

Sermon on the Mount 2 - Inductive Study Guide

Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5:1-4

(See also commentary on Matthew 5:1-2, Matthew 5:3, Matthew 5:4)

The Poor in Spirit			Those Who Mourn	
Definitions: Blessed, Poor	How are the poor in spirit blessed?	How Can One Enter the Kingdom of Heaven?	Definition: Mourn	Practice: Mourning
<p>+R = Abbreviation for righteousness</p> <p>-R = Unrighteousness</p> <p>Beatitude: this word for "blessing" is not found in the Bible but is derived from the Latin word <i>beatus</i> or blessed</p> <p>REVIEW CONTEXT of the KING JESUS CHRIST</p> <p>Foretold by Scripture (His Royal lineage in Mt 1:1ff, His royalty acknowledged by Magi = "King of the Jews", Mt 2:2, Matthew's repeated emphasis on Jesus' fulfillment of Messianic prophecy = Mt 1:23, Mt 2:6, 2:15, Mt 2:18, Mt 2:23, Mt 3:3, Mt 4:15-16), heralded and baptized by John the Baptist (Mt 3:2, Isa 40:3, Mt 3:13-17), anointed by the Spirit (Mt 3:16), praised by the Father (Mt 3:17), and tested by the adversary (Mt 4:1-11), the King had come to proclaim the good news of His Kingdom (Mt 4:17-25). However, He disappointed the expectations of many people both then and now.</p> <p>What is the context?</p>	<p>What is God's response to those who are poor in spirit (in the following verses)? How are they blessed in the following passages?</p> <p>Ps 34:18 (note)</p> <p>He is near the brokenhearted, saves those who are crushed in spirit</p> <p>Ps 51:17</p> <p>(Context: David's sins of adultery & murder)</p> <p>Broken spirit = sacrifice to God</p> <p>God will not despise (look down upon with contempt) the broken and contrite heart</p> <p>Isa 57:15</p> <p>He dwells with the contrite & lowly of spirit > revive spirit of the lowly & contrite (bruised with sorrow for sin)</p> <p>Isa 66:1-2</p> <p>Dwelling place He desires is heart of humble & contrite - one who trembles at His word. (cf Isa 66:5, Pr 28:14, Ps119:161 Ezra 9:4, 10:3) (See discussion)</p>	<p>How much +R is needed?</p> <p>Mt 5:20 > Mt 5:48</p> <p>How does one obtain such an impossible standard of perfect +R?</p> <p>First...</p> <p>1John 5:17</p> <p>What does -R equate with?</p> <p>Sin</p> <p>Ro 1:18 (cf Mt 3:7)</p> <p>1Cor 6:9</p> <p>What reward for -R? (contrast reward of +R)</p> <p>Wrath of God Shall not inherit Kingdom of God vs Kingdom of Heaven for +R</p> <p>Ro 3:10 Ro 3:23</p> <p>How does man stack up regarding the +R God demands?</p> <p>None are +R No not one All fall short of the glory of God (cf Mt 5:48) (Ro 3:10-note, Ro 3:23-note)</p> <p>Ro 7:18</p>	<p>Who receives the blessing in Mt 5:4</p> <p>Those who mourn</p> <p>Note that the verb <i>mourn</i> is in the present tense which speaks of a habitual attitude of mourning or mourning as one's lifestyle.</p> <p>Jesus' declaration is another paradox (as is true of all of the Beatitudes).</p> <p>(G K Chesterton defined a <i>paradox</i> as a "truth standing on its head calling for attention"). Here's the divine paradox...</p> <p>"Happy are the sad"</p> <p>Thus as with the first Beatitude, this one also is not a natural trait of men but refers to a spiritual truth a natural man cannot understand and deems to be utter foolishness! (1Co 2:12, 13, 14)</p> <p>Note that Jesus does not say "<i>Blessed are those that 'moan'!</i>"</p> <p>Nor does Jesus say... <i>"Blessed are grim, cheerless Christians."</i></p> <p>What is the blessing? Shall be comforted</p>	<p>David Brainerd's journal on October 18, 1740:</p> <p>"In my morning devotions my soul was exceedingly melted, and bitterly mourned over my exceeding sinfulness and vileness."</p> <p>James 4</p> <p>Read Jas 4:1-4 for the context = sin</p> <p>What does God provide that is greater than their sins (Ja 4:6)?</p> <p>Grace</p> <p>What is the general condition one must meet to partake of His grace?</p> <p>Humility (picture of one who is low)</p> <p>God is opposed (arrays Himself against like an army standing opposite a hostile force) to the proud (literally one appearing above others - picture of one who is high)</p> <p>Thinking about "blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted" what is the process of by which one receives God's grace?</p> <p>1) Jas 4:7 Submit 2) Jas 4:7 Resist devil</p>

What message had John and Jesus preached to the people (Mt 3:2, 4:17)?

Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand

The Jews were expecting a King but not like this King Whose radical opening declaration was you need to change the way you think.

What (in the context of the Sermon on the Mount) did the Jews need to change their thinking about?

Jesus' message was... "You need to **change the way you think about righteousness**, specifically the +R necessary to enter My Kingdom."

How did Jesus put this in perspective (Mt 5:20)?

He warned them that unless their righteous surpassed (definition) that of the scribes and Pharisees they would not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

How righteous did the people think the Pharisees were?

Extremely, even supremely +R - they were the "religious" elite and the most +R of all. Yet Jesus the King declares that +R that assures entrance into His Kingdom must far exceed the +R of the Pharisees.

How would they demonstrate that their change in thinking (repentance) was

In sum God "BLESSES"

the poor in spirit by...

Being near them

(comfort)

Saving them

Not despising them

Dwelling with them

Reviving them!

Dwelling in a humble,

lowly heart that trembles at His Word

What's another way to say "lowly" which parallels the "poor in spirit"?

Humble

Luke 18:9-14

Who is the parable directed at? (Another discussion of parable)

Those who trusted in self that they were +R (the "Self +R")

Viewed others with contempt (looked down upon, scorned others) (cf Mt 7:1-2, 7:3-5)

Who were the 2 participants in this parable? Lk 18:10

Pharisee & Tax collector

Why chose a tax-gatherer to compare with a Pharisee?

Despicable, hated by the Jews even more than they hated the Romans (note)

Where and what are they doing?

The Temple Praying

What did the Pharisee do? (Lk 18:11-12) (cf Mt 6:1, 5)

Thankful he was not like others (**unjust** = unrighteous - talk about

What's is man's problem?

In my flesh there dwells no good thing (Ro 7:18-note) (cf Ro 5:12-note)

What is the basic understanding every man must arrive at?

Their need for a God kind of +R (cf poor in spirit) This necessitates a change in thinking (repentance)

Mt 9:10-13

(for context see Mk 2:15-17; Lk 5:29, 30, 31, 32)

How is this illustrated by Jesus in Mt 9:10-13? What's the setting? the audience? the question by the Pharisees?

Note "tax gatherers and sinners" = former were despised even more than the Romans. "Sinners" was a word Jews used for Gentiles (see Gal 3:15)

Not healthy ("+R") who need doctor but sick ("sinner" cf Mt 1:3-5)

I did not come to call the +R but sinners

God receives the sinner (sin sick, needy) and refuses the self +R

The self righteous, religious Pharisees did not think they were sinners (spiritually sick) so they would never have sought out the Lord (the Great Physician) and confessed their spiritual bankruptcy - the paradox is that the despised tax collectors and vile sinners were willing to acknowledge their

Note that in Greek the **future tense** is often used to mean **certainty** of the action. In this case this tense does not restrict **comfort** only to the future heavenly kingdom but promises real comfort to the one who mourns, here and now.

What is the definition of the Greek verb mourn (pentheo)?

Pentheo means to grieve, to lament, to show sorrow. It was the strongest of several Greek words that expressed grief or sorrow. It carries the idea of deep inner agony, which may or may not be expressed by outward weeping, wailing, or lament.

What are "those who mourn" to mourn over? Does Jesus refer to mourning in general?

