

Beatitudes: Poor In Spirit

Matthew 5:3

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TRANSCRIPT:

Turn with me to Matthew chapter number 5 this morning, and let us read together from verse 1 through to verse number 12. Matthew 5:1-12, the Word of God says:

"And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated, His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.'"

Let us pray. God in heaven, we ask now that You would help us by the Holy Spirit to hear the Word of God and to understand it. That we might do all the things that are recorded in Your Word. That we might give ourselves to obedience, to the display of our love, to the display of our thankfulness for that which You have done for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

We've been looking at the Beatitudes together and spent two weeks with some introductory thoughts to help us understand how we should approach the book. We considered the right approach to the Sermon on the Mount and, in particular, the Beatitudes, and also last time we considered together the meaning of blessedness and the pursuit of blessedness. And now we're up to the point in the series where we begin to look particularly at each Beatitude, each verse from verses 3 through to verse number 12, and seek to understand what it is that we are being instructed by here by

our Lord.

Now, one further consideration regarding blessedness before we dive into verse number 3 that I think is important for us to understand. As we look through these Beatitudes, what we must understand is that they are not something that happens at a point in time. The blessedness of the Beatitudes is not punctiliar, where it happens at a point in time alone. The blessedness is not just an entry, but it is also a pathway. And why that is important to realize, I'll explain as we go on, but allow me to just illustrate this for our understanding.

When we visit the National Parks here in Australia, we are confronted by a gate, and that notices the National Park is the entry point of coming into the National Park. And as we enter into the gate, we are confronted by different pathways. Pathways within the National Park that lead us to further and deeper and richer experiences of the National Park. And as we go along and drive through the National Park or walk through different parts of the park, we are confronted by signs, and those signs tell us what it points us down those pathways and tells us about those pathways to those further experiences.

Now, when you go into a National Park, if you see a sign in a National Park, two things are certain. The presence of a sign in a National Park and you being able to visibly identify that sign tells us two things. It tells us firstly that you have entered the park. If you call me one day on the phone and say, "Joshua, I see Gibbon Head Trail," as it were here, I will know that you have entered into Bandina National Park, the Royal National Park. I'll know that you're there in the Royal National Park, and that presence of the sign is an indication that you have entered. But not only that, I will know another thing, and that is that you are on the pathway or at the beginning of a pathway, or at least on the pathway to that trail that is leading to that particular outlook, to that particular view of certain wildlife or some feature of the park that you will be about to experience, maybe even a very nice beach that you would find there.

Now, the Beatitudes are very much like the signs that exist in the National Park on this level. If we see the Beatitudes within us, it tells us of two things. If we see what Jesus says here in us, they are signs to tell us two things. One, that we have entered the kingdom of God, and two, that we are on the pathway to the further blessedness that comes from walking along those paths within the kingdom of God. And what is important for us to recognize by understanding this is that the Beatitudes both inform us about where we stand in relation to those who are truly blessed. Are we of those that are truly blessed? Are we of those that have entered into the blessing of being part of the kingdom of God? And secondly, they also not

only inform us but they instruct us and tell us to go on, on the pathway to further blessedness, that we might enter into the further experience of God's blessedness in His kingdom.

Why is it important to view the Beatitudes in this way? Well, it teaches us firstly that these Beatitudes are for our self-examination. When we consider today, for example, "blessed are the poor in spirit," straightaway we should be wondering and asking ourselves, "Am I poor in spirit?" And if I am not poor in spirit, have I entered into the blessedness of the kingdom of God? Am I a partaker of the blessing of God's kingdom? But secondly, why is it important? Not only does it tell us to examine ourselves about where we are in relationship to the kingdom of God, but secondly, it shows us and tells us, are we on the right path to further blessing in the kingdom of God? And what that simply means is, you might say, "I know there's the presence of poorness of spirit within my heart, but I find myself veering off the way, or I find myself not engaging in the poorness of spirit as much as God would have me to," and therefore, that it serves, the Beatitudes serves as a kind of encouragement to press on, on that pathway, that you might continue to experience further blessedness that comes from being part of the kingdom of God.

