

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Taught by Bruce Bickel

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Heavenly Father, it is well with our soul because of your grace. Certainly, we do not have the resources in ourselves to cause you to do anything for us, but we just receive the overflow of what you choose to do in all of your grace and your glory. Father, we pray that you would give us a realistic view of ourselves that we might see who you are more clearly. Father, we just trust once again that you'd be pleased to open our eyes that we might see you, the God of biblical revelation not the god of our human imagination, and may it be so for Jesus' sake. Amen.

We started last week looking at the first of the eight Beatitudes, the preamble to the Sermon on the Mount, known as the Beatitudes, the beautiful attitudes. They all begin with the word "blessed," which literally means in the Greek text it means happy in spite of circumstances. There's a difference between happenings and being happy in spite of circumstances, and that's the blessedness, the divine description that is given everybody who has this mindset about themselves as recorded in these eight Beatitudes.

If you look at handout 3, lesson 3, essentially, poor in spirit is seeing yourself in reality. You say what does it really mean? It means I really see myself in my real condition before a holy God. The problem with our world is we really don't see ourselves realistically. We have all of these made up, different conversations about ourselves, trying to make ourselves feel good about ourselves, and the best way you can really feel good about yourself is to know that it is well with your soul. That's what it means when Jesus says, "Blessed are you." In other words, we're not victim of circumstances.

Happiness generally occurs because of happenings. What Jesus is saying is that you're happy in spite of circumstances because I've changed your disposition through my grace. But the first reality is this—you've got to see yourself as you really are. This is one of the most positive forms of building us up in understanding of who we are because it opens up to being fulfilled by the grace of God.

We need to understand that poor in spirit is not a one-time event. It's not something that just happens to you and then it's over. Poor in spirit is something that God changes the disposition of your heart because you see yourself as you really are compared to his holiness. That's why in the Gospel presentation, we start with the holiness of God. You don't start with the needs of man; you start with the holiness of God. Then you see the sinfulness of man, so that people begin to see themselves in their reality so that they'll understand the need for a Savior—the person and work of Christ—and then their need for the human response is repentance and faith.

It's very important that we see ourselves in reality, and that means we compare ourselves to God's holiness. Poor in spirit is not something that just happens one time. It's really a mindset that you begin to realize the more mature you are in grace, the more you see yourself in reality and begin to realize that you don't have the resources to live the Christian life.

One of the questions last week was, "How do we live the Christian life?" Well you really can't. You see, you and I were never designed to live the Christian life. The only person who can live a Christ-like life is Christ himself. That's why you and I put our trust in him, and at that moment we are justified, we are given credit for his sinless perfection and perfect obedience. The whole concept of justification is based upon our understanding of seeing ourselves in reality.

If you'll take a look at your handout, I tried to summarize some of the concepts that we've been talking about. You'll notice that item B, we learned at the very outset, when we understand that God, through his grace, that we do not have the spiritual resources to put any of these sermons, truths of the Sermon

on the Mount, into application into our lives. We just don't have the resources to do it. That's why the issue of trust is so important; the idea of believing on the person and work of Christ.

Remember the word "believe" is a very, very active word. It is not a word that just means giving mental assent. It's the acrostic DART. It means to depend upon, adhere to, rely upon and trust in. It's when you see yourself in reality, brothers, and realize that I don't have the spiritual resources to be all that God calls me to be. That is not something that's a one-time event. That's something that is just constantly in your mindset as you mature in Christ.

That's why you and I really do not become more spiritual. Spirituality is an absolute. It's an absolute defined by the person and work of Christ. You and I do not become more spiritual; we become more mature. Maturity is more of Christ and less of me. That's poor in spirit. So poor in spirit is not something that's a one-time event. It's the initial inscription of the Holy Spirit working in your life to begin to let you see yourself as you really are and your need for a Savior. That's why it's the first of the Beatitudes. It's foundational to all the others. You won't be able to mourn, you won't be able to be meek, you won't be able to pursue righteousness until you first see yourself in reality and realize I don't have the resources to do all that God wants me to be.

Brothers, that's one of the most positive things that we can ever discover about yourself. You see, when you come to that realization, that's one of the first evidences the Holy Spirit is doing a work in your soul and your heart, so that now you can be filled with God's grace. You see, something has to be removed from us, and that's our own self-sufficiency and our ego and our own pride so that we can be filled with God's grace. Poor in spirit is the means by which Jesus teaches us in the first of the Beatitudes. You've really got to see yourself in reality.