In the context Jesus is referring to one **mourning over sin** (personal, in the church, in a country)

Jesus does not mean..."Blessed are those who are mourning over the difficulties of life."

What relationship do the first two beatitudes have or are they merely random statements by our Lord?

When one sees his or her spiritual poverty and helplessness, this state leads in turn to a condition of mourning as we become aware of our sin (and certainly the Spirit is active in both

3) Jas 4:8 Draw near God (His light will expose your sin)

4) Jas 4:8 Cleanse hands (actions or deeds) and purify heart (motives) - **How?** Confess & forsake sins (1Jn 7, 8, 9)

5) Jas 4:9 Be miserable (**Mt 5:3**) Mourn & weep (**Mt 5:4**) (over your sins)

Turn your...

Laughter to mourning, Joy to gloom over your sins

6) Ja 4:10 Humble self in His presence > Exalt (**Comfort**)

1 Cor 5:1-13 What was the problem in the Corinthian church?

Arrogance & failure to mourn over overt immorality in the church members

What was the danger?

The sin would spread like leaven

What was the church to do?

1) Deliver immoral man to Satan to destroy his flesh, save spirit

2) Figuratively clean old leaven

3) Not associate with immoral

4) Not even eat (immoral, covet, idolater, reviler)

5) Judge those within

6) Remove wicked man

Ezekiel 9:1-11 (cf Ps 119:136)

genuine (Mt 3:8)?

They needed to bring forth fruit (a changed behavior in keeping with Jesus' teachings)

And yet all the Jews knew about was the +R of the Pharisees.

What is Biblical +R?

God's **righteousness** is **all** that God is, **all** that He commands, **all** that He demands, **all** that He approves, **all** that He provides (through Christ).

Who do the beatitudes apply to?

To all believers - for all will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, all will receive comfort, mercy, see God, be persecuted, etc.

What is the King's repeated promise which riveted His audience?

Blessed = makarios = not how you feel but who you are as a result of divine favor. (**note**)

Note that a number of Bible translations use the word "happy" instead of "blessed" The problem is that **happy** is derived from **hap** which means luck or chance. **Hap** in turn is from an Old Norse word "**happ**" which means "good luck"! Thus ultimately "happy" depends on what happens! And that is not the Biblical meaning of "blessed" as used in the context of the Beatitudes.

Blessed is not a feeling but the state of being marked by fullness from God, It means being fully

hypocrisy!), even this tax collector

Boasted in his fasting & paying of tithes (his "religious resume"!)

How does the tax-collector contrast? Lk 18:13

Unwilling to lift eyes, beating breast (mourning over his sin)

Crying "God be **merciful**" "God be **propitious** [**related noun**] to me -- **the sinner!**"

J Vernon McGee paraphrases it "*O God I'm a poor tax collector. I have no access to that mercy seat yonder in the Holy of holies. Oh, if you could only make a mercy seat for me! I want to come!*"

Who was justified or declared +R according to Jesus?

The despised tax collector!

(NB: Justified = declared righteous = "**past tense salvation**" - see study on the Three Tenses of Salvation)

How did Jesus explain?

He who exalts himself shall be humbled (in this life or the one to come) (see)

He who humbles himself > exalted

Humble pictures one made low

How does this parallel "poor in spirit" in Mt 5:3?

spiritual poverty (cf Mt 5:3), and enter into the Kingdom of Heaven through the small gate (Mt 7:13-14)

Ro 7:24-25

What did the Pharisee and in fact every "tax collector and sinner" need to do?

Recognize our wretched (miserable, distressed) state and cry out "Have mercy on me a sinner". (cf Rev 3:17 [see note](#)) (note Ro 7:24-25)

The way "up" is first "down"!

1Ti 1:15

What did Paul recognize about himself? ([note](#))

He was the foremost of sinners but these are who Jesus came into the world to save (cf Mt 1:21)

How does this parallel Mt 5:3? What did Paul continue to recognize even in his later years of ministry?

His poverty of spirit, his spiritual bankruptcy - his continual need for and dependency upon Christ's provision

Luke 4:17-21

(Note how Jesus walked as a Man in Lk 4:14-16)

How did the King address this need in His first recorded teaching in the Synagogue in Nazareth?

Spirit of God upon Anointed to preach gospel to the poor (especially those poor in spirit, those who

opening our eyes to our spiritual poverty and of convicting us of sin)

Luke 7:36-50

What was the setting?

Jesus was invited to dine with a Pharisee (probably not a friendly invitation)

Who "crashed" the party?

A woman, a sinner

What did she do and why?

Wept, wet and wiped His feet with her hair Kissed His feet Anointed His feet with perfume

She was **mourning** and **weeping** over her sins which were many

Picture the scene of this religious Pharisee reclining as was the custom across from Jesus, watching this woman he knew to have a bad reputation.

What was Pharisee's reaction?

If Jesus was a prophet he should have known she was a sinner

What did Jesus teach?

The greater the debt forgiven the greater the love - Like the woman and totally unlike the Pharisee who did not think himself a sinner!

How did Jesus "comfort" the woman?

Forgiveness Salvation by faith Peace (definition)

She was **poor in spirit** and **mourned** over her

What does this chapter teach about sin in country or community?

Jerusalem's inhabitants were to be destroyed except for those who sigh and groan over sin

What happened to this group (Ezek 9:4)

A mark (Tau, that could be shaped like a "cross" but it is probably coincidence) on forehead of those those who mourn over sin - they would be "comforted" = spared of execution

The great characteristic of Jeremiah, the Weeping Prophet, was that he wept for his people (Jer 9:1; 13:17).

Charles Wesley has put this beatitude to music in one of the verses in his famous hymn

[O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing](#)

He speaks, and, listening to His voice, New life the dead receive,

The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,

The humble poor believe. ([Play](#))

Have you ever admitted poverty of spirit, and entered thru the small gate into the Kingdom of Heaven?

Do you live your Christian life with a Mt 5:3 sense of spiritual bankruptcy and total dependence on the Spirit of the Living God?

When was last time I mourned or wept over my sin?

satisfied no matter the circumstances. It is one who is spiritually prosperous independent of circumstances or feelings. One can be "makarios" and yet be in miserable circumstances.

So when Jesus says "**blessed are you**" does not mean "untroubled are you" or "healthy are you" or "admired are you" or "financially prosperous are you." It means "between you and God all is well." You are deeply secure, profoundly content, happy in God - even if you are weeping over the pain of a struck body, a perplexed mind, or a heartbreaking relationship.

NB: Like a good preacher, Jesus opens with the positives and closes with a call to have a change of thinking based upon what He has taught (Mt 7:13-27)

Now let's look at "Poor" in Mt 5:3 - Is Jesus referring to one who is financially destitute? What is the immediate context?

Jesus refers to poverty of one's spirit so He is not referring to financially poverty. (Note)

What does the Greek word for "poor" mean?

Poor (ptochos) is from root = crouch > beggar, destitute, helpless (note) Lowliness

Poor in spirit is the opposite of Proud in spirit

It is to know that you

Crouched low in spirit ~ humbled

What did the Pharisee need to do?

Repent

He needed to have a change in thinking - from trusting in himself to understanding that before God in His Temple speaking with Him, he was but a beggar, a pauper in spirit, and that he had nothing to offer God in regard to what would please Him ("+R")

The unrepentant and unconverted cannot give the heavenly King the glory He deserves, do not belong to the heavenly King, and are unfit for His heavenly kingdom.

Note Charles Wesley's words that speak of the sinner's poverty of spirit...

Jesus, — Lover of My Soul

(note highlighted phrases)

Other refuge have I none, hangs my helpless soul on Thee;

Leave, ah! leave me not alone, still support and comfort me.

All my trust on Thee is stayed, all my help from Thee I bring;

Cover my defenseless head with the shadow of Thy wing.

Thou, O Christ, art all I want, more than all in Thee I find;

recognized their spiritual poverty and were willing to accept His free gift of eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven)

Ro 10:1-4

What was the problem with the religious man (Jew)?

