

The Religion of Christ Pt. 3

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, May 3, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us today! I praise God for the opportunity to connect with you. I invite you to have a Bible at the ready, take whatever notes you deem necessary, and purposefully engage for the next thirty-plus minutes. We have much to cover in a short amount of time.

SETTING THE STAGE

FYI – This AM we bring to a CLOSE our three-part sermon series on a timeless and timely teaching of Christ.

Q. Do you desire a life characterized by an abiding spiritual happiness?

Q. Do you desire a life that is favored by the Lord (both now & forevermore)?

Q. Do you desire a life that the Lord Jesus establishes as both esteemed/enviable?

Q. i.e., Do you desire to be blessed of God?

KEY – Then take NOTE of the Beatitudes proclaimed by Christ in Matthew 5...

Matthew 5:3–12 (NIV)

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

FYI – In recent weeks we covered the Beatitudes noted in vs. 3–7. This AM I want to cover those that remain...

LET'S DELVE IN

PURE IN HEART PT. 1

Matthew 5:8 (Emphasis Mine)

8 Blessed are the **pure in heart**,
for they will see God.

FYI – We must recognize that the CONCEPT of being pure of heart has deep ROOTS in the OT. Consider...

Psalm 24:1–5

1 The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;

2 for he founded it on the seas
and established it on the waters.

3 Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord?
Who may stand in his holy place?

4 The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not trust in an idol
or swear by a false god.

5 They will receive blessing from the Lord
and vindication from God their Savior.

NOTE 1 – In this text the psalmist (David) is PONDERING: “Who could access the presence of the Lord?” (v. 3).

Psalm 24:3

3 Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord?
Who may stand in his holy place?

NOTE 2 – David ANSWERS this query and/or question in the subsequent passage...

Psalm 24:4a

4 The one who has clean hands and a pure heart...

Q. What does it mean to have clean hands and a pure heart?

A. According to biblical COMMENTATORS: “Whereas clean hands refers to right and godly ACTION, purity of heart refers to a rightness of ATTITUDE, HEART and WILL.” So, WHO may ascend the hill of the Lord and/or stand in His holy place? In other words...

Q. “Who can access the presence of the Lord Almighty?”

A. Those who are WITHOUT fault (i.e., inwardly and outwardly).

PURE IN HEART PT. 2

This raises a rather PAINFUL question: “WHO among us can meet such a qualification?”

Q. How many in the sound of my voice are willing to confess an abiding PURITY (i.e., outwardly/inwardly)?

FYI 1 – Scripture makes it clear that NONE of us (left to our own devices) are capable of such requisite purity...

Romans 3:10b–12 (cf. Psalm 14)

There is no one righteous, not even one;

11 there is no one who understands;

there is no one who seeks God.

12 All have turned away,

they have together become worthless;

there is no one who does good,

not even one.

FYI 2 – Even David—the author of our opening Psalm—freely ADMITTED to his own failures & waywardness...

Psalm 51:5

5 Surely I was sinful at birth,

sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

KEY – Thus, per the words of Scripture, we’re ALL severed from the presence of God because NO ONE is pure!

PURE IN HEART PT. 3

Thankfully, the Lord has made a way for us to BECOME PURE. i.e., He has offered a remedy for our sinfulness...

KEY – Through Christ’s work—and faith in Him—we can be CLEANSED of our iniquity and RESTORED to Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21

21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

KEY – The CROSS as the place of EXCHANGE.

FYI – At the moment of your CONVERSION God performs an instantaneous/immediate work: JUSTIFICATION.

QUOTE – Justification is the act of God whereby He removes the guilt and penalty of sin while, at the same time, declares the ungodly to be righteous. Thus, justification is both a) release from the cost and consequence of sin and b) legal declaration of rightness with Him (i.e., expunging of our record)! MADE PURE...

Q. The end RESULT of justification? PEACE with and RESTORATION to God.

Romans 5:1 (Emphasis Mine)

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

PURE IN HEART PT. 4

This work of JUSTIFICATION (declaration) LEADS TO a lifelong work called SANCTIFICATION (process/purity).

Philippians 2:13

13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Romans 8:29a

29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...

