

NINE STAGES OF CHRISTIAN-GROWTH

The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1-12



Ephesians 4:15

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

B r o o k y R S t o c k t o n

NINE STAGES OF CHRISTIAN-GROWTH

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Preface

Want to become a useful servant of Christ?

Learn where the Lord will lead you, and become comfortable with the nine -stages of grow in the Christian-life – otherwise known as “the Beatitudes.”

Know there is a difference between spirituality and maturity. The former has to do with one’s relationship to the spirit, the latter has to do with maturity in doctrine and in character. Thus, the nine states of Christian-growth as developed in Christ’s Sermon on the Mount.

Pastor Brooky Stockton



NINE STAGES OF CHRISTIAN-GROWTH



Ephesians 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

The Nine Beatitudes represent Nine States of Christian-Growth.

The first four beatitudes have to do with requisites for the blessing of salvation (justification). The second set of beatitudes have to do with stages of Christian-growth in being Christ like; or, as theologians would say, growth in sanctification — preparation for Christian service.

Introduction to Matthew 5

Matthew 5:3

◆ **Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

Before you begin a journey, it is nice to know where you are going; otherwise, no road you travel will get you there.

Q: Where will your faith and obedience to the gospel lead you?

The Christian life is a pilgrimage, and the Sermon on the Mount is God's road map that tells you what you will be when you grow up in Christ.

Matthew 5-7 is the most famous sermon ever preached, and it embraces the road less traveled.

Propositions

When **Augustine** preached this sermon he titled it, "*De Sermone Domini in Monte secundum Matthaeum*" — Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount According to Matthew.

Harry Ironside titled it "The Principles of the Kingdom." Others refer to it as the "Ethics of the Kingdom."

The Scofield Bible, edited by the Jewish Oxford Press, classified the Sermon on the Mount as "pure law" intended for the future "kingdom age" — not for the present-day church, which of course, is nonsense.

However, the beatitudes are not about rules in some future alleged kingdom but about growth in Christ-like character now in this age.

We will look at the nine beatitudes from the point of Christian-growth as they represent stages of growth in Christian maturity.

First, one must enter the kingdom.

The Journey

This spiritual pilgrimage begins with a recognition that one is poor in spirit — in need of Christ; and it ends with the pilgrim being rich in Spirit -- A seed rising from cracked earth to wear a victor's crown.

The Christian life is not static. It embodies progression. The one who loves the Father will be sent to His training camp so he can get in spiritual shape and complete the race. He has a direction for His children's lives. And, the beatitudes show us the starting line as well as the finish line.

Matthew introduces us to the Beatitudes which present the progress of development in the Christian soul. For the sake of utility, we shall call them "Stages in Christian Growth."

The major message of Jesus Christ was the arrival of the kingdom of God in history (4:19), and getting into it the supreme objective — a dynamic opportunity that demands a vigorous, violent, radical decision (11:12).

The kingdom of God is compared to a king's banquet and formal white-robe attire is required.

Only the righteous enter the kingdom. Jesus taught that unless your righteousness is greater than the Scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter into it (Matthew 5:20)¹.

Many Jews thought they were righteous enough, but our Lord taught that these bandits will be thrown into outer darkness (8:20).

¹ Matthew 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Note this righteousness is not earned; it is a gift of God given to those that believe and trust Christ. Theologians call this "justification."

We have here, if you will, **Kingdom Theology 101**, or **Requisites for Entering the Kingdom of God**.

The first four beatitudes define the spiritual condition that characterizes souls who enter the kingdom: a sense of spiritual poverty, grief, meekness, and a hunger to enter the kingdom. Does this define you?

The next five beatitudes have to do with the development of Christian-character; that is, growth in Christlikeness; advancement toward sanctification; preparation for service in the kingdom of God; or armament for the church militant. The final stage of development is one who is rich in spirit; that is, one like an oak that can stand against the winds of adversity (persecution).

The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are the same phenomenon. The difference between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God is the difference between a Hebrewism and a Greek idiom.

The kingdom of God is **not** a place but a dominion — the sphere of the rule and reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. To enter the kingdom one must want to be there and one must surrender to our Lord's authority as King of the Nations (Jeremiah 10:7; Romans 10:9-10; Revelation 19:16).

In Matthew entrance into the kingdom is by recognizing the sovereignty of King Jesus. The key invitation in Matthew is **not** "believe" but "take my yoke upon you."

Matthew 11:28-30 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden (poor in spirit), and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Each of the first four beatitudes address a problem with mankind that prevents men from entering the kingdom which we could label as pride, resistance, defiance, and complacency. In other words, the kingdom of

God is for those with a need and a desire to know Him.

The last five beatitudes have to do with sanctification or development of Christian character fit for service in the kingdom of God.

Part I

Four Stages of Spiritual Development Necessary for Justification.



Stage One: Poor in Spirit

Matthew 5:3

◆ **Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

Matthew begins the sermon with “Blessed are the poor in spirit;” Luke simply has “Blessed are the poor.” Both are true.

First, a Christian is not one who is born in a “Christian” country, but one who surrenders to the authority of King Jesus and kisses His scepter (Matthew 1:22; 11:28-29; John 1:10-13; Psalm 2:12; 97:1; 99:1).

The world teaches us to think positive, to possess high self-esteem, to believe in the humanistic doctrine that men are born good, and that only the environment corrupts. Some psychologists go as far to infer that all of man’s problems are the result of poor self-esteem. However, this is a long way from what our Lord taught. Those guided by psychoheresy are living on the edge of the map; the last echo from a dying scream; perilously adrift on the sea of shifting ideas following their own belly button.

A man touched by God begins his journey realizing that his problems are not in the environment, but within him; that he is a poor transgressor that has broken God’s law; too bankrupt to get into heaven; too wretched to avoid indictment; that his lifeboat has a hole in it. The knowledge that one is a sinner in need of a Savior, and this feeling of shame connected with his wretched condition removes the warm cloud of pride – the ambers that keep hope in man’s goodness alive and out of the kingdom.

God's Word acts like a mirror. Humility comes by looking at one's self in the lens of God's Word and realizing how poor one is in relationship to the righteousness the Son requires to enter His kingdom.

Matthew 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your
righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes

and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus pronounced a blessing on the man who feels poor in spirit. The kingdom of God is for the humble, broken man, and not for the proud, self-righteous man "who did it my way."