Zeal w/o knowledge = seeking to establish their own +R (notes Ro 10:1-4)

Why is Christ the answer?

He is the end of the Law - in Him the purpose it was designed to accomplish is fulfilled

Ro 4:5-8

How did Paul address working for +R?

Believes Faith reckoned as +R (notes Ro 4:5-6, 4:7-8)

How does this parallel Mt 7:13-14?

Change your thinking

Enter through the narrow gate of the King, Christ Jesus, the narrow way that leads to life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Don't enter the gate the self +R Pharisees entered, for that broad way leads to destruction for the many who enter by it.

What does God provide for those entering the small gate, the narrow way (2Cor 5:21)?

God made Him Who knew no sin to be on our behalf that we might become the +R of God in Him, in Christ (cf 1Co 1:30, Phil 3:9)

sin.

She was **blessed** for she gained the **Kingdom of Heaven** and experienced **comfort**

Isaiah 61:1-3

What did Isaiah prophecy concerning the King's Second coming regarding mourning?

When the King returns, He will...

Comfort all who **mourn**

Grant those who **mourn** in Zion (Jerusalem) (see in depth [Note](#) for who these are)

Giving them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of **mourning**,

The mantle of praise instead of a **spirit of fainting**. ([Note](#))

Rev 21:1-5

What does this passage teach about comfort in the future new heaven and new earth?

God will Wipe away every tear No longer death No longer **mourning, crying** or pain God is making all things new These words are faithful and true!

Or have I become insensitive to sin's effect on my heart and on the heart of God?

Don't ever forget...

Sin will take you farther than you ever thought you would **stray**.

Sin will keep you longer than you ever thought you would **stay**.

Sin will cost you more than you ever thought you would **pay**

The saddest thing in life is not a sorrowing heart, but a heart that is incapable of grief over sin, for it is without grace. Without poverty of spirit no one enters the kingdom of God. Likewise, without its emotional counterpart - grief over sin - no one receives the comfort of forgiveness and salvation.

If you have never sorrowed over sin in your life (not just its consequences, but sin itself), then consider long and carefully whether you really are a Christian. Genuine believers, those who are truly born again, have mourned, and continue to mourn, over sin. For Christians, mourning over sin is essential to spiritual health.

Ezekiel 21:6

"As for you, son of man, groan with breaking heart and bitter grief, groan in their sight."

Eccl 3:1,4 There is an appointed time for

have nothing to offer

This word (ptochos) focuses on a state of dependence. Thus "the poor in spirit" are those who have learned to be completely dependent on God for everything! Have you? Most of us are in a some stage of learning this truth, a truth which will not be fully consummated until we pass from this life to glorified state of the next

The way Up is Down!

How does the first beatitude contrast with the philosophy of the world?

Self-praise
Self-assertion
Self-reliance
Self-sufficiency

Why are they considered blessed in Mt 5:3? What was the reward promised to the poor in spirit?

Theirs is the **kingdom of heaven** (theirs is the "King" of heaven) (Note)

How does an understanding of the Greek tense help one determine when the poor in spirit receive "the Kingdom"?

The verb "**is**" = **present tense** = which means the Kingdom of heaven is ours *now*.

When do the "poor in spirit" inherit the Kingdom of Heaven ...is it just present or is it also future?

Both...

Raise the fallen, cheer the faint, heal the sick, and lead the blind.

Just and holy is Thy Name, I am all **unrighteousness;**

False and full of sin I am; Thou art full of truth and grace. ([Play](#))

Don Stewart said, "People who travel beyond self-sufficiency to divine dependency must go through the swamp of personal emptiness."

In sum...

'Blessed are the poor in spirit'

Blessed is the man who has an utter sense of his own abject destitution in the sight of God, the man who feels not simply unsatisfactory, but who can only say, God be merciful to me, a sinner.

Blessed is the man who feels this sense of destitution and who has then put his utter and complete trust in Jesus Christ..

Blessed is the man who is conscious of a desperate need and who is utterly certain that in Christ, and in Christ alone, that need can be supplied.

"Theirs is the Kingdom of heaven"

And theirs is also the **King** of that Kingdom Whose Name is Jesus, Jehovah saves. In the King Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom

Ro 8:1-4

Now, who fulfills the demands of the Law?

Those who walk (live not perfectly but as a habit of their life = present tense) according to the Spirit (cf Eph , not according to the **flesh** (notes Ro 8:1-3, 8:4)

Ryrie commenting on Ro 8:4 writes that..."*The contrast here is between an unregenerate life dominated by the flesh (sinful nature within) and one controlled by the Holy Spirit.*"

It follows that the "blessed" child of God will be marked by a continual awareness of our spiritual poverty (flesh) and of our absolute dependence upon God's Spirit. (cf Gal 5:16-17, 25, Ro 8:12-14, Ro 6:12-13, 13:12-14, 2Cor 7:1, Col 3:5-10, 1Pe 1:14, 2:11, 1Jo 2:15-17)

"We say that we depend on the Holy Spirit but actually we are so wired up with our own devices that if the fire does not fall from heaven, we can turn on a switch and produce false fire of our own." (Vance Havner)

I like the story of the young Scottish minister who walked proudly into the pulpit to preach his first sermon. He had a brilliant mind and a good education and was confident of himself as he faced his first congregation. But the longer he preached, the more conscious

everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven--A time to weep, and a time to laugh; A time to mourn, and a time to dance.

But encourage (come alongside, exhort, comfort) one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Heb 3:13)

Lord, let us not forget that the heinousness of sin lies not so much in the nature of the sin committed as in the greatness of the Person sinned against. Give us all grace to make it Lord God Almighty. Amen.

"Lord, let me weep for nought but sin, And after none but thee; And then I would-oh, that I might- A constant mourner be!" (C H Spurgeon)

Remember that and knowledge. In a true
anywhere the King is knowledge of Him is
present and reigning as everything necessary for
Lord, His Kingdom is also life and godliness. In
present. Today it is short, in Christ, the King,
primarily a spiritual spiritual beggars are
Kingdom in the hearts of made infinitely in every
His loyal subjects but one spiritual blessing in the
day future the Kingdom heavenly places, in short,
will be manifest by His fully satisfied
literal reign on earth from independent of all
Jerusalem with His loyal circumstances (blessed)
subjects reigning with now and forever! Amen.
Him! (see Millennium 1, Millennium 2, Millennium 3)

Was the SOM given as the way of salvation or as the way of life for true children of the King?

Clearly the latter. The Beatitudes do not show a man how to be saved, but rather describe the ideal characteristics of one who has been saved.

In fact as pastor Kent Hughes states "*The Beatitudes are not the gospel because they do not explicitly explain Christ's atoning death and resurrection and how one may receive him. But they are preparatory to the gospel. The Beatitudes are preparatory in the sense that they slay us so that we may live. They hold us up against God's standards for the kingdom so that we can see our need and fly to him. They cut through the delusions of formula Christianity and expose the shallowness of evangelicals who can give all the "right" answers but do not know Christ.*" (Sermon on the Mount)

everyone was that "*the Lord was not in the wind.*" He finished his message quickly and came down from the pulpit with his head bowed, his pride now gone. Afterward, one of the members said to him, "*If you had gone into the pulpit the way you came down, you might have come down from the pulpit the way you went up.*" How should he have gone up? (cf "poor in spirit" Mt 5:3)

Blessed are the spiritual paupers, the spiritually empty, the spiritually bankrupt who cringe in a corner and cry out to God for mercy. They are the happy ones. Why? Because they are the only ones who tap the real resource for happiness. They are the only ones who ever know God. Theirs is the kingdom—then and there, here and now. Hallelujah!

Sermon on the Mount

Supplement

Mt 4:23

Proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom..

At the beginning of His life, magi came to Herod, asking where they could find the King of the Jews (Mt 2:2). At the end of His life, Pilate asked Him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He affirmed that He was (Mt 27:11-12), and Pilate sanctioned His crucifixion on that basis (Mt 27:37). So beginning in Mt 4:17-25, the King declares His Kingdom.

