

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

PRINCIPLES
OF THE
CHARACTER OF
GOD'S CHILDREN

WITNESS LEE

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Living Stream Ministry
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**PRINCIPLES OF
THE CHARACTER
OF GOD'S CHILDREN
TEACHING HIS DISCIPLES
THE HIGHEST MORALITY**

In this booklet we come to [Luke 6:12-49](#). Much of the Lord's teaching in this chapter is similar to that in [chapters five through seven](#) of the Gospel of Matthew. In [chapters five through seven of Matthew](#) we have the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens. The teaching in [chapter six of Luke](#) is not a constitution, but it is the principles of the character of those who believe in the Lord, of those who have been born of God and possess His life and nature. As those who have been regenerated by God, we, the believers, have God's life and nature. Now we need to see what principles should govern our character, our behavior. How should we conduct ourselves? How should we act and have our being? The principles given in this chapter answer these questions. All the aspects of the Lord's teaching here are principles that should govern

our Christian behavior. If we see this, we shall see the difference between the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens in [Matthew 5 through 7](#) and the principles of Christian behavior in [Luke 6](#).

FOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF BLESSED PEOPLE

The first principle in these verses is that we who believe in Christ and who have been born of God should be a people blessed by God. We should be a blessed people, not a cursed people. As a result of the fall, mankind came under the curse. But in the jubilee of grace the Lord Jesus has rescued us from the curse and has brought us into God's blessing. Hence, we should be a people blessed by God. In [6:20-23](#) there are four characteristics of blessed people.

POOR

In [verse 20](#) the Lord Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." In this verse "poor" has two denotations. First, it denotes poor in material things; second, it denotes poor in spiritual things. Therefore, the word poor here indicates poor in earthly, material things and also poor in heavenly, spiritual things.

It is often difficult for those who are rich in earthly, material things to be poor in heavenly, spiritual things. If someone chosen and called by God becomes rich in material things, it may be very difficult for that one to become poor in spiritual things. It may even be necessary for God to take away that person's material riches in order that he might become poor in relation to spiritual things.

If we would be a blessed people, we need to be poor. Mainly we need to be poor in spiritual things, in heavenly things. Concerning spiritual things, we should sense that we have nothing, that we are poor.

[Matthew 5:3](#) speaks of being poor in spirit. To be poor in spirit is not only to be humble, but also to be emptied in our spirit, in the depths of our being, not holding on to the old things. To be poor in spirit also means to be unloaded to receive new things.

Our human spirit, the deepest part of our being, is the organ for us to contact God and to realize spiritual things. We need to be poor, emptied, unloaded, in this part of our being so that we may realize and possess the kingdom of God. All the time we need to be poor in our spirit, having the sense deep within that we are poor

in relation to spiritual things, in relation to the things concerning God. If we are poor in this way and humble, immediately the kingdom of God becomes our blessing.

HUNGRY NOW

The second characteristic of a blessed people is to hunger now: “Blessed are those who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied” (6:21a). This verse speaks of spiritual hunger. First we realize that we are poor in spiritual things, and then we hunger after the things we lack in the spiritual realm.

The Lord says that those who hunger now will be satisfied. When we hunger, we shall be filled. We shall be satisfied with the spiritual riches of Christ.

WEEPING NOW

In 6:21b the Lord Jesus says, “Blessed are those who weep now, for you shall laugh.” This is the third characteristic of those who are blessed by God. In this verse to weep means to repent and to regret. To weep in this sense means that we are not happy about our spiritual situation and condition. Therefore, we regret and repent

and desire to have a change in our spiritual condition.

HATED

The fourth characteristic is found in [verses 22 and 23](#): “Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they separate you from them and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man’s sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same manner their fathers did to the prophets.” Here we see that it is a blessing to be hated and reproached for the sake of the Son of Man. We, however, like to be praised by others and to be valued, honored, and highly regarded by them. We need to realize that believers will be hated and evil spoken of by the world. The reason for this is that the entire world is following Satan, and we are following the Lord to go in the opposite way. Because our way is opposite to that of the world, the worldly people will hate us and speak evil about us.