Because individuals are so full of themselves, it is a miracle when one recognizes his own depravity. Admission that one is not "a good person" is so rare, the angels rejoice when a man comes to his senses and realizes that he is a transgressor of God's law (Luke 15:7). When one wakes up out of his ethereal dream world and admits that he is spiritually bankrupt, that person is not far from the kingdom of God.

The pre-Christian reaches "first base" on the road to the kingdom when he realizes that he is spiritually poor and insolvent in his relationship to Christ; that is, when he realizes he is dead broke in righteousness and needs to be redeemed by Another. The psychobabble that one needs more self-esteem to improve his condition is a suicide pill offered to men insuring they never touch life in the kingdom of heaven.

[Note: It would be an error in judgment to totally spiritualize this text as Luke says, "Blessed are the poor" (6:20). Economic poverty often goes hand-in-hand with being "crushed in spirit" and "broken hearted" because of the way poor people are treated sociologically (Isaiah 61:1; Psalm 34:18). Luke emphasizes economic poverty, while Matthew emphasizes spiritual poverty.)

The opposite of being poor in spirit is personal autonomy which is the idea of being self-ruled and there is no greater evil among men than the notion that they are free to choose their own law. The Bible calls this fabricated smugness pride, presumption, and insolence.

You know a person is not poor in spirit when every sentence begins with the pronoun "I."

One of greatest signs of personal autonym and too much self-esteem is the sporting of tattoos² in violation of Leviticus 19:28 - "You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or put any tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord."

In summary, the kingdom of God is for the poor, the humble, and the broken. A poor soul feels his destitution, penury, indigence, pennilessness, want, beggary, impoverishment, and pauperism in relation to the golden righteousness required to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The condition of being in love with self and self-focused keeps men from salvation. Consequently, men need less self-esteem and more Christ esteem; to avoid self-confession and to confess Christ as Lord and Savior.

Thus, a sense of need . . . of spiritual poverty . . . of bankruptcy . . . of being a transgressor instead of a lawkeeper . . . of being in debt to God. A sinner in need of a savior is the first step to the kingdom of God.

"For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" informs us that a sense of spiritual poverty is a requisite to enter the kingdom.

Moreover, do **not** hear what is **not** being said. Poor in spirit does not require self-abasement, self-flagellation, or self-deprecation.

Our Lord is not blistering a man's soul or suggesting that men take out a beat stick and begin a life-long process of self-punishment³ or that the souls of men should act like an army sergeant squashing man's dignity in order to make them subservient to man-made authority.

² At its core, tattooing is a form of idolatrous self-expression that empowers people to visually communicate their passion, emotions, beliefs, opinions, and life experiences on their skin.

³ Flagellants were medieval Christian groups who practiced intense public self-whipping (flogging) as a form of extreme penance, seeking forgiveness for sins and atonement for societal ills.

Rather, the Scripture wants us to be our best and to know that at our very best, we are not qualified to enter the kingdom. We need something more – the royal robes of Christ’s golden righteousness (Romans 3:21-22).

Stage Two: Mourning

Matthew 5:4

◆ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

We don't logically associate mourning with blessedness. Most men would rather go to a fun fest than to a funeral; to a candy store than to a cemetery; to a banquet rather than a battlefield. Men would rather be happy than sad; to sing than sob; to take a warm shower than a polar-bear dip in ice water; to enjoy a hot summer rather than to endure a cold winter.

"Girls just Want to Have Fun"

"Lets Party"

"Relax! Have a good time"

"let's get together and celebrate,"

"Be safe."

"Take at easy . . . its not a big deal"

"Spring is nature's way of saying, 'Let's party!'"

According to psych-gurus, the remedy for sadness is drugs, group therapy, and healthy doses of self-esteem as if a self-pat on the back will remove sorrow.

Love of self, happiness with self, and contentment with self, and high self-esteem characterize the man entering the gates of hell. Over 5000 books have been written on self-esteem, and each one of them is a stumbling block, a suicide pill, a ball and chain that keeps men from finding the door to heaven. This sense of self-worth may characterize self-promoting salesmen, but it doesn't characterize kingdom citizens.

If the first stage of spiritual growth is realizing that one is a sinner, the second stage is the grief and sorrow that springs up within a man when he realizes he is a sinner poor in spirit; a sinner and not a saint, a debtor and not a creditor before God; condemned rather than approved.

Tears are the silent language of suffering—something no one wants. But, he who has felt earth's deepest griefs is in a position to seek heaven's relief. Mourning strips a man of pride and pleasure. Sorrow is God's way of delivering a man from "pipe dreams" and the journey to a "fools paradise;" that is, emotional pain acts like church bells inviting men to enter the gates of the kingdom.

The pronoun "they" is emphatic; i.e. God is concerned about those who suffer.

The promise is for comfort; that is, there is pardon, peace, and rest available for the one grieved over his sin and spiritual poverty.

It is good when men experience sadness of heart, because distress causes them to seek happiness in the Lord. Such a condition calls for handkerchiefs and the wearing of black. It is not good to sin, but it is good when transgressors cry and weep over their sin – liquid prayers that signify deep sorrow, repentance, and grief for one's actions against God.

Anguish over one's broken windows that lets the cold in motivates the man to find a remedy for his guilt. Grief is a stone chest with no warmth; a shadow that lengthens when one has false hopes; bucket dredges dragging the bottom of one's soul for delusions and shimmering mirages on the death walk to hell.

Mourning indicates the soul is being delivered from false hopes; from rip tides of guilt that carry men out to sea. Sorrow is the spark that burns up paper wings you trusted to long; the pin that pops the balloons of fake happiness; the honest hand that removes forced smiles; the mirror of truth that reveals the wrinkles in your soul; the stop sign that says "go no further" on sin's highway.

“they shall be comforted” — For this reason, Jesus pronounced a blessing on the mourner that has ashes on his soul. For sinners broken by the world’s false hopes — mirages of lakes painted on thirsty minds, Jesus promises the warm blanket of God’s presence and the quiet blessedness of forgiveness — an angelic shield that protects the heart from darts of fear; heaven’s fire that warms cold hearts; salvation’s water for thirsty souls; sunlight at the end of the tunnel; pardon for trespassers and lawbreakers; a hearth of heaven’s burning love to calm the shivering soul.

Stage Three: Meekness

Matthew 5:5

◆ **Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.**

The Greek word for meek (praus) refers to gentleness and harmlessness. Jesus is called “meek” in Matthew 11:29 and 21:5. Pious women are called to be meek in relationship to overbearing husbands in 1 Peter 3:4.

