

BRYAN STATION BAPTIST CHURCH
THE PIONEER BAPTIST

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“Preaching the same truth since before Kentucky was a state.”

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THE RELIGIOUS BLACK MARKET

By: C. D. Cole

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

Acts 8:9 “*But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:*”

Our texts point a contrast. They give us two kinds of people. The first gives us the spirit of those in the kingdom of heaven; the other tells of a man who publicized himself as some great person. Those in the kingdom of heaven – the saved – are poor in spirit; those outside the kingdom – the lost – are proud in spirit.

We have heard it said of certain boastful fellows that if they could be bought for what they are worth and sold for what they think they are worth, there would be an immense profit.

On the wall of a tailor shop, catering exclusively to the men of our armed forces, there was a sign which read, “Hats altered to fit any promotion.” This was a smart sign slyly aimed at those who let a little success go to their heads.

This thing of acquiring something illegally and selling above ceiling price is called a black mar-

ket. It means to acquire unlawfully and sell at exorbitant price. This evil takes advantage of scarcity to exploit the helpless. And it has permeated almost every business and has given rise to hitherto unheard of kinds of business. We now hear of a black market in babies. There are baby brokers who acquire illegitimate babies and sell them to eager foster parents for large sums of money.

My texts suggest a religious black market. By this I mean there are people who are self-righteous, and who like to parade their so-called piety. Like Simon Magus, they give out that they are important people. Like the Pharisees of old, they blow their own horn to attract and receive the praise of others. They sell themselves for more than they are worth.

But those who are in the kingdom of heaven are not operating any black market. They are poor in spirit. In their conversion their spirit of self-righteousness was slain. They lost hope in themselves and found hope in Christ. They became poor in their own eyes and became rich in Christ. They became nothing, and Christ became all and in all. They gave self a vote of no confidence and Christ a vote of full confidence. With empty

hands they cling to the cross of Christ as the only way of salvation.

Spiritual Photography

In the beatitudes we have spiritual photography. Photography is followed as a livelihood by some and as a hobby by many others. In Kodak albums you will see the same persons in many places and various postures. So in the beatitudes we have a moral album of the saint in many postures and from many angles. They are spiritual snapshots with no thought of posing for a picture. Matthew 5:3, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” The first beatitude gives us a picture of the saved man as being poor in spirit. He does not think much of himself. Verse 4, “*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*” The second is the same person as a mourner. He is a mourner over sins; his sins and the sins of others, to him sin is a grievous thing. Verse 5, “*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*” The third gives his attitude towards earthly possessions. He is not fighting for them, for the meek will inherit the earth when it becomes worth having. Verse 6, “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*” The fourth

beatitude gives us the desire of the saint for personal and practical righteousness; he is longing to be perfectly whole. And some day he will be filled with the goodness he desires.

The beatitudes give us the feeling the child of God has when occupied with himself. They give us what the saint is in his own eyes. And they show us that he is not selling himself on any black market for more than he is worth. In his own eyes he is worth little. He gladly confesses that he is only a sinner and nothing at all.

The Poor in Spirit

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” What does it mean to be poor in spirit? It does not mean to be spiritually poor. There is no blessing in spiritual poverty. It is not what we are, but what we are in our own estimation, that is here intended. To be poor in spirit means to be consciously poor in personal worthiness. All are poor in personal righteousness, but all do not know it. Many think of themselves more highly than they should. It is one thing to be poor in personal righteousness and quite another thing to realize it. To be poor in spirit is the realization that in ourselves we are nothing, and have nothing, and can do nothing, and have need of all things. It is to be sin-conscious. To be poor in spirit is an attitude towards self. Saints are more sensitive to sin than are the lost. It does not take much sin to fill the saved person; yea, a very little makes him sick at heart, and causes him to cry with the apostle Paul, Romans 7:24, *“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”*

To be poor in spirit is the very antithesis of that proud haughty, self-important disposition manifested by the world in general and by Simon Magus in particular. The spirit of those in the kingdom of heaven was strikingly manifested by Job who said, Job 42:6, *“Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”* Isaiah 6:5, *“Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, ...”* Paul exclaimed in Romans 7:21, *“...when I would do good, evil is present with me.”*

To be poor in spirit is not the same as an inferiority complex. It is not what we are in comparison with other men like ourselves, but what we are in comparison with Christ, and with what we ought to be. Spurgeon used to say: “In the kingdom of heaven the question is not, are you a peer, but are you poor in spirit? It is those who are of no account in their own eyes, who are of the blood royal of the universe.”

To be poor in spirit is foundational in any experience of grace. It marks the beginning of the withering work of the Holy Spirit, and it is also a mark of growth in grace. Salvation begins with a feeling of dissatisfaction with self, and the saved man continues as he began. The saint is ever conscious of his need of grace and of more grace.