A FURTHER WORD TO THE DISCIPLES

[Verses 27 and 28](#) say, “But to you who hear I say, Love your enemies, do good to those who

hate you, bless those who curse you, pray concerning those who revile you.” In [verse 27](#) the ones who hear are those who believe, those who receive the Lord’s word.

In [verses 27 and 28](#) we see the highest standard of morality. To love our enemies and to do good to those who hate us is the highest standard of morality. It is also the highest standard of morality to bless those who curse us and to pray concerning those who revile us. Although it is easy for us to read these verses, it is extremely difficult for us to practice them. Actually, in order to fulfill these words, we need to be a God-man, a person saturated with God and mingled with Him.

In [verse 29](#) the Lord says, “To him who beats you on the cheek, offer also the other; and from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.” To offer the other cheek to the one who beats us proves that we have the power to suffer instead of resisting, and the power to walk neither in the flesh nor in the soul for our own interests, but in the spirit for the kingdom of God.

The “cloak” in [verse 29](#) is an outer garment, and the “tunic” is a garment worn next to the body. Here the Lord says that from him who

would take away our outer garment we should not withhold our inner garment. However, to conduct ourselves in this way we need to be saturated with God.

In [verse 30](#) the Lord goes on to say, “To everyone who asks of you, give; and from him who takes away your things, do not require their return.” To give to everyone who asks us and not to require the return of our things proves that we do not care for material things and are not possessed by them.

[Verse 31](#) says, “And even as you want men to do to you, you do to them likewise.” This indicates that what we want others to do to us we should first do to them.

In [6:32-34](#) the Lord Jesus says, “And if you love those who love you, what thanks is it to you? For even sinners love those who love them. For if also you do good to those who do good to you, what thanks is it to you? Even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what thanks is it to you? Even sinners lend to sinners that they may get back an equal amount.” In these verses “thanks” corresponds to reward, and “what” refers to the quality of the reward. Hence, “what thanks” denotes what kind of reward.

To receive thanks is to receive a reward. If you do something good for a person and he gives you his thanks, that “thank you” is a reward to you. In these verses the Lord is asking what kind of thanks, what kind of reward, it is to us if what we do to others is the same as what sinners would do. Even sinners love those who love them, do good to those who do good to them, and lend with the hope of receiving back an equal amount, if not more.

NOT JUDGING BUT FORGIVING

Verse 37 says, “And do not judge, and you will by no means be judged; and do not pass sentence, and sentence will by no means be passed upon you; release, and you will be released.” Here to pass sentence is to condemn, and to release is to forgive. If we do not condemn, we shall by no means be condemned. Likewise, if we forgive, we shall be forgiven.

If we live in a humble spirit under the Lord’s ruling, we shall always judge ourselves, not others. God’s children will be judged with what they judge. If they judge others with righteousness, they will be judged by the Lord with righteousness. If they judge others with mercy, they will

be judged by the Lord with mercy. As [James 2:13](#) says, “Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

Years ago I heard what C. H. Spurgeon said in a sermon on forgiveness. In that sermon he pointed out that it is difficult for Christians to forgive others. He said that we may think that we have forgiven someone. However, our forgiveness can be compared to burying a dead dog and allowing the tail to show. After forgiving someone, we may say, “So-and-so offended me, but I have forgiven him.” This is to show the “tail” of the “dog.”

According to the New Testament, to forgive means to forget and to release. We need to forget the offense and release the offender. Once we have done this, we should never speak of the matter again.

GIVING TO OTHERS

In [verse 38](#) the Lord goes on to say, “Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will give into your bosom; for with what measure you measure, it will be measured to you in return.” M. R. Vincent has pointed out that here “bosom” denotes “the gathered fold of the wide upper garment, bound together with the girdle, and

thus forming a pouch.” Here the Lord is saying that when we give to others, our Father in heaven will always return to us much more than we give.