NOTE – He has given us a renewed heart/nature that is CAPABLE of genuine purity/godliness...

Ezekiel 36:26

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

KEY – **a)** God purifies us [J]; **b)** God calls those He purifies unto purity; **c)** He empowers us unto purity (S).

Q. The end result for those who are pure?

Matthew 5:8 (cf. Psalm 24) (Emphasis Mine)

8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

PEACEMAKERS PT. 1

Matthew 5:9 (Emphasis Mine)

9 Blessed are the **peacemakers**,
for they will be called children of God.

FYI – We must NOT interpret this to mean that the blessed of God are those who are PEACEABLE or PEACEFUL. Though it is good to live in a state/condition of peace before the Lord, the term PEACEMAKER in Matthew 5:9 has to do with those who BRING peace to where it is not.

i.e., God blesses those who PROMOTE/DIFFUSE peace in a ruined world

i.e., God blesses those who OPERATE as AGENTS of His peace in the earth.

KEY – There are TWO ways in which believers can operate as agents of peace...

1) Christians Can Work to Bring Peace Between God & Man.

2) Christians Can Work to Bring Peace Amongst Humankind.

LET'S START W. PT. 1...

PEACEMAKERS PT. 2

Christians work to BRING peace between GOD and a lost HUMANITY...

FYI – I want to be incredibly CLEAR so as to avoid miscommunication, etc. We—in and of ourselves—can save NO ONE. Neither can we BRIDGE the gap between God and man. We are NOT the mediator(s) between God and a fallen humanity...

1 Timothy 2:5 (Emphasis Mine)

5 For there is **one** God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man **Christ Jesus**.

KEY – Yet God has CHOSEN to USE us in the work of sharing the gospel of peace to lost humanity (i.e., driving the willing and the receptive to that One Mediator: i.e., Jesus Christ). We save NO one and we mediate in NO way, but we do RELAY THE MESSAGE that a qualified Mediator is willing and able to MEND the broken relationship between God and man...

2 Corinthians 5:17–21 (Emphasis Mine)

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the **ministry of reconciliation**: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the **message of reconciliation**. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Q. Do you realize that YOU have a MINISTRY and a MESSAGE?

KEY – You have a MINISTRY of reconciliation and you have been given the MESSAGE of reconciliation!

KEY – RECONCILIATION has to do with the establishment of peace between hostile parties. Our ministry and our message center upon bringing PEACE between God and man through faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ, our Lord!

Q. Is this a role that you actively seek to play in your life and living? Get to work, AMBASSADOR!

PEACEMAKERS PT. 3

Christians ALSO work to bring PEACE amongst MEN.

KEY – With the equipment God has given you, you will either build WALLS or you will build BRIDGES. i.e., Your words and deeds will EITHER work to promote peace, harmony and unity OR to sow discord, friction and strife.

THERE IS NO MIDDLE GROUND HEREIN...

Q. So, WHICH of the TWO are you?

Q. Is your life characterized by the promotion of peace, harmony and unity? OR...

Q. Is your life characterized by the promotion of discord, friction, strife (i.e., DRAMA)?

PEACEMAKERS PT. 4

Let's be HONEST for a moment...

KEY – I have long believed (based upon the words of Scripture – cf. Matt. 18:20) that where two or more are gathered, the LORD is uniquely PRESENT. But I have ALSO experienced that where two or more are gathered, CONFLICT is never far away! Our pride, selfishness and self-interests disrupt vital relationships.

This is WHY Christ places such a premium on peacemaking (cf. Matt. 5:8). It's an ESSENTIAL aspect of the faith!

Matthew 5:23–24

23 “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

NOTE 1 – Our relationship with the Lord is very much connected to our relationship with others.

NOTE 2 – If conflict creeps in, we must work to remedy the situation both quickly and purposefully.

Hebrews 12:14

14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Romans 12:18

18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

PEACEMAKERS PT. 5

Consider the PROMISE of Christ concerning those who are peacemakers...

Matthew 5:9 (Emphasis Mine)

9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children [i.e., sons] of God.

