

# POVERTY, MOURNING, AND MEEKNESS

By Paris Reidhead\*

In Matthew chapter five, the King describes his subjects. I read beginning with the first verse and concluding with the 12<sup>th</sup> verse. This is what He said infinitely more important than anything I shall say about it. "And seeing the multitude, he went up into the mountain and when he was set, his disciples came onto 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, be exceeding glad for great is your reward in heaven for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Our Lord Jesus came preaching saying, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat. 4:17). He called unto Himself men that instructed by Him and empowered by Him would continue to preach this message of repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. With His disciples, He went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom and healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people.

As you know, they brought to Him from Syria and from beyond Jordan the maim, the halt, the blind, the sick, the wounded, the weary. Everyone that came telling his need received from Christ the answer to it. Our Lord by His ministry of love and of miracles, of healing and of deliverance was testifying that in the kingdom of heaven, another king rules.

You recall on one occasion that a woman taken with infirmity, with arthritis would be the nearest thing we could find to it, was brought to him and our Lord looking at her said, "Ought not this daughter of Abraham, daughter of faith bound all these 18 years by Satan, by the devil. Ought not she be loosed. Ought not she be set free" (Luk. 13:16).

He testified therein that this woman was in a world system that was governed by another than God. We know full well from the Scripture, all of us would do this, would understand this, that there was no need for sickness or death if there hadn't been sin.

You will understand when I say that that the human body was made by God. So that periodically some say every seven years, another say much more frequently every cell in the body is replaced by an entirely new cell and this process of replacement is going on constantly. Apparently, God made the body in such a way that it could continue without getting old or weary or sick.

But we find that when sin came into the world, there were four terrifying consequences. First was spiritual death, separation from God. Our legal death, no longer dependent upon God. Physical death and the eternal death. This physical death apparently was put into the stream of humanity because of sin. Death passed upon all men for that all have sinned. The universality of death that men everywhere die testifies that then everywhere are sinners by nature and by choice.

We find in Deuteronomy the 28th chapter in a careful study that the sentence upon sin, the penalty upon sin is death. But the curse of the law was a foretaste of death in the form of suffering. In other words, those that even having come out of Egypt and into Canaan, for he's on the bank of Jordan about to send them over into Canaan, He said, "If you go and obey God, you'll be blessed but if you do not, all these curses will come upon you."

We find that He attached blessing for obedience and the curse for disobedience. These curses touched basket and store, family and animals that might be owned by the family and possessions and the bodies of the people. He describes in minute detail the kind of malady that will afflict the one who comes under the sentence. The person sins, the sentence is death but in the

interim from the time the sentence is pronounced until it's executed, there's a period of curse or a period when there's a foretaste of death. In order that there should be that which would move the people to repentance and return for forgiveness and pardon.

The kingdom into which you and I were born was a kingdom governed by the god of this world. Our Lord Jesus said, "The prince of this world cometh and has nothing in me" (Joh. 14:30). We understand that this prince of the world is none other than Satan. The god of this world is the way the Apostle Paul describes him, "the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, less the light of the gospel should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:4). This world system as we know it is governed by Satan with his minions, his hosts, his cohorts, fallen angels, and evil spirits that work today in a hierarchy of evil.

There are the prince and the power of the air, the princes' of darkness. There are the rulers of darkness and the wicked spirits in high places and a whole hierarchy of evil that controls the world's system. All that is in this kingdom of this world is the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. We were by nature and by choice reared in the kingdom where we were sensualist. The only thing that had meaning and value was what we could see, what we could feel, what we could handle, what we could experience sensually.

That's the kingdom into which we came. At the age of accountability, you as your parents and all before committed yourself to this king and to this kingdom and to this government and to this rule. You became a sinner by choice as well as by nature. God sent His Son into the world in order that he might translate you from the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of His dear Son. When our Lord Jesus Christ came down, he says, "It's the kingdom of heaven." He wasn't talking about a jurisdictional administration as some would have us think.

He was talking about a kingdom which would have heaven nature and heaven atmosphere and heaven government and heaven blessing and heaven riches and heaven enjoyment. That's where we are told we are translated from the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

Now I know there's an eschatological aspect having to do with the future reign of Christ upon the earth. But I'm speaking now of this of which He speaks we enter by our repentance and our faith. He describes it as the Kingdom of Heaven. Now he came saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." God has become flesh, the one by whom all things were made now here is in the affairs of men.

