

THE BLESSED PEOPLE OF GOD.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

– Matt. 5:3.

IT IS only when, as faithful and obedient children of God, we reverently turn the sacred pages of his holy Word and read them as a loving epistle from our faithful God, full of wisdom and counsel and wholesome instruction, that we gather from it all the refreshment of divine grace contained in it. Thus, for instance, in the first lines of our Lord's sermon on the mount, heavenly love breaks forth in showers of blessing – "Blessed," "blessed," "blessed are ye!" Who are the blessed ones thus addressed? Are they the holy angels who do always behold the Father's face? Truly they are blessed; but these words were not addressed to them, but to the redeemed sons of men – to men rescued from the fall, whose feet were taken out of the miry clay and set upon a rock, and in whose mouth is put the new song of praise and thanksgiving for redeeming love and grace.

"Blessed are ye!" Do the blessings belong to all who have ever to any extent tasted of the favor of God? Do they belong to the pardoned sinners who, after being pardoned and cleansed, like the nine lepers of whom the Lord spoke, return not again to give God the glory? Do they belong to those who do not follow on to know the Lord, – who decline to be led of his spirit while they continue to partake of the spirit of the world? Do they belong to the proud and lofty-spirited ones, to those at ease in Zion, to the self-satisfied, the selfish, or those who in any form regard iniquity in their hearts? Ah, no! Any such who read these lines must read therein their own condemnation; for, while they are benedictions to the faithful, they are also solemn warnings to the unfaithful. The benedictions are for the poor in spirit; for those who mourn because iniquity abounds; for the meek (the teachable and humble); for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; for the merciful; for the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and the reviled and

persecuted for righteousness' sake; for those whom the Lord calls "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." Blessed, yes, blessed are ye of the Lord of hosts! Yours is the Kingdom of heaven; you shall inherit the earth; you shall be comforted; you shall be filled with the spirit of God; you shall obtain mercy; you shall see God, and shall be called the children of God; your reward in heaven is great; you shall by and by be as a city set on a hill that cannot be hid. "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad;" [R2138 : page 118] for these heavenly benedictions are upon *your* heads. **page 118**

What refreshment and joy are here for all the faithful sons of God who feed upon his Word, who lean in simple faith upon the promises and obediently walk after the spirit of God. Observe again the conditions of this blessing: they are not such as we cannot comply with: they are not conditions of absolute perfection which we cannot attain while we are in these imperfect bodies; but they indicate a reaching out after that perfection, – a hungering and thirsting after the righteousness of God, a mourning for all that comes short of that righteousness, especially in self, but also [R2139 : page 118] in others, and a consequent inharmony with the general spirit and course of this present evil world. And together with the heavenly desires and aspirations there must be a meek and contrite spirit – a pliable, teachable disposition. "Blessed are the poor in spirit" – the lowly in mind, the studious, teachable ones. Such the Lord can and will lead by his spirit into the paths of righteousness, and finally into the glory of his Kingdom: – "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

O that our dull souls may awake more fully to all that is implied in this promise of the Kingdom! Let us meditate upon it more and more, until the glorious hope inspires to faithful endurance of hardness under all circumstances as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. How large a place did the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God occupy in the preaching of Jesus and the apostles! Indeed, the whole message of divine inspiration contained in the New Testament was briefly comprehended in that expression of our Lord – "This gospel of the

kingdom." The entire work of this Gospel age was to be the preaching of this Kingdom, – "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end [the harvest of the age] come." (Matt. 24:14.) This gospel – this good news – of the coming Kingdom of God, with all that pertains to it, was the constant theme of the Lord and the apostles: – "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom." And he commissioned his disciples, saying, "As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." – Matt. 10:7.

We read nothing in the New Testament of any departure on the part of the early disciples from this blessed theme of the gospel of the Kingdom to the preaching of a mere lifeless morality, or of politics, or of any other theme; but the prospective Kingdom of God, its sure foundation in Christ the Redeemer, its universal dominion, its unlimited authority, its righteous character and requirements, the holiness that alone can inherit or enter into it, and the glory and blessedness to come in it and through it, were constantly held before the people to the exclusion of all side issues.

This is the Kingdom to be inherited by the poor in spirit; for only the poor in spirit – the humble, teachable ones – can submit to the discipline and training necessary to fit them for it. The heady, the high-minded, the proud, the self-conscious and self-righteous have no promise of the Kingdom, and cannot inherit it, nor enter into it; for "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth." (Rev. 21:27.) So, altho in the present age many of these are esteemed of men as the aristocracy of the earth, they will not be the aristocracy of the new dispensation; but the poor in spirit will reign with Christ for the blessing of all the families of the earth. And even now, in God's estimation, these constitute the embryo Kingdom, and God is in the midst of them, and his law is established in their hearts. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." "Tho the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the

lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off." "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house [the temple] that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?...but upon such a one will I look, upon the poor, and him who is of a contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word." – Psa. 34:18; 138:6; Isa. 57:15; 66:1,2.

This is the Kingdom class, the temple class, the beloved of the Lord with whom he is pleased to dwell. Like their Master, they are often lightly esteemed among men of the world, and perhaps despised among the multitudes who professedly are the Lord's people, but whose hearts and minds are still engrossed with worldly things; but they are the prospective kings and priests of the new dispensation, and their lowly estate in the present life is only their necessary discipline to fit them for the glory and service of the time to come. These are the living stones now being shaped, chiseled and polished for their places in the glorious temple of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Blessed indeed are the poor in spirit with such a heritage!

M. F. RUSSELL.