The word “praus” does **not** refer to humility as much as it refers to a person that has put down their sword in their battle against the Lord; to a young bronco that stopped bucking; to a stallion that accepts bit and bridle; a smooth river stone lacking all its rugged edges shaped by the river’s touch; a whisper that echoes louder than a shout because it invites you to listen carefully.

The opposite of meekness is pride — the storm cloud that thinks the sky belongs to it alone; a pottery pot that credits itself for being made; a trumpet that drowns out flutes; a locked door that keeps the world out; a hill that thinks it is more important than the valley; a stallion that won’t submit to bit and bridle; a zit-filled face that thinks he is smarter than all his teachers.

The world teaches blessed are the strong, the ambitious, the aggressive, the fighter, the go-getter, and the avenger. There is even a song extolling the pride of self-achievement, “I Did It My Way,” by Frank Sinatra.

I've lived a life that's full

I've traveled each and every highway

But more, much more than this

I did it my way

Regrets, I've had a few
But then again, too few to mention
I did what I had to do
And saw it through without exemption
I planned each charted course
Each careful step along the byway
And more, much more than this
I did it my way

The pronoun "I" is used 9 times in this prideful song.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way . . ." — Isaiah 53:6

Moreover, meekness is not weakness. It is not the same as apathy, passivity, being laid back, or contentment with one's wretched condition.

Meekness refers to the one who has a correct view of God and a realistic view about himself. Because he knows that he is a sinner, he is not offended when the Spirit exposes his transgressions. Meekness refers to a man who accepts life as it is; who accepts God's indictment against him; who agrees with the verdict, "guilty as charged."

Meekness is that condition of mind which does **not** resist the convicting work of the Spirit. It is a courageous soul that accepts the truth that, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Meekness says, "the judge is correct! I am guilty as a transgressor before His law" — a man in need of mercy from the Court.

Therefore, meekness is an attitude which receives the Spirit's accusations that he is a sinner deserving hell; that conviction of soul which shuns fictions like "I am innocent," "I am great," "I am a good person," or "I can do it," or the ridiculous notion that "the Scripture is full of

contradictions." Meekness is a candle that refuses to compete with the Sun; an oak tree that bends with the wind; a soul living in the barrio that is thankful for a place to live.

Meekness is the opposite of the Victimization Movement which blames everyone else for their problems. A meek heart accepts responsibility and cries out to God, "Be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13). The meek heart is a free heart because it has escaped the "ball and chain" mantra of "I'm a victim," or "it's my parent's fault," or "I was born poor," or "society is the problem."

In contrast to the impulsive, self-promoting, aggressive man pursuing wealth is Christ's promise to the meek – "for they shall inherit the earth." a reference to Psalm 37:11.

He not only enters the kingdom of heaven, but acquires rights in the kingdom of God. His inheritance is not "pie in the sky" when he dies; puffy clouds in the heavens made for playing a harp, but terra firma in the "new heavens and new earth;" that is, "firm land" – true riches in Paradise restored.

Stage Four: A Hunger for Righteousness

Matthew 5:6

◆ *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

Men are hungry for many things, but righteousness is not among them.

Men yearn to be rich and famous, but who thirsts to be blameless before God?

Hunger is defined as distress due to a lack of food.

A hunger and thirst for righteousness involves distress for a lack of righteousness — an intense desire to know God, to be aligned with His will, and be in good standing with Him.

This is what we might call the stage of faith that seeks forgiveness and a right relationship to God — that grasps what God has done for sinners at Calvary.

A person who realizes that he is a debtor before God, and who seeks to be right with the Creator has a healthy soul. Sick men seek a physician. Sick souls seek the Great Physician. The sinner, while knowing that he has no righteousness of his own pursues a righteousness that comes from God alone, through faith alone in Christ alone (Sola Fide; Sola Christos, Sola Gratia).

The hungry heart “**shall be filled;**” that is, he will find a feast in Christ. For when one trusts our Lord and His work at the cross, God lavishly provides the believer with a kingdom banquet -- the righteousness of Christ; forgiveness, justification, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, eternal life, reconciliation, and more.

A man who investigates the gospel will find that He is saved by good works—not his own works, but by the works of Christ. A man is not only saved by the dying of Christ, he is saved by the doing of Christ.

The possession of righteousness is a pre-requisite to enter the kingdom. According to Christ, a man must have a righteousness greater than the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20).

Eternal life awaits those who patiently do good, and seek immortality (Romans 2:7). But, what is a man supposed to do who has sinned and not been patient in doing good? (Romans 3:23).

Job asked the most important question a man can ask, "How shall a man be just before God?" (Job 9:2).

The good news is that God provides golden righteousness through the gospel to poor men who trust Jesus as their Savior:

Matthew 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Romans 3:21-22 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from (one's personal obedience to) the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ (an ablative) for all who believe (in Christ). For there is no distinction:

The sinner is called to cease from his own performance-based, self-esteem acceptance program (Maslow's self-actualization ambition) and to accept the performance of Christ on His behalf. Man fulfills His potential when he confesses he is a sinner, comes to Christ for forgiveness, and rests in His work for them.

Psychologically speaking, Maslow was wrong. His is a false gospel. Man's greatest needs are not **Love & Belonging** (relationships, connection), **Esteem** (respect, recognition), and finally, **Self-**

Actualization (reaching full potential) but a right relationship to God that begins with the first beatitude; possession of righteousness that comes from Christ alone (Justification) and regeneration by the power of the Holy Spirit. Then, and only then can man achieve his full potential – “he shall be filled.”

Theologically speaking, a man who investigates the gospel will find that He is saved by good works—not his own works, but by the works of Another on His behalf. A man is not only saved by the dying of Christ, he is saved by the doing of Christ.

Christ took our debts to the cross (for our forgiveness), and in exchange, He gives His royal righteousness as a free gift to us who believe (for our justification) (Sola Gratia). He first declares believers just (justification), then proceeds to make them just (regeneration followed by sanctification). When arrayed in His white robes of righteousness, the believer is qualified to enter the banquet hall and to enjoy the feast.

This is justification—the day God declares a man righteous and treats him as such.

But, there is more. Not only does God justify the sinner by faith (Romans 4:5), He regenerates the man by the Spirit of God (Titus 3:5; Romans 5:3ff). This dual state of being justified and regenerated is the blessing which Christ promised to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

This is the day of salvation! This is the beginning of “his potential.”

Justification is a judicial ruling whereby God declares a man right with the Court (Genesis 15) and treats him as such (Genesis 20). Being declared just and then being made just is the central hope of Matthew 5:1-6.