He demonstrates something of the nature of this new kingdom by rebuking those that the evil spirits possess, by opening blind eyes, by healing withered limbs, by raising the dead, by all of these miracles that we find here. Our wonderful Lord Jesus is demonstrating that in the Kingdom of Heaven there is blessing for those that are the subjects, those that are His.

But you see it isn't only to demonstrate in this object lesson, for He went teaching and preaching and healing. What's He preaching? He's preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come among you." What is He teaching? He is teaching how to get in. What repentance means. What the implications of it will be. Then He is healing in order that He might give an evidence of the benevolence of the King.

Now this is the point that I want you to see. You understand of course that Satan's lying diatribe against God is this. He blames God for everything he does. Everything that is...in a sense God as sovereign of the universe has allowed the things which transpire on the earth. We recognize this and we realize this. But the origin of these things are not in the heart of God but in the heart of God's arch enemy and ancient foe who works only as he is given opportunity because of the hearts of men.

For instance, the Scripture says to you as a Christian, "Give no place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27). This is a very real Scripture overlooked by most people. Most Christians think that if they sin, all they're going to do is lose their reward. Something far more tragic than losing your reward transpires when a Christian sins, because by that sin in the life that is tolerated and not forsaken and not confessed, the door is left open for the devil as a roaring lion to get in to touch business and family and possessions and bodies.

Thus the Scripture says, "Give no place to the devil." How is this done? By obedience and faith. By walking in sweet simplicity and union with Christ and walking in the light of His Word. Now He is speaking about this kingdom back here and He is healing and He is demonstrating that these maladies that have come have come because of sin, because of unrighteousness, because of ungodliness. And He is now the one who is going to set up a new kingdom in which these things shall not prevail, shall not stand.

You see, it's important, everybody is going to want to get into a kingdom where there will be this deliverance from all of these terrifying things that have tormented and hurt and injured. And so the King describes His subjects. He gives us here in His Word an explicit description of just who it is that is a member of His kingdom. Who it is that has been transferred from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

You see, many people would like the benefits of it, just like many people would like to go to heaven and be saved from hell. They don't want to be saved from sin while they're on earth. They want the benefits of the death of Christ, but they do not want the dictatorship of the Son of God, and the government of God's Son in their life. And so He makes it now very clear as to just the company that are having any part with Him in His kingdom.

Blessed is the word he uses. We say blessed. It's the archaic form but blessed because certainly, there's no blessing in the kingdom of Satan. There's no blessing in the kingdom of darkness. There's nothing but terror and fear, grief and death. Blessed are they.

You see, the 10 commandments do not constitute a 10-step ladder, the 10-steps step ladder into Heaven as some people have thought. I am sure there are those that have thought; now if I will just do the first Beatitude and then after a diligent application to that, I can achieve the second and then perhaps the third. Maybe when I come to the 10th, I'll be high enough so I can step over the top of the ladder into heaven. It doesn't work that way.

This is not a description of how one gets there. This is a picture or a description of those that have arrived. He's not giving you a ladder to reach heaven. He is telling you, just giving you that full description of the one that has come into this blessing of being part of His kingdom. Notice therefore in the third verse, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

By virtue of His using these words, "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven," He is establishing once for all, finally and authoritatively that no one can ever feel that he has part in the kingdom of heaven unless he has whatever is implied by poor in spirit. For these words in the language in which it were written are explicit to the extreme. Perhaps we could paraphrase it and give some of that significance. Hear it now. *Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs, only theirs and no one but theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

This is not an exaggeration of the strength of these words. The Lord has fixed it once and for all that everyone in the Kingdom of Heaven is poor in spirit. That anyone who is not poor in spirit is not in the Kingdom of Heaven. That no one can ever be thought by others to be in the Kingdom of Heaven who was not poor in spirit. That this now has become the not without which.

It overrules all theology. It overrules all ritual. It overrules all deeds of the sacrifice and service. That this now has become the absolute qualification for having part in the Kingdom of Heaven. Now you will agree with me that if anything has this degree of meaning, it's of tremendous importance. What does it mean? Well first, what doesn't it mean?