Notice, we cannot fulfill God's standards ourselves. God's standard is absolute perfection. Do you have to be perfect to get to heaven? The answer is...

Audience Members: Yes.

Yes. Absolutely. He doesn't grade on a curve. Are you perfect?

Audience Members: No.

Therefore you need a Savior. That's poor in spirit. It's that recognition that here's the standard and I can't do it. It's the moment that you say, "I can't do it. I don't have what it takes. I don't have the resources," is the moment that God's grace begins to infuse your life, and the moment the Holy Spirit begins to help you see yourself in reality, and all of a sudden, your disposition changes. Your desire changes to live differently.

You see, you no longer have that natural inclination to take the definition of the Christian life as the little red choo-choo who says, "I think I can. I think I can. I think I can." In reality, when you see yourself in reality through poor in spirit, it's to realize this—I know I can't, but he can. I know I can't, but he can. You see, you and I just don't have the resources.

Audience Member: What's that DART again? Depend upon...

DART—it's the idea of believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved. Believe does not mean give mean mental assent to some facts about a man. It means to depend upon, adhere to, rely upon and trust in. It's the acrostic DART. That's the idea of believing. It's something that's very, very aggressive. Believing on the person and work of Christ is not sitting on your haunches just contemplating facts. It's

this aggressive response to say I'm going to depend upon him today when I realize I don't have the resources to go into this meeting, "I don't know what I'm going to do. I'm going to depend upon him. God, give me the grace. Your grace is sufficient." You see, it's that mindset. Every time you do that, you're basically expressing the fact that you understand what it means to be poor in spirit.

Poor in spirit is not something that happens to you; it's something that you become. It's something that matures in your life. The more you see yourself, the more we mature in Christ, the more we see ourselves as poor in spirit because you just begin to realize my whole life is an expression that I don't have the resources, and I have to trust. I have to depend upon. I've got to rely upon the person and work of Christ. That's poor in spirit. It's one of the most positive things that we can see because it really starts with seeing ourselves in reality. But it really takes on our egos. It takes on our self-sufficiency. It takes on the idea that I'm the captain of my own ship. No, you're not. You see, to be poor in spirit realizes I can't guide the ship. Christ can guide the ship, and he needs to be the captain of my soul. It means that we must come to him in knowledge of our spiritual bankruptcy. For someone to be bankrupt means you have no resources. So we recognize our spiritual bankruptcy.

We empty ourselves of all our self-righteousness, of our moral self-esteem, and our personal vain glory. You see, the more that we get rid of that, the more God fills us with his grace. That's poor in spirit. It's something that is constantly changed our disposition the way we think of ourselves. You see, it's really the beginning of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit when he begins empower us by his grace, but we've got to get rid of all those vain glorious things that we think that we make a difference.

One of the things I had to realize years ago, it took me a long time to get to that, and that was that I really can't make a difference in anything. Now that was a personal affront to my ego because all my training says you've got all this training and all this education so that you can make a difference. I began to realize that I can't make a difference. All I can do is be an expression of giving away what God has given to me, which is our definition of ministry. It's in the midst of that realizing I'm resourceless to make a difference in anybody's life. And so I've just got to trust the person and work of Christ and recognize my inability to change anything. But we can transform things. That's why Paul says, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

I would love to hear some politician... I just get sick and tired of all these politicians saying, "We need change. We need change. Vote for me and we'll change this, we'll change that, we'll change this. Because it's time for America to change." Well guys, you can't change a lick! You can't change a thing! I would love to hear some politician say, "I can't change anything; I'm just going to try help you think differently." You see, we're going to transform the way you think. That's what Paul says, "Do not be conformed to the system of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." You see, people act out how they think. What Jesus is saying is this—you've got to think of yourself as poor in spirit because when you see yourself resource less, as bankrupt in all of the spiritual resources you need to have to be glorifying to God, when you come to that realization and you think that way, you're going to act differently, and your actions will be that you're now going to be blessed because you're going to be happy in spite of circumstances.

Bill: *Don't you think when you think poor in spirit of yourself, you really don't have much of a problem with election.*

That would be correct. That's a good insight. When you think correctly, of being poor in spirit, you shouldn't have a problem with election. I'm going to get into that because I know some people... I got some notes last week... people were somewhat...

Audience Member: *Surprised.*

Audience Member: Intrigued.

