

Jesus
&
The Pursuit of Happiness

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Jesus & The Pursuit of Happiness

By W D Furioso



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Preface

In His priestly prayer, Jesus described His disciples as being "*In* the world, but not *of* the world." As His disciples, our spiritual birth and citizenship are *of* heaven. Any and all of our spiritual blessings come to us in Christ from heaven – the place of God's abode – our future eternal home.

However, physically, we are now *in* this fallen world. With the time we've been given, we all continuously seek happiness in various forms and in various ways. We are told that "*the pursuit of happiness*" is even a political right in the country in which some of us live, although most contemporary Americans would be surprised to learn what the Founding Fathers meant by the phrase, *"the pursuit of happiness"* in the Declaration of Independence.[1]

The shared human experience in this fallen world is that happiness seems to be hard to find – it's like a

[1] For Thomas Jefferson, the one who penned the phrase, "happiness" was "human flourishing" which at the time of the founding of America meant living in harmony with natural law and practicing the virtues of self-governance and moral reasoning. Recommended Reading: The Pursuit of Happiness: How Classical Writers on Virtue Inspired the Lives of the Founders and Defined America, by Jeffrey Rosen (2024) examines how Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, George Washington, and other Founders drew on classical thinkers like Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, and John Locke. Rosen details how 18th-century "happiness" was defined as self-mastery, moral self-improvement, and classical virtue (Greek: eudaimonia), rather than modern consumerism or emotional pleasure.

fuzzy image hidden in a fog. Needless to say, if you have lived long enough, you have learned that happiness can be elusive much of our time on this earth, which is in need of redemption.

At least in Christian circles, or maybe more specifically in a sermon or a Bible teaching, it can be customary to contrast "happiness" with "joy". The message is that "happiness" is based or sourced in circumstances, and "joy" is based or sourced in God. There is a point to be made, and the preceding statement is a convenient way of making the point. However, Scripture doesn't make that same customary contrast between "happiness" and "joy". A research of the biblical languages will bear this out. Both Hebrew and Greek words are used to depict a joy that is sourced in God and a joy that is sourced in circumstances, as well as a happiness that is sourced in circumstances and **a happiness that is sourced in God**. An example of the latter is *the subject matter of this article*.

The Greek word, *makarios*[2], is most often translated "blessed" in "The Beatitudes", but according to biblical Greek language scholars[3], it can just as well be translated "happy". In fact, *makarios* is translated "happy" four times in the New American Standard Bible[4] and

[2] Strong's # G3107
[3] Mounce, Strong, Thayer, Zodhiates, et al.
[4] John 13:17, Acts 26:2, Romans 14:22, Cf. 1 Corinthians 7:40

five times in the King James Version[5]. In this article, we will look at **"The Beatitudes" as a pathway towards a happiness that is sourced in God.**

[5] John 13:17, Acts 26:2, Romans 14:22, Cf. 1 Corinthians 7:40, 1 Peter 3:14 and 4:14

The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1-16

"**1** When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. **2** He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying,
3 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **4** Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. **5** Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. **6** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. **7** Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. **8** Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. **9** Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. **10** Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11** Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.
12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."[6]

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[6] Cf. Luke 6:20-38. Both Matthew's and Luke's accounts of the Beatitudes introduce what have come to be called the "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew's gospel and the "Sermon on the Plain" in Luke's gospel. While the accounts of the two authors are "different", they are in no way contradictory. There are merely some "differences" in perspective and emphasis. It is not within the scope of this article to attempt to discuss the particular details. Theologians and Bible scholars offer various perspectives on this issue. (See Darrel Bock's "The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain", Bible Training, *Life of Christ*, and Leon Morris' The Gospel According to Matthew, Pillar New Testament Commentary (1992). My personal perspective is this: Both accounts represent *a collection* of Jesus' teachings rather than a one-time sermon per se. And as an itinerant teacher, Jesus delivered similar material on different occasions adjusting the perspective and emphases to suit His

What, Who, When & Where

In both Matthew's and Luke's gospels, the two accounts are usually given the heading, "The Beatitudes". I have entitled a study book I have written on "The Beatitudes" as "The Character of the King & His Kingdom". "The Beatitudes" function as the introduction to the "Sermon on the Mount", which we could understand as the law of the Kingdom – that is, how God rules and reigns in His Kingdom. As such, "The Beatitudes" introduce the character of the Christ of God and the desired character traits of His people. In addition, I would also offer that **the Beatitudes depict life in the Kingdom of Heaven.**

This article is a discussion of what Matthew refers to as "the kingdom of heaven" and Luke and the other writers of the New Testament refer to as "the kingdom of God". (The two phrases are essentially synonymous.[7]) I would also like to point out that in these passages Jesus is speaking to **His disciples** – "those who hear", Christ followers, those being "taught by the Lord".[8] The theme of this article has to do with **the experience of happiness** in the lives of "disciples of the kingdom"[9] – specifically, *on this earth, during this present age*.

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audience. Simply because of familiarity, I have chosen to use Matthew's account as the textual basis of this present article.

[7] See: https://www.gotquestions.org/kingdom-heaven-God.html

[8] Isaiah 54:13

[9] Matthew 13:52

Some might say Matthew emphasizes the *present* with his phrase "theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven" appearing twice.[10] And one could rightly say that with his use of the words "now" and "shall"[11] and "in that day" and "in heaven",[12] Luke stresses that the poor, hungry, weeping, and persecuted may not appear blessed now in this age, but God will reverse their condition in *the age to come*.[13] However, the overall context of both passages is clearly **on this earth, during this present age**.[14] Therefore, the perspective of this article is in accord with *inaugurated eschatology*[15]: Beatitude rewards *begin in this age* but are *consummated in the age to come*. I will state that more exactly: The Kingdom came when Jesus came – that is, *during this age*. But the Kingdom will be fully established in *the age to come*, after Jesus comes again. The Kingdom is *"now already, but not yet fully"*. Therefore, I understand the experience of the rewards of the Kingdom, including the rewards of the Beatitudes, to be the same – *"now already, but not yet fully"* – **Beatitude rewards begin in this age but are consummated in the age to come.**

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[10] Yet Matthew does use the phrase "reward in heaven" in verse 12.
[11] Luke 6:21, 25
[12] Luke 6:23
[13] Cf. Luke `3:30; Matthew 19:30, 20:16; Mark 9:35, 10:31
[14] Cf. Matthew 5:13-16 and Luke 6:27-38. I believe it would be accurate to say that Jesus explains how to live out Matthew 5:1-12 in Matthew 5:13-16 and explains how to live out Luke 6:20-26 in Luke 6:27-38.
[15] For more definition of this term see: https://theopedia.com/inaugurated-eschatology and https://www.gotquestions.org/inaugurated-eschatology.html

"Blessed"

Again, this passage is entitled "The Beatitudes". "Beatitude" is a noun. But the Greek word translated "blessed" – *makarios*[16] – is *an adjective, which in this context describes the state of a person*. What does it mean that a person is "blessed"? The Greek word can also be translated "favored", "fortunate", or "benefited".[17] In other words, someone will be "blessed" – favored, fortunate, and benefited - if they are "poor in spirit", if they "mourn", if they are "meek", if they "hunger and thirst for righteousness", if they are "merciful", "pure in heart", are "peacemakers", "persecuted" and "hated, ostracized, insulted and scorned for the sake of the Son of Man".

Obviously, Jesus' words sound counter intuitive. But, as Christians, we believe He is offering *ways of placing ourselves in a position of gaining blessing* – that is, *fortunate to receive favor and benefit* – **a pathway toward happiness**. In this article, we will look into why and how these values – seemingly the inverse of conventional wisdom, and "upside-down" to the values of the surrounding culture of the world,[18] can actually **lead to the happiness we all seek.**

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[16] Strong's # G3107

[17] Bible Hub, 3107, *makarios*, Topical Lexicon, Concept Summary

[18] The idea of kingdom values (Jesus' Beatitudes) as being the inverse of conventional wisdom and being "upside down" to the values of the surrounding culture of the world has been popularized through the writings of G.K. Chesterton ("The Catholic Church and Conversion", 1926) and Donald N. Graybill ("The Upside-Down Kingdom", 1978)

Escaping Unhappiness

I will begin this section with two foundational statements so that some things I have to say about "Escaping Unhappiness" will hopefully not be misinterpreted.

Firstly, "the Way of Escape", so to speak, is none other than Jesus Christ. He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me."[19] When I speak of the way of "escape" *from* unhappiness and the way *to* the happiness found in our Heavenly Father, I speak of Jesus Christ as "the Way" the Father has provided.

Secondly, Hebrews 5:9 states that Jesus is "the source of eternal salvation". Thus, the way the Father has provided in and through and by Jesus Christ is **salvation** – not merely "escape" in the conventional sense.[20] The Greek word translated "salvation" in the New Testament is *soteria*[21]. The word is used 46 times in the New Testament and is rich in meaning and theological application. Suffice to say here that *the way of salvation in Christ* provides deliverance or setting free *from* sin and its effects *to* a preservation of health and wholeness in God. This is the foundational concept

[19] John 14:6

[20] In fact, as it will be discussed up ahead, it is actually a way of "head on" engagement with the effects of sin on Humanity and this fallen world.

[21] Strong's # G4991

lying beneath the thoughts I have to share using the word "escape".

