

Poor in Spirit

#0125

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—July 18, 1975

“Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? ...Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless” 2 Peter 3:12, 14.

In the 12th verse of this chapter, the apostle points out our privilege not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we see the last rays of the setting sun in this last hour of human history, what a great thought it is that you and I can bring more quickly the blessed time when sin and sorrow, pain and woe, shall be no more. Isn't that a wonderful privilege? A wonderful privilege.

Now, in order to do this, friends, we need to understand how God works. How He builds character, the basis on which our salvation is accomplished. We need to understand it for two reasons: First, that we may enter in and cooperate with God ourselves in our own character building. Second, that we may know how to appeal to others. That we may know how to instruct them, guide them, encourage them.

And so this evening, I want to study with you some very simple, elementary lessons in Christian experience.

Please turn to the fifth chapter of Matthew to our Savior's Sermon on the Mount. This was given on an unnamed mountain, near the Sea of Galilee, just after the ordination of the 12 apostles.

A multitude were expecting some special word from Jesus concerning the kingdom He had come to set up. Contrary to their expectations, He was not to rein as a monarch in Jerusalem. He set up the kingdom of grace, offering a part in His *kingdom* of grace to all who would meet the requirements. And this Sermon on the Mount was an announcement of the character of His kingdom and the character of the *subjects* of that kingdom.

Matthew 5, beginning with the first verse:

“And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: And He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” Matthew 5:1–3.

Those words were strange to the multitude that heard them. I wonder if they're as strange to any heart tonight. I am sure of this, dear friends, there's somebody here tonight that has come with a *weary* heart that's going out with a *relieved* heart. There's somebody here tonight that's discouraged, that's going to leave this chapel *full* of courage. You might be the one. Oh, it's a wonderful thing to come to the great Burden Bearer and have our load lifted and our heart's refreshed.

Notice the opening words of this memorable sermon:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" Matthew 5:3.

Interestingly enough, many of us think (whether we word it this way or not) that if we were where we ought to be we wouldn't feel poor in spirit—that there must be something wrong with us if we're not riding on top, "upon a cloud" as it were. If we're feeling under a pressure, under a load, under a sense of need and weakness, we suppose that there must be something wrong.

Let's study it a little tonight. Jesus' word is:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" Matthew 5:3.

This word "Blessed" is an interesting word. Another translation gives it "Happy." Both thoughts are in the original word—blessed, happy. Jesus pronounces a blessing upon those who are poor in spirit, and He says, "theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Let's notice some statements from the Psalms, relative to this matter of being poor in spirit. The 40th Psalm, the 17th verse:

"But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me"
Psalm 40:17.

God gives His greatest attention to those who have the greatest needs. Isn't that encouraging?

In fact, we are told in the book *Testimonies to Ministers*:

"Our need is the qualification which gives us the assurance that we shall receive the gift" *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 519.

Think of it: the greater our need, then, and the greater our *sense* of that need, the more *assurance* we have that we're going to receive the gift that our hearts desire. "Our need is the qualification which gives us the assurance that we shall receive the gift."

So, David says, "I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me." Do you feel poor tonight, needy, weak, unworthy? Then that in itself should bring

courage to your heart that you're going to get a special blessing. May God make it so for every one of us.

Notice the 70th Psalm, the 5th verse. Note that he makes the matter of his *need* the reason for his appeal to God to *do* something:

“But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God:
Thou art my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no
tarrying” Psalm 70:5.

He comes into the presence of God and pleads for help when? Right now, immediately. And he urges as the reason for it: “I am poor and needy.”

The 86th Psalm and the 1st verse. Here again, his very poverty of soul, his great need, is urged as the reason why God should hear him:

“Bow down Thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor
and needy” Psalm 86:1.

Why should God hear him? Because he's poor and needy. Are you poor? God is rich. Are you needy? He's the great supplier. He has everything that we need—grace, pardon, power, peace, deliverance, victory, hope. Thank God for such a wonderful Savior. What do you say?

Psalm 109, verse 21:

“But do Thou for me, O GOD the Lord, for Thy name's sake:
because Thy mercy is good, deliver Thou me. For I am poor
and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. I am gone
like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and down
as the locust. My knees are weak through fasting; and my
flesh faileth of fatness. I became also a reproach unto them:
when they looked upon me they shook their heads. Help
me, O LORD my God: O save me according to Thy mercy”
Psalm 109:21–26.

David was praying here at a time when there was no human help. Everyone, it seemed, had turned against him. But he sent his prayer to the sanctuary above and presented his great need. “I am poor and needy,” so help me, Lord, he prayed. Did he get help? Oh, yes.

Notice the 72nd Psalm and the 12th verse:

“For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the
poor also, and him that hath no helper” Psalm 72:12.

God delights to hear the cry of His children; He *runs* to help. If there seems to be a delay in the answer, it is only that our faith may further develop by praying more earnestly and trusting more completely.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” Matthew 5:3.