Foretold by Scripture (His Royal lineage in Mt 1:1ff, His acknowledgement by the Magi as "King of the Jews", Mt 2:2, Matthew's repeated emphasis on Jesus' fulfillment of Messianic prophecy = Mt 1:23, Mt 2:6, 2:14, 19, Mt 2:18, Mt 2:23, Mt 4:15-16), **heralded** and baptized by John the Baptist (Mt 3:2, Isa 40:3, Mt 3:13-17), anointed by the Spirit (Mt 3:16), praised by the Father (Mt 3:17), and tested by the adversary (Mt 4:1-11), the King had come to establish His Kingdom. However, He disappointed the expectations of many people both then and now.

When (the multitudes) came together, one question was paramount in their minds:

"How can we enter Your Kingdom?"

How righteous must we be to be saved?

Will our righteousness be sufficient to admit us to Your Kingdom?"

They did not ask for proof that He was Messiah; His miracles demonstrated that. They were concerned about the righteousness demanded for entrance into His Kingdom. These people had been brought up in Pharisaism. Pharisaism was based upon the Mosaic Law, which was a divine revelation from God to Israel. But Pharisaism had perverted that Law and reduced it to a system of external observances. The Pharisees had conveniently codified the law into 365 prohibitions and 250 commandments. **They taught the people that, if they observed these things, they would be acceptable to God.** They substituted the **traditions of men** for the **revelation of God**; they trusted external observances to give them a pure heart. The people, in their religious background, had heard nothing of the truth of the Word of God until they listened to John preach (Mt 3:2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12); all they had known was the **Pharisees' perversion** of it.

The only righteousness they had ever been told about was the righteousness of the Pharisees.

So they came to Christ with this basic question,

"Will the righteousness of the Pharisees in which we have been brought up bring us into Your Kingdom?"

Will we be acceptable to God if we do what we have been told to do and refrain from doing what we have been forbidden to do?"

It was to this inquiring multitude that our Lord addressed the Sermon on the Mount. To answer their question, our Lord said, "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." Then He proceeded to tell them what God demands of those who would fellowship with Himself and be in His Kingdom: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Mt 5:48). God's standard for those who would be accepted of Him is a perfection that equals His own. (Pentecost, J. D. Design for living: Lessons in holiness from the Sermon on the mount. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications) (Bolding added)

Psalm 34:18

The LORD is **near** to the **broken** hearted, and **saves** those who are **crushed** in spirit. (cf **Ps 147:3**)

Near: Hebrew word ([qarab](#)) has the basic meaning of being or coming into the most near and intimate proximity of the subject!

Broken: ([shabar](#)) was used literally of things that were broken and figuratively as here (and twice in Psalm 51:17 '**broken** spirit...**broken**...heart') of one's "heart" or emotions.

The Greek word used in the Septuagint (LXX) is a word (suntribo) which means literally to rub hard together and so to crush

completely, to beat to a pulp (maybe this is how you feel even as you read this note...go back and read the promise in Ps 34:18); to break in pieces and figuratively as used in this psalm of the mental and emotional state in which one is deprived of strength, is heartbroken or is in despair. This is the word used by Luke in Luke 4:18 (only in the KJV) where Jesus says "*He hath sent me to heal the **broken** hearted*".

Pentecost comments that...

When the psalmist referred to a broken, contrite heart, he did not mean a heart crushed because of bereavement, but a heart that has come to the end of itself, which sees no help in itself, and cries out to God for deliverance. (Pentecost, J. D. Design for living: Lessons in holiness from the Sermon on the mount. Page 23. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications)

Saves ([yasha](#)) means to rescue, deliver, free one from danger. The root in Arabic is "make wide" or "make sufficient". **Yasha** describes that which is wide and connotes freedom from distress and the ability to pursue one's own objectives. **Yasha** may be used in everyday life free of theological overtones, but generally in the OT has strong religious meaning, for it was Yahweh Who wrought the deliverance. Thus He is known as the "God of our salvation" (Ps 68:19ff). Although salvation could come through a human agent, it is only because God empowers the agent.

The Greek word used for "**saves**" in the Septuagint (LXX) is **sozo** which has the basic meaning of rescuing one from great peril. Additional nuances include to protect, keep alive, preserve life, deliver, heal, be made whole.

Crushed ([dakka'](#)) bruised, beaten to pieces, humbled.

The Greek word used for "crushed" in the Septuagint (LXX) is a word (tapeinos) which literally refers to that which is low (low lying) and does rise from the ground. Figuratively means lowly, of no degree, humble in spirit, poor, humiliated (in circumstances or disposition). The psalmist says that such a one is saved (delivered from danger, healed or cured or restored to health, made whole, preserved or kept safe and sound)

C H Spurgeon commenting on **Psalm 34:18** writes...

The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart. Near in friendship to accept and console. Broken hearts think God far away, when He is really most near to them; their eyes are held so that they see not their Best Friend.

And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. What a blessed token for good is a repentant, mourning heart! (cf Mt 5:4) Just when the sinner condemns himself, the Lord graciously absolves him. Salvation is linked with contrition. (Treasury of David)

F B Meyer comments on "**the LORD is nigh**"...

You may not realize it, oh brokenhearted sufferer, but the great Gardener passes by those who are standing erect, to stoop over thee, beaten down by the storm and trailing on the ground. He comes where He is most needed. (Gems from the Psalms)

Warren Wiersbe writes a devotional note on this psalm entitled "**Smashed Rainbows**"

A little girl and her mother were walking down a sidewalk after a rainstorm. Someone had spilled some automobile oil on the pavement. Seeing that, the little girl said, "Mommy, look at all of the smashed rainbows!"

Maybe your rainbows have been smashed, and you have a broken heart. Perhaps you don't feel close to God because of your heartache. What can you do to be near to Him? First, keep in mind that nearness is likeness. "The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart" (Psalm 34:18). The more we are like God, the nearer we are to Him. How close can you get to God? You can get as close to Him as you want. Draw near to Him, and He will draw near to you. Remember that God knows the meaning of a broken heart. Jesus Christ literally experienced one. He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3). Let your experiences make you more like Jesus, and He will draw near to you.

Second, remember that God gives grace to the humble. "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). David also said, "A broken and a contrite heart--these, O God, You will not despise" (Ps. 51:17).

Our Lord came "to heal the brokenhearted" (Luke 4:18). Do you have a broken heart that needs healed? Here's the simple secret: Give the Lord all the pieces, and He will heal you.

Everyone has experienced dashed hopes and smashed plans. Take comfort in knowing that your Lord heals

the broken heart. Are you getting over a crushing experience? The Lord understands what you are going through. Draw near to Him with a humble spirit and give Him the broken pieces of your heart (Warren Wiersbe. [Prayer, Praise, and Promises](#)).

Ps 51:17

The Greek word used for "**contrite**" in the Septuagint (LXX) is a word (*tapeinos*) which literally refers to that which is low (low lying) and does rise from the ground. Figuratively means lowly, of no degree, humble in spirit, poor, humiliated (in circumstances or disposition).

Warren Wiersbe writes a devotional on this section entitled "Broken Things"...

Have you ever studied the broken things in the Bible? A woman broke a vessel at the feet of Jesus and anointed Him (Luke 7:36-50). Jesus took bread and broke it as a picture of His body given for us (Mt 26:26, 1Cor 11:24). God uses broken things, and He starts with broken hearts. This is what repentance is all about. God doesn't listen to the lips. He doesn't measure a material sacrifice. He looks at the heart and says, "If your heart is broken, then I can cleanse it."

When David sinned, he could have brought all kinds of sacrifices. But they would not have pleased the Lord. God was waiting for the sacrifice of a broken heart. That's why David said, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart--these, O God, You will not despise" (Psalm 51:17). David's sins should have brought him condemnation and death. He committed adultery, and he murdered a man. No sacrifice could be found in God's sacrificial system for this kind of flagrant, rebellious, deliberate sin. But David did not die. Even though no sacrifice was available for his sin at the time, God looked down the corridors of time and saw a cross where Jesus Christ would die for David's sin.