Intrigued. Thank you. {LAUGHTER} Their expression was a bit more aggressive than that. About the whole concept of election. People say it's not fair. Well let me get into that in a moment. But you're absolutely right. When you begin to see yourself in reality, you realize that all of my righteousness is as what?

Audience Members: Filthy rags.

Filthy rags. It's filthy rags. If God's standard is holiness, how are my filthy rags going to be acceptable to him to say, "Oh, I'm going to let you not my kingdom because you're wrapped in filthy rags." Who does he wrap us in? The righteousness of Christ. We're wrapped in the robes of righteousness. God sees you differently. The way that you see yourself in reality opens up all the mercies of God. It opens up all the compassion of God. You begin to realize that election is one of the most merciful, compassionate, kind, loving doctrines in all of Scripture, because he does something for you that you can't do for yourself. You see, that's the whole issue of being poor in spirit. It's recognizing our spiritual bankruptcy. It's emptying of ourselves to these things. We're ready for him to fill us with his grace. And that is a constant, repetitious thing.

As Paul writes in Ephesians, "Be filled with the spirit." That doesn't mean a one-time event. This is not a second blessing after your conversion. You're converted to Christ and now you're filled with the Holy Spirit. No, you see, literally that means be being kept filled. It is a constant, progressive attitude that's always going on in your life. It literally means to be led by. But the idea is this—do not be drunk with wine and debauchery because it leads to drunkenness, but be filled with the spirit. It means be being kept filled. It means moment by moment you're in this condition of being kept constantly filled with the Holy Spirit, and it starts with by being poor in spirit. The degree to which you and I recognize our spiritual bankruptcy will be the degree to which we will be being kept filled. How you think determines how you act.

You see, character precedes conduct, because who we are determines what we do. Character precedes conduct, because who we are determines what we do. Jesus is saying this—you've got to see yourself in reality. First of all, you've got to be poor in spirit and recognize the variance that exists between my holiness and your innate sinfulness and realize that you don't have the spiritual resources to fill that gap, and I'm the only one that can do that. You see, that's the beginning of the flicker of the grace of God working in your life. That's something that constantly just deepens and grows as we understand and become more mature in Christ.

Let me just summarize a couple of things here for us. What do we mean when we say "blessed are the poor in spirit?" It's the opposite of that haughty self-assertive and self-sufficient disposition, which the world loves to admire, to encourage and to teach. We get rid of this self-assertive and self-sufficient disposition that says, "I can do anything." It's basically realizing, "I can do nothing, spiritually, that pleases God. He alone is the resource." It's the very reverse of the independent and defiant attitude which refuses to bow down to God, which determines to brave things out because I've got the strength to do it, which says like Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" You see, that's the opposite of poor in spirit. The opposite of poor in spirit is this—who is the Lord that I should obey him?

You see, to be poor in spirit is to realize that I have nothing, that I am nothing and I can do nothing and have need of all things in Christ. Poverty of spirit is the conscientiousness of my emptiness, the result of which the spirit begins to work within the soul of a man, or a person. It issues from the painful discovery that all of my righteousness is as filthy rags.

The very best I do is really from God's point of view filthy rags. It follows the awareness that my best performances are unacceptable and are an abomination to the Lord. That's not easy to digest in our humanness. My very best sermon, my very best instruction, my very best activity is unacceptable? Do you realize that? What hope is there for us? Our hope is in the person and work of Christ. You see, that's poor in spirit. It's realizing, "Man, I really nailed it, but it's unacceptable." "I really did the best thing I've ever done in my life," and it's an abomination.

You see, it's coming to that realization. That's when the Holy Spirit begins to lead you and fill you because your thinking in yourself and reality. That doesn't mean that we don't study and we don't work hard. I'm not saying thing. It's our motivation to realize because of God's grace, you now have the desire, the disposition, you have a changed desire to want to do those things and do them well, but you realize you don't get credit for it. All the credit you got was in the sacrifice of the person and work of Christ. There's no merit in the very best thing you and I do. You see, that's contrary to everything you learn at all these instructions and Carnegie...

Audience Member: *It's not that we get the credit, we live our lives in order to give God the glory. But if we preach a good sermon and bring forth the message, we've been used as an instrument of the hands of God. God speaks to the hearts of the congregation and transforms, and we can't just let, like you said, we can't do anything, but God can utilize us to that end.*

Amen.