BECOMING AS OUR TEACHER

In [6:40](#) the Lord continues, “A disciple is not above his teacher; but everyone who has been perfected will be as his teacher.” The teacher here is Christ. When we, the disciples, are perfected, we shall be as our teacher, Christ.

TAKING THE LOG OUT OF OUR OWN EYE

In [6:41 and 42](#) the Lord says, “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but the log in your own eye you do not consider? How can you say to your brother, Brother, allow me to take out the speck in your eye, not seeing the log that is in your own eye? Hypocrite, first take the log out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck in your brother’s eye.” As children of God living in a humble spirit, we should first take the log out of our own eye whenever we look at the speck in our brother’s eye. The speck in our brother’s eye should remind us of the log in our own eye. As long as the log

remains in our eye, our sight is blurred, and we shall not see clearly.

DOING THE LORD'S WORDS

In [6:47-49](#) the Lord Jesus says, “Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and does them, I will show you whom he is like. He is like a man building a house, who dug and went deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood came, the river broke against that house and was not strong enough to shake it, because it was well built. But he who hears and does not do is like a man building a house upon the earth without a foundation, against which the river broke, and immediately it collapsed; and the crash of that house was great.” Here the house refers both to our being and to our work, our conduct. If our being is according to the Lord’s word, it will have a proper foundation. Likewise, if our work is based on the Lord’s word, it will have a solid foundation. If our being and our work are based upon the Lord’s word, they will be able to withstand any kind of test, any “flood” or “river.” But if our being and our work are not founded on the Lord’s word, the river will carry them away.

The “rock” in [6:48](#) does not refer to Christ.

Instead, it refers to the Lord's wise word, the word that reveals the will of God the Father. Our being and work must be founded on the word of the Man-Savior for the accomplishment of the will of our Father.

The house that is built on the rock and that is not shaken by the river is like the building work of gold, silver, and precious stones, which can stand the testing fire ([1 Cor. 3:12-13](#)). But the house built upon the earth without a foundation and that collapses when the river breaks against it is like the building work of wood, hay, and stubble, which will be burned by the testing fire. However, the builder himself will be saved ([1 Cor. 3:12-15](#)).

A CLEAR VIEW OF THE HIGHEST STANDARD OF MORALITY

The Lord's teaching in [Luke 6:17-49](#) gives us a clear view of the highest standard of morality. The topmost teaching on morality is that of the Man-Savior. He Himself as the God-man lived a life that is the highest standard of morality. His life, work, and saving power are all in the highest standard of morality. The Lord conveyed His saving grace in His human virtues with His divine

attributes. This is the highest standard of morality, and we all need to pay careful attention to it.

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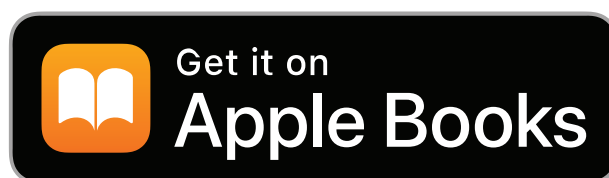
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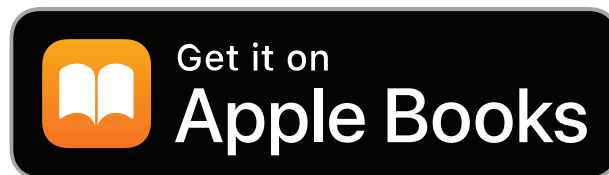
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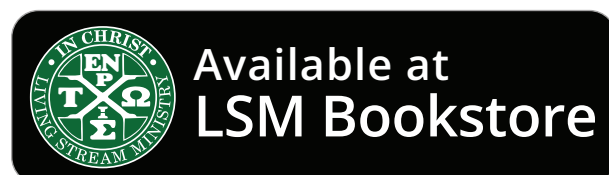
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