The rest of our Lord’s sermon concerns sanctification – the process of being made holy; of growing in Christ-likeness (Matthew 5:7-11).

Justification is essential; sanctification is esthetic.

Sanctification is the beautifying of the Christian by obedience of the man to God's Word (law-order) with the assistance of the Spirit. While a man is justified by "faith alone" without man's assistance, sanctification requires man's obedience while seeking the power of the Holy Spirit to make him holy. A man is saved by faith alone, but faith is never alone (Calvin).

A Historical Perspective

In the 16th century, the Roman Catholic Church made justification dependent on regeneration and sanctification.

While the Reformers agreed that it is not totally possible to separate justification and regeneration completely, they insisted that the act of justification (judicial declaration) be logically separated from the work of regeneration (infusion of righteousness) and from the process of sanctification (being made holy).

Men are justified by faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone; the justified are then regenerated (by faith alone); and, then for the sake of holiness, God requires the regenerated to obey His Word so they will become like His Son (sanctified).

So, where are you in the process of salvation? If you are poor in spirit, grieved over your wretched condition (mourn), humbly accept the fact that you are a sinner (meekness), and you thirst to be right with God, then look at Calvary (not in your heart). You are on the path toward salvation – like following a sunrise that keeps unfolding more light the farther you go; like a tree leaning toward the sun growing where it was planted – a tree destined to bear fruit for the glory of God and the joy of men.

Part II

Five Stages of Development Necessary for Sanctification and Qualification for Christian Service

A description of the Christian soldier

The first four beatitudes describe the condition of souls at the gates of the kingdom; the second five describe the requisites for being a mature Christian; servant of God; and, a soldier in the Lord's army.

A strong Christian is a soldiering Christian – a man at war with the world.

The next five beatitudes describe God's training course for His army.

Theologically, the first four beatitudes are requisites for justification; the second set of five are requisites for sanctification; practically, Jesus gives a condensed lesson on Christian character; traits that mark the kingdom man.

Stage Five: Growth in Showing Mercy

Matthew 5:7

◆ **Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.**

When a person enters the kingdom, they discover the grace of God. Consequently, they are inclined to show grace and mercy toward others who are in need. Mercy begets mercy.

A young believer may not know how to express his faith, but he shows his faith through little acts of kindness towards those closest to him. He does not love others to gain salvation, but because he has salvation he loves others. He is not better than other men, but he helps to better other men.

Because he is secure in the Father's love, he is able to show love through acts of mercy, service, giving, helping, and assisting others to be successful.

Mercy is the opposite of disdain, discretion, and a demanding spirit; the opposite of strict justice, revenge, and punishment. It's active, rather than passive; generous, rather than frugal; forgiving rather than exacting; compassionate rather than condemning; God-like rather than man-like.

Showing mercy often involves seeing suffering and helping to relieve stress. The merciful man gets his hands dirty assisting others in the duties of life. He gives up his seat on the bus; goes last in line; and speaks kindly to the rude. He has chapped hands from washing dishes, changing diapers, and pulling weeds in the garden. He serves without moaning or groaning about hardship; without complaining and arguing about difficulties. He is like a candle that melts away its own resources never asking the darkness for anything in return.

Because God loves the unworthy and sent His Son to save men, the

Scripture informs us that He is “rich in mercy” (Ephesians 2:4), and His “mercy is great” (2 Samuel 24:14). He not only shows compassion, he restrains anger, judgment, and censorship. He is like the rain falling on land that does not deserve it; like an ocean wave that erases the footprints without judging the path they took; like moonlight that relieves the stress of blackness without demanding thanks.

Traditional hands-on Christianity practices the 7 Corporal Works of Mercy that address physical needs of men: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead.

See the movie, “The Scarlet and the Black” starring Gregory Peck as a marvelous example of a Roman Catholic priest with hands-on mercy.

Don’t hear what is not being said. The context is not crime and justice, but neighborly mercy. Jesus is not exhorting civil-judges to release criminals back on the street so they can continue their crime spree. There is a place for strict justice, but not in the non-malicious, push and shove lanes of the market place.

Nor is God calling disciples to always eat honey-roasted, Sun-baked, passion peck cereals for breakfast. Sometimes iron-man Wheaties needs to be on the menu. God calls men to be a combination of steel and velvet; to be tough and tender. Here, our Lord exhorts us to grab hold of the gentle graces of a real man touched by His mercy.

Because the Christian has received mercy without merit, he shows mercy to others without merit. He not only starts his Christian life with grace, he serves with grace, grows in grace, and finishes with grace. His daily prayer is, “Have mercy, O Lord; and help me to show mercy today.”

Stage Six: Growth in Purity

Matthew 5:8

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

The opposite of purity is defilement, compromise, contamination, double-mindedness, pluralism, hypocrisy, and inconsistency; that is, traits that characterize politicians and shysters.

The pure in heart align their inner self with outward actions, and act with integrity, honesty, and love leading to spiritual clarity and a deeper connection with God. It suggests honesty, sincerity, peace, and a kind of inner stillness that isn't muddied by hidden motives.

A pure heart is like water that hasn't been polluted by anything artificial—transparent, refreshing, and able to reflect the heavens without distortion.

Purity is the fruit from the hardwood of holiness growing in the heart—a clear sky after a rain; a window without dust; a fire without smoke; a garden without weeds. Purity makes a man stately. It beautifies the man and makes him strong. The more he says "Yes" to love, the more he says "No" to sin.

In Alfred, Lord Tennyson's poem "Sir Galahad" (1842), Galahad is the ultimate example of the "perfect knight," a virgin knight whose unwavering piety and spiritual focus make him uniquely worthy for the sacred quest for the Holy Grail. In one sonnet Galahad declares, "My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure," allowing him to overcome enemies and achieve the Holy Grail where others failed due to their earthly sins.

By blessing the pure heart, our Lord addresses holiness, cleanness,

morality, ethics, honesty, power, clarity, and separation from sinful habits.

The Lord promised that those with a pure heart shall see God; that is, to know Him, perceive Him, and have a relationship with Him.

A necessary support-attribute of purity is “self control” – the first fruit of the Spirit that secures all others. Without self-control a man has nothing (Titus 2:6).

This is the period where the trials of life refine the soul, unshackle the believer from habits of sin, duplicity, and where the Spirit progressively works into the heart of the believer the desire to be a holy man set apart to be his faithful servant.

