

## "Poor in Spirit"

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Stay with us, because today we're going to explore the blessedness of being poor in spirit.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. How we think of God makes all the difference in the world. If we love Him and humble ourselves before Him, God will bless us richly; but if we fail to give Him our respect and our obedience, we'll find the blessed life disappear. The more we get away from God, the more the blessings of God get away from us. That's why we continually go to the Word of God, the Bible, to find the truth of God and the blessing of God. You won't find it anywhere else. God's way is the right way, the blessed way, and the true way. Thanks for taking time to search God's word with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful man in the world in his day. God allowed him to have this power in order to punish Israel for her sins. Three times Nebuchadnezzar's army entered Jerusalem, and the third time completely destroyed the city, including the temple. Nebuchadnezzar's home was the great city of Babylon, whose hanging gardens were one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Chapter four of the book of Daniel tells how Nebuchadnezzar became proud and said, "Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?"

Well because he forgot God, and he forgot that God was the true ruler of the world, God humbled him by making him like a beast of the field for three and a half years. He ate grass like cattle, and his hair and his nails grew long. Afterwards Nebuchadnezzar praised and honored the Most High God. He learned his need for God the hard way.

Now friend, you can learn more about being "poor in spirit." And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org).

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Isaiah 1:16 to 20, and we'll explore what it means to be "poor in spirit."

Our reading today from God's Word comes from the book of Isaiah chapter 1, verses 16 through 20. "'Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together,' Says the LORD, 'Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword.' Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken." That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Oh Father, help us to live as You would have us to live. To draw close to You, and to love You and serve You in every way. And Father may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to hear Jesus speak in person? In 2006, Jackie and I visited the site near the Sea of Galilee where Jesus supposedly delivered the Sermon on the Mount. The crowds gathered to the mountain to hear Him speak. They hung on every word. The people knew about Jesus' power to heal, His godly teaching and kind ways. Matthew 4 verses 23 to 25 says, "And he

went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So His fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought Him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and He healed them. And great crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan." You see, these people wanted to hear what the Master had to say—I hope that you have that kind of hunger for the word of God.

How would you begin your signature sermon? Well the beginning statement of a sermon is usually what catches people's attention. Jesus made a surprising and captivating comment about being poor in spirit. He said in Matthew 5 and verse 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He started His sermon talking about people who are "poor in spirit." He started there, because He knew how vital being "poor in spirit" was to our relationship with Him and with the Father. If we're not "poor in spirit," we may never have room for God in our lives. The blessed person not only has room for God; the blessed person cannot live without God!

What does it mean to be blessed? Well the word "blessed, or blessed" means more than being "happy." Now happiness is merely an emotion, and it's often dependent upon outward circumstances. To be blessed here refers to the ultimate well-being of a person, a person who has a lasting spiritual joy arising from his relationship with God. The beatitudes are not simple statements, they're exclamations! They're saying that these are the kinds of people that God sees as having the ultimate in well-being.

I'm reminded of Habakkuk, a prophet in the Old Testament, who lived at a very difficult time. Habakkuk 3 verses 17 to 19 says, "Though the fig tree should not blossom, And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail, And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold, And there be no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the Lord of my salvation. The Lord GOD is my strength, And He has made my feet like hinds' feet, And makes me walk on my high places." Oh a relationship with God is a wonderful and fulfilling blessing, because it assures us of an eternal home, and even when our world here falls apart here, we have a time with God.

The Lord Jesus before His death gave some assurance to His apostles. Now Jesus knew that He would be crucified and they would be sorrowful, but the Lord said in John 16 and verse 22, "Therefore you too now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you." My friend, in Christ, no one can take away our joy or our hope. In Christ we have forgiveness, the right to pray, eternal life, and an inheritance in heaven. No one can take this away from us! We may all kinds of change in this world, but nothing can change and takeaway all the joys that Christ gives. Now if you're counting on this world to bless you, remember this world is fickle and temporal, but Christ is eternal.

We don't always see things the way God sees them. The people that we think are blessed aren't necessarily the ones that God says are blessed. God said in Isaiah 55 verses 8 and 9, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Now the world values riches, and honors, and fame, intelligence, appearance, and strength. These beatitudes emphasize inward dispositions not outward circumstances, so God has different values than people do. Jeremiah 10 verses 23 and 24 says: "Thus says the LORD, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him

who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,' declares the LORD." Men shouldn't boast over their human wisdom, power, or wealth. These things don't make a man blessed in God's eyes. If you wish to boast about something, boast that you know and understand the Lord God of heaven, who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth. Those things are truly valuable.

When God calls someone blessed, he is blessed indeed! God never lies but calls things as they truly are! And if anyone else blesses you, that blessing may last for a time, but God's blessings last for all of our lives and beyond this life. God's blessings are both physical and spiritual. He meets our physical needs for food, and water, clothing, and shelter; but He also meets our spiritual needs. Ephesians 1 verse 3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

Now in Christ we do have every spiritual blessing that we could even hope for. We have access to the Father, peace, joy, assurance, and love. And in Christ we have forgiveness. Rom. 4 verses 7 and 8 says, "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account." Forgiveness through the blood of Christ opens the door to an eternal fellowship with God on earth and in heaven. And that's truly a blessed state and condition!