It is significant to note that God provided this salvation through "Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for *the joy set before Him* **endured the cross**, despising the shame".[22] **Jesus saw joy on the other side of His suffering**. Conventional wisdom would tell us that suffering brings unhappiness, rather than happiness. While that is *naturally* true, suffering can also bring an *"unconventional" happiness* in a manner of speaking – *a spiritual happiness*, if you will. I have written a concise theology of suffering in an article entitled "Walking with Sorrow" which attempts to show that Scripture makes sense out of the spiritual value of suffering, and God's purpose in suffering. Having said that, as human beings, we do naturally look to escape the unhappiness which physical and emotional suffering brings. And we long to find happiness instead. But what is the unhappiness we are trying to escape?

Sin – Our Private World

"All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

With the word "all", this verse speaks of each individual, yet also humanity as a whole. No one coming into this fallen world has escaped "the wages of

[22] Hebrews 12:2

sin" which is "death"[23] – separation from the Spirit of Life. Even those in Christ who have now been redeemed from sin can remember the darkness we groped in. And even now, with "sin (still) at work in our members", we are periodically revisited by that emptiness. Indeed, the fall into sin has affected the lives of all humanity and is found residue or painfully active in our family relationships, friendships, work, health, and other commonalities of humanity.

The World – The Domain of Demons

And going beyond "flesh and blood" struggles, the apostle Paul reminds us that we also struggle "against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."[24]

Literally and more accurately, Paul writes of "rulers", "powers" "world forces of darkness", "spiritual forces of wickedness" which go above and beyond mere demonic activity. I am not writing this article to expound on the comprehensive realities of evil in the world. However, suffice to say that every day there is the ever-present spiritual evil in the world in which we live affecting our lives in various ways – in politics, with war and terrorism, as well as mass murders and abortions, et al. Viewing the daily news of our world is usually

[23] Romans 6:23
[24] Ephesians 6:12

depressive and often oppressive. I don't need to be more explicit. Even for those who are ignorant of "the schemes of the Evil One"[25], or those who actually don't believe there is evil at work in the spiritual realm, anyone who has lived long enough is familiar with the shocking realities of life on this earth. These are, in fact, "the works of the Evil One"[26]. We may be fortunate enough not to live in certain places where there are human atrocities, famines, natural disasters, etc. which "make the news". But evil touches all of life, and each one of our lives – overtly or covertly. We should be grateful when it doesn't touch us personally, but when evil touches "close to home", the natural human tendency is "fight or flight".

Fight

Those of us who are born of the Spirit are familiar with the fact that "the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh".[27] This article is about those "weapons of our warfare" – but, I think, in a very different sense than we usually hear about. I am speaking specifically of *"The Be- Attitudes"!*[28]

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[25] Cf. Ephesians 6:11

[26] Cf. 1 John 3:8

[27] 2 Corinthians 10:4

[28] This article is in no way presented as discrediting other more conventional discussions of "Spiritual Warfare". For example, see my article, "Proclamation". This present article may be more closely related to my article, "The Cross & The Powers of Darkness". Probably the best way to put it is that this perspective on "The Beatitudes" may present an overarching narrative on "Spiritual Warfare".

Flight

Those of us who are born of the Spirit may be able to remember various forms of "flight" we used to choose in response to what caused us emotional pain and suffering – that is, various attempts at "escaping" "the wages of sin"[29] in our personal lives and the general malaise of the fallen "human condition". There are many examples of these attempts at escape: the pursuits of power, wealth, education, success, notoriety and popularity, entertainments, sex, etc. etc.

But there is one prevalent form of physical and mental escape which is emotionally synthetic and essentially ineffective but may serve to help explain the *true* blessings of "The Beatitudes": While I did experiment with psychedelic drugs in my past, I would in no way advocate them as an authentic way of dealing with life in this fallen world. Psychedelic drugs are used to alter perception, mood, and cognitive processes.[30] At the time, I used these drugs in tandem with the study of Eastern philosophies and Occult sciences. I was in search of "spiritual reality". It was not a "party" for me – it was my "religion" for a number of years. After my conversion to Christ[31], looking back, I realized my

[29] Romans 6:23

[30] https://adf.org.au/drug-facts/psychedelics/

[31] See my autobiography "Searching for Truth": eBook. Paperback.

getting "high" on "trips" was actually a way of escaping the harsh realities of my personal life and life in general by *synthetically creating an alternative reality* – **another "reality" in which I hoped to find "happiness".**

The Way

The correlation I am hoping draw here between psychedelic drugs and "The Beatitudes" is that **alternative reality** – *not as an escape,* but rather as a **head-on engagement** with the realities of personal sin and resident evil in the world. **I believe that Jesus was presenting an entrance into an alternative reality and a way of *abiding* in that alternative reality in response to the fallen human condition through "The Beatitudes"** – again*, not by escape***,** but **by head-on engagement**. And He offered this as "The Way"[32] to being **"blessed"** – *the way to happiness.* **Happiness is living in the "alternative reality" of the Kingdom of Heaven while here in this fallen world.** *That* is the theme of this article.

[32] John 14:6; Acts 9:2, 18:25, 19:9, 23, 22:4, 24:14, 22; Cf. Hebrews 10:20, 1 Peter 2:21

Engaging with Life in This Fallen World

By the phrase *"head-on engagement"* with the fallen world, I do not mean "striving with" the fallen world. Rather, we should "strive to enter into God's rest".[33] (I am not merely doing a play on words.) A better translation of that verse is: **"**Therefore let us be diligent[34] to enter that rest." Let us be "diligent" to enter into the reality of a rest[35] which has already been accomplished for us by Christ[36], as attested to in Hebrews 4.[37] In a manner of speaking, **the reality of that "rest" is the "alternate reality" of the Kingdom of Heaven.**

I don't know of a better way of defining the promises Jesus attaches to "The Beatitudes" than the word "rest" – specifically a rest from striving with life in this fallen world. **"The Beatitudes" are the pathway to God's provision of rest and happiness.**

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[33] Hebrews 4:11

[34] "Strong's # G4704 spoudázō – properly, be swift (go fast, be speedy); (figuratively) to move speedily by showing full diligence (fully applying oneself); acting fervently (speedy commitment) to accomplish all that God assigns through faith ("His in-birthed persuasion"). Accordingly, 4704 (spoudázō) and faith (4102 /pístis) are directly linked (see Eph 4:3-5; 2 Tim 4:7-9). See 4710 (spoudē)." Gary Hill and Archer L. Gleason, Emphatic Language Pointer System (Synonym Glossary, Discovery Bible, NASB New Testament) Moody Press (1987)

[35] By faith and obedience as we are exhorted to in Hebrews 4.

[36] Cf. "His works were finished from the foundation of the world." Hebrews 4:3b

[37] Hebrews 4:14-16

Be the "Attitudes"

I believe it can be said that The Beatitudes exercise a particular "attitude" towards this fallen world. It is **a godly attitude** in response to sin and the resident evil in the world. Living the Beatitudes results in not striving for the world's acceptance and recognition but rather entering into the rest of being "accepted in the Beloved"[38] and being the "special possession"[39] of God. Living the Beatitudes results in not being crushed by rejection and persecution from the world but rather being a testimony and overcoming "by the word of our testimony; and by not loving our lives even when faced with death.".[40]

We should dedicate ourselves to pleasing God by **being the "attitudes"**, rather than trying to convince the world of our personal worth – or even the worth of our Christian faith. **Being the "attitudes" is our witness to the world.** Because of the witness of our **"alternative reality"**, many – not all, but many – will "see and fear and trust in the Lord":

"He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; many will see and fear and will trust in the Lord."[41]

[38] Ephesians 1:6
[39] 1 Peter 2:9 New International Version
[40] Revelation 12:11
[41] Psalm 40:3

"See" a "new song"? What does that mean? How do they "see" a "song"? What is the "song"? I offer this: It's akin "a letter" – "being" a "letter", "a letter of Christ" to be "known and read by all men".[42] In this manner of speaking the "new song" is the testimony we give to the world by Being the Attitudes" – living the Beatitudes.

Having made somewhat of a case for being a witness to the world by living the Beatitudes, I must add that people's impression and response – or lack of response to our life and witness, is obviously not our primary motivation for living the Beatitudes. We want to live the Beatitudes because we want to be pleasing to God and grow in Christlikeness.

[42] 2 Corinthians 3:2-3

"Tasting" Happiness

"Tasting"

There are many New Testament verses of scripture which indicate that those of us who have "received the gift of the Holy Spirit"[43] have **a "foretaste" of the Kingdom of Heaven**.[44] We have **tasted the happiness** which comes from the "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit".[45]

There is a verse in the Old Testament which I believe also speaks of this "foretaste" of happiness in a different way:

"Thus, the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent."[46]

Here we see Moses in the tent of meeting, outside the camp, meeting with God "face to face" in an intimate way of friendship. Take a moment to contemplate that! That happiness is the "blessing" typified specifically by God's face "shining upon you":

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[43] Acts 2:38–39. See my article: "Receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit".
[44] Hebrews 6:5; Ephesians 1:3, 14; Cf. Romans 8:23; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; 1 Peter 1:3–9
[45] Romans 14:17
[46] Exodus 33:11

"The Lord bless you and keep you; **the Lord make his face shine on you** and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."[47]

So, even under the Old Covenant, Moses had that "foretaste" of the happiness of the Kingdom of Heaven. This also suggests an early portrait of Joshua's formation in proximity to the divine presence. In addition, to some extent which Scripture does not specify, we see that Joshua also had this "foretaste" of happiness so that he was inclined to "not depart from the tent". Just as Jesus announced blessings of happiness upon His "disciples of the Kingdom"[48], so also as Moses' "disciple", Joshua, received training in the presence of God and the "foretaste" of happiness which he would carry on into his ministry as the successor to Moses.

