

## Our Unusual God: Part 3

If you study history, you find that most all people from the earliest times up to the present have always believed in a god of some kind. The issue is not primarily whether people believe in god because they do. The issue is what is the true god like? For the last two weeks, we have been looking at the fact that the true god is very different from what many people suppose. We expect Him to respond to life's circumstances the way we would, and that is not going to happen. It was William Cowper, the English poet, who said, "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform. He plants his footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm."

That says a lot. God acts in ways that are sometimes mysterious to us. When we contemplate His ways, they cause us to wonder, to be perplexed. Sometimes we can't figure out why He allows certain things or why He didn't do it the way we would have done it. We need to remember that when we make decisions, we do so with a limited amount of information. When God makes decisions, He does so with a total working knowledge that includes every detail of everything that ever has happened, everything that is happening now and everything that will ever happen in the future.

### **GOD IS UNUSUAL BECAUSE OF WHAT HE CONSIDERS TO BE A BLESSED LIFE**

What is a blessed life? How do you determine if someone's life is blessed? For the majority of people, the idea of finding happiness is based on having the right circumstances. It is "When & Then thinking."

"When I get a good job, then I'll be happy."

"When I find the right mate, then I'll be happy."

"When I have kids, then I'll be happy."

"When the kids leave home, then I'll be happy."

We think outward circumstances bring contentment.

The word, "blessed," has the meaning of joy, of wholeness and of well-being. The word blessed is often used of God Himself. David ended one of his psalms with the declaration "Blessed be God!" ([Ps. 68:35](#)). His son Solomon sang, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone works wonders" ([Ps. 72:18](#)). Paul spoke of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" ([1 Tim. 1:11](#)) and of Jesus Christ "who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords" ([6:15](#)).

To be blessed is not a superficial feeling that occurs when your circumstances are positive. That is clearly taught in Matthew 5 in what is called the Beatitudes'. Each of the Beatitudes' start with the word blessed. The things that Jesus told the people would bring blessing were just is unusual to them as they are to us today. They're totally contrary to what our society tells us.

## **1. BLESSED ARE THE POOR**

*Matthew 5:1, “<sup>1</sup>And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. <sup>2</sup>Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:  
<sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

The words, “blessed” and “poor” don’t seem to go together in any context. No child in school ever grows up hoping to one day become poor, and no one ever goes to school so that he may 1 day become poor. It is important to understand that Jesus is not speaking of physical poverty here. He is speaking of a condition of your spirit that causes you to see yourself as being totally dependent on god. Those who are poor in spirit realize that life is poverty without god’s blessings.

### **a) THE POOR IN SPIRIT ARE A PART OF GOD’S KINGDOM**

There are 2 spiritual kingdoms-the kingdom of God (heaven) and the kingdom of Satan (this world). The entry point into God’s kingdom is to be “poor in spirit.”

Chambers said, “We have to realize that we cannot earn or win anything from God through our own efforts. We must either receive it as a gift or do without it. The greatest spiritual blessing we receive is when we come to the knowledge that we are destitute. Until we get there, our Lord is powerless. He can do nothing for us as long as we think we are sufficient in and of ourselves. We must enter into His kingdom through the door of destitution.

No one comes into God’s kingdom who is not willing to see his complete spiritual helplessness and cast himself fully on the mercy of God. Jesus gave an example of being poor in spirit in

*Matthew 18:2-3, “<sup>2</sup>Jesus called a little child to him and put the child among them. <sup>3</sup>Then he said, “I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven.”*

What better example could be given of what it means to be “poor in spirit” than a little child. I have never in my life seen a child who was proud of his spirituality. When you tell a little child about the Lord, he is all ears. His heart is open and ready to receive what you have to say.

Jesus starts with the foundational truth of all those who know the Lord. They are “poor in spirit.”

## **b) THE POOR IN SPIRIT ARE HUMBLE**

Humility was an exclusively Jewish virtue. The ancient philosophers didn't want anything to do with it. Things haven't changed much; our modern culture applauds the "macho" kind of person. There's no situation that he gets into that he doesn't have an answer for. He is always in control. That may be good for Hollywood, but it's not the kind of life Jesus says is blessed. Jesus says it is the "poor in spirit that are blessed."