Soon after a man comes to know the Savior, he learns that while sins have been taken off him, sin is still in him. He learns he has been saved from the penalty of sin, and that he must now be saved from the power of sin. His spirit is born again, but there are parts of him which are not yet regenerated. He is a true child of God, but he may not share the family resemblance . . . yet.

Being saved from the penalty of sin by the Savior is one matter (justification, forgiveness); being saved from the power of sin by the Spirit is quite another (sanctification).

God commands his children “to be holy as He is holy.” Personal holiness is not necessary to attain salvation, but salvation produces desires to attain holiness. God has no need of our goodness, but we have a need for His goodness -- to love more and to sin less.

Holiness beautifies the man and makes him a storm in denim – with heavenly dew refreshing those around him; an oaktree with a heartbeat for goodness; a rock among cotton balls. Purity and humility, steel and velvet, muscle and mercy are the sweet fragrances of a manly man – the cologne of a man dressed in the leather of Scripture. Holiness is the

strength of the soul, and it comes to the man of faith by obedience to God's laws and commands.

The more a man studies the Scripture, the more he understands how destructive sin is to himself and to others. The more one understands the Lord, the more he desires to be like Christ free from sin's defiling influence – a disciple with his “feet washed” (John 13). The desire to give more replaces the desire to have more. The desire to love more and to sin less is a gift from heaven – Christ's home where there is no sin and lots of love.

A Christian may lack many talents, but no Christian should lack holiness. In the eyes of God, a pure man is a useful man . . . a strong man with moral character, inner peace, and unwavering faith (2 Timothy 2:19-21).

Stage Seven: Growth in Peacemaking

Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Persecution is not a blessing, but the state of “those” preaching righteousness is a blessing among men.

While God calls us to be peacemakers, He does not call us to be nice, pettable pugs. He does not call us to ride sidesaddle through flowery meadows, but to clean out the barn — a job where the hired man may find himself being kicked by a mule or scratched by two scrapping cats.

God's man is less like a white-collar car salesman talkin' sweet, and more like plaid-shirted rigger wearing steel-toed boots and a hard hat with garlic on his breath.

Due to intense study of God's Word, this is a stage of development where the Christian-soldier grows in obedience and in righteousness — a man that stands up for what is right when everyone else is bowing down. This is a recruit training for war against foreign hostiles. You'll never see God's man dressed in white handing out flowers beggin' for money! Never!

Spirituality has to do with one's relationship to the Holy Spirit; Christian-maturity has to do with one's relationship to God's Word, to doctrine, to truth. Because he is mature in faith, he stands against omnism, feminism, and the LGBTQ+ agenda. Thus, he will be resisted, persecuted, or even jailed!

The word "persecuted" means "to make run." This is a stage of life where the active believer experiences opposition for His devotion to Christ and his salty message to neighbors and friends. He is opposed, not because he

preaches the gospel, but because he seeks to apply green-herb principles of the gospel to the open sores of society.

The blessing is **not** "persecution," but the character of the man and the peace he enjoys while confronting the proud, power-brokers of idolatry with God's Word.

The key word in this statement is "for righteousness sake." Most Christians in the West are not persecuted for preaching the gospel, but they are persecuted for asserting the law of the Lord God and applying it to the social ills of our time. Most pastors lose their jobs for being faithful to the Word than for any other reason. It is an honor when carnal congregations vote a holy man out of office while those with itching ears search for a candidate that makes them feel comfortable with their sin and doctrinal errors.

As a student of God's law, the Christian develops steel convictions about righteousness. Rejecting caramel Christianity and its honey-roasted, sun-kissed, passion-pecked sermons, he eats iron man Wheaties from God's Word for breakfast. His riveted convictions make him a target with the dreamy, impossible, equality ideals of liberals.

In this stage of growth, the believer finds himself soldiering against humanists, secularists, abortionists, lesbians, feminists, perverts, maskers, vaxxers, transvestites, social engineers, journalists, and politicians who force their perverted religious values of equality and moral relativism down the throats of Americans.

Because he no longer sees abortion as a women's right to control her own body, but murder; and, no longer sees living together as consensual sex, but fornication; and, no longer sees homosexuality as an alternate lifestyle, but sexual perversion; and, no longer sees feminism as social progress, but rebellion against God's law-order, the man of God may find that himself being called a misogynistic, anti-Semite, or a homophobic racist. The more effective he is at articulating Biblical doctrine and calling

rebels to repent, the more he will be defamed and belittled.

It is a blessing, not because of the suffering incurred, but because the man has Biblical convictions which motivate him to address the decadence of his age.

Don't hear what is not being said. This passage does not encourage a servant with strong, moral convictions to be bellicose, judgmental, or deficient in social skills that leads isolation, anxiety, and relationship issues with the flock. No pastor has permission to put on combat boots and to kick straggling sheep. Rather, this passage encourages a quiet man to speak the truth in love regardless of the "baas" in the herd (Ephesians 4:15)

"Woe unto you when all men speak well of you!" (Luke 6:26).

Jesus announces a reward for those who are persecuted for standing for the truth of the gospel: "for theirs is the kingdom of God." The term "kingdom of God" refers to a manifestation of the reign of God now, among men.

In using the term "kingdom of God," Jesus is not referring to some alleged millennial reign, but to the manifestation of kingdom reality within the heart and mind of the man; that is, his submission to the reign of Christ is manifested through the preaching of the man. Persecution means the preacher is doing something right. His announcement of the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ and His justice stirs anger and revolt among rebels — proof the man is a kingdom citizen and a servant of King Jesus — proof the man is not a flaky, wishy-washy, namby-pamby, sugar-cane apostate prophet, but a salty, faithful preacher of righteousness.

Stage Eight: Growth in Biblical Convictions

Matthew 5:10

◆ **Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

Persecution is not a blessing, but the state of “those” preaching righteousness is a blessing among men.

While God calls us to be peacemakers, He does not call us to be nice, pettable pugs. He does not call us to ride sidesaddle through flowery meadows, but to clean out the barn — a job where the hired man may find himself being kicked by a mule or scratched by two scrapping cats.

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the active believer experiences opposition for His devotion to Christ and his salty message to neighbors and friends. He is opposed, not because he preaches the gospel, but because he seeks to apply green-herb principles of the gospel to the open sores of society.

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Because he no longer sees abortion as a women's right to control her own body, but murder; and, no longer sees living together as consensual sex, but fornication; and, no longer sees homosexuality as an alternate lifestyle, but sexual perversion; and, no longer sees feminism as social progress, but rebellion against God's law-order, the man of God may find that himself being called a misogynistic, anti-Semite, or a homophobic

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"Woe unto you when all men speak well of you!" (Luke 6:26).