It's important to understand these aspects of the Beatitudes and how it is to inform us and both to instruct us. Now, what does it mean to be poor in spirit? What is being referred to in this passage of scripture? Jesus says in verse number three, "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Blessed are the poor in spirit, and we see the word "poor," we're straightaway confronted with the idea of poverty, of poverty. And to understand what we are to be in spirit with regards to that description of poor or poverty, we need to understand and be reminded a little bit about what it means to be impoverished.

One person put it this way: poverty is when a person's resources are not sufficient to meet their minimum needs. Those that are in poverty or they are poor, they lack necessities, necessities that are required for the basic survival. And when you consider the poor, when you consider those that are impoverished, a few things are very clear concerning them. Their lack of food, their lack of water, their lack of shelter displays a sort of desperation. It tells us a little bit about their utter dependence upon others for their survival, and it also tells us about their disposition, that they are in a position where they are crying out or calling out, and the presence of a poor individual, presence of someone who is stricken with poverty, whether they say "help me" or not, they themselves by their manner, by even their words, testify that they are in need of dire and desperate help. And it's quite horrific to see people that are struck with material poverty. It's horrendous to see those image bearers of God, as it were, that are weighed down in a

certain desperation for their basic requirements, things that we take for granted so freely here in this country.

And so, when we understand the dire need and the desperation of the poor in spirit, that lack the basic necessities and survival things for survival, and that disposition that they have of crying out and heartfelt need, well, we understand what a little bit more of what Jesus is trying to say here, don't we? He says, "blessed," not out of a poor, but he says, "blessed are the poor in spirit." The realm of the poverty for which Jesus is saying here that describes to us those that are of a truly happy life, those that are truly under the blessing of God and the blessedness of God's kingdom, they are those that are marked by a poverty, not of material things, but of an im-material poverty, a poverty of soul, a poverty of spirit.

Jesus does not say here, "blessed are poor people." Finances in Scripture are no measure of godliness and no measure necessarily of spiritual life. Being impoverished is not being a partaker of the gospel, although the Bible teaches us that it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, and that God, in His mercy, has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs together of the kingdom. What the Bible is also clear about is that poverty is not the way of salvation, nor is God's mercy, saving mercy, shown upon all those who are impoverished.

And so, we understand that although, in one sense, the poor, we could argue, are closer to the kingdom of heaven because they are unlike the rich who trust in their riches, but it does not make them partakers, nor does it make him of those who are in the kingdom of heaven or those that are truly blessed by God. You see, the issue with finances in Scripture is the love of them. The issues with finances in Scripture is those that trust, as Jesus said, in their riches. And although it is a sad thing to say, but it is nonetheless true, there will be many homeless people that will wake up and find themselves in hell, and there be many people that hunger for bread and beg for bread, but at the same time, reject the bread that comes from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And so it's important to realize that just because there is poverty, it does not necessarily mean there is spiritual life, and that there is partaking of the blessedness of the kingdom of God.

This is well displayed in the passage of the rich man and Lazarus that was read to us just moments ago. Here in the Gospel according to Luke, we have a case of a man that is poor, and his name is Lazarus, and we also have him contrasted with a rich man who we are not given his name, but in the text of Scripture here, the Bible says in Luke 16:19 that there was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fed sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of

sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.

Now we know what happens next is that they both die, the angels come and take the poor man into Abraham's bosom, and the rich man wakes up in torment in hell. Now before we think, "There you go, there's the gospel: become poor and you shall have eternal life," we see a dialogue that happens there in hell itself between Abraham and the rich man. And the rich man cries out and says, "Father Abraham, just send Lazarus to go and tell my brothers that they don't come to this place, and if they see one rise from the dead, they'll come and believe, and they won't come to this place of torment because I'm tormented in this flame and I do not want them to be tormented also in this flame." And Abraham, how does he respond to him? He says, "Let them hear the law and the prophets. Let them hear Moses and the prophets because they will not repent though one rise from the dead if they will not repent at the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ," or that which the law and the prophets point to, which is no one less than Jesus Christ Himself.

And so, Abraham, he is not teaching that they must become poor like Lazarus to escape the fires of hell and enter into the kingdom of heaven, but rather that they must hear the law and the prophets and repent at the preaching of the Word of God. And so what we see here, that the way of salvation unfolded in the text does not affirm that poverty is the way of salvation, but it does remind us of the reality that those that have much and are satisfied with much have very little thought for God and His kingdom.