Booker T. Washington was a prominent black educator. Shortly after he took over the presidency of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, he was walking in an exclusive section of town when he was stopped by a wealthy white woman. Not knowing the famous Mr. Washington by sight, she asked if he would like to earn a few dollars by chopping wood for her. Professor Washington smiled, rolled up his sleeves, and proceeded to do the humble chore she had requested. When he was finished, he carried the logs into the house and stacked them by the fireplace. A little girl recognized him and later revealed his identity to the lady.

The next morning the embarrassed woman went to see Mr. Washington in his office and apologized profusely. "It's perfectly all right, Madam," he replied. "Occasionally I enjoy a little manual labor. Besides, it's always a delight to do something for a friend." She shook his hand warmly and assured him that his meek and gracious attitude had endeared him and his work to her heart. Not long afterward she showed her admiration by persuading some wealthy acquaintances to join her in donating thousands of dollars to the Tuskegee Institute.

A few days after President Reagan had been shot, when he was well enough to get out of bed, he wasn't feeling well, so he went into the bathroom that connected to his room. He slapped some water on his face and some of the water slopped out of the sink. He got some paper towels and got down on the floor to clean it up. An aide went in to check on him, and found the president of the United States on his hands and knees on the cold tile floor, mopping up water with paper towels.

"Mr. President," the aide said, "what are you doing? Let the nurse clean that up!" And President Ronald Reagan said, "Oh, no. I made that mess, and I'd hate for the nurse to have to clean it up." People who are poor in spirit are humble people.

## **c) THE POOR IN SPIRIT ARE DEPENDENT ON GOD**

Paul described the attitude of being poor in spirit in 2 Corinthians 3:5, "<sup>5</sup>Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God,"

*Psalm 25:16, "Turn Yourself to me, and have mercy on me, For I am desolate and afflicted.*

*Psalm 131:1-22, " LORD, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty.*  
I don't concern myself with matters too great or too awesome for me to grasp. Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself, like a weaned child who no longer cries for its mother's milk. Yes, like a weaned child is my soul within me."

Just as child is weaned off its mother's milk, the psalm writer says, "I have been weaned off my reliance to self. I now look to God alone. That's poverty of spirit.

*Luke 18 gives us a negative example of one who is not poor in spirit. Look starting at vs:18. <sup>18</sup>Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>19</sup>So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. <sup>20</sup>You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'"*<sup>£</sup>

*<sup>21</sup>And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth."*

*<sup>22</sup>So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." <sup>23</sup>But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.*

Max Lucado in his book *Applause from Heaven* writes:

"He's rich. Italian shoes, tailored suit. His money is invested. His plastic are gold cards. He lives like he flies- first class. He's young. He pump's away fatigue at the gym and slam dunks old age at the court. His belly is flat, his eyes sharp. Energy is his trademark and death is an eternity away. He's a ruler, powerful. If you don't think so just ask him. You got questions? He's got answers. You got problems? He's got solutions. You got dilemmas? He's got opinions. He knows where he's going. He has mastered the three "P" of yuppiedom. Prosperity, posterity, power. He's the rich, young ruler."

The question that was intended to show the rich, young ruler how he falls short only convinces him that he stands tall. He's a child dripping water on the floor while telling his Mom he hasn't been out in the rain." So, Jesus, who knows the heart, cuts right to the chase- Vs:22- "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have- then come and follow me."

Someone who is poor in spirit is not proud or self-reliant. Someone who is poor in spirit is like the tax collector who stood at the temple with his head bowed and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

He understands where his sufficiency comes from. He knows that apart from god is like his life has very little meaning or future.

## HOW DO I BECOME POOR IN SPIRIT?

### **a) DRAW CLOSE TO GOD**

There is something about spending time with God that melts your heart and brings humility, and the more you grow spiritually, the more humble you become. It is interesting to see this in the life of the apostle Paul.

In A.D. 59, Paul wrote, "I am the least of the apostles"  
(1 Corinthians 15:9)

In A.D. 63, he wrote, "I am the very least of all the saints  
(Ephesians 3:8).

In A.D. 64, he wrote, "I am the foremost of sinners  
(1 Timothy 1:15).

Growth in grace runs parallel to growth in humility.

### **b) COMPARE YOURSELF WITH THE RIGHT STANDARD**

Have you ever noticed that when you want to justify yourself, you invariably pick someone who is doing worse than you? The standard to compare yourself to is not someone who is worse off than you. The standard is Jesus Christ. When you see people in the Bible come in contact with God, they are always humbled by the experience. When Peter saw Jesus do a miracle, he said "depart from me Lord for I am a sinful man." When Isaiah had a vision of God, he said "woe is me." When you get a glimpse of who God is, you suddenly realize how little and weak you are.

