor to do the humblest works.

They Spring out of Each Other

It is as if each beatitude depended upon all that went before it. Each growth feeds a higher growth, and the seventh is the product of all the other six. The two blessings that we will have to consider first have this relation. "*Blessed are they that mourn*" grows out of "*Blessed are the poor in spirit.*" Why do they mourn? They mourn because they are "*poor in spirit.*" "*Blessed are the meek*" is a benediction that no man reaches until he has felt his spiritual poverty and mourned over it. "*Blessed are the merciful*" follows upon the blessing of the meek, because men do not acquire the forgiving, sympathetic, merciful spirit until they have been made meek by the experience of the first two benedictions. This same rising and outgrowth may be seen in the whole seven. The stones are laid one upon the other in fair colors and are polished until they look like a palace. They are the natural sequel and completion of each other, even as the seven days of the world's first week were.

Each One Is Perfect in Itself

Notice, also, in this ladder of light, that though each step is above the other, and each step springs out of the other, each one is perfect and contains within itself a priceless and complete blessing. The very lowest of the blessed, namely, the poor in spirit, have their peculiar benediction, and indeed it is one of such an order that it is used in the summing up of all the rest. "*Theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" is both the first and the eighth benediction. Those who are of the highest character, namely, the peacemakers, who are called the children of God, are not said to be more than blessed. Undoubtedly, they enjoy more of the blessedness, but they do not possess more in the covenant provision.

The Blessing Is in the Present Tense

Note, also, with delight, that in every case the blessing is a happiness to be enjoyed and delighted in now. It is not “Blessed shall be,” but “*Blessed are.*” There is not one step in the whole divine experience of the believer, not one link in the wonderful chain of grace, in which there is a withdrawal of the divine smile or an absence of real happiness. Blessed is the first moment of the Christian life on earth, and blessed is the last. Blessed is the spark that trembles in the flax, and blessed is the flame that ascends to heaven in a holy ecstasy. Blessed is the bruised reed, and blessed is that tree of the Lord, which is full of sap, the cedar of Lebanon, which the Lord has planted. Blessed is the babe in grace, and blessed is the perfect man in Christ Jesus. As the Lord’s mercy endures forever, in the same way will our blessedness endure.

The Blessing of Each One Is Appropriate

“*Blessed are the poor in spirit*” is appropriately connected with enrichment in the possession of a kingdom more glorious than all the thrones of earth. It is also most appropriate that those who mourn should be comforted; that the meek, who renounce all self-aggrandizement, should enjoy most of life, and so should inherit the earth. It is divinely fit that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness should be filled, and that those who show mercy to others should obtain it themselves. Who but the pure in heart should see the infinitely pure and holy God? And who but the peacemakers should be called the children of the God of peace?

Each One Is a Paradox

Yet the careful eye perceives that each benediction, though appropriate, is worded paradoxically. Jeremy Taylor said, “They are so many paradoxes and impossibilities reduced to reason.” This is clearly seen in the first beatitude, for the poor in spirit are

said to possess a kingdom. It is equally vivid in the collection as a whole, for it talks of happiness, and yet poverty leads the way and persecution brings up the rear. Poverty is the opposite of riches, and yet how rich are those who possess a kingdom! Persecution is supposed to destroy enjoyment, and yet it is here made a subject of rejoicing. See the sacred art of Him who spoke as never man spoke. At the same time, He can make His words both simple and paradoxical, and thereby win our attention and instruct our intellects. Such a Preacher deserves the most thoughtful of hearers.

All seven beatitudes composing this celestial ascent to the house of the Lord conduct believers to an elevated plateau upon which they dwell alone and are not counted among the world's people. Their holy separation from the world brings persecution upon them for righteousness' sake; in this they do not lose their happiness, but rather they have it increased to them and confirmed by the double repetition of the benediction. The hatred of man does not deprive the saint of the love of God; even those who revile him contribute to his blessedness. Who among us will be ashamed of the cross that must attend such a crown of loving-kindness and tender mercies? Whatever the curses of man may involve, they are so small a drawback to the consciousness of being blessed in a sevenfold manner by the Lord that they are not worthy to be compared with the grace that is already revealed in us.