It doesn't mean blessed are the poor spirits, as though God were now putting a premium on cowardice, on effeminacy, on non-willingness to take ones responsibility, on a weak vacillating type of thing. This isn't what it has reference to at all. Not in any way. Nor does it said, "Blessed are the poor." It's not talking about the physical poverty or financial poverty. It's not talking about those that would do without.

Of course, the ancient Catholic writers, the point where it says, "Blessed are the poor," would then say, "For theirs is the spirit of the kingdom of heaven." This is a complete twisting of the words. It isn't what it has to convey at all. There's no virtue in

poverty. You may have at one time been poor and I assure you of this that within the days of your poverty you certainly had it no more readily that you were spiritual.

Now I'm sure I am confident looking back on them that The Depression did not make the United States one bit more spiritual than prosperity has made it. I just don't think there's any spiritual significance at all now to the amount of money that one possesses or the degree of poverty that they experience. It's not talking about that.

Of course, there's much to be said about loving the world and the things of the world. We're trying to isolate this and see how it applies to you in your life. What does this mean, blessed are the poor in spirit? Obviously, if it doesn't mean a natural weakness of character and vacillation of purpose and it doesn't mean financial poverty, then it must have something to do with the attitude of an individual towards himself.

Now, what's the attitude that the Scripture makes so clear characterizes the unsaved? What is the attitude? What does characterize the lost men and lost women in our communities? Many times we will find people that are lost, that are very meek and mild in disposition. I think of one the prayer room down in Florida, in a meeting that we had many years ago. She said, "You know, all my life ever since I was a little girl, I have been the meek and the mild and the quiet and the sweet."

She gave her name. She said, "I don't know when it started but somewhere back there, I found out that if I fought, people fought me but if I gave in, was sweet and was just so mild then everybody patted me on the back and I came to like it." She said, "My means of dealing with life was to be the ever-loving, ever-giving, ever self-effacing little Annie." She said, "Everybody thought I was such a sweet little Christian."

But she said, "They didn't know what was in my heart. Deep in my heart was resentment and hatred and I used to go to bed at night, and lie awake and stare at the ceiling and think of the things I'd like to say and like to do to get even with these people that took advantage of me." She said, "My heart was just like a furnace – white heat all the time. But I had cultivated an outward demeanor, an outward facade that made everyone think that I was so meek and so mild."

So I would have you understand that it does not refer necessarily to that person, that type of thing, the part of the unsaved that's here. It can be duplicated but it's not what we're talking about. We're not talking about that at all when we count it. This is not what the unsaved are. They may imitate it just as you can teach a parrot to say the 23rd Psalm presumably. I don't know that it's been done and he won't understand it.

So you can teach someone that's unsaved to behave in a self-effacing manner but they're still going to be as cocky and arrogant and proud as they were. This does not characterize the unsaved. As you look back on your own experience, what marked you? Wasn't it self-interest and self-will and pride and wanting and insisting on your rights and perfecting yourself in getting?

Aren't the common adages of the world an expression of the temper. Look after number one. If you don't, who will? Get while the getting's good. Do others before they do you. This whole common philosophy by which men live, this whole atmosphere of I, me, my and mine, this is what characterizes the world.

Now, Jesus Christ, our wonderful Lord is saying that anyone that has part in the Kingdom of Heaven has had something happened to him that's of such a nature that it has completely cut across this spirit of selfishness, self-will, self-assertion, self-right and pride and arrogance. He's not telling you here how to get it. He's simply saying, "This is what everyone that's in the Kingdom of Heaven has and if they don't have this, they're not in the Kingdom of Heaven."

The spirit of the world is one of arrogance, of haughtiness, of pride, of selfishness, that's willing to murder, to steal, to lie, anything to get one's own way and right. No, this says our Lord Jesus says, is totally abdicated in the Kingdom of Heaven; just it's completely cut across.

Now we're coming to the heart. This word poor is a word that's used of the most despicable and needy of beggars. The word in the Greek is *ptóchos* and it means bankrupt or broken or beggarly in respect to the spirit. Now, how does this come? That's not

natural. It's just as impossible for you to say to the Ethiopian, "Change your skin," to the leopard, "Change your spots." As to say to a person, "Change your nature from arrogance and pride and haughtiness to one of brokenness of spirit, poverty of spirit."

I am looking at you an unsaved person today and I'm saying to you just as God's word says that unless you are broken in spirit, beggarly in respect to the spirit, unless this thing that is represented by the word *ptóchos* has happened in you, you have no part in the Kingdom of Heaven. You look at me and say, "Where will I get it? How am I going to get a spirit like this?"