Audience Member: *And I think that the difference, poor in spirit is, in the flesh, I want to use God as a resource to fulfill my plan and my dream, and then [UNCLEAR] spirit is where we recognize it. The best we can do is be an instrument for God to use in order that he might fulfill his purposes.*

Amen. There's a great difference there. It's a good distinction. One of the greatest distinctions of...

Bishop Rogers: *I was just sitting here pondering because there are other passages where we're described not only as self-righteous, but actually enemies of God. In a way poorness of spirit is already a little bit kinder way of describing our condition than an enemy of God. It's the same thing.*

The same thing.

Bishop Rogers: *But it's a gentler way to describe...*

We don't like to think of that. One of the greatest contrasts that I see in the Scripture is in John 5 and John 8, where Jesus says this, "I initiate nothing on my own. I only do those things that I see the Father doing."

I told you last week I had three different men come to me and say, "I'm going to start a ministry. Will you support me?" Now I'm saying, "Why are you starting anything? Aren't you the ministry already?" "No, I need to create something."

Now you notice Jesus' illustration here is magnificent. His life was based upon two things—subjection and revelation. What he saw the Father doing, he submitted himself to. He became what I call an aggressive responder to what God is doing around his life.

Guys, that's one of the most freeing things we could ever discover is this—you and I do not need to initiate ministry. You and I are the ministry. We are the ministry. I said to these men, "What have you

been doing since you were converted? Since your regeneration? What have you been doing? You are in full-time work because your lifestyle is your ministry.” So we become aggressive responders, and realize that I’m not smart enough to create some ministry. I don’t have the resources to do that. Now that doesn’t mean that I don’t expand and I don’t pray and I don’t discern. Certainly you do all that. But the end result is how can I discern what God is doing around me and then I want to join that so I can be an aggressive responder. That’s poor in spirit. That’s how you begin to apply this idea of realizing I don’t have the spiritual resources, because I’m not going to make a difference. God is the only one who can make the difference. What we do is we have this treasure in earthen vessels to show that the all-surpassing power comes from God and not from us. That’s poor in spirit. You see, you’re the vessel. The treasure is he shares his life with us. Christianity is a shared life experience. God shares his life with us.

Coop: *Absolutely to what you’re saying to this point. Personally, myself, I turned off that cable because it sending you thousands of messages about the world that drowns out the [UNCLEAR] should be. So it’s something that you can do is just turn that off and send that \$100 a month or \$50 a month to a missionary and go read the Bible and turn off television or get it off the air, I mean [UNCLEAR].*

If you’d like to hear some great exposition and understanding about the impact of mass media upon Christianity in the west, read Ravi Zacharias’ new book, *Why Jesus*. It has to deal with the impact of mass media communication upon Western Christianity. It is really phenomenal—he gives all the resources of how mass media is shaping the mindset of the church in America of how we look at Jesus. It’s the infusion of Eastern Mysticism, all the other “isms”—Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, all the Eastern meditation, all those things are creeping in because it’s such a popular thing in mass media, but it’s beginning to shape the mind of how we look at Christ.

Audience Member: *Who is the author?*

Ravi Zacharias—you can go on his web page, which is rzim.org, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, and look at the book. By the way, the first week of June...we could pray about this...he’s asked me if I would come and be with him at his international Christian apologetic conference in Izmir, Turkey, the first week of June, to teach on Biblical Leadership and Management. He said I’ve got these magnificent students. There are going to be students from UK, Canada, United States, India, Japan, Hong Kong, China, Thailand, several other countries, are all coming together where he is teaching them how to deal with Christian apologetics. That would be defending the Christian faith with those who don’t believe in it. He says, “I’m dealing with their minds. These are magnificent intellectuals. Bruce, they’re just so brilliant, but they need something from the heart. Can you come and just talk about what it means to be a leader, a servant leader, from the heart position?” He’s giving me two days to take his 75 students and just walk them through such things as the Beatitudes, because what I’m going to talk about is ethical decision making, and I just teach the Beatitudes. That will be the first week of June, and we can talk more about that.

If you really want to see the impact of mass media communications upon the mind of the Christian church in America, read his book, *Why Jesus*. It’s really phenomenal. He says one of the greatest impacters on American Christianity is Oprah Winfrey, how she has changed the whole concept of Christianity in America. She’s one of them. He gives several other instances of people who mass media has just bought into that because it is opposite of poor in spirit, guys. It’s exactly the opposite. So please read that. It’ll be very, very inspirational and informative and give us great equipment to realize how we can deal with a world that is really just controlled by Twitter, Facebook and everything else. It really fosters narcissism, individuality and narcissism.