But what is it like to "taste" that **"alternate reality"** of the Kingdom of Heaven? When Jesus came to earth, He said, "the Kingdom of heaven has come"[49], and "is in your midst"[50]. As He walked this earth performing various miracles, He was giving "a foretaste" to people of the Kingdom of Heaven – "undoing the works of the devil".[51]

[47] Numbers 23:24-26 New International Version
[48] Matthew 13:52
[49] Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 10:9; Cf. Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20
[50] Luke 17:20-21
[51] Cf. 1 John 3:8

Again, a clear description of the atmosphere of the Kingdom of Heaven is in Romans 14:17. It is **a spiritual atmosphere where "righteousness, peace, and joy" dwell** – an atmosphere of "joy inexpressible and full of glory"[52]. Scripture tells us if we are "born from above"[53], we can have that "foretaste" of the Kingdom of Heaven.[54] **Happiness is "tasting" righteousness, peace, and joy**.

In addition, the Book of Revelation gives us some description of the atmosphere of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is a place where death, mourning, crying, and pain are no longer realities.[55] Our lives during this age in this fallen world are full of unavoidable death, mourning, crying, and pain. But again, we can **"taste" what it is like to be free of the consequences of the Fall.**

We find in Paul and Peter's epistles specific and definitive words which can serve as a very succinct description of what is experienced in the Kingdom of Heaven: **God's presence, His glory and His excellence**.[56]

Similarly, we find in John's Revelation that in the Kingdom of Heaven **God's presence,[57] the face of God**

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[52] 1 Peter 1:8
[53] John 3:3
[54] Romans 8:23; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13-14; Cf. Hebrews 6:5
[55] Revelation 21:2-4
[56] 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Peter 1:3
[57] Rev 21:3, 22. For a detailed treatment of the subject of God's presence, see "The Manifested Presence of God" – eBook, Paperback.

shining the light of His glory,[58] **and an environment of continuous worship of the Almighty God**[59] can experienced here and now – that is, now already, but not yet fully**.** Even as just *a "foretaste" here and now*, our hearts are set on that **eternal happiness** of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Happiness

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."[60]

We now must get to discussing the fact that Jesus said **we would find happiness through living the Beatitudes**. So, let's look at each Beatitude and consider how it can make one happy as Jesus said. Here, I will give a brief definition of each Beatitude, but I recommend my study book "The Character of the King & His Kingdom" for a more detailed treatment of each of the Beatitudes.

I must add that what is presented here is merely my personal – and limited – understanding and experience of the Beatitudes and finding happiness. Never-the-less, my simple purpose here is to give an example of **how each Beatitude can be a pathway to "tasting" that**

[58] Revelation 21:3, 11; 22:4-5
[59] Revelation 4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:9-12; 11:15-18
[60] Matthew 13:44

eternal happiness here and now – that is, the "alternate reality" of living in the Kingdom of Heaven here and now – which is "now already, but not yet fully". In doing so, I believe we can cultivate and grow in our experience of that eternal happiness.

The Happiness of Being "Poor in Spirit"

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."[61]

To be "poor in spirit" is to realize our spiritual poverty. There are two different Greek words translated "poor". One is to be needing daily work for sustenance.[62] But the word Jesus used here is to be a beggar.[63] Beggars don't need *"just a little help to make it through until payday".* They have no means of providing for themselves. Without Him, we are spiritually bankrupt. To be "poor in spirit" is to realize that "in me – that is, in my flesh – there is no good thing"[64]. To be "poor in spirit" is to see the glory of God and like Isaiah, exclaim, *"It's all over. I'm doomed![65] In comparison, He is 'Holy, holy, holy'[66] and I am not. He is the Creator. I am the 'createe'".* Humility is the essence of holiness for the human being.[67] To know these things cognitively and experientially is to be "poor in spirit".

"Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven". That is Jesus' pronouncement of the blessing for those who are "poor

[61] Matthew 5:3; Cf. Luke 6:20
[62] Greek; penichros, Strong's # G3998, from penomai, to work for one's daily bread, I.E. to be needy.
[63] Greek: ptochos, Strong's # G4434, from ptocheuo, to be as a beggar.
[64] Romans 7:18
[65] Isaiah 6:5 New Living Translation
[66] Isaiah 6:3
[67] Cf. Proverbs 3:5-6; 1 Peter 5:6-7

in spirit". The Kingdom of Heaven is the ultimate blessing. Can it be that being "poor in spirit" is the catalyst to receiving all other blessings coming from living the Beatitudes? In any case, being "poor in spirit" is a pathway to the "foretaste" of happiness that is eternal.

The realization and application of living absolutely dependent upon our Creator is, in fact, *"in our DNA",* in a manner of speaking: We were created to live in dependence upon God.[68] The Fall into sin was the choice to live independent upon God. Living in that choice is very hard work, as it is *"all up to you", "to make or break" – it's "you against the world"*. Living in humility and dependence upon God is being like a little child that lives simply resting contently in the security of its mother[69]:

"Lord, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty;
nor do I involve myself in great matters, or in things too difficult for me. Surely, I have calmed and quieted my soul;
like a weaned child [resting] with his mother, **my soul is like a weaned child within me [composed and freed from discontent]**."[70]

[68] Psalm 62:1-2, 5-8; Psalm 103:13-14; Cf. Hosea 11:1-4; Matthew 6:25-33; Romans 8:15-17
[69] Cf. Isaiah 49:15-16, 66:12-13; Deuteronomy 1:31; Psalm 103:13-14; Hosea 11:1-14; Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:4-7
[70] Psalm 131:1-2 The Amplified Bible

Indeed, Jesus said we must become like this little child to experience the happiness of the Kingdom of Heaven.[71] Can we become like a little child again? Is it possible to have lived a long life, experienced the harsh realities of the fallen world, and yet choose to adopt the outlook and attitude of a little child? We are "adults" – not children – right?

True, we are adults. But what does that mean? The fact that we have lived a long life and experienced the harsh realities of the fallen world should be a clear reminder of the Fall in the Garden when Man chose to live independently of God – that is, when Man said to God: *"We know good and evil. We know how to live this life. We've got this."* On the contrary – we should be longing to regain that original innocence.

To put it another way: "The fear (including terror, awe, reverence, respect, and submission)[72] of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom. And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."[73] If we have truly embraced "the fear of the Lord", we know – cognitively and experientially – that even though we are "adults", and even though we have the knowledge which the experience of many years can give, and even though much has been revealed to us by the Holy Spirit through the written words of God, still we fall far short

[71] Matthew 18:3, 19:14; Mark 10:14-16; Luke 18:16-17; Cf. Isaiah 66:10-14
[72] Hebrew: yirah, Strong's # H3372
[73] Proverbs 1:7, 9:10; Cf. 14:27

of fully understanding God and His ways with us in life on this earth, during this age. I have elaborated on this reality in my article "Embracing the Fear of the Lord". When we get a glimpse of, have an encounter with, and experience God as He truly is in more of the fullness of His Being, we realize that we are to Him less than an ant is to us.[74] To say we are "as a little child" in comparison is an understatement and a sensible posture to adopt before Him.

The older (more "adult") I've become[75], the more my understanding and experience of God has moved in this direction. As I have been learning this reality, the more I've become "like a little child" before Him. I find that I am often saying: *"God, I don't really understand what is going on in our life right now. I am trusting in your goodness towards us." "Lord, I've thought of and tried everything I know to do, but I cannot solve this problem in our life. I am dependent upon you to work for good in our situation." "Father, I'm doing my best to be responsible, but I realize, I cannot make provision for our future. We are utterly leaning upon your provision."*, et al.

Am I entering into that innocent, carefree, child-like posture of knowing my Father God is in charge and taking care of us? Yes, I think I am beginning to. Am I tasting of the rest and child-like happiness which comes with that child-like faith? Yes, I think I'm beginning to.

[74] Yet in some way created in His image.
[75] At the time of this writing, 80 years old.

The Happiness of Being "Mournful"

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."[76]

As with the Beatitudes in general, the idea that being mournful leads to happiness seems counter intuitive. Just as there is no happiness in physical suffering in and of itself, there is no happiness in emotional suffering in and of itself. So, *Jesus is referring to something outside of the physical and emotional realms – something spiritual – something of the heart*. He is saying that in mourning, our hearts can feel comforted and even experience a form of happiness.

The apostle Paul explains how mourning is abundantly blessed by comfort:

"3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. **5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. 6** But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; **7** and our hope for you

[76] Matthew 5:4

is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also, you are sharers of our comfort."[77]

But do that comfort and happiness "outweigh" the suffering which is causing the mournfulness? I think the answer to that is "Yes", but explaining that may be beyond words. However, personal experience can prove it to be true. For what it is worth to the reader, I offer this as an example: Because of a spinal cord injury and something called D.I.S.H. (Diffuse Idiopathic Skeletal Hyperostosis[78]), I feel so physically bad when I wake up from sleep, I think I probably won't live much longer. But I recently heard Joni Earekson Tada speak of the similar experience she wakes up to everyday as well. Yet, she has been living as a quadriplegic for 59 years.[79] I find comfort in that! Of course, there is more to be mournful about besides physical suffering. I find the various "wages (results) of sin" on the human race and life in this fallen world also reasons for being mournful.