There's only one way, only one way. That's to recognize that by nature and by attitude, by habit and by practice and by policy and by principle of life, you have been a bona fide member of the kingdom of this world. You followed in the pattern of your father, the devil and his nature. You've manifested and reflected. In the Kingdom of Heaven, there is an entirely different nature, entirely different principle, entirely different mode of operation.

The only way that anyone can ever get from the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of God's dear Son is by a supernatural work of God's grace. It's supernatural. No other way. No other means. You say, "Well, believe the gospel." There's only one time and one place where believing the Gospel can have saving significance and that's after repentance. For its repent and believe. It's repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus.

Now, what's repentance? First, it implies conviction or recognition that you've been a bona fide member of the kingdom of Satan, a bona fide member of the kingdom of this world. That his philosophy and his attitude, his governmental principles and policy have characterized your life. You've been there as a citizen, participating in the activities.

Some of the grosser ones you may have rejected but actually in spirit, you've been there. You see, this is what we call lost. This is what we call convicted. The reason why few people are being genuinely saved in the 20th century is because so few people are being truly lost or brought by the Spirit of God to that place of lostness or awareness of it. The Spirit of God is the one who causes you to see that you are not in the Kingdom of Heaven. That's what Christ is saying.

Here's a multitude of people gathered around Him and His disciples and He is telling them that only those that have this thing are in His kingdom. Why? Because they would have assumed that since they were in the kingdom of Israel, that since they had been circumcised and they've been presented to the people at their bar mitzvah that they had been accepted into the life of the community. Since they had brought their offerings to the temple and observed the holy days and knew the 10 commandments, that they've fasted and they tithed that they were all right.

The Lord Jesus is saying to the list, "No, no, no, no, no, no. That isn't enough. You aren't in the Kingdom of Heaven unless you've had this supernatural work of grace performed upon you. When this policy and principle that characterized the world has had the knife go right straight through it both ways, crossing it out. And some other spirits come into you, some other attitude.

Now, the first thing that has to happen to anyone is that he discovers that he is a bona fide member of the unsaved community, that he is lost, that he doesn't have eternal life, that he isn't in the Kingdom of Heaven. No one can be saved until their lost. We've been trying to get people saved before they were lost and it won't work because Christ only came to seek and to save that which was lost.

What's the lost man? I am deserved of God's wrath. I know I'm wrong. I know my heart's wrong. My mind is wrong. My will is wrong. My whole being is wrong. There's nothing in me that's right. And I don't know what to do about it. I hate it but I can't break it. Well you say this is a hopeless place to bring a person. Sure, of course it is because salvation is supernatural. You've got to come to the place where you realize you're just as hopeless as can be. Then what do you do?

Then you discover that Jesus Christ has been exalted to give repentance and remission of sins. In this state, you'll have to go to Him and say, "Lord, my heart is as hard. My mind is as wicked. My will is as obdurate as anyone's could be. And I know not how to change it." Then you come to Him with this recognition of what you are and what happens? Then God in His sweet grace works this miracle in your heart.

The first miracle that you have is a miracle of repentance. Truly, this brokenness of spirit that he knew there's nothing good, nothing to bring, nothing to offer. Your purpose is no longer to please yourself but to please God. The point of this *ptóchos* operation, this changing one from the arrogant, haughty, prince that reigns in the dominion of his soul to the broken beggarly one in respect to his spirit is a supernatural work of God.

Obviously, we reduced everything down to formulas in the 20th century. It's all so simple, one, two, three, four. Have you sinned? Christ died, accept Him. Good, now you're in. That's all true but listen, no one, no one can repent until he's been convicted. No one can believe until he's repented. No one can truly be born again until he's believed. It's all there. It's all in the formula.

But "A" has to happen before "B" can and "B" has to happen "C" can and "C" has to happen before "D" can. What before Jesus Christ is saying is no one has any part in the Kingdom of Heaven spirit, until by the operation of God he has become poor in broken in the spirit. Everyone in the Kingdom of Heaven has. Anyone who hasn't isn't in the Kingdom of Heaven. It's just there. There it is. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those to whom this awful, tyrant of self [has been broken]. You say, "Isn't this what you deal with at the cross?" No, it's an aspect of this that you deal with at the cross.