To be poor in spirit is not natural to men, man by nature is self-important, self-sufficient, and self-righteous. It was only after grace had wrought mightily in Saul of Tarsus that he felt himself to be a chief of sinners. The natural man wears two kinds of spectacles. If he is looking for sin he puts on the kind that diminishes when he is

looking at self, and magnifies when he is looking at his neighbor. If he is looking for good he wears the pair that magnifies when he is looking at self and minifies when he is looking at his fellow man. I looked at my brother with the microscope of criticism and said, “How coarse my brother is!” Then I looked in the mirror of truth and said, “How like me my brother is!” The best way to take the starch of pride out of a man is to let him look at himself in the mirror of God’s word.

The government has been rather severe on people who operate a black market, and God will be severe on those who operate a religious black market. Those who exalt themselves will be abased. The man who sells himself for more than he is worth, saying, Matthew 7:22, *“...Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”*

The poor in spirit are said to be blessed because this spirit belongs to those who are in the kingdom of heaven. Such an attitude towards self is one of the evidences of the new birth. It is to have a disposition exactly opposite to what they had by nature. And notice, the promise is for the present: *“...theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* Many are the gracious promises addressed to the poor in spirit. Psalm 40:17, *“But I am poor and needy; yet the LORD thinketh upon me: ...”* Psalm 70:5, *“But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliver; O LORD, make no tarrying.”* Isaiah 66:2, *“...to this man will I look, even to*

him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

No Gospel in the Beatitudes

I think it will help us to see that there is no gospel in the beatitudes or in the sermon on the mount. The beatitudes do not tell us what we are in Christ. They have nothing to say about the death of Christ; nothing to say about faith in Christ; nothing to say about the imputed righteousness of Christ. Our Lord is not describing the feeling which results from faith in Christ, but rather his thoughts and emotions when he is occupied with himself, and not the forward and upward look at Christ. He is telling us what the saint is in his own eyes on account of his own record. Every Christ reader must surely see his own portrait in this beatitude. This is a snapshot taken by the Holy Spirit of those who are in the kingdom of heaven. They are not proud and self-sufficient, but are poor in spirit. They are conscious that they are not what they ought to be, nor what they want to be, nor what they shall yet be, by the grace of God.

Our Lord began His sermon on the mount with benedictions on the saved rather than with maledictions on the wicked. He makes us know wherein true blessedness consists. He describes those who are truly blessed or fortunate. The word "blessed" in the beatitudes does not speak of feeling, but of state or condition. Those here spoken of do not feel good or happy. One may have a happy feeling and at the same time be in a sorrowful or miserable condition. The drunkard has a glorious feeling, but is in a miserable condition. The Laodiceans felt fine, but their feelings were not a true index of their condition.

Revelation 3:15-17, *"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:"*

There is Christian Joy

We are not saying that the Christian is without joy, but his joy is not in himself. He rejoices in the Lord and has no confidence in the flesh. Luke 10:20, *"...rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."* This cause of rejoicing is not in his attainments or personal worthiness. Paul speaking in Philippians 3:3, *"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."* Philippians 4:4, *"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice."*

A well-balanced ministry will promote humility as well as hope; it will turn the eyes of the believer

upon himself and his failures, as well as upon Christ and His finished work. None but the poor in spirit can properly hope in Christ. Nobody but a conscious sinner can be trusting Christ as Saviour.

In the beatitudes our Lord is not telling the lost how to be saved; He is telling the saved how to identify themselves as members of the kingdom of heaven. He is not presenting the way of salvation, but describing those who are already in the way. Every child of God can find his portrait from many angles in the beatitudes.

The True Gospel

I Corinthians 15:1-4, *"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:"*

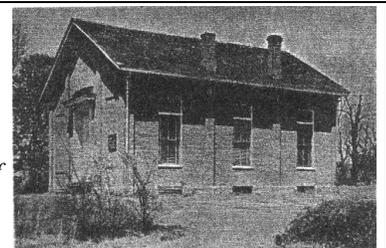
TAKING A LOOK BACK

From BSBC church minutes:

At a Church meeting held at John Mason's Thirteenth of August, 1788. The church took into Consideration the Conduct of our Brother William E. Waller, in his manner of leaving of us, are unanimously of opinion that his Conduct was Disorderly, and for the same Disfellowship him. Adjourned till meeting in Course. A. Dudley, Mdr., J. Mason, Clk.

At a Church meeting held at the meeting house at Bryan's, Third Saturday in August, 1788...A motion made respecting a plan for the Support of a minister Referd. Then adjourned till meeting in Course. A. Dudley, Mdr., J. Mason, Clk.

At a Church meeting held at the meeting house at Bryan's Third Saturday in September, 1788—A Reference from last meeting Respecting a plan for the Discharge of our Duty in Supporting our Minister. The Church are of opinion that the Minister of our Church Receive from us the sum of Fifty pounds to be paid in such Property as each person Shall think proper at the Common Selling price and that the Proportion for each one to pay be ascertained by a member of the Brethren appointed for that purpose...Then adjourned till meeting in Course. Ambrose Dudley, Mdr., John Mason, Clk.



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 Don Waltermire, Assistant Pastor

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Sunday Morning Worship—11 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship—6 p.m.
Wednesday Prayer Service—7 p.m.

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