

"... healing for all the nations" Revelation 22:2



"... the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified" Isaiah 61:3

The Tree of Life

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"... for the testimony of Jesus"
Revelation 1:9

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The Beatitudes

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Purity of heart is to will one thing - Kierkegaard

We have now come to the sixth of the Beatitudes. The ancient Hebrews felt the number six was the number of man. If so, then this Beatitude is in this place for a reason. It is the final word of Christ on the condition of the man that has come to His kingdom.

Remember as we have went through the Beatitudes, I have tried to show and point out that it is an upward progression of thought that the Lord employs as He says these eight sayings. When we come to number six it is as if the Lord is putting an exclamation point on everything that He has said to this point. Everything that the Lord has said can be summed up or has its end in that simple phrase, "pure in heart." Meekness, righteousness, poorness of spirit, mercy, these are all characteristics of a pure heart.

We know that the Bible defines the heart as the inward part of man. The part that we do not see. That is what the Lord was trying to get the Pharisees to see so many times. Outward cleansing is right and necessary, but it is not the end. There has to be a cleansing of the inside. By the time the Christian has developed the traits that the Lord has taught to this verse, his heart will have been revealed for what it is, either cleansed or not.

All our faculties are covered in this pureness. Our heart is made pure." Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." (Psalm 24:3,4) Notice the contrast between a pure heart and pride and lying. We also get a glimpse of the rest of the Beatitude, that a clean heart is the prerequisite to seeing God in His fullness.

With our hearts clean this leads to our minds then being clean. "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior" (2 Peter 3:1,2) As the heart has become pure by the new nature taking hold and growing there, it starts to make the mind pure. How is this accomplished? By the Word of God. The verse before is about the pig that goes back to the mire. That is one who has an external show of religion, but soon turns from what they had professed to be true. The apostle would seem to be telling us that one of the safeguards of keeping our minds pure is to keep the Word of God constantly in our minds. The picture of stirring is that of action and effort. Not just a simple reading, but a thinking, pondering and concentrating on the Word of God.

With a clean heart and a clean mind, it only follows that our hands would be clean. There is an interesting statement in Job 22:30. It reads thus, He shall deliver the island of the innocent: and it is delivered by the pureness of thine hands.” There is a direct connection between the power of God in our lives and the cleanness of our hands. Think about what the Lord said to the children of Israel. “And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.” (Isaiah 1:15) What a complete contrast between the two statements! God is not interested in just a show of religion. He will have a complete man, heart, soul, and body or He will have not have that man.

Can we know that we have a pure heart? The Scripture teaches that we we can. “And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” First, we have to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. We have to believe on His finished work on Calvary, on the resurrection on the third day, and His soon return. When you believe those three things, having a pure heart is easy. How do you have a pure heart? By keeping the commandments and loving one another. All of our lives are wrapped up in those two fragments.

God’s Supply

The world is feeling very anxious about the supply and cost of basic necessities for life. Are we as Christians to be feeling as anxious as the world is? In the life of Elisha the prophet there is an account that gives us some insight into this very question. We will begin in 2 Kings 6, verse 24. We find that the king of Syria had come and besieged Jerusalem. The siege lasted for sometime. The Bible does not tell us how long. Maybe the people did not plan well beforehand. Maybe King Benhadad burned all the crops on his way to Jerusalem. What the Bible does tell us is the severity of the siege. It led to famine.

This famine led to food prices skyrocketing. The Word tells us that food was so scarce that they were eating dove dung. They were selling a horse head for eighty shekels. The account goes on to relate that two woman made a pact. One would slaughter her son to eat, the other would on the next day. Things were bad.