FYI – There are TWO perspectives on “son-ship” in Scripture. FIRSTLY, the word can be used to connote someone born or brought into a family unit (e.g., biological and/or adopted children). SECONDLY, it can refer to those who TAKE ON the characteristics/nature of their parents.

APP – From the moment I was born into this world, I was the son of Ken Foley. But over time, as I grew, I took on his nature and characteristics. I sounded more and more like him, walked like him, took on his values, etc. In this way, I BECAME his “SON” to a whole new degree.

QUOTE – What Jesus is saying in Matthew 5:9 is that peacemakers have the character of their heavenly Father. We know from Scripture that God is the God of peace (cf. Rom. 16:20; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20) and that heaven is a place of peace (Luke 19:38). We know that God is a peacemaker, for “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). When we function as p-makers, we show ourselves to be His!

Q. Do you want to look like your Heavenly Father? Be a peacemaker!

Q. Do you want to look like your former dead-beat dad, Satan? Don't be...

PERSECUTED PT. 1

Matthew 5:10–12 (Emphasis Mine)

10 Blessed are those who are **persecuted because of righteousness**,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

FYI 1 – In many regards this eight and final Beatitude inherently FLOWS out of those previously mentioned. i.e., The persecution that Christians suffer occurs BECAUSE they are poor in spirit, mournful, meek, hungry for the things of God, merciful, pure and peace oriented.

FYI 2 – Such attitudes/virtues fly in the face of this ruined world and its value system (CONFLICT)!

QUOTE – “It is not easy to be a dedicated Christian. Our society is not a friend to God nor to God’s people. Whether we like it or not, there is conflict between us and the world. Why? Because we are different from the world and have different attitudes. As we read the Beatitudes, we find that they represent an outlook that is radically different from that of the world. The world praises pride, not humility. The world endorses sin, not moral purity. The world is at war with God, while God is seeking to rescue His enemies and make them His children. We must expect, therefore, to be persecuted if we are living as God calls us to live. “

2 Timothy 3:12 (Emphasis Mine)

12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus **will be persecuted**,

John 15:18–20a (Emphasis Mine)

18 “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. 20 Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ **If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.**

PAUL EXPERIENCED THIS REALITY...

2 Corinthians 11:23b–26

23 . . . I have . . . been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers.

PERSECUTED PT. 2

Q. Have you ever really considered the SUFFERINGS of the original APOSTLES?

Peter – Crucified upside-down on a cross in Rome.

Andrew – Crucified on a cross in Greece (after being whipped).

James – James was put to death by King Herod (struck down by a sword).

John – They tried to boil him in oil (failed attempt). Exiled to the island of Patmos.

Philip – Death by crucifixion.

Bartholomew – Crucified upside-down in Armenia after being flayed by a whip.

Matthew – Killed by a sword wound in Ethiopia.

Thomas – Speared to death in India.

James – Possibly stoned to death in Jerusalem.

Thaddaeus – Killed in modern day Iran.

Simon the Zealot – Possibly hacked to death in Iran.

Matthias – Possibly stoned to death.

Paul – Beheaded in Rome under Nero.

FYI 1 – More Christians were KILLED in the Twentieth Century than in the previous nineteen combined!

FYI 2 – Even if we NEVER face such a degree of persecution (possible), we can STILL suffer for our faith...

PERSECUTED PT. 3

KEY – Yet there is BLESSING even in the midst of persecution...

1) Those Who Suffer for their Faith Shall Be REWARDED...

Matthew 5:10 (Emphasis Mine)

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

2) Those Who Suffer for their Faith are in GOOD COMPANY...

Matthew 5:11–12 (Emphasis Mine)

11 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. **12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

CONSIDER...

Hebrews 12:1–2

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

CONCLUSIONS 1

Q. Do you desire a life characterized by an abiding spiritual happiness?

Q. Do you desire a life that is favored by the Lord (both now & forevermore)?

Q. Do you desire a life that the Lord Jesus establishes as both esteemed/enviable?

Q. i.e., Do you desire to be blessed of God?

KEY – Then wholly EMBRACE the Beatitudes proclaimed by Christ...

Matthew 5:3–12

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

CONCLUSIONS PT. 2

Thank you for joining us today. If you would be willing – **GIVE ONLINE**