God looks at the heart, not the hand. He wants sincerity from the heart, not religious routine. A broken heart is not remorse, nor is it regret. It is repentance, a turning away from sin. It's telling God you hate sin, are judging it and claiming his forgiveness. Bring to Him the sacrifice of a contrite heart. (Warren Wiersbe. [Prayer, Praise, and Promises](#)).

Spurgeon commenting on "**a broken and contrite heart O God Thou wilt not despise**" writes...

A heart crushed is a fragrant heart. Men condemn those who are contemptible in their own eyes, but the Lord does not see as man sees. He despises what men esteem, and values that which they despise. Never yet has God spurned a lowly, weeping penitent, and never will he while God is love, and while Jesus is called the man who receives sinners. (Treasury of David)

Matthew Henry adds that...

Men despise that which is broken, but God will not. He despised the sacrifice of torn and broken beasts, but he will not despise that of a torn and broken heart. He will not overlook it; he will not refuse or reject it; though it make God no satisfaction for the wrong done him by sin, yet he does not despise it. The proud Pharisee despised the broken-hearted publican, and he thought very meanly of himself; but God did not despise him. More is implied than is expressed; the great God overlooks heaven and earth, to look with favour upon a broken and contrite heart, Isa. 66:1-2; Isa 57:15.

A Handbook on the Book of Psalms notes that

The concept "humble" is sometimes expressed idiomatically as "not making oneself to appear big," or "having a low heart," or "one who speaks softly." (Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. A translator's handbook on the book of Psalms. Helps for translators (Page 476). New York: United Bible Societies)

The Preacher's Commentary writes that...

All that David can offer to the Lord in worship then is his shattered "spirit," his "broken ... heart," that is, the very center of his being, himself. Sin has "broken" him; judgment has "broken" him. But even more than this, when we discover God's mercy in His incredible love for us in our sin—here is the final breaking. As our heart sobs, the Lord puts His arms around us. When we see Jesus expelling demons, forgiving sins, cleansing lepers, and hanging on the cross—then we are finally "broken." We are among those who are forgiven much and who therefore love much (Luke 7:47). (Williams, D., & Ogilvie, L. J. Vol. 13: The Preacher's Commentary Series, Thomas Nelson)

F B Meyer comments...

Thou desirest not sacrifice.--Ceremonialism cannot free us from taint (Heb 9:9-16). God's fire descends on broken hearts. (Psalms - Gems from the Psalms)

Isaiah 66:2

Tremble at My Word: To "tremble at God's word" (Isa 66:2, 5) means to reverentially fear and respect what God says and to fear to disobey it so as not to displease Him (Ps 119:120). The Jews experienced this reaction of trembling at God's Word when Ezra exposed their sins (Ezra 9:4; 10:3), and the prophet Habakkuk experienced it when he saw the vision of God's judgment recorded in (Hab 3:16). Saul of Tarsus trembled when he met the Lord (Acts 9:6). However, King Jehoiakim did not tremble at the Word; he tried to destroy it (Jer. 36), and that led to his destruction (Pr 13:13). Paul urged all believers to "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12-13).

Lk 18:9-14

Dwight Pentecost notes how the Pharisee...

was controlled by pride and commended himself to God and demanded that God accept him and his petition because of what he was. Then he commended himself to God because of what he had done:

"I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."

He expected to be blessed of God because of what he had done for God. What an example of the one with no poverty of spirit! On the other hand, there cowered afar off a confessed sinner who cried, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." "God, look upon me as you look upon the mercy seat sprinkled with atoning blood." This one claimed nothing as to his person nor as to his righteousnesses. In his spiritual poverty and destitution he cast himself wholly upon the grace and mercy of God. Here was a man poor in spirit...A man's only way of access to God is to come to God and confess his own unrighteousness, his own inability to meet the standards and requirements of God, and by faith claim the blood of Christ, which covers his sin. As Toplady's words in "Rock of Ages" express it, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling." Such a one—poor in spirit—is happy because he is blessed of God. "(Pentecost, J. D. Design for living: Lessons in holiness from the Sermon on the mount. Page 24. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications)

Mt 9:10-13

"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (KJV "to repentance", cf Lk 5:32):

One of the most important statements ever recorded in the Bible. Jesus came for those who know they have a terminal spiritual illness and who have no trust or hope in themselves to be cured. God's receiving the sinner and refusing the righteous is central to the Christian faith.

Here are the prayers, confessions and declarations of some of the men Jesus came for...

"Lord, save me from that wicked man, myself." (Augustine)

"In youth, in middle age and now after many battles, I find nothing in me but corruption." (John Knox, greatest preacher in the history of Scotland)

"I am fallen short of the glory of God, my whole heart is altogether corrupt and abominable, and consequently my whole life being an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit." (John Wesley, the great revival preacher)

"Vile and full of sin I am." (Charles Wesley, the great hymn writer)

"Oh, that such a wretch as I should ever be tempted to think highly of himself. I am myself nothing but sin and weakness, in whose flesh naturally dwells no good thing." (Augustus Toplady writer of "Rock of Ages")

"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:8) (Peter on beholding Jesus' great power and glory)

"It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all" (1 Ti 1:15) (Paul summing up the confession of every honest believer)

Although it is not a popular "tactic" in many churches today, the Bible clearly teaches that

The first declaration of the gospel is negative-that every man is sinful, separated from God, and condemned to hell (cf with Jesus' opening words "**poor in spirit**"). A person will not seek to be saved until he realizes he is lost. Therefore the first step in proclaiming the gospel is to tell men of their lostness, and the first step in

receiving the gospel is to confess that lostness. A person will not seek healing until he is convinced he is sick; he will not seek life until he acknowledges he is dead. Conversion, then, occurs in one who is willing to accept the death sentence and also the acquittal of God. The man who does not recognize his condemnation to death has no hope for new life. (MacArthur, J. Matthew. Chicago: Moody Press)

tax-gatherers: (all NT uses of **telones** "tax gatherer" Mat 5:46 Mat 5:47 Mat 9:10 Mat 9:11 Mat 10:3 Mat 11:19 Mat 18:17 Mat 21:31 Mat 21:32 Mark 2:15 Mark 2:16 Luke 3:12 Luke 5:27 Luke 5:29 Luke 5:30 Luke 7:29 Luke 7:34 Luke 15:1 Luke 18:10 Luke 18:11 Luke 18:13)

The noted Jewish scholar Alfred Edersheim reports that a Jewish **publicani** was barred from the synagogue and was forbidden to have any religious or social contact with his fellow Jews. He was ranked with the unclean animals, which a devout Jew would not so much as touch. He was in the class of swine, and because he was held to be a traitor and a congenital liar, he was ranked with robbers and murderers and was forbidden to give testimony in any Jewish court.

Edersheim states that there were two categories of **publicani**. The first, whom the Jews called **gabbai**, collected general taxes, which included those on land and other property, those on income, and those referred to as poll, or registration, taxes. The basic land tax (the amount paid to Rome) was a tenth of one's grain and a fifth of one's fruit and wine. Income tax amounted to one percent of one's earnings, and the amount of the poll tax varied.

The second type of tax collector was called a **mokhes**, who collected a wide variety of use taxes-taxes similar to our import duties, tollway fees, boat docking fees, business license fees, and the like. The **mokhes** had almost unlimited latitude in their taxing powers and could attach a tax to virtually any article or activity. They could, for instance, levy a tax on a person's boat, on the fish he caught with it, and on the dock where he unloaded it. They could tax a traveler's donkey, his slaves and servants, and his goods. They had authority to open private letters to see if a taxable business of some sort might be related to the correspondence. There were two kinds of **mokhes**. One kind, called the **great mokhes**, hired other men to collect taxes for them and, by virtue of partial anonymity, protected at least some of their reputation among their fellow countrymen. The other kind, called **small mokhes**, did their own assessing and collecting and therefore were in constant contact with members of the community as well as with all travelers who passed their way. The **gabbai** were despised, the **great mokhes** were more despised, and the **small mokhes** were despised most. Matthew was obviously a **small mokhes**, because he himself was sitting in the tax office as Jesus passed through the outskirts of Capernaum. It was to that man, the most despised of the despicable, to whom Jesus said, Follow Me! (Mt 9:9, cf Lk 5:28)... That simple call by Jesus was more than enough reason for Matthew to turn his back on everything he was and possessed. Because of his position as an agent of Rome, he knew that once he forsook his post he would never be able to return to it. He knew the cost and willingly paid it. Of all the disciples, Matthew doubtlessly made the greatest sacrifice of material possessions; yet he himself makes no mention of it. He felt with Paul that "whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ" (Phil. 3:7).(MacArthur, J. Matthew. Chicago: Moody Press)

Here is the entry on "**publican**" (tax collector) from **Smith's Bible Dictionary**...