Stage Nine: Growth in Reliability

Matthew 5:11

◆ **Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.**

It has been said there are two kinds of people in the church: pillars that hold it up, and caterpillars that crawl in and out; reliable servants, and unreliable egocentrics.

Before us is a rock, the reliable soldier -- the stable, anchored, unwavering, secure, poised, steady, fixed, enduring man of integrity. He is the opposite of crumb cake and a shooting star.

The word "revile" means "to reproach," criticize, rail, or belittle.

"utter all kinds of evil" probably refers to name calling designed to prejudice other people against the righteous man. And, if that is not enough to make people suspect him, they just make up slurs saying all kinds of things against him "falsely."

The world does **not** hate Christians. It hates disciples that follow Christ and become like Him.

John 7:7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.

This is the final stage of maturity. It involves a character that is secure, persistent, and confident in the face of resistance. It is the ability to stand with joy for a righteous cause while one is being slandered and maligned. Not an easy place to be!

In this stage, the man walks alone with little support from family and friends. He has the ability to stand when others call for him to sit; to advance when the fearful call for retreat; to be defiant when mush-balls

call for complacency and tolerance.

"I learned from [the communist guards]. As they allowed no place for Jesus in their hearts, I decided I would not leave the smallest place for Satan in mine. . . . God will judge us not according to how much we endured, but how much we could love." — Richard Wurmbrand, imprisoned and tortured for fourteen years in Romania.

The ultimate goal of the Christian life is not to sit on a cushion of strawberries, but to be a blood-splattered soldier with spear in hands piercing the dragon; not to be nice and marshmallow-sweet, but to be a salty soldier of the cross rescuing souls near the gates of hell. The goal is not to create conflict, but to boldly confront the decadence of our age with a holy tongue. And, when this happens, tempers flare, eyebrows bend, and the tongue spits out venom. You can't avoid a street fight if you are opposed by bullies advancing the Devil's agenda.

Enemies morph in life. The longer one lives, the more the militant Christian engages the fight against entrenched, well-organized political opponents composed of vigorous antichrists (fake Jews).

This environment of criticism can be hard for the man that has been trained to be nice and do what is socially acceptable.

In the final stage of Christian maturity, the man of conviction will find himself facing powerful, well-funded, well-connected adversaries: politicians, elected officials, local bureaucrats, cops, judges, journalists, lawyers, deacons, false witnesses, prosecutors, and churchmen. His fight may be political or legal, commercial or judicial, social or relational, ecclesiastical or civil.

Because his enemies are people of means including officers in the government, they may have the power to crush your reputation, fire you from your job, destroy your career, tax you into poverty, seize your possessions, strike fear into your family, and injure you emotionally and

physically. This is true of Christians who served the gospel through the centuries, and it is true in the United States where the government promotes Zionism, omnism, communism, militarism, socialism, feminism, transvestism, humanism, and every other godless ism.

John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, and Peter spent the last years of their life in court facing judges that had the power of life and death.

These bone-crushing enemies of militant Christians are not only in journalism and government, they are in compromised 501 c 3 church organizations.

The more you move away from caramel Christianity and the candy-coated desire of church leaders to be compliant with State policies, the more you will receive the right fist of Christian fellowship. *When pleasing the government is more important than pleasing God, you cannot expect churchmen not to betray you.* Even Jesus was betrayed by his own brethren. Why should you expect anything less? "Beware of the man who picks you up at the airport!" wrote one pastor.

Jesus pronounces a blessing on the reliable, slandered disciple because what he says and does reflects the truth about kingdom values and exposes the nasty truth about the sinner.

He is blessed because of what he has become -- a man of faith and conviction, a brave soldier on the battlefield, a competent spokesman on the right side of the issues standing for the Lord he loves.

"I fear neither death nor fire. I am prepared for both, so do your worst!" — William Lithgow, tortured during the Spanish Inquisition.

Summary

◆ What is the final stage of growth for the cross-carrying Christian?

In the first stage of growth one is poor in spirit; in the final state one is rich in spirit. Thus, the beatitudes are a rags to riches program; a coward to courage course; a journey from fear to nite-faith.

In the first stage of growth the man is useless to God; in the final stage exists a strong competent soldier of the cross.

In the first stage of growth, one is insecure in faith; in the final stage, one is secure in his faith.

In the first stage of growth, lights leads to sadness of heart, in the final stage of growth, light leads to unspeakable joy.

In the first stage of growth everything about the man is shaky, but in the final stage of growth the believer is unshaken.

In the first stage of growth is a revelation about one's lack of spiritual character; in the final stage of growth, the steel character of the man is being tested against Satan's warlords.

If you have taken up the cross, God will work into your heart deep convictions about truth and righteousness.

As you seek to apply the Word of Truth to a corrupt society, you will experience fierce opposition. It is not encouraging to be opposed, but it is a blessing to possess the faith, to exhibit courage in the face of conflict, and to be constant in the application of righteousness when surrounded by the wickedness.

May the Lord increase your convictions and give you a melody to sing when you experience the screeching sounds of opposition for doing what is right. You will be in good company. Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Peter,

James, John, and Paul went from being poor in spirit to being rich in spirit.

Addendum



Too Sinful to Follow Christ?

Luke 5:8

◆ In the film, "In the Shoes of the Fisherman," a diplomat says to Anthony Quinn who plays the part of a Roman Catholic Pope, "You have changed."

Quinn answers, "That is because I know who I am . . . a man who sits too high for his gifts." Oh, that all of us had this humble perspective of ourselves.

Luke 5:8 - When Peter saw the power of Jesus to fill the net with fish, he felt he was too sinful to follow Christ: " he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

But the Lord accepted this sinner and made him his favored disciple.

Matthew 7:23 — There are men too wicked⁴ to follow Jesus - "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Jeremiah 17:14 — Jeremiah felt he was too sinful to follow the LORD praying, "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise."

Genesis 15:1; Luke 1:15; 12:7, 32 - Some men are too fearful to walk with God. But, Jeremiah heard Him say, "Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD" (1:8).

Hosea 610 - 7:1-14 — Samaria was too defiled to walk with God. But, the

⁴ Wickedness carries the idea of a man who is beyond repentance totally committed to the path of evil. Jesus calls weak, flawed sinners to follow Him, but not those confirmed in wickedness.

