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Micah chapter 6

New International Version

1 Listen to what the LORD says: 'Stand up, plead my case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say.

2 Hear, you mountains, the LORD's accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel. **3** My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me. **4** I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam.

5 My people, remember what Balak king of Moab plotted and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD.' **6** With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? **7** Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? **8** He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Psalm chapter 15

New International Version

1 A psalm of David. LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? **2** The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart; **3** whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, and casts no slur on others; **4** who despises a vile person but honors those who fear the LORD; who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind; **5** who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken.

Psalm 15:1, NIV: A psalm of David. LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain?

What does Psalm 15:1 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

David questions how to describe a person qualified to be the Lord's guest in His tabernacle. This is not meant as a shallow thought; David seems to recognize that everyone has fallen short of God's glory (Psalm 51:1–2; 143:2; Romans 3:23). The Lord cannot coexist in His full presence with sin, so how can He welcome *anyone* to live in His presence?

David's use of the term "sojourn" here is part of his perspective. The Hebrew root word is *guwr*, which most literally means to live somewhere as a stranger or foreigner. Naturally, any imperfect person would be out of place in God's presence. This term is sometimes used for temporary travel, but it is not necessarily something short-lived. David's desire is for something permanent (Psalm 5:4–8; 15:5).

Today, a person might ask, "Who will live in heaven with the Lord?" In the New Testament a young lawyer pondered this question (Matthew 19:16–23). A Pharisee, Nicodemus, also sought an answer from Jesus (John 3:1–4). Jesus provides the answer in John 3:36 and John 14:1–3. John 3:36 assures us that whoever believes in Jesus, God's Son, has eternal life. In John 14:1–3 Jesus

promises His disciples—and all believers—that He will come again and take them to His Father's house. Then Jesus and believers will be together forever.

God's saving grace is the means for us to answer. By grace He saves sinners (Ephesians 2:8–9) and reconciles them to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:17–21). David refers to the Lord's "tent," or "tabernacle," as situated on His holy hill, which is Zion, or Jerusalem. Some believe this psalm was written when David brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem with great joy (2 Samuel 6:12–15).

Context Summary

Psalm 15:2–5 describes the person who is qualified to be the Lord's guest in the tabernacle (Psalm 15:1). This is not an explanation of "how" a person comes to be qualified. Rather, it describes "what" a person's life looks like to honor God and reflect His goodness. While not a direct parallel, the ten ideas given here complement the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17).

Psalm 15:2, NIV: The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart;

What does Psalm 15:2 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

The person who is the Lord's guest in His tabernacle (Psalm 15:1) proves the genuineness of his faith by leading a blameless life and speaking truthfully. The term "blameless" is often misunderstood to imply "sinless;" it means being sincere and free of any legitimate charge of sinful conduct, in so far as that's possible for a fallible person (1 John 1:8–10). At the beginning of the church age, the congregation at Jerusalem was instructed to choose seven men to oversee the church's welfare program. One of the required qualifications for these men was that of being "of good repute" (Acts 6:3). Paul exhorted the Philippian believers to be "blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation" (Philippians 2:15).

David also refers to this person as one who "speaks truth in his heart." Honesty and truthfulness are necessary parts of personal integrity. That not only applies to the world, at large, but to one's own thoughts and emotions. The Hebrew concept

of "the heart" is not purely emotional. Terms translated as "heart" and "mind" in ancient writing are more closely related than they are in modern language. The righteous person is not only honest *with* others, and *about* others, but *with* and *about* himself, as well.

Clearly, the person who anticipates dwelling with the Lord in heaven demonstrates a righteous life on earth. Having received salvation by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8–9), he performs good deeds as a natural outcome and visible evidence of that salvation (Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:12–13).

Psalm 15:3, NIV: whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, and casts no slur on others;

What does Psalm 15:3 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

David describes the Lord's guest (Psalm 15:1) as a person of integrity and peace. He doesn't slander others, nor does he harm his neighbor. Furthermore, he does not lie about his neighbor.

Believers today ought to avoid using language that harms others. They show by their speech that they are followers of Jesus, who is the truth (John 14:6). They speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) and display the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22–23). This also includes avoiding slander: unkind or untrue words that harm another person's reputation.

The wicked person poisons society by slander, but the person who reflects God's nature uses speech that is gracious and seasoned with salt (Colossians 4:6). The wicked person is like the robbers who assaulted the man who was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. The righteous man is like the Good Samaritan who ministered to the wounded traveler (Luke 10:25–37). He shows compassionate love and care for his neighbor.

Psalm 15:4, NIV: who despises a vile person but honors those who fear the LORD; who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind;

What does Psalm 15:4 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

The person the Lord allows to be His tabernacle guest (Psalm 15:1) understands how mankind ought to react to their Creator (Genesis 1:26–27). There are two important terms in this first phrase. The word "vile" describes a deliberately wicked, morally worthless person. "Despise" comes from a term which can also mean "to hold in contempt" or "to disdain." These are both understood through direct contrast. The opposites of those conditions are to "honor," or to esteem and respect, and those who "fear" God, in the sense of submissive reverence and obedience (Proverbs 1:7). A godly person respects those who honor God and rejects the lifestyles of those who hate Him.

This partly includes refusing to partner with evil people in evil activities. The apostle Paul commands in 2 Corinthians 6:14–16, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols?" The righteous person chooses to honor those who fear the Lord. He commends them, edifies them, and supports them with his fellowship and prayers.