## 2. BLESSED ARE THE MOURNERS

*Matthew 5:4, "Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted."*

Again, the Lord is speaking in a spiritual sense. He is not saying, if you are really down in the dumps, if you are mourning over some great loss in your life, you are blessed because some day someone will come along and comfort you. He is speaking about your relationship to God especially with regard to how you deal with sin in your life. And this kind of mourning logically follows being poor in spirit. Why? Because when you realize how spiritually poor you are, you mourn over your need.

There is a great deal of difference in the kind of sorrow that so many times comes as a result of living in this sinful world and the sorrow that comes from a godly repentance.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians in

*2 Cor 7:9-10, "I am not sorry that I sent that severe letter to you, though I was sorry at first, for I know it was painful to you for a little while. <sup>9</sup>Now I am glad I sent it, not because it hurt you, but because the pain caused you to repent and change your ways. It was the kind of sorrow God wants his people to have, so you were not harmed by us in any way. <sup>10</sup>For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death. "*

The kind of sorrow Paul describes as "worldly sorrow" basically means that you're sorry for the consequences of your actions. Maybe you wish things were different, but you are not willing to make any changes. Go back to the story of the rich young ruler. The Bible says that after talking to Jesus, he went away very sorrowful, but nowhere does it say he repented or that he followed Christ. It just says he was sorrowful. In the same way, it is very easy for you to hear a sermon that points out your need and to go away feeling really bad but to do nothing to change things in your life. That's the sorrow of the world. It causes anxiety, regret and even resentment, but it does not mean that you are repentant. On the other hand, godly sorrow brings repentance and forgiveness. It is when you mourn over your sin and that you receive god's comfort.

Look at it and look at it this way, sin is like a boil that begins small and then grows bigger and bigger until you are in real pain. When it gets to that point, the doctor may take a needle and lance it. The needle may be cause itself for mourning, but it is the means to comfort. When you are infected with the boil of sin, the cure is to lance it with repentance. That's where the spiritual comfort comes from.

King David had an affair with Bathsheba and in order to cover it up he had Bathsheba's husband killed. For one whole year, David experienced the burden and guilt of his sin.

*"(God) you're the One I've violated, and you've seen it all, seen the full extent of my evil. You have all the facts before you; whatever you decide about me is fair." Psalms 51:4*  
*(MSG)*

It was when David confessed his sin that the boil was lanced, and he found comfort. Jesus says, "people who are blessed are people who are sorry over their sin and who turn from it.

## **1. HOW WELL ARE YOUR VALUES LINED UP WITH GOD'S VALUES?**

If you were to write your own list of what brings blessings in someone's life, what would you put on the list? There are many good things you can choose from. You could say blessed are those who live in a new home or blessed are those who have good friends.. You could say blessed are those who have a good job. The truth is that all of those things are good things, but they are only truly good when your heart is right with God. Plenty of people have all of those good things and live miserable, broken lives. That's why Jesus begins at the foundational level of what truly brings blessings-a heart that is surrendered to God and which turns away from sin. So, if you were to honestly compose your own list of what brings blessings to someone's life, what would be on your list?

## **2. WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH WHAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED?**

JerryJenkins said, "You would have loved my dad. He was a constant tinkerer. One of those guys who was always out in the garage taking things apart and putting them back together again. He loved building things, fixing things, making things work, even if he couldn't get them to work the way they were supposed to. A friend used to say that my dad could "fix anything from a broken heart to the crack of dawn." That described him pretty well.

Once when I was a boy, he and I were in the yard working on one of his many projects, and he grabbed a large object out of the woodpile. He leaned it against the garage, took a step back and began studying it. I immediately recognized what it was. "It's one of those slabs they use to pick up things with a fork lift," I exclaimed, beaming. I motioned excitedly and began to explain to him how it worked. After a while he grinned and said in his deep southern drawl, "I know what it is. I'm just trying to figure out what I'm gonna do with it." You have the same choice to make every time you hear truth from God's word. What are you going to do with it? Are you willing to lay yourself out as poverty-stricken before God and to turn from the sin in your life? To do so is the first step toward having a truly blessed life.