But it's important for us to get this because Jesus is not teaching that "blessed are the poor," neither is Jesus teaching in this text "blessed are the poor-spirited." Some come to this passage of scripture and think, "Well, there you go, blessed are the poor-spirited, those that are timid, those that are cowardly, those that are shy, those that are marked by a feeble-mindedness; they're the ones that are truly blessed by God, they're the ones that are believers that are marked by true faith in Christ and are walking on the pathway of blessedness." But that is not a characteristic that is marked by those that belong to the kingdom of God. It could be that you are shy in your temperament because you had a certain upbringing. It could be that you are shy, and a little bit timid, and whatever it may be, and cowardly because of certain trauma or experience that you had in your past, or because of just the nature of your personality. But that does not mean that the cowardly or the shy or the timid shall enter into the kingdom of God or are marked to the blessings of the kingdom of God.

Let us be reminded of what is said in the book of Revelation 21:8, "But the cowardly, and the unbelieving, and all liars, and adulterers, and forni-

cators shall have their part in the lake of fire which burns with brimstone." And so, it's not necessarily that because we are reserved that we are truly blessed, because then what would we say of Jesus, who He Himself was bold in His word, who spoke great pronouncements of judgment upon the Pharisees and spoke words of strength and of might and stood strong and didn't display timidity? What do we say of John the Baptist, who cried out to the Pharisees, "O generation of vipers"? Or what do we say to Paul and even the prophets, who stood, or even the Lord Jesus, who said about Herod that he's a fox? Not very timid, perhaps not very cowardly, not the appearance of a shy and feeble mind, but it is no mark of their relationship to the kingdom of God.

In fact, we can go as far as to say that Paul rebukes and exhorts Timothy to break out of this timidness that would affect his ministry, and he reminds him that God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. And so, just because those are poor-spirited and considered by the world's standards to be those that are poor-spirited, it does not mark their true relationship to God's kingdom, or that they're walking on the pathway of true blessedness.

Nor should we think of the suppression of one's personality as those that are poor in spirit. It can happen many times, especially in a legalistic setting, where we try to clone people, where Christians try to clone people's personalities to be all and like the same. I think this is most evident in the application, particularly regarding women, of the concept of being meek and quiet in spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. And that definitely is in the sight of God of great price, and that is definitely something that our sisters should aspire to, but we must be careful that we understand that commands like that have their own unique expression that comes through one's own personality. And that being poor in spirit necessarily does not mean looking like Christians all looking the same in terms of their personality, but they would express the spiritual qualities and character through their own unique personality given to them by God.

We need to consider the command, for example, of being meek and quietly spirited in relationship to Proverbs 31, that woman there who is described to us as a great example to be, this virtuous woman, and how she lived her days and carried out her life. And I think that will help us break away from perhaps the common idea of someone who sips a high tea and sits down and says no a word and has no opinion, as opposed to that being the mark of what it means to be quiet in spirit, rather seeing it as a spiritual quality that has its own unique expression in the life of every individual.

And so, these are some things that we must understand as to what it means not to be poor in spirit, to make sure that we don't fall in either

side of these extremes. But so then, what does it mean to be poor in spirit? What is Jesus then referring to? And a quote here by D.A. Carson helps us. He says, "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 upon Him." To be poor in spirit is to be destitute, to be in a sense of desperation, to be marked in our lives by a sense of emptiness. That is a good way to put it. You see, the poor man is empty and therefore he requires supply from outside of himself to supply that which lacks within himself. And so, to be poor in spirit is very much the same, is to have this disposition of mind that understands that we are spiritually bankrupt before God, and that we are met within our own soul with a certain emptiness, with a certain destitution, with a certain desperation that only God can supply for us.

This is what it means to be poor in spirit. It is illustrated again to us by the rich man and Lazarus. Look at the contrast between them. The rich man is marked out as a man that is clothed, and he fares sumptuously every day. And to fare sumptuously every day does not mean to eat well every day, or some translations have it, but it means to live luxuriously every day. And the rich man is marked as someone who has everything that he needs and has nothing else that he needs. He doesn't look to anyone, he doesn't wait upon anyone, he doesn't go to anyone for that to supply him because he has no lack. This is how the Bible portrays the rich man, and it also portrays Lazarus in the opposite way.