One of the great things we need to realize...

Audience Member: *Is narcissism love of self?*

Yes. It's making yourself become....your self-deification. The real issue is narcissism is deifying yourself. I become my own God. That's essentially it.

You see, the beautiful message of the Scripture, brothers, when you understand poor in spirit, is that God's great salvation is without money and without price. This ought to be one of the most merciful and one of the most compassionate provisions in all of divine grace is to realize that if we had to purchase God's salvation, we have no resources in which we could buy it. And so it is without money and without price.

One of my Puritan friends says this about poverty in spirit, "Poverty of spirit may be termed the negative side of faith. It is that realization of my utter worthlessness which precedes my trusting the person and work of Christ. It is the Spirit emptying the heart of self that Christ may fill it: it is a sense of need and destitution. This first Beatitude, then, is foundational to all Christian living." That's a pretty good understanding of what we talk about in poor in spirit.

Audience Member: *Who was that? Which Puritan was that?*

That was Thomas Manton. Let me take through some Scriptures to help us understand this. Look at your notes please. We'll see if we have some time to go through some things. Let's turn to Genesis 3. I would encourage you, brothers, to take a look at those Scriptures I gave you and read them in order because that gives you a very good illustration of the concept of poor in spirit and leads us down to our summary of seeing ourselves in reality.

Let's turn to Genesis 3 and this will tell us why we cannot see ourselves as we really are in reality. Genesis 3:1-7, "¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, "You shall not eat of any tree in the garden"?' "²And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths."

Of course, that's the historical description of the fall. When we see that Satan intervened and basically, when you compare that to Genesis 2 and what God did say, you'll basically see this—doubt, distortion, denial, death. The first thing that Satan does is plant a doubt. Notice what he says. He doesn't say anything except to ask questions. "Did God say?" That's a question. That's planting a doubt.

You see, that's what people are going to do to us. They're going to say, "Well, that isn't fair, is it?" You see, they're planting a doubt. The very first thing that Satan does is plant a doubt. The next thing he does, he distorts it. "God didn't say that." There was a doubt, and she repeated something back that was a distortion. So he distorted it. The third thing was he denied it, "Surely God will not have you die." There's doubt, distortion, denial, and the end result was death.

Don: *I think that that first thing about doubt is so important because I think it's plaguing the church today.*

Amen!

Don: *Whether it be [UNCLEAR] creationism—now I'm stepping on toes here, I know—or hell or whatever. Has God really said? Wow!*

Yes. See, that's the beginning of it. That's what you have to fight, guys. That's why I keep saying to us, we've got to adhere to the God of biblical revelation not the god of human imagination. The God of human imagination is caused by doubt. Certainly, we all have doubts. We have to give those to Christ and say, "Father, remove those thoughts from my mind."

Tom: *Another aspect is of that I think is the word counterfeit. I think that's why Oprah Winfrey is so popular spiritually because it seems good, but when you examine it, it's false.*

Right. Counterfeit. Exactly. So here's what happens. Initially, Adam and Eve were living in complete dependency upon the Lord, upon God; absolute dependency. He gave them everything. Their sustenance, their joy, whatever it is. We don't know a lot about it, but we do this—prior to the fall, they lived in absolute freedom, absolute dependency upon God for everything. Now sin came in, and notice what happened. Their eyes were opened.

Let me try to give you an illustration. When you live in light, what's the size of your pupils? Very small. Right? When you go into darkness, what happens? Your pupils expand. Their eyes were opened. What happened to their pupils? They got bigger because they went from light to darkness. That's what happened. They went from light, which is absolute dependency upon God; now they begin to live in darkness. That's why they saw themselves and began to cover themselves up, because they didn't have to do that beforehand, because they were light. You see, what doubt, distortion and denial does, it changes our view of who God is. It changes how we see ourselves, and what we try to do now is cover everything up and wear a mask. So what happened? They went from light to darkness, and they began to live in darkness and tried to cover themselves up.

Now let's go to the next verse I want you to see in this progression. Go to Genesis 5:1-3, "¹This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. ²Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. ³When Adam had lived 130 years," now this is after the fall, "he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth."