The class designated by this word in the New Testament were employed as collectors of the Roman revenue. The Roman senate farmed the *vectigalia* (direct taxes) and the *portoria* (customs) to capitalists who undertook to pay a given sum into the treasury (*in publicum*), and so received the name of *publicani*. Contracts of this kind fell naturally into the hands of the *equites*, as the richest class of Romans. They appointed managers, under whom were the *portitores*, the actual custom-house officers, who examined each bale of goods, exported or imported, assessed its value more or less arbitrarily, wrote out the ticket, and enforced payment. The latter were commonly natives of the province in which they were stationed as being brought daily into contact with all classes of the population. The name *publicani* was used popularly, and in the New Testament exclusively, of the *portitores*. The system was essentially a vicious one. The *portitores* were encouraged in the most vexatious or fraudulent exactions and a remedy was all but impossible. They overcharged whenever they had an opportunity, ([Luke 3:13](#)) they brought false charges of smuggling in the hope of extorting hush-money ([Luke 19:8](#)) they detained and opened letters on mere suspicion. It was the basest of all livelihoods. All this was enough to bring the class into ill favor everywhere. In Judea and Galilee there were special circumstances of aggravation. The employment brought out all the besetting vices of the Jewish character. The strong feeling of many Jews as to the absolute unlawfulness of paying tribute at all made matters worse. The scribes who discussed the question, ([Matthew 22:15](#)) for the most part answered it in the negative. In addition to their other faults, accordingly, the publicans of the New Testament were

regarded as traitors and apostates, defiled by their frequent intercourse with the heathen, willing tools of the oppressor. The class thus practically excommunicated furnished some of the earliest disciples both of the Baptist and of our Lord. The position of Zacchaeus as a "chief among the publicans," ([Luke 19:2](#)) implies a gradation of some kind among the persons thus employed. ([see here also](#))

J Vernon McGee makes this story very applicable to our modern world writing that...

The Pharisees did not believe in eating with publicans and sinners. Many saints today still have the same idea. It doesn't hurt to invite sinners to dinner because they are the ones who need to be reached for Christ. We need to have some contact with sinners. Jesus is the Great Physician. He has come to heal mankind of their basic problem, which is sin. This ought to be said to a lot of our little Christian groups who have their banquets and "fellowship" meetings and do not invite the unsaved. If the unsaved do come, the majority of the Christians freeze them out anyway. May I say to you that I think some of these so-called Christian groups are sinful in their very existence and in the way they meet today. Matthew is at it again, quoting Hosea 6:6 from the Old Testament. When Jesus said, "For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," He could have included the Pharisees, because they were sinners. In fact, all of us are included—"For **all** have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). (McGee, J. V. *Thru the Bible Commentary* Vol. 4, Page 53. Nashville: Thomas Nelson)

Go and learn:

This phrase was commonly used in rabbinic writings to rebuke those who did not know what they should have known. Jesus used the very Scriptures the Pharisees' held as their authority and rebuked them for their ignorance of God's true nature and of their failure to follow His clear commandments. What Jesus was saying in quoting Hosea 6:6 is that God's Word was calling the Pharisees to show mercy and forgiveness, instead of a critical, condemning, judgmental spirit. Ritual separated from righteousness has always been a sham and an affront to God and the Pharisees were masters of such sham!

Ro 8:4 who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Pentecost comments that...

Our Lord not only showed the way of access to Himself, and the way of access into His kingdom ("poor in spirit" Mt 5:3), but also He showed what will characterize one who in **poverty of spirit** has come to claim God's salvation. **His life as a child of God will be marked by that same complete dependence upon God, moment by moment....**

(Commenting on Romans 8:4) The man who by the flesh seeks to please God claims he can do it himself. In pride he seeks to please God. The only one who pleases God in his daily life is the one who says,

"God, I can't do it because the flesh is corrupt; but I cast myself totally and completely upon the sustaining strength of the Holy Spirit that he might live the life of Christ through me."

When Peter stepped out of the boat to walk across the water to the Lord Jesus and began to sink, he cried out, "Lord, help me." He was **poor in spirit**. When Mary and Martha were overcome with grief at the passing of their brother Lazarus and they sent a message to Jesus Christ to come and help them, they evidenced they were **beggars in spirit**. When you recognize your own helplessness and cast yourself solely upon the grace of God and the Spirit of God, you are renouncing spiritual pride and evidencing a **poverty of spirit** that makes it possible for God to bestow blessing after blessing on your life. What do you have to offer God? Nothing. What does God have to give you? Everything. What makes God's riches yours? A cry for help, a cry of dependence, a confession of your own helplessness. (Ibid) (Bolding added)

1Ti 1:15

Sinners

Sinner was a term used by the Jews to describe Gentiles (cf Gal. 2:15). Jesus used "**sinners**" to refer to all of fallen mankind (Mt 9:13). **Sinner** is the name that denotes man's constant violation of God's law. Men are sinners by nature (being born into Adam's seed of Ro 5:12). Jesus (Mt 1:21) came "to seek and save that which was lost" (Lk 19:10).

It is interesting (and convicting) to note when in this great Apostle's spiritual life, this statement "sinners...among whom I am the foremost of all" was recorded. Guess before you read on.

It was recorded near the end of his life.

APPROXIMATE DATE OF WRITING (A.D.)	PAUL'S CONFESSION OF "POVERTY OF SPIRIT"
55	1Cor 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles , who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.
61	Ep 3:8 To me, the very least of all saints , this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,
62	1Ti 1:15 It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

This simple chronological record of Paul's spiritual life leads to the following conclusions:

- (1) We may grow in grace as we grow older in the Lord, but we never outgrow our need for acknowledgement of our spiritual bankruptcy outside of Christ (cf John 15:5, Col 3:4, etc)
- (2) The longer we walk with the Lord and the more He reveals Himself to us (cf John 14:21), the greater will be the sense of the poverty of our flesh in the light of His greatness and glory (cf John 3:30)

Mt 5:1 (see commentary notes on Matthew 5:1)

Here is a quotable quote on the Sermon on the Mount...

*It has been said if you took all the good advice for how to live ever uttered by any philosopher or psychiatrist or counselor, took out the foolishness and boiled it all down to the real essentials, you would be left with a poor imitation of this great message by Jesus...The Sermon on the Mount is sometimes thought of as Jesus' "**Declaration of the Kingdom.**" The American Revolutionaries had their Declaration of Independence. Karl Marx had his Communist Manifesto. With this message, Jesus declares what His Kingdom is all about. It presents a radically different agenda than what the nation of Israel expected from the Messiah. It does not present the political or material blessings of the Messiah's reign. Instead, it expresses the spiritual implications of Jesus' rule in our lives. **This great message tells us how will we live when Jesus is our Lord.** ([Dave Guzik](#)) (Bolding added)*

Mt 5:2 (see commentary notes on Matthew 5:2)

Mt 5:3 (see commentary notes on Matthew 5:3)

Poor in spirit - Although most conservative evangelical commentaries favor Jesus' phrase as pointing to **spiritual** and not **financial poverty**, there are a few that favor it as reference to financial poverty. Although proportionately it is fair to say that many more of those who are financially poor are also poor in spirit when compared with their wealthy counterparts (e.g., see Mt 19:24, Mk 10:25, Lk 18:25), that by no means justifies the interpretation that Jesus is here addressing **only** the financially poor. In that regard, it is fascinating to see how inaccurate **interpretation** has led some to make grossly inappropriate **application** as in the case of the Roman emperor Julian the Apostate (332-63) who is reputed to have said with vicious irony that he wanted to confiscate Christian's property so that they might all become poor and enter the kingdom of heaven!