[77] 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

[78] Also known as Forestier's Disease: Calcification and ossification of tendons and ligaments.

[79] On July 30, 1967, at the age of 17, she suffered a diving accident in the Chesapeake Bay that fractured her vertebrae and left her paralyzed from the shoulders down. As of July 2026, she marked 59 years living with quadriplegia.

The Happiness of Seeing Jesus

Isaiah described the Messiah as a "Suffering Servant" – "A Man of sorrow and acquainted with grief."[80] This is a major aspect of who Jesus is.

The apostle Paul explained that "We all, with unveiled face, **beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord (in the face of Jesus Christ), are being transformed into the same image** from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."[81]

In my personal experience, I have found that even something sorrowful causing me to mourn can bring me happiness because it is **an opportunity to see Jesus, and seeing Him, to be transformed into His image**. I believe this spiritual truth and cultivate it in my personal life experience. Of course, becoming like Jesus has to be more important to us than merely escaping suffering. But, if it is, mourning can lead to a happiness of the heart, knowing that, in fact, *the Lord cares enough about you to give you opportunity to become like His Beloved Son*. Even beyond that, there is a "joy inexpressible and full of glory"[82] in experiencing Jesus for we "are *progressively* being transformed into His image from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory, which comes from the Lord, [who is] the Spirit.".[83]

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[80] Isaiah 53:3
[81] 2 Corinthians 3:18
[82] 1 Peter 1:8
[83] 2 Corinthians 3:18 Amplified Bible

There is also something else which seems to defy expression in words. The apostle Paul mentioned it to the Colossians:

"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions."[84]

Something "is lacking in Christ's afflictions"? We need to understand Paul's revelation: The Lord intends that His suffering be continued "on behalf of His Body" in building and blessing His Church with His sacrificial love – through His people – one for another. Jesus did command us: "Love one another, just as I have loved you."[85] Jesus loved us sacrificially. Indeed, the essence of God's love includes self-denying suffering.[86] I have written on this perspective at length in my article entitled "Walking with Sorrow". Again, there is a "joy inexpressible and full of glory"[87] in experiencing Jesus for we "are *progressively* being transformed into His image from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory, which comes from the Lord, [who is] the Spirit.".[88] Thus, "those who mourn" can experience in their hearts a spiritual happiness.

[84] Colossians 1:24
[85] John 13:34, 15:12
[86] Revelation 13:8; 1 Peter 1:19-20
[87] 1 Peter 1:8
[88] 2 Corinthians 3:18 Amplified Bible

The Happiness of Being "Meek"

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."[89]

I have written at length about "meekness" in my articles "Treasures of Darkness" and "The Weakness of God".

Meekness is a character trait exercised firstly toward God and secondly toward people. It is **the intentionality to find and enter into "His rest" in every circumstance and situation**. Rest is the reward of faith and obedience.[90] *Meekness is choosing to look to God and trust God in a given circumstance or situation, and intentionally resting from employing one's own works in response to that circumstance or situation.*[91] It is choosing to let God work rather than you work in a given circumstance or situation. Meekness is basically gentle submission to God's ways – that is, **a willingness to receive whatever God ordains or allows in one's life, without resistance**, trusting that "God is at work in all things for His good purpose to conform us to the image of His Son."[92]

For this obedience from the heart, we receive the God-given gift of "inheriting the earth". I would understand

[89] Matthew 5:5 English Standard Version
[90] Hebrews 3:18-19; 4:3-8
[91] Hebrews 4:9-11
[92] Romans 8:28-29

that "earth" to be the new heavens and earth in the age to come.[93] But again, we can have a "foretaste" of that inheritance here in this world.

Of course, the concept of "inheriting the earth" will be very different between those who are born of the Spirit and those who are not:

"5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. **6** For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace."[94]

"The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men *take it by force*."[95] In contrast: "The meek shall **inherit** the earth."[96]

The difference then, is not to "*possess* the earth" in one's own strength – as do "violent men" – but instead, to "**inherit** the earth" through faith in God's strength to fulfill His promise.[97] With fallen humanity, the world is gained through force. With the meekness of those who imitate Christ, the world is gained through gentle

[93] Isaiah 65:17, 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1
[94] Romans 8:5-6
[95] Matthew 11:12. For my explanation of this verse… Seeing the Kingdom Through the Cross, pp.12-15.
[96] Matthew 5:5
[97] In Matthew 5:5, Jesus is quoting Psalm 37:11, where it says, "The meek will inherit the land." In the Old Testament, "the land" speaks of the victories of inheriting God's promises in this life. (Hebrews 13: 7; 6:12). "The earth" refers to the "new heaven and new earth" (Isaiah 65:17, 66:22; 2 Peter 3: 7, 10-13; Revelation 21:1), of which we now have a foretaste.

submission to God. This happiness of being meek comes from the fact that the reward is *inherited rather than fought for.*

But what does that "foretaste" look like for the meek ones who are in Christ? This is my personal understanding, experience, and description: Having walked with the Lord now for more than 50 years, I look back on my life feeling blessed and very grateful. Like everyone else, I have had my share of suffering and sorrow. But even in the midst of that, I can say I've had a rich life full of wonderful and exciting experiences with God. I have a wonderful marriage. Our children are good, respectful, and loving children. I've had - and even in old age, still have a deeply meaningful life. It would take another essay to elaborate. But a couple of passages in the Psalms are especially meaningful to me:

" **1** How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways. **2** When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, you will be happy and it will be well with you. **3** Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house, your children like olive plants around your table. **4** Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord."[98]

And ...

[98] Psalm 128:1-4

" **12** The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree. He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. **13** Planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. **14** They will still yield fruit in old age. They shall be full of sap and very green, **15** to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."[99]

That is from my personal perspective. But how else can we describe what a "foretaste" of "inheriting the earth" might look like? God has His ways in each individual's life, but Psalm 37 gives us a picture of **the inheritance in this world for the godly ones who are meek**:

"**1** Do not fret because of evildoers, be not envious toward wrongdoers. **2** For they will wither quickly like the grass and fade like the green herb. **3** Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. **4** Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart. **5** Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it. **6** He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noonday. **7** Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. **8** Cease from anger and forsake wrath. Do not fret; *it leads* only to evildoing. **9** For evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land. **10** Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more. And you will look carefully for his place, and he will not be *there.* **11** But the humble will inherit the land and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity."[100]

[99] Psalm 92:12-15
[100] Psalm 37:1-11

Indeed, throughout his psalms, David is often found praising God for blessings. And again, we are speaking of blessing of happiness received during this life, here in this fallen world.

The Happiness of "Hungering and Thirsting for Righteousness"

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."[101]

Hungering & Thirsting

Who are "those" who desire righteousness? Those who *are* righteous. And that would be those who have become "the righteousness of God in Him (Christ)"[102]. Not those who are self-righteous. Yet the self-righteous and even some of the unrighteous also apparently desire to see righteousness in human society which they communicate through "virtue signaling"[103]. However, can it be said that such non-believers – who do not personally know nor even understand that righteousness which comes from God through Christ – truly "hunger and thirst for righteousness"? I don't think so. However, that is not to say that all who *have* become "the righteousness of God in Him (Christ)" truly "hunger and thirst for righteousness". Certainly, the words "hunger and thirst" don't seem to apply to lukewarm Christians. Never-the-less, for "those who hunger and

[101] Matthew 5:6

[102] 2 Corinthians 5:21

[103] "Virtue signaling is the conspicuous public display of one's moral, social, or political concern chiefly to appear virtuous to others—often implying that the display substitutes for meaningful action." (Merriam Webster)

thirst for righteousness", the promised blessing is that "they shall be satisfied".

The fact that they "hunger and thirst" indicates they are presently *unsatisfied*. Indeed, they will not be satisfied with seeing righteousness established in this fallen world, during this age. God does not promise that. That happiness awaits the 2nd Coming of the "Righteous Branch"[104] and the creation of "the new heaven and the new earth".[105]

Righteousness

With the exception of relatively few people, most people desire to see righteousness established – many even demand it politically. So, why is there this universal desire for righteousness? Righteousness is not merely the instruction and law of God – it is His very nature and character.[106] This is why most human beings desire to see righteousness of some sort or another – be it "the righteousness of God" or merely human righteousness. **Unless the conscience has been seared[107], human beings have an innate sense of righteousness.**[108] *The desire for righteousness is a desire for*

[104] Jeremiah 23:5–6 and Jeremiah 33:14–16.
[105] Isaiah 65:17, 66:22; 2 Peter 3: 7, 10-13; Revelation 21:1
[106] Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 11:7, 119:137, 145:17; Jeremiah 12:1; Daniel 9:14; Revelation 16:5
[107] 1 Corinthians 8:7; 1 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:15
[108] Cf. Romans 2:14-16; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 1 Timothy 1:5, 19; Hebrews 9:14, 10:22; 1 Peter 3:16, 21

God Himself. **"Hunger and thirst for righteousness" is a hunger and thirst for God Himself.**

"They shall be satisfied". When? Not during this age, but in the age to come. But the children of God have a "foretaste". However, that foretaste of righteousness will not be found in any society on this earth. **That foretaste of righteousness can be found only in our relationship with "Christ, who is our righteousness"**[109]. Not in any human society, but only in relationship with Christ can we experience true righteousness. And because "sin is (still) at work in our members"[110], even that experience will be tarnished by our own "falling short of the glory of God".[111] And because the Body of Christ here on the earth is made up of human beings, with "sin (still) at work in our members", even in the community of the saints our experience of "the righteousness of God in Him (Christ)" will be tarnished.