Oh, how wonderful our Lord is!

The 35th Psalm the 9th verse. He’s praising God now, after a period of struggle, and the deliverance has come:

“And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in His salvation. All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto Thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him”
Psalm 35:9–10.

Thank God, He delivers us from those that are too strong for us. Is Satan stronger than we are? Yes, but God is stronger than Satan. We’re not a match for this world, backed by the Devil, but the world backed by the Devil is no match for God. He delivers the poor and the needy. We need to be fully settled on this fact—that our *need* is the great *claim* that we have on God to do something for us. We do not come presenting our merits, our goodness, our attainments; we come presenting our great need. We can claim these promises.

Years ago, I was in a large city that someone had made arrangements for a large charity hospital to serve. I used to go there to visit the sick on occasion. And I looked at the name across the entrance to the hospital: Charity Hospital. Suppose that I’m sick and I want to get in there. And I come to the administrator of the hospital, and I say, “I’d like a room in this hospital. I’m a millionaire and can pay for the best room.” What will He say to me? “You can go elsewhere. There are hospitals where you can pay your way, but *here*, this is for *charity* patients.” And the only way that a sick man could get into *that* hospital would be to prove his *poverty*, not to prove his *wealth*. Do you see what I mean?

So, instead of thinking that we have to wait to come to the Great Physician until we can prove how *good* we are, or how *strong* we are, or how *worthy* we are, it’s the other way around, friends. Our claim upon His mercy is the fact that we are poor and needy. Anybody here tonight that’s poor and needy? Then you should have great hope of receiving a blessing.

The problem with Laodicea, as analyzed by the Great Physician, the True Witness, is this: you say you are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. This is the message to the Laodiceans in Revelation 3. And as long as we are in that Pharisaical experience, where we stand up in self-righteousness and say, “Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as the rest of men,” we have no claim on the mercy of God. We may not even feel our *need* of that mercy. But when under the searchlight of the Holy Spirit, measuring our lives by the holy law of God, we see our wretchedness, our need, our unworthiness; then He comes to comfort the mourner, to pardon the penitent, to relieve the oppressed, to hear the cry of the poor and the needy. Oh, thank God for such a wonderful Savior.

“But,” somebody says, “Brother Frazee, I know all that is so, and I have sought the Lord again and again, but it looks like to me that somewhere along the line I ought to at least make some progress. I look worse to myself than I used to, surely there ought to be some progress. I know there’s a great work yet to be done in my heart, but I get discouraged when I see what little progress I’m making.”

I was talking to someone just a few days ago who came with this problem, and the Lord gave me this little page from *Steps to Christ*. I share it with you in the light of these wonderful Scriptures tonight:

“The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes” *Steps to Christ*, page 64.

Why, that seems a contradiction, doesn’t it? “The closer I get to Jesus, the more faulty I will appear in my own eyes.” Well now, let’s get the rest of the sentence:

“The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer...”
Ibid.

It doesn’t mean you really *are* worse, you just *look* worse to yourself, because you can see more. The poverty was there all the time, but where you thought your poverty was minus a hundred thousand, maybe you see it now as minus *two* hundred thousand, or minus a *million*. And I’ve good news for you; it’s going to look worse a year from now.

You say, “Good news?”

Sure. You are going to continue to make progress, aren’t you, on the road to Heaven. I said to this one that was talking with me, “Now look here, you look bad to yourself now, but what if a year from now you look *worse*?” This says you *will* if you’re making progress. The only way you can feel better about yourself, all the while, and feel more encouraged, after you look at yourself, the only way you can do it, is to get farther and farther away from Jesus. Did you know that?

Let me read it again:

“The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that Satan’s delusions have lost their power; that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you” *Ibid.*

Thank God, friends. Thank God.

You know, when I had surgery over at the hospital, for a while, I didn’t feel the pain at all. But after a while, I began to feel it. And then a little later, I felt it more,

and then later, I felt it still more. Things were really getting bad, weren't they? What was happening? My nerves were waking up.

And so the soul that is poor in spirit and senses its need is "waking up." It isn't that you really *are* worse than you ever were. You're *sensing* it more, and you're worse than you think you are tonight—more hopeless without God, more needy, more than you can possibly realize tonight. But if you realize it more than you did a year ago, or a week ago, a day ago, than you are making progress.

Now, this is so wonderful and so foreign to the thinking of many an earnest Christian that I want to read it all over again:

"The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that Satan's delusions have lost their power; that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you" *Ibid.*

Somebody says, "But, Brother Frazee, if that's the program, what in the world is going to keep me from getting discouraged if day by day and week by week I look worse to myself?"

Ah, this says:

"The less we see to esteem in ourselves, the more we shall see to esteem in the infinite purity and loveliness of our Saviour. A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon; and when the soul, realizing its helplessness, reaches out after Christ, He will reveal Himself in power" *Ibid.*, page 65.