LORD said, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. I will be thy king . . . I will redeem them"

Mark 10:17-27 — The rich young ruler was too rich to follow Jesus.

Matthew 8:2 — There was a man too attached to his aged father to follow Christ.

John 3 — Nicodemus was too dead to follow Christ, but he found life in the Redeemer.

1 Corinthians 9:27 — It is possible to be too undisciplined to qualify for God's service, but the fruit of the Spirit is self-control.

Exodus 4:10-11 — Moses felt he was too inarticulate to represent the Lord, but God empowered his tongue to speak for him and the result is the Torah.

James 4:6 — Some men are too proud to walk with God, but He "giveth grace unto the humble."

Isaiah 6:5 — Isaiah felt he was too unclean to serve God . . . But, God cleansed the man's lips with coals from the burning altar.

Matthew 8; Luke 5:13 — The leper was too unclean to follow Jesus -- but, Jesus made him whole: "I will: be thou clean."

Mark 9:24 — This father felt he had too little faith to respond to Him who required faith, but Jesus accepted his little faith and healed his son.

Luke 18:13 — The Publican, who beat his chest, felt he was too much of a sinner to have a relationship with God, but our Lord received him.

2 Corinthians 12:8 — Paul felt totally inadequate to serve God, but found God's strength was made perfect in weakness.

Romans 7:15-25 — Do you feel too wretched to follow the living Spirit, there is a way out through Christ.

Colossians 2:10 — Do you feel inadequate? "You are complete in Him.

1 John 1:5-10 — Do you feel too sinful to follow Christ? His blood cleanses us from all sin.

Luke 17:10 — Do you feel like you are being treated unfairly by God's people? Jesus teaches us to say, " We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

We are all men being treated better than we deserve.

And, our problem is that we don't take sufficient comfort in the promises of God.

Abiding in His Love

John 15:9

◆ **John 15:9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.**

This is not a command for us to love God but for us to receive, enjoy, remain, and draw our strength from His love for us; that is, to take comfort in His love.

The word "continue" is rather a lackluster word. It should be translated "abide" in my love because it is the same word translated "abide" in verse 4. Both are aorist imperatives meaning "start now" clinging to me for all your needs and resources.

"As the Father hath loved me" Twice in this book John records how the Father loved the Son:

John 3:35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

John 5:20 For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

Jesus is the “Beloved” Son in whom the Father delights. This is not a sacrificial love by a Father for a Son, but an eternal delight in the communion of a Father and Son.

Likewise, Jesus loves us by delighting in us and showing us his will.

We are made strong by enjoying, resting, and delighting in His love.

Count the Cost of Following Christ

Matthew 18:19-21

◆ Discipleship is not for the fainthearted.

Mr. Too Quick: I will follow thee

Matthew 18:19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

The fact the scribe stated he wanted to follow Jesus is nothing short of amazing. Why?

Perhaps he heard Jesus preach the Sermon on the Mount and dreamed of joining this new political party or sharing in the power structure of this new kingdom.

We simply don't know, but one thing we know for sure is that he failed to count the cost of following Christ. Men of the cross must share in Christ's poverty, privation, and homelessness (Ellicott).

Following Christ is not a "name it, claim it" journey. It is more like trusting God each day to meet our daily needs rather than trusting God to build our fortune. The Son lacked a nest to call home and many a good pastor has never owned his own lodging and never bought a new car. Is it worth it? Yes. Is it easy? No.

You can serve Christ superficially with duplicity of heart, or you can follow Christ with all of your heart trusting Him to meet your needs. Count the cost — the cost is real.

Mr. Too Slow: "Follow me."

Matthew 8:21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

Before us is a serious call to a superficial disciple. The scribe said, "I will follow thee;" but to this man Christ said, "Follow me."

An unwilling heart doesn't need to go far to find an excuse. Mr. Too Slow deserved a rebuke just as much as Mr. Too Quick.

We learn from this that some people travel through life with the pedal to the metal and others travel with their emergency brake on. Both received the Lord's condemnation. Delay is as bad as haste. A pale spirit is as fatal as having a red-hot will. The nature of a mule is as defective as having the nature of a race horse.

Carrying for an aged father is a good work required by God, but it was not the work required of the man at this time in his life. Conducting one's business is a good thing unless that business is the anchor that keeps one from sailing his ship on the sea of holy service. Clutching to security is as much a spiritual flaw as the failure to consider the cost of following

Christ.

Mr. Just Right: He left all . . . and followed him.

Luke 5:27-28 And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. 28And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

Luke records the call of Matthew. There wasn't much to leave — his bench at the custom house, his fellow employees, and his emolument, but it was all that he had, and no man can leave more than that (Ellicott).

Count the cost, and follow Christ.

Seek Not Great Things for Thyself

Jeremiah 45:5

◆ Q: Are your expectations too high?

Ambition has ruined many a man. Seeking success and great things for ourselves is an affliction of every American. The lions of fame, money, and power chase all of us.

Jeremiah 45: 5 And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

This passage was addressed to Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, circa 605-604 B.C. - the first year of the Babylonian conquest over the Levant.

Baruch was charged with the duty of writing Jeremiah's prophecy and then delivering it to the people on the special "fast day" in the 9th month

of the Hebrew calendar (Nov-Dec). The scroll announced the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon. When Jehoiachin heard the reading of the scroll, he ordered it to be shredded and burned in the fire -- an inexcusable act that sealed his doom (Jeremiah 36).

Baruch suffered two afflictions: (1) the sorrows of impending implosion of the nation he loved - "The LORD saith thus; Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land" (Jeremiah 45:4);

and, (2) the sorrows connected with his personal struggles . . . even driven into hiding from the king's secret police - "Woe is me now! for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest" (Jeremiah 26 and Jeremiah 45:3).

It was during this time, the Lord commissioned Jeremiah to deliver a message of comfort and warning to Baruch: "And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek *them* not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest."

We are not told what "great" things Baruch sought for himself, only that his expectations were not appropriate for the times.

From this we learn the following:

(1) Baruch became discouraged when he had to hide from Jehoiachin's arrest order.

Likewise, we are easily discouraged by our first encounters with overt oppression from government:

"Young beginners in religion are apt to be discouraged with little difficulties, which they commonly meet with at first in the service of God." (Matthew Henry).

Those who expect much from government will be disappointed in government. Where government is god in the minds of His people, you

cannot expect them not to betray you . . . and they did betray Baruch.

(2) Baruch suffered from a stoked furnace of ambition.