Now something happened back when he went from light to darkness. Naturally, when all procreation we have the image of God. There is that certain there, but it's changed in the sense of what is it that he gave to his son. It was his likeness of which his view of God had changed because he was now in darkness, and all of a sudden, all generations after that are born in the likeness of man. Now yes, we have the likeness of God in us, in our generalities. But there's a likeness of man as a result of the fall. That's why we have the doctrine of original sin. We were all born in darkness.

Last week, somebody said they were offended by the fact that I said that people were going to hell. Everybody is born going to hell. God doesn't send them there. They're on their way because they're born what? In the likeness of man. They're born in the lineage of Adam because of the fall. Certainly we have the image of God, but it's been a tainted image. It's been a deformed image. It's been a depraved image. That's because everybody from Adam on was born in his likeness. We take on this deformed, depraved, damaged view of God's likeness because of original sin. Everybody is on the way to hell. That's why election is so compassionate. That's why election is so tender. That's why election is so loving.

Now let me just try to give you an illustration. Whenever we try to create human illustrations of biblical truths, it's always dangerous, because we're always going to belittle it and we're always going to lessen its glory, but at least let me try to put something in your mind to help you understand this. Let's just say that we have a building with 10 people in it, and those 10 people represent all human creation, from Adam on—10 people.

They're in this building and they are not the accused waiting trial; they're the convicted waiting execution. There's a difference. We think that we're the accused awaiting trial. The trial has already occurred. In this illustration, these are not 10 people, the accused waiting trial; they are 10 people who are convicted of their heinous treason against God, and they're waiting execution. They're born that way.

Now let's just say the building gets on fire and a fireman runs in and he grabs six. He pulls out six. What are you going to say about that act? It's not fair. It's not fair. It's not fair. Why didn't he grab the other four? Well it's not fair. It's not fair that he only grabbed six. You see, that's the mindset that we have about election. We think that it's not fair, when in reality, the fact that God saved anybody is an act of grace, it's an act of love, it's an act of compassion, let alone because I'm one of the convicted waiting execution. If the fireman ran in and got one person, you would have to say what? That is an act of love, it's an act of compassion, it's an act of mercy, it's an act of bravery. If he just saved one person, because they're all convicted, waiting for execution. They're not waiting trial. The trial has already occurred, and yet we have the audacity to say, when we understand election, it's not fair, because we think that we're still the accused waiting trial, when really, we're the convicted waiting execution.

Don: *I think that as Americans, it's even [UNCLEAR] to accept that because, you know, what are we constantly told that we're entitled; everybody [UNCLEAR] [OVERLAPPING]...*

There you go.

Don: *[UNCLEAR] rights, yeah, and [UNCLEAR]. Everybody should [UNCLEAR] it's not fair that someone has more than me or whatever, and so it's very difficult for us as Americans to believe the doctrine of election, that God is sovereign and saves who he will. Like you said, it's an act of grace. Pure justice would be that everybody perishes.*

Absolutely. Now notice, we need to understand...we've done this before, but sometimes repetition is good for us. We need to understand the difference between justice, mercy and grace. Justice is getting what you deserve. In that illustration of the 10 people representing humanity, in this building that's on fire, they all deserve what? Death because the convicted awaiting execution. They're not the accused waiting trial; they're convicted waiting their execution. They deserve that. We deserve that. Justice is getting what you deserve.

The last thing, brothers, you ever want to ask for is, "Just give me what I deserve." The Old Testament says it this way, "The soul that sins shall die." You ever sin? Why are you alive? Because of mercy. Mercy is not getting all that you deserve. The New Testament says it this way, "The wages of sin is death." Don't ever ask for what you deserve. God just might give it to you.

You see, we deserve what we just read because we're now living in darkness. That's what we deserve. Election, God's grace rescues us; does the one thing that we can't do ourselves. We can't save ourselves from this flaming inferno. God alone is the only one that can do that. Why he chose to save one person is the real issue, not why didn't he save the other four. You see, our mindset says it's not fair. Fairness is not one of God's character qualities. Righteousness and justice and holiness are.

Secondly is this—justice is getting what we deserve, mercy is not getting all that you deserve, and grace is getting what you don't deserve. Grace is getting what you don't deserve. When you and I see ourselves in reality, when I realize this—that I was born in my sin...