Yet in the midst of all of this, comes Elisha with a word from God. The famine will end tomorrow. It will end to such an extent that flour will sell for pennies. The first thing that we need to see about God’s supply is that it is not based upon our need or our supply. God in His sovereignty had already picked the day and the hour that the deliverance would come. While it would seem that God was overdue in meeting the need, it would be only from our perspective that this is the case. God was moving in King Benhadad coming to lay the siege. The eating of the children was the fulfillment of His promise of turning from His grace and mercy. (Deut. 28:49-58) Yet all the evilness and iniquity of the people could not keep the mercy of God from coming forth when He decreed it to come.

It is the same with us today. God has decreed that things are to get bad, even awful. False prophets, earthquakes, pestilence, skyrocketing food prices, these are just the beginning of sorrows. (Matthew 24: 4-8) Yet He also told us who and what we are to expect as Christians. He has said that He will be with us. He has said that he will never leave nor forsake us. So what are we to believe?

The world and all of its worry and fear? The world and all of its empty promises of hope and comfort? So many of the promises in this world are just like the promise of that woman. We give of ourselves, and then they do not fulfill their part of the bargain. What are we to do?

We could do like the king. We could become angry at God and take it out on the preacher or others who standing for God. The preacher is not at fault for speaking the Word of God. How can the Christian not tell people of their sin if they are in sin? How can the Christian not speak the truth that judgment is coming, even that it is here?

Yet as Christians, we must also be ready with the message of hope. When Elisha heard from the Lord, he spoke just as he had any other message. It did not matter to him how impossible it seemed. He spoke hope! God is going to supply our need! God is on the move! To everything there is a time. Even a message of hope in the time of greatest distress!

One of the lords of Israel was sitting and heard the words of Elisha. He mocked God, and questioned whether God could do as He had told His prophet. So many of us are in the same position. We can only see the problems around us and not the awesome grace and power of God to supply what is needed!

This ultimately is about Who we believe God is and what we believe He is doing in the land. Yes, God is bringing judgment on the land. There is no doubt about it. Yet for what purpose? Is His judgment purely in anger and spite? Is there no hope for mercy or grace in the trouble we see around us?

God even in the midst of the most impossible of circumstances can make His supply appear. In the account before us, He made the army hear a noise and flee. God does not need any help to meet your need. I am not saying that you should not pray, or go to church or do any of those things. What I mean is that when God gets ready to move He will do it, no matter the circumstances. Do you see that in this account? Do you see that by faith in all the situations around you?

Just as Elisha spoke to the people then so the word of God is speaking to us now. Read some of the following and believe it as sure as it was when Elisha spoke.

“Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.”

“O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built. Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee. For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low. And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.”

“As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.”

Fellowship in the Gospel

The passage I want to look at is in Philippians 1:3-6. We know what the Gospel is. It is Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, dying for the sins of the whole world. We know that He lay in the tomb for three days, and then was seen for forty days by upwards of five hundred persons. We also believe that He is coming back, even as He left, and that His foot will touch and split the Mount one day very soon.

Yet the wording that the Apostle uses here is what is intriguing. The word fellowship is key to understanding this passage, especially as it relates to the promise of verse six. The word fellowship is a key word in the New Testament. It has at its roots the idea of communion and community. The idea of sharing and being part of something. When we think of the first century church, we think of the rich selling what they had to help the poor. Money is not the key issue here. It is wanting to become part of the poor person's solution, to help them. For the poor, money is not the issue either. It is receiving the fellowship of the richer person. Some people have a problem with giving, some have a problem with receiving.

How does this relate to our passage? We all know the story of the Gospel. We can give chapter and verse about what it is. Yet we have seen that fellowship is giving and receiving. We have to see that God is doing a good work in us, even more, that He will finish it. I think about the Genesis account, and the words that end each day. It was good. This is not some man and his definition of good, this is Almighty God and His definition of good. God does not do something half way, or enough to get by. He is perfect, and everything that He does is perfect. In Genesis it says that the earth was void and without form, and He created everything that is. What a picture for us. When we come to the Lord we are nothing. Yet He begins to create something out of that nothing.