Lazarus is portrayed to us as one that is full of sores, he needs help, he is one that is sickly in that sense. He is laid at the rich man's gate, he is not living in the rich man's palace, he is not living off the rich man's food and sustenance, he is living at the gates of the rich man, there lying at the gate. And his disposition is this, that he waits upon the rich man, hoping that he can eat some of the crumbs that falls from the rich man's table. Do you see the picture here? Here is a man that is completely satisfied, full, faring sumptuously every day in luxury, that has need of nothing, compared to a poor man who is in the disposition of one who is in need of help, that is waiting and watching and looking and hoping that some of the crumbs of a rich man will fall to his lot. One is self-sufficient, one is not self-sufficient. How does this relate? One is crying out, "Help me," the other one is saying, "I need no help." One, if we could say, is self-sufficient, and the other is God-dependent, as it relates to poorness of spirit.

And I think Charles Wesley's hymn really captures this well. He says, "All my trust on Thee is stayed, all my help from Thee I bring. Cover my defenseless head with the shadow of Thy wing." He's a man that realizes, "I am in need of God's defense, His covering as a shelter for me. I need my supply from Him, or my help from Thee I get. Everything I need is from

the Lord." He goes on to say, "Just and holy is Your name, I am all unrighteousness; false and full of sin I am, Thou art full of truth and grace." He realizes that "I am false and full of sin, but He is full of truth and grace. All I need, I must get from Him, for I have nothing in myself." That is the mark of those that are poor in spirit.

What does it look like in our lives to be poor in spirit? First and foremost, it looks like those that are not self-conscious. Something that is very unique about a beggar is that he's come probably to the point in his life where he doesn't really care what people think about him anymore—the way that he looks, the way that he dresses, even the way that he appears to society. He is not living under this self-consciousness; he has one passion: fulfill my need. And that passion so consumes him that he is not gauging what people think of him, but he is at the point of a sense of desperation where he's lost all thought and sight of what others think of him.

Remember the two blind men, blind Bartimaeus and the other one that was with him, as Jesus was walking along the road, and they said, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." The crowd said to them, "Shh, don't disturb the Master, don't disturb the Master, you're making a commotion." But the Bible says that they cried out the more, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me," and they caught the attention of our Lord. He says, "What do you want me to do for you?" He says, "Oh, that my sight may be restored," and Jesus restored their sight.

And the same thing was true of the Syrophenician woman. She kept on asking the Lord, "Lord, please deliver my daughter from demon possession, please deliver my daughter from demon possession." And Jesus said, "I'm not going to cast the bread that belongs to the children to the dogs." And what did she say? Well, she's self-conscious in such a way that she became self-defensive and said, "How dare you speak to me as such?" No, no, she said, "Oh, the little dogs can eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table." And Jesus looked at her and said, "O woman, great is your faith." A faith displayed by a poorness of spirit, a heart that was cast entirely upon God, not concerned about what the people thought of them, not concerned about what others think of them, but in a sense of desperation, "I need God."

So they were not kept back from God by fear, nor they kept back from their pursuits of God by what others might think, but they are caught up in this one thing, "Lord, I need You. I'll do whatever it takes to have more of You."

Not only that, they're marked by this brokenness of humility. Those that are poor in spirit are marked by a lowliness of mind, as demonstrated by our Lord, who esteemed others better than Himself, if we could put it that

way, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God but took upon Himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. He humbled Himself, the Bible teaches, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And those that are marked by poorness of spirit are marked by humility; they are clothed with humility.

How do you know if you're humble? What does it look like to be humble? Well, it begins by asking this question: What do you think of yourself? What you think of yourself is a good measure of your humility. What do you think of yourself? And this is what is important to realize, that those that are poor in spirit do not have the spirit of self-promotion or the spirit of carnal competition, but they are those that understand their weakness and understand who they are without God and their need of God, and so they're marked and clothed by humility.