Yet, by His decree, the Lord intends the world to witness "the righteous acts of the saints". Revelation 19:8 says that the Bride of Christ is "arrayed in fine linen, which are the righteous acts of the saints". This term "righteous acts"[112] refers to the results of having "been made the righteousness of God in Him (Christ)"[113] – that is,

[109] 1 Corinthians 1:30; Jeremiah 23:6, 33:16
[110] Romans 7:23
[111] Romans 3:23. What is tarnished is not the righteousness, but the experience.
[112] Greek: dikaioma, Strong's # G1345
[113] 2 Corinthians 5:21

our obedience and holiness. But I believe this phrase can also be connected to what Jesus said: "Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your **good works**[114] and glorify your Father who is in heaven."[115] Revelation 19:7 says that "the Bride has made herself ready" – that is, dressed in the "fine linen" ("righteous acts", by extension, "good works") while here on the earth.

Many demand to see righteousness and good works in our societies and are expecting the governments of the world to legislate those good works and righteousness. That is the plan of Man. But God's plan is to demonstrate those good works and righteousness through the Church.

At this writing, by all appearances, the Church is failing miserably at being a testimony of "righteous acts" and "good works" to the onlooking world, and to our onlooking Lord. The Church – acting no differently from the rest of the world – is looking to human governments to educate our young, meet the needs of the stranger, the hungry, the sick, the imprisoned,[116] and the widows and orphans[117]. The Church has abdicated its responsibilities to the human

[114] Greek: kalos (Strong's G2570, ergon (Strong's G2041
[115] Matthew 5:14-16
[116] Matthew 25:35-40
[117] James 1:27

governments of a fallen world system. God is looking for the Church to rise up to its calling.

But what is that "foretaste" for "those who hunger and thirst for righteousness"? What is their experience like of that promised happiness? Firstly, "becoming the righteousness of God in Him (Christ)" is an experiential reality. We are quite familiar with our personal unrighteousness. When we "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"[118] and "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"[119] begins to operate in our souls, we experience the supernatural input and exercise of a righteousness which we recognize is not our own.

Certainly, the temptation to own it as our own self-righteousness is always present. But through the discipline of the Lord, our hearts are "adjusted" and understand that the exercise of this self-denying love is coming from the Spirit of Christ within us:

"And we all, with unveiled face, continually seeing as in a mirror the glory of the Lord ('[as it is manifested] in the face of [sweet spiritual communion with] Jesus Christ.'[120]), *are progressively being transformed into His image from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory*, **which comes from the Lord, [who is] the Spirit**."[121]

[118] Acts 2:38
[119] Romans 8:2
[120] 2 Corinthians 4:6 Amplified Bible
[121] 2 Corinthians 3:18 Amplified Bible

Along with this infusion of happiness, we can also experience the reality the fact that "It is more blessed to give than to receive"[122] when we give of ourselves to educate our young, meet the needs of the stranger, the hungry, the sick, the imprisoned,[123] and the widows and orphans[124]. Anyone who has done so knows the unique form of happiness which permeates your soul.

Again, self-righteousness is always "crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it".[125] And so we learn to address and dismiss that temptation and give thanksgiving and glory to God. "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up?"[126]

[122] Stated by Jesus, quoted by Paul, Acts 20:35.
[123] Matthew 25:35-40
[124] James 1:27
[125] Genesis 4:7b
[126] Genesis 4:7a

The Happiness of Being "Merciful"

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."[127]

Showing mercy is something I almost always associate with God rather than myself. I mean, whenever I pray for someone, I find that I almost always ask God to show them mercy in their situation. Relatively speaking, I hardly ever think of myself as needing to show someone mercy. I don't think of myself as being in a position of authority and having the power over others so as to be merciful or not. Am I being insensitive and callous? Am I missing opportunities to show mercy? Because of this Beatitude, I am thinking it's possible that sometimes I may be insensitive and callous in situations when I could be showing mercy.

So, what are those situations where I do have a position of some authority and can exercise some power over others? I am not a king, a judge, some kind of an official, or even a "boss" where I carry authority and power over people. But what comes to mind is my relationships with my wife, children, friends, and at times, possibly some acquaintances. These are relationships where the other is vulnerable. I can take the opportunity to hurt the other – or help the other in some small way.

[127] Matthew 5:7

With those I am closest to, I can be aware of their physical health condition, or mental health condition, or can be sensitive to when they are struggling with a stressful situation, or just not feeling well and having an "off" day, etc. What do I do when their condition is making my life somewhat inconvenient in some relatively miniscule way? Say and do what I feel is *"standing up for my rights"*? Or do I have the love and compassion to say to myself: *"You know, they are hurting. I'm just going to let this slide. I'm not going to say or do anything. In fact, I'm going to try to be kind and help them in some way, of I can."*? That's how I can be merciful.

After being kind and showing some mercy, I may get to thinking, *"Well, aren't I a very nice fellow."* But the fact is, I know "the thoughts and intentions of my heart"[128] – I know I am not a very nice fellow. I realize the Holy Spirit is giving me opportunity to take hold of some fruit of the Spirit[129] and be conformed to the image of Christ "from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory, **which comes from the Lord, [who is] the Spirit**."[130] And more than dominating the situation and *"standing up for my rights"*, **the idea of becoming a little more like Jesus gives me that "foretaste" of happiness.**

[128] Cf. Hebrews 4:12b
[129] Galatians 5:22-23
[130] 2 Corinthians 3:18b Amplified Bible

The Happiness of Being "Pure in Heart"

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."[131]

We see a corresponding verse in the epistle to the Hebrews: **"**Pursue peace with all men, and **the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord."[132]** The Greek word translated "the sanctification" is *hagiasmos*.[133] Properly, it means purification, the state of purity.[134] In other words, those who pursue purity "will see God".

In His Beatitude, Jesus specified the locus of this purity to be in the human heart. Further, the Greek word Jesus used for "pure" was *katharós*[135], meaning without admixture – nothing mixed in, added, or contaminating.[136] Human motivation arises from the heart.[137] Therefore a "pure heart" has no mixed motivations in its pursuit of God.[138] A "pure in heart" pursuit of God arises out of a desire to know God for Himself rather than desire to obtain certain blessings we want to get from God. It's a pursuit of the Giver rather than the gifts.

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[131] Matthew 5:8
[132] Hebrews 12:14
[133] Strong's # G38
[134] Bible Hub, Lexical Summary and Strong's Exhaustive Concordance
[135] Strong's # G2513
[136] Gary Hill and Archer L. Gleason, Emphatic Language Pointer System (Synonym Glossary, Discovery Bible, NASB New Testament) Moody Press (1987)
[137] Cf. Proverbs 4:23
[138] Cf. Psalm 51:6-7 12

It should be obvious that this is the desired motivation for entering into and pursuing any relationship. The marriage relationship is an appropriate example. To marry for status, money, sex, or convenience while vowing *"to love and to cherish"* are some examples of mixed motivations. Jesus is returning for a Bride who is "pure in heart" – a Bride who has "single and pure devotion" to Him.[139]

A "pure in heart" pursuit of God is a "single and pure devotion" to knowing God Himself.[140]

"They shall see God." This promise certainly has an eternal fulfillment, as the tense of the Greek verb, *horao*[141], is future indicative. But as with the other Beatitudes, there is a "foretaste" of that happiness here and now. Those who are "pure in heart" in their pursuit of God as we have discussed, will "see God" even in the here and now. The Greek word, *horao,* is *"often with metaphorical meaning: "to see with the mind" (i.e. spiritually see), i.e. perceive (with inward spiritual perception)."*[142] Those who are "pure in heart" may not literally "see" God here and now, but *"perceive (God) with inward spiritual perception"*. In other words, in their "pure in heart" pursuit of God, He grants them

[139] 2 Corinthians 11:3. "single heartedness ", Weymouth New Testament.
[140] For further discussion of this subject see my article "Purity of Heart".
[141] Strong's # G3708
[142] Gary Hill and Archer L. Gleason, Emphatic Language Pointer System (Synonym Glossary, Discovery Bible, NASB New Testament) Moody Press (1987)

"revelation" of Himself. This takes place in the sphere of **relationship with God** through His written words and His Spirit which abides within those who have "received the gift of the Holy Spirit"[143]. When you carry on relationship with God, He carries on relationship with you. It may be more accurate to say that in reverse, because this God's ultimate intention: To carry on relationship with His creations.[144]

God desires to reveal cognitive and experiential knowledge of Himself to those who pursue Him in relationship with a pure heart. I can testify of the reality of these things. And in addition to that, I will also testify that my relationship with God – that is, what I know and understand of God – is the greatest and most valuable thing in my life.