There are two points of view about this good work. There is the heavenly perspective, and then there is the earthly perspective. That is to say, how God sees salvation, and how man sees salvation. I am not talking about the theories of salvation, I mean what God has really given us and what He has done for us.

John 10:27 says that "My sheep hear my voice". This is salvation. Remember the joy of knowing that you were saved? Remember when you first heard the Gospel? When you accepted His truth, you became Christ's. From the perspective of God, that moment of salvation is just the beginning. As awesome and wonderful as that moment is, it is just the beginning. The rest of our lives is salvation. We are continually in the process of being saved. We are being saved from the wicked on, from the world, and our flesh. God will finish what He started! He will not abandon you, leave you or let anything or anyone else have you.

"I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." What is He saying here? He is saying that if you commit yourself to God, nothing can keep you from God. The devil? God created him. Yes, he has a certain amount of power and authority. Yet the moment that God says that power and authority ends, it ends. Trouble is not an indication of God leaving you.

This is one of the great lies of the father of lies. "That sin from ten years ago, now you are reaping the consequences" "That sickness you talked about last week, now you got it." Let's see if you can pray now, now that your kid is the one sick!" Let this resonate in your heart and mind. You are not out of the hand of God!

When the Apostle John uses the phrase 'eternal life', he is not just talking about length of life. More important, he is talking about the quality of life. There is only one thing that is eternal, that is 4

God. The only way someone becomes eternal is for God to give of Himself. Salvation is God showing us His Eternal Life. We do not have to wait until the sweet by and by to have and to know the life of God. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." We may not understand all that is going on in our lives, but we know that Christ sits at the right hand of the Father. Because Christ in such a favored position, so we too are favored.

God's wisdom is all in Christ. God's power is all in Christ. God's love is all in Christ. I am in the hand of Christ, so all of those things are mine also! The writer of Hebrews tells us that we have this hope as an anchor for our souls. What hope? Christ Himself is the hope we have. We leave our emotions and move over to hope and faith in Christ! God cannot change what He has decreed to be in Christ. He ceases to be a holy, righteous God if His promises fail. I believe God more than my situation. I believe God more than what I can see. I believe God more than what I can hear. I believe God more than the doctors. I believe God more than the people on TV. I believe God more than the thoughts of despair, anger and discouragement.

From man's perspective it is just as awesome, but it puts a certain amount of responsibility on us. In coming to Christ we have become a kingdom of priests. In the older dispensation, a man could only watch the sacrifice be made and have faith that all was right with God. We get to come boldly into the very presence and throne room of God Almighty. We can come with pleading, praise, or just to bask in His glory.

There is an important responsibility in being part of this priesthood. There is a passage in the letter to the Hebrews that tells what the responsibility entails. "... we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

When a baby is first born the best thing for it is breast milk. For several months, that is all that it eats. Yet around six or eight months, it starts with the mashed peas and potatoes. Then as it starts to get teeth, you start to give it more and more grown up food. Then there comes a time when it is eating just like an adult. It is the same with Christians. When we are new in the Lord we need to hear the messages about repentance and the coming of the Lord. There comes a time though, that we need to mature into the deeper things of God, not have the same mashed up message that we had last week. There comes a time when we need to start manifesting the fruits of the Spirit. We need to come to a place where we have faith for others, and not solely expecting everyone else to pray for me. I should be partaking of the Gospel so that I can share it with everyone else.

The warning is clear. If we do not mature, there is the chance of death. When that baby is six months old, we expect certain things to have happened in its body.

The same at one year, two years and so on. If those stages of growth are not happening correctly, we assume that the child is sick and try to find out why. We know that if the child does not grow, and stops eating it will die. The same is true in our spiritual growth. We need to be maturing in Christ, or there is something wrong with our relationship with Christ.

I know that there are a lot of Christians that hold sincere and differing views of this passage. I believe however that the warning is clear. We have to mature in Christ. That is our part in fellowship in the Gospel! We have to become Christ like.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

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