Here, you're dealing with the thing as far as your attitude toward it is concerned. At this point, it has to come that one discovers that he is everything God has said he is and that he takes sides with God against himself. Our Lord has now made it perfectly clear, absolutely clear that the only one that is in the Kingdom of Heaven and has any possibility of so viewing himself has to have come to that place of poverty in spirit, brokenness in spirit.

It's going to be manifested and I quickly touch it by a mourning. Blessed are they that mourn. Mourn over what? Over their life of rebellion against God, over the arrogance of their mind and will and spirit, over their constant crimes against the holiness and grace of God.

Blessed are they that mourn. These that are broken in spirit having seen themselves alright are going to mourn over what they are. There will be no self-defense. There will be no self-vindication because they've seen themselves and stood at the cross as having nothing and needing everything. Bringing only to Jesus Christ all of the accumulated guilt of their lives against Him. Blessed are they that mourn and then blessed are the meek. Blessed are the meek.

Three things therefore characterize these as we see it now. And as Christ describes the subjects of His kingdom He says they're poor, they're broken in spirit, they mourn over their past sins and their crimes against God and in their meekness, they know that in them, in their flesh, there's no good thing.

This describes born again people. I don't believe we should view this as any other way. You know there's been a lot of talk in the past about this referring to the constitution of the kingdom in some future day. This is the description of the regenerate heart. This is what God does in the one whom He redeems. There are two things that it does. God looking at you today bears witness to your heart. Yes, yes, yes your heart responds.

There came a day when I broke. There came a day when I broke and I know it. I know it today. There came a time when I mourn not only because I was in trouble in thought but because I hated sin. I have discovered that in me and my flesh, there's no good thing. Then this has the effect of exhilarating you and thrilling you and lifting you and causing you to say, "See what great things God has wrought. God performed this miracle in my life."

If on the other hand, however many years you may have been in the Christian way with the profession, you with God as your witness do not find this poverty of spirit and this mourning and this meekness He describes. Then I say there's only one possible response that's wise and proper and that is to face it.

You may have been in the church organized and the church visible, but not in the Kingdom of Heaven. Not have made the partaker of that supernatural life by the divine impartation that's necessary for everyone that's His. For everyone, everyone, this is the absolute rule. Everyone that's met Jesus Christ in the saving experience must acquire these three things: of spirit, mourning and meekness.

It characterizes the household of God. You say, "Must they always manifest it?" I tell you what will happen, when they do not manifest it. They will treat the failure to manifest as the sin that it is. This won't characterize them. I do not say that without exception that such a person will always manifest it. But when he's brought to see it, he will deal with the failure to manifest that poverty of spirit, that mourning, and that meekness as the sin God holds it to be.

He will not justify himself. He will not vindicate himself. He will not insist on his rights. He will bow and break because God wrought the work in his heart. Now let me ask you. Has God wrought the work in your heart? When He describes the subjects of His kingdom is He describing what He's done in your life? Listen, if you say, "No, no, He doesn't," don't despair. Come to him. Come to him.

The only ones that ever have received such as He describes here have to come with the very opposite and get it from the Lord. You come to him. He didn't put something here impossible for you to attain and to reach. All He did was to tell you what He'd come to provide. He requires it but He provides it.

Let's bow our hearts. Our Father, I'm glad that everyone who gets into Thy kingdom has to come the same way whether wealthy or poor, whether wise or foolish, whether successful or failure. There's only one door and it's so low that the only way anyone can get in is crawling on his hands and knees, broken. Oh, Father of our Lord Jesus, Thy dear Son told that people, the only ones who were blessed, were those that had something they could never earn or secure or get and He closed them up to Thee, He sent them to Thee.

If they listened well, they knew that they had to come to Him to get it, to know Father. Anyone here today whose heart bears have to say, "God has done it." For I was utterly unlike this and witness with Thy word and says, "Yes, this God has done," will I came to Him and He wrought the work in my heart.

Therefore for those who say, "I am not like this. This has not been done in my life." Let there be not despair, or sense of futility but a glad going even with their grief to the Lord Jesus Christ. For He who has commanded has also provided. Might it be that today we shall recognize a fresh anew that the King had a right to describe the subjects in His Kingdom. Let us supply that word to our own hearts. For Jesus sake, Amen.

\* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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