"23 Thus says the Lord, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; **24** 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."[145]

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[143] Acts 2:38; Cf. John 3:3-8

[144] John 17:3; James 4:8; Cf. Genesis 2:15-17, 3:8-9; Exodus 6:7, 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 7:6-9; Jeremiah 3:33, 29:12-14; Ezekiel 36:26-28, 37:27-28; Zephaniah 3:17; Malachi 3:7; John 1:14, 14:23, 15:4-5, 15; Romans 5:8-11, 8:15-17; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; Hebrews 10:19-22; 1 John 1:3. 4:10, 19; Revelation 3:20, 21:3-4, 22:3-4.

[145] Jeremiah 9:23-24

When I think of those who do not yet know God in relationship through Christ, I am deeply impacted by the sense of privilege of having some personal knowledge and understanding of the Almighty Creator God – my heavenly Father!

The Happiness of Being a "Peacemaker"

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."[146]

It is very interesting to me that Jesus listed this as one of His Beatitudes. This is the single mention of the word "peacemaker" (Greek: *eirenopoios*[147]*)* in Scripture. This in no way diminishes its importance. But one must ask, *"How do we make peace?"* Do human beings even have the ability to "make" (accomplish) peace? There is no example of that in Scripture except one: **Jesus "made" (accomplished) peace through His cross.**[148] While I am aware that many – both Christians and non-Christians – endeavor to negotiate peace in the world, I am inclined to say that **Jesus alone can "make " (accomplish) peace.**[149] Indeed, at His birth, angels announced, ""Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"[150] He is the "Prince of Peace".[151]

Something Jesus said to His disciples about peace may give us some direction on this Beatitude: "Peace I leave you, My peace I give you; **not as the world gives**, do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, nor fearful." Jesus

[146] Matthew 5:9
[147] Strong's # G1518
[148] Colossians 1;20; Cf. Ephesians 2:15
[149] Luke 2:14; John 16:33; Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:14-17
[150] Luke 2:14 New King James Version
[151] Isaiah 9:6; Cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:16

gives peace **"not as the world gives"**. How does the world give peace? The answer is basically the political concept of *"Peace through strength."* This approach to peace has been put forth and put into practice from ancient times to the present.[152] However, this is obviously not how Christ. nor His followers, "make" peace. How does Jesus, the Prince of Peace, make (accomplish) peace?

"Lovingkindness and truth have met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other."[153]

"Righteousness and peace" are paired. However, **"righteousness" always precedes "peace"**.[154]

"The **work of righteousness** will be peace, and the **effect of righteousness**, quietness and assurance forever."[155]

Righteousness is a prerequisite for peace. And that righteousness is "the righteousness of God" in Christ.[156] This is why only Jesus, the Prince of Peace, can make peace. **Jesus made (accomplished) peace through the cross of self-denying love.**[157] At the very least we can and should *imitate the way of Christ with self-denying love*. But even the martyrdom of Christians has not "made"

[152] Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_through_strength
[153] Psalm 85:10
[154] Cf. Psalm85:10; Isaiah 32:17; Romans 14:17; James 3:18; Hebrews 12:11
[155] Isaiah 32:17
[156] Romans 1:17, 3:21-26
[157] Colossians 1;20; Cf. Ephesians 2:15

peace in the world. However, **when we live in self-denying love we "proclaim the peace" of the "Prince of Peace"**:

"How delightful on the mountains are the feet of one who brings good news, who **announces peace and brings good news of happiness**, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"[158]

Because of the finished work of Christ, we can **"announce" there is "peace" and "happiness" in Him** (and in Him alone).

As the Spirit of Christ announced through the prophet Isaiah, Jesus of Nazareth repeated the fact that **peace brings happiness**.[159] Again, this "happiness" we speak of is the "culture" or atmosphere of the Kingdom of Heaven. And has been mentioned, we can have a "foretaste" of that "happiness" here and now, for "the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit"[160] whom we have received.[161]

Righteousness is being in right relationship with God. This is what the finished work of Christ has restored for

[158] Isaiah 52:7; Cf. Nahum 1:15

[159] However, Isaiah also said that righteousness was a prerequisite for peace. (Isaiah 32:17) And that righteousness is "the righteousness of God in Christ". This is why only Jesus, the Prince of Peace, can make peace.

[160] Romans 14:17

[161] John 14:16-17; 1 John 3:24, 4:13

humanity and can be entered into by those who place their faith in Christ.

We can summarize both the Hebrew concept of "Shalom", as well as the Greek concept of "Peace" as the Divine Order.[162] "Divine Order" is a term which can be used to express the state of everyone and everything being in right relationship (righteousness) with God.[163] Jesus, the Price of Peace, has made this possible by His finished work on the cross, and will bring about its ultimate fulfillment upon His return.

When we "announces peace and bring good news of happiness" and truly believe our message concerning this gospel of God's heavenly kingdom come to earth, we can "taste" of that happiness of living in the Kingdom of Heaven even here and now. *At times, that "announcing" may also require a demonstration of Christ's self-denying love as we "proclaim the peace" of the Prince of Peace.*[164]

Of course, this spiritual experience of happiness taking place in our hearts is in stark contrast to the insanity, suffering, and sadness taking place all around us in this

[162] That is "The Kingdom of God". Cf. Isaiah 52:7

[163] "Shalom", Hebrew: shalom, Strong's # H7965. "Peace", Greek: eirene, Strong's # G1515. https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1213&context=shabbat-shalom

[164] For more on this idea, see my article "The Cross & The Powers of Darkness", Chapter: *"An Even Greater Commission for the Church".*

fallen world. And even as Christians, we must admit that with the preponderance of mass media and social media pumping out the "news" of that insanity, suffering, and sadness taking place daily all around us, we are often robbed of that experience of happiness. Like Jesus, we are a people "of sorrows and acquainted with grief".[165] But we must remember the exhortation:

" … fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for **the joy set before Him** endured the cross, despising the shame, and **has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God**." [166]

While being "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief", Jesus also "tasted" that happiness set before Him – on the victory side of the cross. We are living in Christ's victory. **We should be dedicated to "announcing" that there is "peace" and "happiness" in Christ. Again, when we "announces peace and bring good news of happiness" and truly believe our message concerning this gospel of God's heavenly kingdom come to earth, we can "taste" of that happiness of living in the Kingdom of Heaven even here and now.**

[165] Isaiah 53:3

[166] Hebrews 12:2

The Happiness of Being "Persecuted"

"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."[167]

Can there really be a happiness of being persecuted? Jesus briefly elaborated on what it means to be persecuted, but also gave the reason why, yes, there *can* be a happiness of being persecuted:

"Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. **Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great**; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."[168]

"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great." Jesus is saying to His followers that, just as all the prophets we read in Scripture are now living in the happiness of the Kingdom of Heaven after being persecuted here on earth, we too will be so rewarded, if persecuted for our faith. He indicated that **"the reward in heaven is great".**[169]

[167] Matthew 5:10
[168] Matthew 5:11-12
[169] Cf. Matthew 5:19; Revelation 22:12

Contemporary Persecuted Christians

So, what does that happiness "taste" like here and now? Perhaps those of us in Western nations have not yet had the opportunity for experiencing the happiness of being persecuted for our faith in Christ. But there is no scriptural – or even rational - reason to think that we will be spared being persecuted for our faith. According to organizations like *Open Doors* and *Global Christian Relief*, over 380 million Christians worldwide currently face high levels of discrimination, persecution, violence and death for their faith.[170] Persecution of Christians in Western nations is probably something not too far off. We would do well to think about it, prepare our hearts for it, and hopefully be inspired by the happiness experienced by Christians who already have been persecuted for their faith.

Organizations like *The Voice of the Martyrs* report contemporary first-hand testimonies of Christians experiencing persecution which display a supernatural peace overcoming fear, a spiritual joy providing physical and emotional strength, and Christlike love and compassion for their enemies. Their prayer requests are for endurance rather than deliverance from their oppressors. They consider it a privilege to be a witness for Christ and understand their trials and the

[170] https://globalchristianrelief.org/stories/christian-persecution-statistics/

testing of their faith to be a refining process, drawing them closer to God.

But we also have "the prophetic word made more sure"[171] in the New Testament scriptures displaying the same testimony:

The Apostles Before the Sanhedrin[172]

"40 … after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and then released them. **41** So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, **rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name**."[173]

The first century apostles considered it an honor to be persecuted for their faith in Christ Jesus.

The Stoning of Stephen

"54 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. **55** But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and **saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God**; **56** and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened up and **the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God**.' **57** But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed

[171] 2 Peter 1:19, that is, Scripture, the written words of God.
[172] The Jewish legal and judicial council
[173] Acts 5:40-41

at him with one impulse. **58** When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him*;* and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. **59** They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' **60** Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them!' Having said this, he fell asleep."[174]

Stephen – known as *"the first martyr"*, saw the risen Christ as victorious over His enemies. He believed he would be joining in Christ's victory as he was being stoned. And he had the grace to forgive his murderers, much the same way as Jesus asked the Father to forgive His murderers as He hung on the cross.

The Apostle Paul

"29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to **suffer for His sake**, **30** experiencing the same conflict **which you saw in me and now hear to be in me**."[175]

The apostle Paul also suffered persecution and admonished the Church that he was an example of the fact that believing in Christ entails suffering persecution.

[174] Acts 9:54-60

[175] Philippians 1:29-30

The Apostle James

"2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, **3** knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. **4** And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect[176] and complete[177], lacking in nothing."[178]

Here, the apostle James confirms Jesus' Beatitude saying that trials like encountering persecution can be a source of happiness. The happiness resides in the understanding of the Lord's way of using persecution to temper our faith, produce endurance, and bring His Church into spiritual maturity.

