

LETTERS TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE

Vol. I No. 3

July 2006

RECIPE FOR A BLESSED LIFE

Text: Matthew 5:3-12

When I was studying in the National Institute of Education (NIE), we were taught that in order to capture our students' attention to listen to our lessons, it is important to have a catchy introduction. Jesus, the Master Teacher, knew this well. He began His sermon by addressing an issue that is of great interest to His hearers – the recipe for a blessed life. This series of blessings proclaimed by Jesus in Matthew 5:3-12 is now popularly known as the Beatitudes.

Just like the people who heard Jesus on the mount, I am sure all of you want to know how to have a blessed life. Let us do so by observing the following.

I. The Character of the Christian

The world often teaches us that the way to success and happiness is to be aggressive and self-confident. The Beatitudes teaches the opposite. The blessed are those who are poor in spirit, meek and mourn for their sins. They seek after righteousness and not the things of the world. They are also willing to be persecuted while standing for the truth. In summary, the blessed are those whose character reflects that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their confidence lies in the Almighty God and not in their own abilities.

Let us take note that the description given in the Beatitudes is what every Christian is meant to be. Any unregenerate person will **NOT** be able to demonstrate all of the traits found in the Beatitudes. His will is to rebel against the one living and true God. He can only manifest the works of the flesh which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness and revellings. Such do not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal 5:19 – 21). Only those who are born again by the Spirit are able to display the character of a citizen of heaven. They bear the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance (Gal 5:22 – 23). This is the working power of grace in the hearts of all citizens of the kingdom of God.

Dear reader, are you born again? If you have not repented of your sins and believe in your heart that the Lord Jesus Christ died for your sins, was buried and rose up again on the third day, you will never be able to experience the blessed life. Believe today. Do not delay. Ye must be born again.

II. The Blessedness of the Christian

The second lesson we want to draw from the Beatitudes is this – the Christian will have a blessed (or super happy) life. This is something the world cannot understand. How can a person that mourns be happy? How can a person that is undergoing suffering still have joy? What many do not understand is that Christians possess something which they do not have – the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is the bread of life which causes us to never hunger (John 6:35). It is because of Him that we have this blessed hope in this life – the hope of eternal life and joy where there will be no more tears, death, sorrow or pain (Rev 21:4). It is the knowledge of this hope that allowed Paul and Silas to sing praises unto God in the Philippi jail (Acts 16:25).

Now that we know that Christians are supposed to be super happy, why are there times when we are so despondent and unhappy? Could it be that we have lost sight of what it means to be a child of God? Have we stopped manifesting the character of a Christian as shown in the Beatitudes and started walking in the way of sin? If that is the case, it is no wonder why we have become depressed. We have followed the wrong recipe – a life that is full of ourselves but devoid of God. We are just like the Israelites during the time of Moses who just have to enter the Promised Land in order to possess it. But they chose not to trust in the promises of God and do things their own way. The promise of God to us is that all Christians will have a blessed life. What remains for us is to grab hold of this promise and possess it.

III. Conclusion

Dear reader, do you want to lead a super happy life? The world out there will tell you to assert yourself, follow your heart and build a positive self-image. It will tell you to pursue your passion in life. Alas, without Christ, such things will only lead to temporary happiness. The way to true happiness is to follow the recipe as stated in the Beatitudes. We must seek God. We must fear Him. We must submit our all to Him. The hymn writer Elisha A. Hoffman writes:

You have longed for sweet peace and for faith to increase,

And have earnestly, fervently prayed;

But you cannot have rest or be perfectly blest

Until all on the altar is laid

Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid?

Your heart doth the Spirit control?

You can only be blest and have peace and sweet rest

As you yield Him your body and soul.

The way of God is the way of happiness. The way of the world is the way of despondence. Amen.

C Chew

1 July 2006