Let me show you another illustration of this. Go to Psalm 51—David. Now David is known in the history of Israel as their greatest warrior. He's known as their greatest musician. He's known as their greatest statesman. He's known as their greatest king. He's known as the greatest poet. But he's also known for one other thing. He's the greatest repentant. You'll see that in Psalm 5, ¹"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!"

He uses three words and three verbs to describe his disposition and who he is. Three words and three different verbs. He doesn't say the same thing three times; he says it three different ways. He does this. The first word he uses is transgressions. That means willful, chosen disobedience. He says, "I chose to do this. I planned to do this. There was a process to do this. I'm absolutely guilty because this was a personal choice that I made. It was in my disposition, and I willfully chose to do this. Will you get rid of that transgression?"

The next thing he says is, "Deal with my iniquity; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity." Iniquity means inward pollutedness. Not only does he say, "Deal with my personal acts of willful disobedience, but deal with my inward pollutedness. I'm a person of iniquity. I've got inward pollution in me." That's why the Scripture says that the sins of the spirit are as heinous as the sins of the flesh. You see, pride, ego, self—all those things are sinful dispositions of the spirit because that's what causes us to act that way. So he says, "Not only deal with my transgression, my willful choosing to be disobedient to your law, deal with that, he says secondly, get rid of my inward pollution; I'm a polluted man." But that's not all. He then says, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." The word sin literally means missing the mark. It means I realize I'm a failure. I'm an absolute abject failure.

What David says immediately after Nathan said to him, "You're the man"... go back to 2 Kings 12:7, you'll see the story of that. I want you to notice one thing. Nathan said, described what he did in the first 12 verses (2 Kings 12), verse 13 David says, "I am the man." He says, "I recognize it." And then Nathan says this, "You're forgiven." Notice how quickly. You're the man, I did it, you're forgiven.

You see, the moment we confess our sin, what happens? Forgiven. Right away. David was forgiven immediately, because what did he do? He confessed it. He recognized it. That's what you see in Psalm 51. There's an immediacy in our forgiveness. The real issue is do I confess it, not do I profess it, do I make statements about it, but do I confess it. David didn't say, "Well, look, I'm a victim of circumstances. You don't understand. She doesn't meet my needs. I needed somebody else." He doesn't defend that. He says, "I did it." In Psalm 51 he says, "Deal with three things in my life—my willful disobedience, my inward pollutedness and the fact that I'm a failure; will you deal with that."

When you put all those together, he says this, "My willful disobedience was because of my inward pollutedness, which realizes that I'm a failure." That's what David recognizes about himself. That's poor in spirit, guys. It's seeing yourself in reality. At that moment he says, "Cleanse me. Wash me."

Now notice, he uses three verbs, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love." Now notice, he's appealing to God's character, not his own ability to do anything. That's poor in spirit. "According to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgression." The word "blot" there is a verb that literally means to erase. It would be like writing something with a pencil and then taking an eraser and

rubbing it out, getting rid of it. You don't see it anymore. He says, "Blot out my willful disobedience to choose to sin. Get rid of it. Blot that out."

The next thing he says is, "Deal with my iniquity in a different way." Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity. The idea here is the washing, it means to trample. The way that they would wash their material in the biblical ages, in David's time, was they would take piece of material and they would stamp on it. They would do that until all the dirt was gone. That's how they would clean something. He's saying, "Trample my iniquity. Trample all of my desire to be inwardly polluted. Just get rid of that. You've got to trample on it. Wash it out." That's why he uses the word "wash." It means to trample till it disappears. He's saying, "Not only deal with my willful disobedience, blot it out so it doesn't occur again, but get rid of that tendency that I have because of my inward pollutedness. You've got to trample that out. Wash it out."

The last thing he says is, "Cleanse me from my sin." The word "cleanse" there means total elimination of the memory. Just get rid of the whole memory, as if it never occurred. As if it never occurred. That's what he's saying. That's why David is Israel's greatest repentant, because he says, "Deal with my transgressions, my iniquity and my sin. Blot it out, wash it out, and cleanse me, so that the memory is not even there anymore."

Now here's the basis of that, ³For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. ⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity." David understood what it meant when Adam and Even went from light to darkness. David saw himself that way. We don't see ourselves that way. We like to think that I was born good. We were born blind. We were dead. We were dead spiritually.

Don: *Not only that, I think that, it's what David said [UNCLEAR] misunderstood by a lot of people. They say, "Well I was born," [UNCLEAR], "Well I was born gay," let's say. Or "I was born with that Irish or Italian or German temper," as if it were an excuse. David isn't making an excuse.*

That's absolutely correct.