The Apostle Peter

"13 But to the degree that you **share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing**, so that also **at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation**. **14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you**. **15** Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; **16** but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed but is to glorify God in this name."[179]

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[176] Greek: Strong's # G5946, *teleios*, meaning perfect, or complete, or mature.
[177] Greek; Strong's # G3648, *holokleros*, meaning entire or whole.
[178] James 1:2-4
[179] 1 Peter 4:13-16

The apostle Peter states that suffering persecution because of the name of Christ Jesus glorifies God. But he also states that if we share in Christ's sufferings, we will "rejoice with exaltation at the revelation of His glory". And – like Stephen – if we are "reviled for the name of Christ", "**the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you".** This is an amazing statement! May we have the grace to believe the same will be true for us when we are faced with persecution.

Sharing in the Victory of Christ

"10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying,
'Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. **11** And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.[180] **12 For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them.'"**[181]

Again, in this passage, we see that the outcome of our testimony of faith and love for Christ our Savior is sharing in the victory Christ has won over our arch enemy by the shedding of His blood to redeem our

[180] Overcoming the fear of death cannot be minimized, as the fear of death subjects us to bondage. (Hebrews 2:15) However, it is the glory which follows the death of a believer that is the source of our experiencing happiness here and now.

[181] Revelation 12:10-12a

souls. Again, may we have the grace to believe this to be true for us when we are faced with persecution. "For this reason,", we can "taste" heavenly happiness here and now even in persecution.

Abiding in the Spirit

Throughout this article, we have discussed in various ways the fact that we have a "foretaste" – a downpayment, a deposit, "spiritual blessings in the heavenly places", "the powers of the age to come", the Holy Spirit - **a "taste" of that heavenly happiness**.[182] Now, I'd like to change the analogy from "taste" to "a meal" – and a lengthy meal at that.

At Table

Allow me to share an example of the analogy I'm suggesting: For the whole of our married life,[183] our main meal has always been around mid-day. And now in our retirement years, we can enjoy extended time at table after eating. During the meal, we usually comment on how good the various foods taste. And after the meal, we will continue sitting at table – for more than an hour - discussing things the Holy Spirit has put on our hearts and minds, or reminiscing about people and places from our public ministry years. We almost always conclude with expressing how rich our life has been, and how grateful we are that we have the privilege of knowing and serving the Lord. What happens "at table" is not merely "a taste", but a fresh

[182] Hebrews 6:5; Ephesians 1:3, 14; Cf. Romans 8:23; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; 1 Peter 1:3–9

[183] Approaching 50 years.

re-immersion into "life in Christ Jesus".[184] I am using this analogy of an extended meal "at table" as being more than a mere "taste" of heavenly happiness but somewhat of a more ongoing experience – possibly more of a lifestyle.

Perpetuity

Heaven is eternal. Heavenly happiness, likewise, has an eternal aspect to it. It is something which is there from eternity past to eternity future. It never "turns off" – it's always "on". We are finite; the seasons of our lives come and go; our circumstances and situations begin and end. But when we touch into heaven and its happiness, we are touching into eternity - past and future.

People like the apostles Paul and John and others have had the experience of being "caught up" in heaven.[185] These were very special experiences given for God's plans and purposes – specifically to be recorded in Scripture. But even that – the most grand of supernatural experiences has a "descent" and comes to an end.
The experience I am endeavoring to communicate here is not as grand, but similarly heavenly, yet different. There is a verse of scripture which may serve to communicate the spiritual reality I have in mind:

[184] Romans 8:2; Cf. Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30
[185] Paul: 2 Corinthians 12:2-4; John: Revelation 4:1-2. I have also discussed this topic in my article, "Encountering God".

"(God has) made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), **6** and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him **in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus**."[186]

God resurrected Jesus and raised Him up and seated Him in heaven. We, who are regenerated by the Spirit and are "in Christ", are even now[187] in some way resurrected, raised and seated with Him in heaven. In what way? In some spiritual way. We are still here on this physical earth, in this fallen world, and still in our bodies which are dying daily[188]. Yet there exists this spiritual reality which we can experience in ways which are also spiritual because of the reality of the Holy Spirit and our regenerated spirits. I am fully aware that these statements require discussion and explanation.[189] But here, suffice to say this: **As Jesus offers a "taste" of heaven through the pathways of the Beatitudes, I believe His intention is to grant us something with more perpetuity, if we co-operate with the Holy Spirit in ways which we will be discussing shortly up ahead.**

"Continually"

"17 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

[186] Ephesians 2:5-6
[187] There is also a future fulfillment at Christ's Return.
[188] 2 Corinthians 4:10-11, 16, 17 – 5:5, 5:10-11
[189] Part 1 of my article, "The Manifested Presence of God", touches on these things.

from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, **18** yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation."[190]

Life can be hard, taking us into some difficult seasons, circumstances, and situations. Is it possible to be happy "continually" - even when we are going through spiritually "lean" times?

"And the disciples were **continually** filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."[191]

Again, is it actually possible to be "continually" happy living in the midst of the evil, insanity, grief, and sadness of this fallen world? Is it possible to maintain an experience and a consistent disposition of heavenly happiness?

Admittedly, a spiritual reality such as this seems counterintuitive. For example: The Lord actually intends for us to feel "poor", "mournful", "hungering and thirsting", and "persecuted", as He has indicated in His Beatitudes. In fact, there are many scriptures speaking of suffering as part of the normal Christian life.[192] So, that heavenly happiness *doesn't seem to be* a Christian life experience 100% of the time, in a manner of speaking. Yet, paradoxically, as Jesus has also communicated in His Beatitudes, **in the midst** of these

[190] Habakkuk 3:17-18
[191] Acts 13:52
[192] John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Romans 8:17-18; Philippians 3:10; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12-13

"negative" experiences, we can find that heavenly happiness.

How Things Work with God

Of course, the spiritual reality is that God works these "Be-Attitudes" into our souls and lives by His Spirit. But how does that work? The apostle Paul gives us the key to this work of God:

"… (You) **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure."[193]

This "working out" of salvation is past, present and future: We *have been justified* because Jesus accomplished our salvation by His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. We *will be glorified* at the return of Christ and "the resurrection of the dead". And presently, we *are being sanctified* by the working of the Holy Spirit. I have written at length about this process of Sanctification in an article entitled "Transformation of Self". Besides the term "transformation"[194], there are passages in Scripture describing this process in various ways: "laying aside the old self and putting on the new self"[195], "growing in the

[193] Philippians 2:12-13
[194] Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18
[195] Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:10

grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"[196], growth in Christlike attributes and character.[197] I believe we could include growing in "the fruit of the Spirit"[198]. And for our purposes here, we can also think in terms of **the development of the Be-Attitudes in our lives by the working of the Holy Spirit.**

Again, the apostle Paul gave us the key to this work of God:

"… **(You) work** out your salvation with fear and trembling; for **it is God who is at work in you**, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure."[199]

As Paul explained, this requires God's supernatural working, but it also requires our working as well. I've heard it said: *"Christ in us; not Christ instead of us." "We cannot do it without Him, and He will not do it without us."* I believe those simple statements are theologically true. We co-operate with God's working. *"We will, but God works the will in us. We work, therefore, but God works the working in us."*[200]

[196] 2 Peter 3:18
[197] 2 Peter 15-8
[198] Galatians 5:22-23
[199] Philippians 2:12-13
[200] Vincent's Word Studies (quoting Augustine) on Philippians 2:13.

Abide in the Spirit

We might relate the likeness of the Beatitudes of Jesus to the fruit of the Spirit of which Paul wrote:

Beatitudes:

- Poor in spirit
- Mournful
- Meek
- Hungry and thirsty for **righteousness**
- Merciful
- Pure in heart
- Peacemakers
- Persecuted for righteousness' sake

Fruit of the Spirit:

- Loving
- Joyful
- Peaceful
- Patient
- Kind
- Good
- Faithful
- Gentle
- Self-controlled

"Just as the ninefold fruit of the Spirit which Paul lists [Gal 5:22–23] is to ripen in every Christian character, so the eight beatitudes which Christ speaks describe his ideal for every citizen of God's kingdom."[201]

Moreover, we rightly associate the idea of "abiding" with "abiding in the Vine" – just as Jesus taught His disciples. Let's consider what that Vine is. It is Jesus, of course. But is that the man Jesus of Nazareth – Christ in the flesh? Or is that the Spirit of Christ – the resurrected and ascended Christ? An excerpt from my article "Abide in the Vine":

"When we consider the word 'abiding', we should bear in mind that John 15:1-11 puts forth the disciples' relation to Jesus – a new relationship in the sense that He would soon be ascended, and they would relate to Him now through the agency of His Holy Spirit. Jesus depicted this relationship as 'The Vine and the Branches'. This 'Vine' is no longer the Man, Jesus of Nazareth, but the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit, through Whom, He would be in them, and they would be in Him – he referred to this relationship as being 'one'."[202]

So, **it is the Spirit of Christ in whom we are to abide.** Now, let's consider some of the things the apostle Paul taught about "the Spirit": In Galatians 5:16, Paul wrote, "walk in the Spirit"[203]; and in verse 18 he wrote, "be led by

[201] John Stott, "Christian Counter-Culture", IVP, 1978, page 31.
[202] An excerpt from my article "Abide in the Vine" – concerning John 17:11, 21-23.
[203] Or to live in the Spirit.

the Spirit". I'd like to suggest firstly that "walking" and "being led by" the Spirit corresponds to "abiding" in the Spirit. And secondly, I would like to suggest that what Jesus taught about "abiding" in the Spirit of Christ corresponds to what Paul taught about "abiding" in the Spirit.