But not only are they marked and clothed by humility, but the mark of the poorness of spirit, what does it look like, is also—it looks like pleading with God. In a very practical way, the measure of your crying out to God determines your understanding of how much you need God. The poor in spirit have a bent toward God; they are not stiff-necked and proud and stubborn, resisting God. They are coming to God, they are pleading with God, they open their hands, as it were, before God, for God's supply, for God's help.

They, unlike the saints at Laodicea, who thought they were rich and increased with goods and they thought that they were in need of nothing, but they get a stern rebuke from the Lord Jesus Christ, saying that "you don't realize that you are poor, you are miserable, you are wretched, you are blind, and you are naked." And they thought of themselves so highly as if they had need of nothing, and perhaps they had need of nothing in matter of material possessions, but this was true of them, that they were not marked by a poorness of spirit. They did not realize how much they needed God, and Jesus says to that church, "I counsel you to buy from me gold tried in the fire, garments I sell to help restore you." You know what Jesus is saying to them? He says, "What you lack, I supply. You don't see that you lack; wake up, see what you lack, and come to me and buy from me, because I will supply that what you need." In other words, what He's saying to them is, "Walk along the pathway of poorness in spirit and come to me and plead with me for my supply. Buy of Him," He's what the Lord said to them.

And Jesus goes on to say in Matthew 5:3, He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." What is the implication of this statement? What Jesus is simply saying to them, "Theirs and theirs only is the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of heaven does not belong to the proud in spirit; it belongs to the poor

in spirit, and only to the poor in spirit. If you have not come to the place where you've realized your destitute state before a holy God, darkened and dead in sin, and your need for the grace of Jesus Christ, you are still yet in your sins, marked by a proudness of spirit that will send you, like the rich man, into hell's fire. But the kingdom of heaven belongs to those that are poor in spirit, those that have come face to face with their sin and with their need for the grace of God, and they've cried out for the supply of the mercy of God to be found in Jesus Christ the Lord.

Now Jesus says here, not "theirs shall be the kingdom of heaven," although of course, as they walk along that pathway, they shall ultimately, in the final analysis, be ushered into the kingdom of heaven as those that truly belong to God. But the Bible says here that "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." It is their present possession. "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Now, think about that just for a moment. The beggar made a king and a priest unto God. The prodigal son returned to the farm at the father's house. What was put on his shoulders? A robe. Shoes on his feet. A ring on his finger. Killing of the father's calf. The praise of the father, as it were, brought into the household of God. The beggar that lays at the gates of the rich man now presently in the kingdom of heaven, now presently seated in Christ Jesus in heavenly places, now presently in the kingdom of God, under the rule and reign and experiencing the blessings of God.

Blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, has the fatherly care of the Heavenly Father, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Lord Jesus attends to him, helps him, provides for him, shepherds him, nurtures him, binds up his broken heart, binds up his wounds, ministers healing to his bones. This is what it means for those that are poor in spirit to now have the kingdom of heaven. They live under the blessedness of God's rule, His power, His consolation, His guidance. What they have forfeited here in earth to purchase, as it were, that pearl of great price, or to buy that field so that they can have that treasure, they indeed have that treasure now. Now they taste and see that the Lord is gracious. Now they walk upon a path of glory and joy and peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Now they taste and see that He's good.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, not for one day they will be ushered into, as it were, heaven, but no more than that, now they receive the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said to this little flock, and even though it was little, they were of the Father, He said, "It's your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." We possess the kingdom through Jesus Christ our Lord, and are subjects of it. Great mercy is displayed.

You ask yourself, how do I know if the kingdom of heaven is mine? Well, let me ask you this question this morning: Is your life marked by a poorness

of spirit? You say, "How may I know if my life is marked by a poorness of spirit?" Well, let me remind you of this: Do you need God's help? Do you need God's help in your home? Do you need God's help in living a godly testimony in your workplace? Do you need God's help in living as a godly member of a Christian Church? Do you need God's help as living as a godly husband in shepherding your family and raising your children the fear of the Lord? Do you sense your need of God's help as you go about your day, day by day, hour by hour? As you study the scripture, do you sense your need of God's help for even illumination and understanding? Do you sense your need of God's help when you hear the word of God, and you want to go out of this place, and all you feel like saying is, "God, give me the grace to go through this week to fulfill that which I have heard"? Do you sense your need? If you are indifferent to your need or reject the sense of need that comes upon you, or because you're willing to be proud in spirit rather than poor of spirit, you can be assured that the kingdom of heaven is not yours.