Likewise, we often suffer from too high of expectations of people, government rulers, and churchmen. We must lower our expectations of our fellow-citizens and the brethren or we will be forced to endure a kettle of frustration (Hebrews 12:13ff). Ambitions must be tempered for the times.

(3) Like Baruch, we are often over ambitious and self-seeking.

We might ask Baruch, "When the whole nation is being driven to destruction, do you expect to be exempt from difficulty?" As Baruch had too high expectations in his doomed generation, we also may suffer from too high of expectations in our world . . . in our marriage . . . in our ministry.

(4) It is foolish to seek wealth and pleasure in a world devouring itself with indulgence and excesses.

Normally, ambition for a young man is good. But, it was ill-timed of Baruch to expect great things for himself when God was breaking down the nations around him. Likewise, we should not expect security in a world where everything is amiss and nothing is certain.

(5) If we have the necessities of life, let us therewith be happy:

"And having food and raiment let us be therewith content"
(1 Timothy 6:8).

(6) The message to Baruch was not only for Baruch, but for Jeremiah (Jeremiah 12:1-5; 15:10-18) – ambition is a common affliction of the saints in every age.

The message was designed to make Baruch better and not bitter, glad and not mad, content and not malcontent, alert and not distracted.

Christians aspiring to ministry need to get real and to lower their expectations of others and that which defines success.

(7) God's message to Baruch was not designed to relieve him of responsibilities.

He had duties that needed to be discharged. But, climbing up the career ladder was not in the forecast.

The grand lesson in this chapter is that we must adjust our expectations (not our standards) based on the trammels of our times. God's man must adapt to his circumstances, lower his expectations, and focus on his God-given assignment. Piety is always in style in every generation, but changing the world is not.

There is a time to study, and a time to stop studying.

There is a time to start a business, and a time to retire from business.

There is a time to get married and a time not to get married.

And, as Solomon taught us,

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace" (Ecclesiastes 3).

Study your ambitions. Discern the times in which you live, and where you are in the seasons of life. Discern God's will for you and do it with all of your heart . . . and, His will involves holiness and devotion to His Son in

every stage of life.

Publications

Books we have written:

1. Biblical Standards for Civil Rulers, Form #13.013
2. Should Christians Always Obey the State?, Form #13.014
3. The Crisis of Church Incorporation, Form #13.017
4. A Family Under God, Form #17.001
5. Origin of the Bible, Form #17.002
6. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God, Form #17.003
7. Five Pillars of the Gladiator Gospel, Form #17.004
8. Prayer Puts Power In Your Life, Form #17.005
9. Old Testament Theology, Form #17.006
10. Towards Exegetical Eschatology, Form #17.007
11. A Commentary on Revelation, Form #17.055
12. Commentary on Romans 13, Form #17.056
13. What is the Date of the Biblical Flood?, Form #17.057
14. Behold His Glory, Form #17.059
15. Proverbs for Wisdom, Form #17.060
16. The Pursuit of Piety, Form #17.061
17. 101 Sermons on God and Government, Form #17.062
18. Marriage Counseling Manual, Form #17.063
19. Words for the Weary, Form #17.064
20. Correcting the Upside Down Gospel, Form #17.065
21. Sermons on the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, Form #17.066
22. If I Could Do Church Again, Form #17.067
23. The Feminist War Against God's Law, Form #17.068
24. The Case for Head Coverings and Restoring God's Law Order to the Church, Form #17.069
25. The Sovereignty of God and the Madness of Politics, Form #17.070
26. The Pilgrim's Songbook, Form #17.071
27. The Route of the Exodus, Form #17.073
28. Commentary on the Book of Psalms. Form #17.074
29. Imprecatory Psalms, Form #17.075
30. Political Psalms, Form #17.076
31. Psalms for the Troubled Heart, Form #17.077
32. Psalms Messianic, Form #17.078
33. Psalms of Asaph, Form #17.079
34. Double Through Discipleship, Form #17.080
35. The Art of Conflict Management, Form #17.081
36. Know Who You Are In Christ, Form #17.082
37. From Corinth to American Churches, Form #17.083
38. When Satan Goes to Church, Form #17.084
39. Nike Greek Grammar Manual, Form #17.085
40. The Magna Carta, Form #10.017
41. The Case for Common Law Marriage, Form #13.022
42. The Matthew 24 Preterist Interpretation, Form #17.086
43. The Passover Seder, Form #17.087
44. You Can Be Your Own Lawyer, Form #17.088
45. Justification v. Sanctification, Form #17.089

46. Doctrinal Issues in Modern Times, Form #17.090
47. Opting Out of the Tax System, Form #10.018
48. Opting Out of Property Tax, Form #14.023
49. Freedom Documents, Form #10.019
50. Jewish Myths, Form #17.091
51. America's Worst President, Form #17.092
52. Our Greatest Heroes, Form #17.093
53. Solomon's Sex Education for Sons, Form #17.094
54. Why So Much Suffering in WWII?, Form #17.095
55. Learning to Say No, Form #10.020
56. Winning in Traffic Court, Litigation Tool #10.022
57. Apostasy and the Man of Sin, Form #17.096
58. The Proper Place of God's Law Today, Form #17.097
59. God's Christmas Storm, Form #17.098
60. The Greatest Need in the Church, Form #17.099
61. Grampa's Prayers and Poems, Form #13.023
62. Grampa's Family Fun Poems, Form #13.024
63. Power Principles of Exegesis, Form #17.100
64. Shalom, Shalom!, Form #17.101
65. The Anathema of Another Gospel, Form #17.102
66. Basking in the Sunshine of God's Love, Form #17.103
67. Faith In Dark Times, Form #17.104
68. Charismatic Confusion, Form #17.105
69. Qualifying a New Priesthood, Form #17.106
70. Men Who Got a Glimpse of Heaven, Form #17.107
71. Sunday-The First Day Sabbath, Form #17.108
72. Mark of the Beast, Form #17.109
73. The Seven Titles of the Gospel, Form #17.110
74. The Seven Downward Steps of Christ, Form #17.111
75. The Monstrous Regiment of Women, Form 17.112
76. Romans 6-Know Who You Are in Christ, Form #17.113

Works we have contributed to:

1. [Laws of the Bible, Litigation Tool #09.001](#)
2. [Ten Commandments of Freedom Form #13.016](#)
3. [SEDM About Us Page, Section 9](#)
4. [Proof of Claim: Your Main Defense Against Government Greed and Corruption, Form #09.073](#). Click [Here](#) for the article this publication is based on from this site