Now, let's review what Paul wrote about the results of "abiding" in the Spirit which are "the fruit of the Spirit":

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."[204]

I offer the following – not as one who has fully achieved "bearing much fruit"[205], but from my personal experience as one who is learning about and growing in being fruitful in Christlikeness. I am sharing here major lessons the Spirit is teaching me and developing in me even after more than 50 years in relationship with the Spirit of Christ:

Love

The first term listed in the fruit of the Spirit is love. Just as the apostle John "summarized" God with the word "love"[206], I believe all of "the fruit of the Spirit" may be

[204] Galatians 5:22-23
[205] John 15:8, Cf. vv. 5 and 16
[206] 1 John 4:7-8

summarized with the word "love". The common saying, *"Love is a decision[207] - not a feeling"* I have found to be absolutely true in my personal life experience. Even with our special loved ones with whom we have that inherent feeling of love, there are times – in certain circumstances and situations - when that inherent feeling can be difficult to find. In fact, very ugly feelings followed by unloving attitudes, words, and actions can flood up and out of us towards even our loved ones. However, in those times, a response of silence can be a decision of our will. An attitude, a word, or an act of love are also purely decisions of the will. I find that when I make those decisions, the feeling of love soon "comes out of hiding" as well. In addition, I'm enveloped in a sense of happiness.

"Walking in love", as the apostle John communicates in his epistles, is the quintessence and embodiment of spirituality.[208] It is as well the greatest feeling possible for human beings because it is touching God who "is love". It is "tasting" that heavenly happiness. But, in fact, "walking in love" is not merely a "taste" – it is actually **living in love – abiding in that heavenly happiness.**

[207] Or a choice.

[208] 1 John 2:3-6, 9-11; 3:11-18; 4:7-12, 16-21; 5:2-3; 2 John 4-6; 3 John 3-6

Joy & Peace

The next two words in the list of "the fruit of the Spirit" are "joy" and "peace". If we add in righteousness[209] - the prerequisite for peace - we have one of the apostle Paul's descriptions of the kingdom of God – "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit".[210] This is how the prophet Isaiah expressed it: "And this righteousness will bring peace. Yes, it will bring quietness and confidence forever."[211] Paul and Isaiah give wonderful pictures of that heavenly happiness which we pursue.

Self-Control

The last words in the list of "the fruit of the Spirit" are "self-control". Much like love being a decision, **"self-control" is also a decision of the will to simply control any and all of the responses of the self.** Despite the fact that "the law of sin (still) at work in our members",[212] we can learn to grow in "self-control", choosing rather to exercise the fruit of the Spirit – "patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness". And when we do exercise these fruit of the Spirit in response to exasperating people and stressful situations, we

[209] That is, being in right relationship with God and the godly life that flows from that relationship.
[210] Romans 14:17; Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:20
[211] Isaiah 32:17 New Living Translation
[212] Romans 7:23

experience the goodness inherent in Christlikeness – contributing to that heavenly happiness which is found only "in the Holy Spirit".

Addendum

As I said in the Preface, Scripture uses Hebrew and Greek words for both "joy" and "happiness" without implying any significant contrast in their meanings. Scripture depicts both a happiness that is sourced in God and a happiness that is sourced in circumstances, as well as a joy that is sourced in circumstances and a joy that is sourced in God. In this article, I have used the word "happiness" as sourced in God. In this Addendum, we will take a brief look at the word "joy" as sourced in God.

"The Joy of the Lord"

What is the meaning of the phrase "the joy of the Lord"? Let's take a look at the primary passage in which that phrase is used. The context is Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites reading and giving understanding of the Law of Moses to the Israelites upon their return to rebuild the temple after their stay in Babylon.

" **9** Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest *and* scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, '*This day is holy to the Lord your God*; do not mourn or weep.' For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law. **10** Then he said to them, 'Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; *for this day is holy to our Lord*. Do not be grieved, for **the joy of the Lord is your strength**.' **11** So the

Levites calmed all the people, saying, 'Be still, *for the day is holy*; do not be grieved.' **12** All the people went away to eat, to drink, to send portions and to celebrate a great festival, because they understood the words which had been made known to them."[213]

Firstly, we see the phrase, "this day is holy". "This day" was actually the Feast of Trumpets, which along with the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Booths was being restored.[214]

However, it must be pointed out that the solemness associated with the Feat of Trumpets was put aside on this particular occasion.[215] Instead, the people were told to celebrate on "this day". Why this exception took place "this day" is what we will venture to explain now: Upon hearing the words of the Law, the people were grieved over their obvious failure to live up to its standard. However, Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites gave them understanding – explaining that they could actually celebrate. And the reason they were given was "the joy of the Lord is your strength". Their falling short and missing the mark of the Law was their weakness. But "the joy of the Lord was their strength". So, what is "the joy

[213] Nehemiah 8:9-12

[214] The seventh month contained these solemn observances for the Hebrews: The first day – the Feast of Trumpets; the tenth day – the Day of Atonement; and the fifteenth day and onward – the Feast of Booths, which was celebratory.

[215] Cf. Leviticus 23:23–25; Numbers 29:1–6 call for a solemn rest, holy assembly, and special offerings.

of the Lord"? The Hebrew word, *chedvah*[216], means gladness, rejoicing, or joy.

Contrary to the exhortations of many sermons based on this passage, **the "joy" is a noun representing something that belongs to the Lord** – not belonging to the people; and neither is it a verb describing an action performed by the people. As the primary grammatical reading of the construct state, most Hebrew scholars identify it as a subjective genitive ("the Lord's own joy") rather than an objective genitive ("our joy in the Lord"). Specifically, **it is God's joy over His people which somehow serves as the source of their strength.**

So, what is the nature and character of God's joy which enables it to give strength to His people? **God's joy is coupled with His strength:**

"Splendor and majesty are before Him. Strength and joy are in His place."[217]

Where God is – "in His place" - there is joy.[218] God's strength is paired with His joy. Interestingly, when we think of a display of human strength, it is not usually a joyous occasion. But "the joy of the Lord" is coupled with His strength. When we think of a human strong man,

[216] Strong's # H2304
[217] 1 Chronicles 16:27
[218] Psalm 16:11

we usually envision one who is somber – even angry. But our Heavenly Strong God is happy.

And like all of God's attributes, His joy is eternal – not fleeting (based on circumstances). The same is true of God's strength - it too is eternal. There is never a time when God's strength is absent. If "God is with us" (Immanuel)[219], and we are with God by virtue of being "in Christ",[220] **God's joy and strength are shared with us.**

"These things I have spoken to you so that **My joy may be in you**, and that **your joy** may be made full."[221]

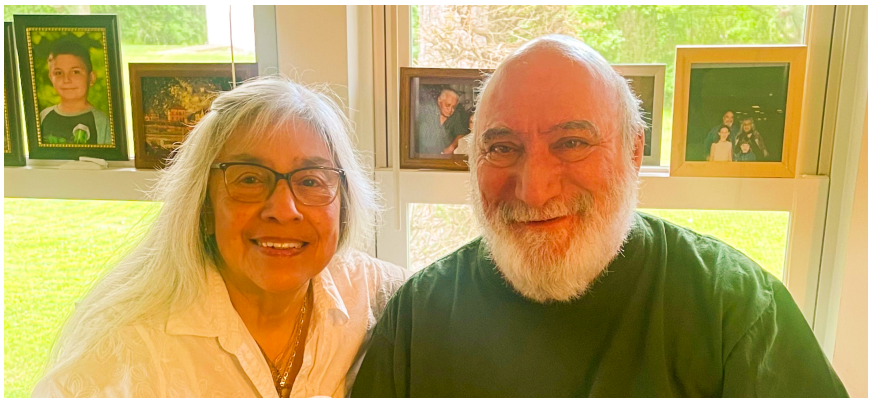
"The joy of the Lord" becomes our joy as well. And God's strength is a guarantee of that joy. Indeed, if we are baptized into Christ[222], we are immersed in God's joy and strength. Don't always feel it? It is one of those "spiritual blessings in the heavenly places"[223]. As we have discussed throughout this article, we have a "foretaste" – a downpayment, a deposit[224] – of which we can "taste" of that heavenly joy. Let us abide in it also.

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[219] Matthew 1:23; Cf. Isaiah 7:14
[220] Being "in Christ": 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:26; Ephesians 2:10, et al. Abiding in Christ: John 15:4-5
[221] John 15:11, 17:13
[222] Galatians 3:27; Cf. Romans 6:3-4
[223] Ephesians 1:3
[224] Hebrews 6:5; Ephesians 1:14; Cf. Romans 8:23; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; 1 Peter 1:3–9

Bill & Frances Furioso

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Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, discipled many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Theology, Philosophy, Education, and Music. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet... www.AtChristsTable.org

ACTpublications

"Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words." 1 Corinthians 2:13

A teaching ministry from Bill and Frances Furioso

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Disciples of the King and His Kingdom eating and drinking of Jesus

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