How may I know? Do you need God's help? How do I know if I know that I need God's help? What's that looking like? Well, God has provided to us a throne of grace, whereby we might obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Let me ask you this: How is your prayer life? Do you frequent the throne of grace so as to get from God that which you are lacking, so that you might go on and live for His glory and for His namesake? Do you regularly attend the throne of grace?

You say, "I'm too busy." Too busy? I think it was Martin Luther that said, "I have so much to do today that I must spend the first three hours of my day in prayer." I'm not saying that's a pattern for us to spend three hours every day in prayer; if you don't, you're not poor in spirit. But he connected this: that much to do was required for much grace. Much to do meant more dependence upon God; more dependence on God translated into more prayer. And this is true. You say, "I don't need to pray." Well, then you really have no need.

You say, "Well, I do believe I'm poor in spirit, and I do belong to the kingdom of God, but how may I become more poor in spirit? How may I continue to tread along this pathway?" Simply read and believe what the Bible says about you. What does the Bible say about us? Jesus says, "Without Me, you can do nothing." What does the Bible say about us? Paul says, "It's not that we are sufficient in ourselves, but our sufficiency comes from God."

Read the scripture, recognize what it says about us. It tells us that there are things that we cannot do, and we require God's grace in order to do it. The scripture is not presented to us in such a way that God says, "There you go, there's all the commandments; you're all by yourself now." No, the

same God that gives us the commandments also commands us, "Call unto Me, and I will help thee. Call unto Me, and I will assist thee to do that which I have told you to do." This is the way that the Bible presents it.

Don't view your success in terms of your capabilities. How many times we have success in life, and we say, "Yes, that's because I am skilled, and I did this, and I did that, and I accomplished these great things." No, no, realize what the Bible says in Psalm 75:6, "For exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south, but God is the judge: He puts down one and exalts another." You know the verses before that say that? It says this, "Do not deal boastfully, do not lift up the horn, do not lift up your horn on high, do not speak with a stiff neck." You know, the Psalmist is telling us here, the horn being lifted up, the horn is a symbol of strength, and he's saying, "Do not raise your head and lift up your horn and have this proud symbol of strength hanging on your head. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God," is what he's saying, "and He will exalt you in due time because promotion doesn't come from the east, it doesn't come from the west, nor from the south, but it comes by the determinant counsel of God who raises up some and puts down others."

And so, if you are ever blessed with any blessing, recognize that God brought it into your life and give Him praise. Don't say, "Look what my own strength has done to do all these things." That's what Nebuchadnezzar did, and he ate grass like an ox for seven years. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and let Him exalt you in due time, because the Bible says that God resists the proud, and He gives grace to the humble. And the word "resist" doesn't mean that God sets up a passive war against the proud; it actually means this, that God sets the battle in array against the proud. It's God actively, as it were, gathers armies against the proud. It's not a passive war, as it were; it sounds like that, it resists the proud, but it's an active resistance from God. He resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.

Never forget the words of Isaiah, who was prophesying the words of the Lord, who said this, "But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word." Perhaps today, for you, brothers and sisters, it's time to start displaying a poorness of spirit, to be done with pride, to lay your pride in the dust, and to walk humbly before God in the Church of God, in the household that you belong to, in your workplace, before the world. Patiently listening, enduring, engaging, learning, being teachable, being involved, sharing, not being proud and arrogant, thinking that we have discovered it all and arrived. My friends, we have not yet arrived; we have not yet arrived at full humility, neither have we arrived at the full blessing that comes along the pathway of full humility. Let us be done with carnal competitiveness, and let us have a Christlike spirit. May the Christlike spirit be everywhere found in the house of God,

in the people of God.

You say, "What shall I gain from having such a Christlike spirit and such humility? I might lose my reputation at work." Listen, if you're an unbeliever, you will gain the kingdom of heaven. If you're a believer, you continue to walk on the pathway of blessedness and experience further blessings of being part of the kingdom of God that are reserved for those that walk the pathway of the humble. This is the blessing that we would have. Happy will be that one who is poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Let us pray.