It is no mistake that "poor in spirit" comes first. This is the first and fundamental quality of the spiritual life. This is where discipleship begins. This is the key that unlocks the door of heaven. (Ray Pritchard)

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would we rate the condition of our spiritual life? Even though we may desire to please the Lord, our efforts are so inadequate, our motives often selfish, our faithfulness questionable. No matter how much we do, we fall so far short!... On God's grading scale, we all rate zero without the Perfect One. (Our Daily Bread)

John MacArthur explains why **poor in spirit** should be clearly distinguished from poor materially or financially writing that...

The word commonly used for ordinary poverty was penichros, and is used of the widow Jesus saw giving an offering in the Temple. She had very little, but she did have "two small copper coins" (Luke 21:2). She was poor but not a beggar. One who is penichros poor has at least some meager resources. One who is ptōchos poor, however, is completely dependent on others for sustenance. He has absolutely no means of self-support.

Because of a similar statement in Luke 6:20-

“Blessed are you who are **poor**, for yours is the kingdom of God”-

some interpreters have maintained that the beatitude of Matthew 5:3 teaches material poverty. **But sound hermeneutics (the interpretation of Scripture) requires that, when two or more passages are similar but not exactly alike, the clearer one explains the others, the more explicit clarifies the less explicit.** By comparing Scripture with Scripture we see that the Matthew account is the more explicit. Jesus is speaking of a spiritual poverty that corresponds to the material poverty of one who is ptōchos.

If Jesus were here advocating **material poverty** He would have contradicted many other parts of His Word—including the Sermon on the Mount itself (Mt 5:42)—that teach us to give financial help to the poor. If Jesus was teaching the innate blessedness of material poverty, then the task of Christians would be to help make everyone, including themselves, penniless. Jesus did not teach that material poverty is the path to spiritual prosperity.

Those who are materially poor do have some advantages in spiritual matters by not having certain distractions and temptations; and the materially rich have some disadvantage by having certain distractions and temptations. But material possessions have no necessary relationship to spiritual blessings. Matthew makes clear that Jesus is here talking about the condition of the **spirit**, not of the **wallet**. (MacArthur, J. Matthew. Chicago: Moody Press) (Bolding added)

Poor in spirit

The way up is down!

It doesn't start by measuring up. It starts by realizing that we don't measure up. We are poverty stricken, helpless as a child, and sin-sick in need of a Great Physician. (John Piper)

It means a complete absence of pride, a complete absence of self-assurance and of self-reliance. It means a consciousness that we are nothing in the presence of God. It is nothing, then, that we can produce; it is nothing that we can do in ourselves. It is just this tremendous awareness of our utter nothingness as we come face-to-face with God. (D Martyn Lloyd-Jones)

Poverty of spirit "is not a man's confession that he is by nature insignificant, or personally without value, for that would be untrue. Instead, it is a confession that he is sinful and rebellious and utterly without moral virtues adequate to commend him to God. The poor in spirit recognize that they have no spiritual "assets." They know they are spiritually bankrupt. With the word poor, Jesus uses the more severe term for poverty. It indicates someone who must beg for whatever they have or get. Poverty of spirit cannot be artificially induced by self-hatred; it is brought about by the Holy Spirit and our response to His working in our hearts. (see John 16:8, 9, 10, 11, Acts 2:37, 16:29,30)" (Dave Guzik)

To be poor in spirit is not to lack courage but to acknowledge spiritual bankruptcy. It confesses one's unworthiness before God and utter dependence on him...All must begin by confessing that by them selves they can achieve nothing....in the last book of the canon, an established church must likewise recognize its precarious position when it claims to be rich and fails to see its own poverty (Rev 3:14-22). (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

In spiritual things, poor in spirit is the opposite not of self-esteem but of spiritual pride. It is the self-sufficiency that springs from spiritual pride that our Lord condemned. The New Testament records that the Pharisees were intensely proud, for they counted themselves as righteous; they deemed themselves to be righteous and to need nothing. They heard the Lord Jesus offer a true righteousness from God, and they spurned it. This word is addressed to them and to those who follow their path. The man who is characterized by spiritual pride will receive nothing from God; there can be no blessing of God upon him, for pride is no foundation for righteousness. Spiritual pride is not an evidence of holiness but of sinfulness. Spiritual pride can never produce happiness...The poor in spirit is the one from whom the ground of self-sufficiency has been taken. The poor in spirit is the heart on its knees. The poor in spirit is the one characterized by an attitude of utter dependence. (Dwight Pentecost)

It is the opposite of that haughty, self-assertive and self-sufficient disposition which the world so much admires and praises. It is the very reverse of that independent and defiant attitude which refuses to bow to God, which determines to brave things out, which says with Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" To be "poor in spirit" is to realize that I have nothing, am nothing, and can do nothing and have need of all things. Poverty of spirit is a consciousness of my emptiness, the result of the Spirit's work within. It issues from the painful discovery that all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isa 64:6, Phil 3:7, 8, 9-note, Rev 3:17-note). It follows the awakening that my best performances are unacceptable, yea, an abomination to the thrice Holy One. Poverty of spirit evidences itself by its bringing the individual into the dust before God, acknowledging his utter helplessness and deservingness of hell. It corresponds to the initial awakening of the prodigal in the far country, when he "began to be in want." (Lk

Kingdom of heaven

Click for a discussion of the **Kingdom of Heaven**.

Click to study over 100 uses of the **"Kingdom"** most of which refer to the **Kingdom of Heaven/God**.

Note that the phrase **"Kingdom of heaven"** is the "reward" that opens and closes the Beatitudes. (Mt 5:3-note, Mt 5:10-note)

JESUS TEACHES ON THE PRINCIPLE OF PROPHETIC "TIME GAPS"

Isaiah 61:1-3 Jesus Teaches about A "Time Gap" in the Fulfillment of Prophecy

Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners;

2 To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,

3 To grant those who mourn in Zion, Giving them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of mourning, The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.

Jesus quoted the first section of this passage in Luke (so **Who was speaking in Isaiah?**)

Luke 4:14 And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (notice the role of the Spirit in Jesus' ministry Mt 3:16, Lk 3:22, Mt 4:1, Mk 1:12, Luke 4:1, John 1:32. How important is the Spirit to our walk and ministry? cf Acts 1:8) and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.

15 And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.

16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the **synagogue** on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.

17 And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written (Isa 61:1-2a),

18 "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR (ptochos = same word in Mt 5:3). (**Note:** KJV [which is translated from Greek manuscript known as Textus Receptus and different from the NAS, NIV which are translated from the Nestle-Aland and felt by most scholars to be more accurate] adds the following not found in NAS, NIV [or the Nestle-Aland manuscript] = "*he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted*") HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE DOWNTRODDEN,

19 **TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE** (acceptable) **YEAR OF THE LORD.**" (Now compare what Jesus read in the Synagogue at Nazareth with what He declared in Isaiah 61:2. Where did He stop in the Isaiah passage?)

20 And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon (gazed intently, even idea of straining or stretching the eyes so to speak) Him.

21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled (means filled full such that nothing else can be added and is in the perfect tense which means at the moment Jesus said it, it was fulfilled and it stands fulfilled forever) in your hearing."

This passage in Luke is most instructive especially in regard to **interpretation of prophecy**. Clearly Jesus declares the first section of **Isaiah 61:1-2a** was **fulfilled** at His first coming. He stopped reading in mid sentence **"the day of vengeance"**. Why? First note that **"vengeance"** is the Hebrew word (naqam) which calls for revenge or for punishment to be inflicted in retaliation for an injury or offense. Who had been offended? Jehovah Himself had been offended by Israel's continuous wandering, adulterous and hardened

hearts that chose idols over the Living God and thus justly deserved His righteous punishment. But the first coming of the Messiah was a merciful appearing ("the favorable year of the Lord") to offer the free gift of salvation, opening the eyes of the blind. This prophecy in Isaiah 61:1, 2a was fulfilled around 30AD. But as John records although the King "came to His own, (most of) those who were His own did not receive Him" (Jn 1:11, 12, 13).