Oh yes, and what does that *mean* when He reveals Himself in power? Does that mean I feel I'm good now, and I can make it from now on? That isn't the point. My courage and my cheer come from looking to *Him* instead of looking to myself. And the *more* I sense my own *need*, the more I want to *quit* looking at this ugly thing and look at His beautiful life.

Notice how it's put in *Volume 5*:

"We are not to look within for evidence of our acceptance with God. We shall find there nothing but that which will discourage us. Our only hope is in 'looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith.' There is everything in Him to inspire with hope, with faith, and with courage... Those who look within for comfort will become weary and disappointed. A sense of our weakness and unworthiness should lead us with humility of heart to plead the atoning sacrifice of Christ. As we rely upon His merits we shall find rest and peace and joy" *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5*, pages 199–200.

What does it mean to *rely* on His merits? To rest on them and to keep it *up*. It isn't just our *past* debts that Jesus pays; He meets our *present* need. It isn't just the failures of our *past* life that He covers; He must cover our deficiencies, our weakness, right *now*. Our best efforts are not as good as we'd like to have them, are they? Isn't that true? But, thank God, when it is in the heart to obey Him, and efforts are put forth to this end, He accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service, and He makes up for the deficiency with His own divine merit.

Constantly, God is laboring to make up man's deficiencies, but our claim upon His mercy is our great need. If we boast of our attainments, we're not looking for His merit. If we think we have attained, then there is nothing that He can *do* for us. It is our sense of need that turns us from looking to ourselves that we may gaze upon Him and claim what *He* deserves instead of what *we* deserve.

Notice how it's put here, again in *Testimonies to Ministers*:

"God rejoices to bestow grace upon all who hunger and thirst for it, not because we are worthy, but because we are unworthy" *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 519.

Why do we get help, grace, mercy? Not because we are *worthy*, but because we are *unworthy*.

Now, this is not talking about the defiant rebel that shakes his fist in God's face and says, "I'll do as I please; I'll trample on Your law." No, no. This is talking about the humble child of God that senses, in spite of his best efforts, that he's poor and needy and weak and unworthy and relies wholly on the merits of Jesus. Our choice is to be *like* Him, correct? Looking at Him, we sense that we are not yet like Him. And the closer we get, the more we see yet that needs to be done. And may I tell you, friends, *that* progression will continue on and on until we reach the coming of our Lord.

It's true that, before the great time of trouble, the saints will reach the place where they no longer are breaking God's commandments. But this will not cause them to be proud. *They* will not have a conscientiousness of their righteousness. God looks upon them and says, "Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." But they will not look to themselves and trumpet to the world, "Here we are, we, at last, have arrived. We are perfect commandment keepers." Oh no, no. They are not *looking* at themselves, they're looking at *Jesus*. They're not *talking* about themselves, they're talking of *Jesus*. They're not *thinking* about their attainments, they're thinking about His covering *righteousness*.

And so, remember, as long as we are in this world we need a deep repentance, day by day. We need a true sense of our utter inability, without Christ, to meet the temptations of Satan and live the life of Heaven. This is true today, and it was true yesterday, it will be true tomorrow. And so, the beatitude is present truth, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Will you repeat it with me?

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” Matthew 5:3.

Do you feel needy? Thank God, there is that which meets your need—the *love* of Jesus, the *righteousness* of Jesus, the *power* of Jesus, the *strength* of Jesus. But it is not given you for the purpose of making you feel happy about *yourself*. It is given to you for the purpose of making you feel happy about *Him*. *He* is your substitute. *He* is your representative. *He* is your advocate. *He* is your intercessor. And *He* *lives* to redeem you and stand for you and confess your name before the Father. Oh, how good our Lord is. What do you say?

[Testimony and song service follow.]

Is there somebody here tonight that, as we have our closing prayer, would like to be especially remembered before the Lord? If you raise your hand, I know that Jesus sees each one as though you were the only one. And He will grant your request as though yours were the only one on His heart. Let us look away from ourselves to Him.

Precious Lord, we thank Thee for the simplicity of the Gospel. We're so glad You've made it plain so even simple people can get hold of it. And Lord, we're poor and needy, and we know You think upon us. You've chosen to make the citizens of Your kingdom out of those who sense their need and feel their unworthiness, that look away from themselves to Jesus. And just now, hear the prayer of each heart. Grant the request of each of these who've raised their hands, and all of us, as we share together in giving Thee what Thou dost want—the opportunity to help us.

We come in our need; we go with Thy promise—the assurance that Thou art with us. And we thank Thee through Christ Who died for us. Amen.

A happy Sabbath to all of you. God bless you.

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W. D. Frazee Sermons
435 Lifestyle Lane, Wildwood, GA 30757
1-800-WDF-1840 / 706-820-9755
www.WDFsermons.org
support@WDFsermons.org