The Lord said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Now there are two words for poor in the New Testament. First, there are those who are poor who are needy and have to work from day to day just to earn a living. Now they have food and clothes enough to survive but very little else. Second, there are those who are destitute beggars, living in absolute poverty—the person who has nothing at all and is desperate. Amy friend it's this second word that's used here; and that's what makes this so surprising! The blessed person is the one who "in spirit" has nothing at all. He has nothing and is utterly dependent upon God.

The poor in spirit are not the same as people who are "poor-spirited," that is, who are dejected, or self-pitying creatures who go about in fear or in indifference. No, this is speaking of people who realize their spiritual poverty without God. They realize they have an utter need and a dependence upon God. Since they know their condition, they're humble and they yearn for God's help. They put their whole trust in God. They realize they owe their existence and their salvation to God. They realize that on their own without God they're lost in sin and have no hope. And they know they cannot earn their salvation.

Ephesians 2 verses 8 to 10 says, "For by grace you've been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it's the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Now a person poor in spirit will become wholly dependent upon God—that is, God means everything to him! And we must realize that we need God's help and we need His strength; only God can give us eternal life. We must put our trust in Him.

A person poor in spirit doesn't invent his own religion and he doesn't invent his own way to be saved. A person poor in spirit is willing to listen and do what God says and do it God's way. He doesn't try to correct God or change God's laws or morals. He doesn't propose his own solutions to the problems of sin or question God's wisdom and justice. He loves God and is willing to follow the Lord and learn from Him.

Because a person "poor in spirit" realizes His need for Jesus to be His Savior, he also regards Jesus as His Lord! He belongs to the Lord and takes what God says seriously. God said in Isaiah 66 and verse

2, "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." Does the word of God make you tremble? It should. God's word will one day determine your eternal destiny. God is the eternal authority, and one day you will have to give an account for your life to Him.

Now when we think about all of these matters, one of the things that we realize is that God is the only one who could make the moral laws of life. The Pharisees were a sect of Jews that lived by its own human traditions and judged others for not keeping their rules. They would even judge Jesus for not keeping their traditions! And they were fooling themselves. You remember the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 15 verses 13 to 14, that "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone [that is the Pharisees, alone]; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit."

Now a proud person doesn't think he needs God's wisdom and he thinks God should be honored just to have him around. You remember the Lord Jesus in Luke 18 verses 9 to 14 "told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: he said, 'Two men went up into the temple to pray, one was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' [oh my] But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' Jesus said, 'I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.'" God cannot use a man who is full of himself, because such a man has no room for God!

The Bible also tells us of an arrogant church that didn't know it needed the Lord. The Lord Jesus sent His message to the church in Laodicea in Revelation. 3 verses 15 to 20: he said, "I know your works: that you're neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I'm going to spit you out of my mouth. For you say, well I rich, and I've prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. [then Jesus said] Those [those] whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. And if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."

Oh these things matter because we all stand in the utter need for God. My friend, are you poor in spirit? Do you need God?

Let's pray together. Oh Father, open our eyes that we may see how much we need You in our life, Your laws, Your morals, Your love and Your forgiveness. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Blessed is the person who has realized his own utter helplessness, and who has put his whole trust in God, for only by emptying himself out can he render to God that perfect obedience which will make him a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. Obeying God is a demonstration of our faith, our love and our attitude toward Him. James said a man shows his faith by his works.

The Lord Jesus said in Luke 9 verses 23 to 24, that "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but

whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." You must empty out your pride and your willful ways and humble yourself before God, if you wish to enter the kingdom of heaven.

To become a Christian, we must die to ourselves, so that we may live for Christ! Trust in the Lord with all your heart, remove the sin from your hearts and lives in repentance, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ by being immersed in water. Now baptism is when our old man of sin dies and we're born again to walk in newness of life. Romans 6 verses 3 and 4 says, "Do you not know that all of us who've been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Start a new life in Christ today by obeying the Lord.

Let me also encourage you to get involved in the church. When you're baptized, the Lord saves you and adds you to His church. Now as a Christian you keep your connection with God by staying faithful in His church. Don't think that you can go it on your own. You need the Lord and you need His people to help you stay faithful and to reach heaven. Get involved in church.

Now we hope that today's study about being "poor in spirit" has stirred you to consider your attitude toward God. If you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter at our website: [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you get a hold of us, don't worry, we're not here to get your money or exploit you. We're here to help you to know the Lord and to go to heaven.

Please get involved with a church of Christ. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Now maybe you've got a spiritual problem that you'd like to talk to someone about, well let us know, we'd ne glad to help you. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us and please, please, tell a friend about this program. Well as always we love to say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.