Dr. Luke records the events that marked the beginning of the last week of Jesus' ministry (during His first advent) and the culmination of His rejection by His own people...

Luke 19:37 And as He was now approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen,

38 saying, "BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; (Ps 118:26-note) Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

39 And some of the Pharisees (Ro 10:3-note) in the multitude said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples."

40 And He answered and said, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!"

41 And when He approached, He saw the city and **wept over it**, (cf Mt 5:4, Greek word for **wept** pictures weeping or wailing with emphasis upon noise, lamentation with sobbing and wailing aloud even as professional mourners did in a funeral procession!)

42 saying, "**If you had known in this day** (they could have **the very day!**), even you, the things which make for peace! (cf "the favorable year of the Lord") But now they have been hidden from your eyes.

43 "For the days shall come upon you when your enemies (He is prophesying about the Roman general Titus who will come some 40 years later to crush the Jewish rebellion) will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, (this happened when the Romans in 70AD encircled Jerusalem in a siege that leveled the city)

44 and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another (this occurred literally because the Temple was on fire, melted the gold vessels which ran between the stones, which the Roman soldiers lifted up in order to get the gold), because **you did not recognize the time of your visitation.**"

In this passage in Luke Jesus' points out that the Jews **should have** and **could have known** that this was the **very day** the King, their Messiah (John 1:41), would arrive in Jerusalem, the day we call "Palm Sunday", His triumphal entry recorded in Luke 19:37, 38 where He was descending the Mt of Olives and the crowds were proclaiming "Blessed is the **King** Who comes in the name of the Lord". It is worthy noting that they even called Him the "**King**" quoting Ps 118:26-note where it says "Blessed is the **one** who comes". So the crowds changed "**one**" to "**king**" at Jesus' "Triumphal entry" into His beloved city, so beloved that because of their sin and rejection, it caused Him to greatly mourn and to weep.

So this was the "**favorable year of the Lord**" Jesus had read about in the synagogue probably some 3 years earlier. This was the day of visitation that they failed to recognize. Why should they have recognized it? The answer is found in one of the most amazing Old Testament Messianic prophecies, **Daniel 9:24, 25, 26, 27**, which is commonly referred to as the **Seventy Weeks of Daniel** (see Da 9:24-27: Part 1: Notes on Daniel 9:24-25; **see new verse by verse notes** on Da 9:24; Da 9:25; Da 9:26; Da 9:27). Without going into detail a careful reading and computation of dates that one can perform based on the specific prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27, allows one to predict the "**day of His visitation**" the day the King would enter into His city. At the end of the first "69 Weeks" of Daniel's prophecy Messiah was to enter Jerusalem. Note that the last week of Daniel, the seventieth week has not yet been fulfilled (see Summary Chart of Daniel's Seventieth Week) and thus there has been a **time gap of almost 2000 years!** (See Discussion of Time Gap in Daniel 9:24-27)

Robert Anderson ([The Coming Prince](#) in 1894) and Harold Hoehner (in 1976) have independently calculated that following the **decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah, the Prince** (cf Da 9:25-note, Neh 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) was 177,880 days which by their calculations coincides with the very day Jesus entered Jerusalem (Palm Sunday) riding on a donkey fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy in which Jesus clearly presented Himself for the first time publicly (cf Jn 1:49, Mt 2:2) as their promised Messiah and King (cf Jn 18:33, 19:1, 2, 3, 4-13, 14, 15, 19, Mt 27:37 Mk 15:26 Lk 23:37, 38)

Zechariah 9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your **King** is coming to you; **He is just and endowed with salvation**, (section in bold not quoted in the Gospels!) Humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey (For a King to enter a city in ancient days on a donkey was a symbol of peace. To enter riding on a white horse was a symbol of conquest of His second coming on a "white horse" in Rev 19:11-note)." (Zechariah 9:9 is quoted in Mt 21:4, 5 "SAY TO THE

DAUGHTER OF ZION, 'BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY, EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.')(cf Jn 12:12, 13, 14, 15, Mk 11:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) Note that there is **another time gap of almost 2000 years** between the fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 (first coming at Mount Calvary) and Zechariah 9:10 (second coming at Mount Olivet cf Acts 1:9, 10, 11, 12, Lk 24:49, 50, 51, 52, 53, Zech 14:3, 4, Ezekiel 43:2, 3, 4 - The Mt of Olives is the mountain just to the east of the Eastern gate and Temple Mount)

Zechariah 9:10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; and the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; and His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. (These events describe the King's return and triumph over the Anti-Christ and the nations arrayed against Him).

And so tragically the majority of the Lord's chosen people (ethnic Israel), failed to recognize the **King's triumphal entry** for what it was. And so He must come again as He predicted in Isaiah 61:2b (the point at which He ceased to read in the synagogue in Lk 4:19). And so we eagerly, expectantly await the fulfillment of **"the day of vengeance of our God"**. Meanwhile there has been a gap of time of almost 2000 years between the historical fulfillment of **Isaiah 61:1, 2a** and the yet to occur fulfillment of **Isaiah 61:2b, Isa 61:3**.

And because of the failure of most of the chosen people to recognize Jesus' **favorable year**, and His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, that the King **mourned and wept** (Lk 19:4) (cp Mt 5:4, Lk 19:41, 42, 43, 44, Lk 13:34, 35)

Matthew records a similar lament following Jesus' final teaching session with the multitudes and the Pharisees declaring...

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.

38 "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

39 "For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me until you say,

**BLESSED IS HE
WHO COMES
IN THE NAME OF THE LORD**

(Quoting from Ps 118:26-[note!](#)" (Mt 23:37, 38, 39)

When will Israel say "Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord"? At the termination of "the day of vengeance of our God," (Isa 61:2) at the end of **Daniel's Seventieth Week**, (Da 9:27-note, 2Th 2:3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, Mt 24:15, 21, 30, 31, Rev 1:7-[note](#)) when God pours out grace upon the Jews who have survived the Great Tribulation, the final three and one-half years marked by the rule of the "Anti-Christ". **Zechariah** records God's favor to Israel at this time...

Zechariah 12:10 "And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication (cf Lev 26:20-42, Joel 2:28, 29, Hos 5:15, Dt 30:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, Ro 11:26, 27-note **Why?** because of Ro 11:29), so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced (cf Zech 13:7, 8, Isa 53:5, Ps 22:16, 17-[note](#), Acts 2:23, 3:13, 14, 15, 4:10, cf Jn 1:29, 19:34, 35, 36, 37) and they will **mourn** for Him, as one **mourns** for an only son, and they **will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over** a first-born. (cf Mt 13:26, 14:62, 24:30, 26:64, Lk 21:27, Rev 1:7-[note](#), Re 19:11-[note](#), Re 19:12-[note](#), Re 19:13-[note](#), Re 19:14-[note](#), Re 19:15-[note](#), Re 19:16-[note](#), Amos 8:10, 2Co 7:9, 10)

11 "In that day (**What day?** "the day of vengeance of our God") there will be **great mourning** in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

It is at this time of the King's return, His second coming after the fulfillment of **Daniel's Seventieth Week** and the final three and one half years of the Great Tribulation that the prophecy of Isaiah 61 is finally consummated...

And the day of vengeance of our God (Daniel's Seventieth Week , Great Tribulation) To comfort **all** (all would include Gentiles who are saved out of the Great Tribulation) who **mourn**,³ To grant those who **mourn** in Zion (this speaks especially to the Jews who are saved at His return), Giving them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of **mourning**, The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.

~~Maranatha, Our Lord, come! (1Cor 16:22)~~
Mt 5:4 (see commentary notes on Matthew 5:4)