Don: *He's saying [UNCLEAR]...he's not making an excuse for his sin [UNCLEAR]...*

Audience Member: *He's confessing.*

He's confessing. Confessing is different than professing. Professing means to make a statement about. David is confessing. He's agreeing with what somebody else has already said. That's what confession means—to agree, it's homologueo—to agree upon what somebody else has already said. He's saying, "You have already said that I was born sinful."

Notice what he says next, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psalm 51:5) And we have the audacity to say that I was born good. David is not making an excuse here. He's not defending anything. He says, "I agree with you, that I was born in iniquity. I was born rotten. That's who I am by disposition. I confess that. I agree with you. I'm pleading on your mercy. Have mercy on me because I realize that I was born sinful."

You see, and we have the audacity to say that, "As an American I was born good and I don't deserve hell." That's why people are offended by election. You've got to understand election. David is saying, "I understand what happened to my first parents. They went from light to darkness. That was me. And everybody who's been born since then was born into darkness; born in the image of Adam." You see,

and that image changes.

***Ted:** I would just say, for the brothers who are struggling with this idea, they've heard Bruce talk about it before, but all at once they're seeing the implications of what he's saying. Every one of us who's come to this position has struggled with it.*

Amen! Oh yes.

***Ted:** At first, we resisted it with all our will, but in the end, we could come to no other conclusion based and teaching of Scripture.*

Amen!

***Ted:** So it's not as if I've always thought this way. Every one of us came [UNCLEAR].*

Thanks Ted. That's a good summary. I was not raised in this tradition. My background was Methodism. Very, very good Methodism. It wasn't till I began at a Naval Academy that I began to read what Jesus said and what Paul said. All of a sudden, you know, what convinced me of election was not my logic, it was what Jesus said about it and what Paul said about it. My understanding of election is based upon what Jesus and Paul said, not upon my mind, or my coming to some conclusion. It was I just read what they said, and I said, "That's different than what I thought." Ted's absolutely right. We all struggle with this. That's why I'm trying to give you some basic illustrations to help you realize and to go back to help us see ourselves in reality.

Let me just show you one other thing. Go to Colossians 1:11. Here's one of the great definitions of our salvation, brothers. "¹¹May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light." Watch that word now. "¹³He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

You see, what is salvation? It is the restoration of our back to our pre-Adamic fall state when we go from darkness back into light. That's salvation. Adam and Eve started in light and ended up in darkness because their eyes were opened. Everybody has been born in the image of mankind since then. Yes, in the image of God, but it's been a tarnished, damaged, polluted version of God. What salvation is in God's grace is this. He takes that polluted image of himself, he redeems us, which means rescued through the payment of a price, and he qualifies us, and he transfers us back into the kingdom of light, and you begin to see things differently. That's why it is through the light of the life of Christ we see ourselves in reality.

Look at the rest of the sequence of the verses that I've written down for you on handout three when you have time. That's when you begin to see yourself in reality is when you begin to see yourself through the light of the life of Christ. That's how you begin to see yourself in reality. That's poor in spirit, guys. When you see that, God's grace just fills you up and you're blessed in spite of your condition. Happy in spite of circumstances.

Now just notice the summary statement at the very bottom of your handout. "Seeing ourselves as God sees us by the light of Christ and His Word." It's what Ted was saying, "by the light of Christ and His Word, recognizing our rebellion, sin and total need for Christ, His life, and His righteousness, we turn away from ourselves and submitting to Christ as Lord of our lives, we trust Him for the resources of His life and are transferred from the realm of darkness and illusion to His Kingdom of reality and light."

Guys, that's poor in spirit. It is not something that happens to you; it's something you become. It's an ongoing maturation process. The more we see ourselves in reality, the more effective we're going to be for the kingdom because it will be this—to show that the all-demonstrating power comes from God, and not from us. May it be so, that Christ would be glorified by our poor in spirit.

Let's pray. Father, you've given us so much in your Word—so powerful, so significant. Father, deal with our own inability to understand. We just pray, Lord, that you would rid us of all that self-righteousness to think that the things that I do are impressive to you. Father, give us a contrite heart. Lead us into the idea of seeing ourselves in reality, that we will empty ourselves of ourselves and be filled with your grace, because only then do we become all that you desire us to be in Christ, and may it be so. And all the Brave Men said...Amen!!!