Philippians 2:2–4 exhorts believers to honor one another by sharing the same mind and love, being unified, and putting one another's interests ahead of their own. According to this verse, the righteous person is true to his word regardless of the consequences. Even when the promise is hard, it is God-honoring to keep one's word (Matthew 5:37).

Psalm 15:5, NIV: who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken.

What does Psalm 15:5 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

The person allowed to be the Lord's guest in the tabernacle (Psalm 15:1) exhibits faith in the Lord in the way he lends money. Jews were commanded in Scripture

not to charge interest of fellow Israelites. Exodus 22:25 states, "If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him." There is a biblical distinction between lending to those in need, for their need, as opposed to lending for some business purpose. In this verse, for example, the Hebrew terminology specifically refers to *usury*: the charging of unfair levels of interest. One who lends to invest reasonably expects a return on his money (Luke 19:23). Those who lend to the needy and poor should not expect to profit from that charity.

Also, the Lord commanded His people not to accept a bribe. Exodus 23:8 states plainly, "And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right." It seems judges commonly accepted bribes in David's day. Later, both the sin of usury and the sin of taking a bribe brought indictments from the prophets (Isaiah 1:23; 5:23; 10:2; Ezekiel 22:12; Amos 5:11–12).

David writes that the person who lives according to the characteristics described in verses 2–5 will never be moved, meaning nothing will shake him. His consistent lifestyle of godliness will act as a form of self-protection to avoid falling into sin and evil.

1 Corinthians chapter 1

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

19 For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.'

20 Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? **21** For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. **22** Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, **23** but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, **24** but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. **25** For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

26 Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. **27** But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. **28** God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, **29** so that no one may boast before him. **30** It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. **31** Therefore, as it is written: 'Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.'

Context Summary

First Corinthians 1:18–31 describes the foolishness of the gospel in the world's eyes. Both Jews and Greeks rejected the idea of Christ crucified. Any god who would die on a Roman cross, especially as a sacrifice for human sinfulness, would be seen by worldly eyes as a weak and foolish deity. God, though, will shame the wise and strong by giving the ability to believe in the cross of Christ mostly to the weak and foolish of the world, in human terms. In the end, nobody will boast before him of their own strength and wisdom.

1 Corinthians 1:18, NIV: For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

What does 1 Corinthians 1:18 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul now begins to expand on his statement from the end of verse 17: that Christ did not send him to focus on words of eloquent wisdom as he preached the gospel, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. Paul divides the world into two groups of people: those who are perishing and those who are being saved. Those perishing are destined for eternity apart from God, while those being saved are destined for an eternity of sharing in God's glory.

To the first group—the perishing—the cross of Christ is "folly." The original Greek term used here is *mōria*, from the same root word forming English words such as *moron*. In blunt terms, Paul is saying that to the unsaved world, those who preach the gospel look like idiots. Broadly speaking, ungodly people think believers, and their faith, are stupid.

In Paul's day, the cross remained in widespread use by the Romans as a means of public execution. It was a symbol of shameful crimes and powerlessness before the irresistible Roman empire. The cross of Christ was not foolish in the Greek and Roman culture as a result of atheism. In truth, they believed in all kinds of gods and sorted them by the power they wielded over nature and humanity. The cross of Christ was foolish to the pagan culture because Jesus Christ was rejected by His own people and crucified like any other common criminal by the Roman machine.

From the Greek and Roman perspective, that was no kind of god to worship.

For those who are being saved, because of their faith in Christ, the cross is understood to be God's most powerful act. God's Son did not lose a fight with the Jewish leaders or the Roman government. He wasn't overpowered or outmatched (John 10:17–18; 18:6; Matthew 26:53). God the Father sacrificed His Son Jesus for human sin. Jesus, in spite of limitless power and authority, gave up His life to cover the sins of those who were perishing.

Those who trust in Christ understand that without that powerful act, we would be lost and without hope.

1 Corinthians 1:19, NIV: For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.'

What does 1 Corinthians 1:19 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul often quotes from the Scriptures of his era: what we call the Old Testament. He does this to support his claim that these are the words and message of God. In the previous verse Paul wrote that the cross of Christ is foolishness to those perishing, and the power of God to those being saved.

Here he quotes from Isaiah 29:14, referencing a time when Israel followed supposedly wise human advice. They formed an alliance with Egypt seeking to strengthen their position against Assyrian invaders. What was really needed was trust in the power of God to save them (2 Kings 18:17–19:37).

Paul cites Isaiah, quoting God as saying He will destroy the wisdom of those considered wise according to human understanding. God declares He will thwart —He will "trip up"—those thought to be discerning apart from Him. In other words, God is committed to revealing as foolishness what those opposed to Him see as wisdom and vice versa.

1 Corinthians 1:20, NIV: Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

What does 1 Corinthians 1:20 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

The Corinthian Christians lived in a culture which placed enormous value on human wisdom, philosophy, and expertise. The Jewish culture, as well, under the law of Moses, elevated study and scholarship to a place of high status (John 7:49; Mark 1:22; Philippians 3:4–8).

Paul now makes the point that despite high-powered human knowledge and wisdom, these self-appointed gurus had all missed the simple power of Christ, the Son of God, crucified to pay for human sinfulness.

Poetically, and somewhat sarcastically, Paul asks where the wise man is. Where is the Jewish scribe, with all his study? Where is the great debater or philosopher of this era, the ones viewed with such great respect? Why, with all their skill and hard work, have they decided that the cross of Christ is foolishness? Why didn't their study and carefully worded arguments bring them to the truth?

1 Corinthians 1:21, NIV: For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe

What does 1 Corinthians 1:21 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul is declaring a powerful truth: The reason so many fail to believe in Christ's death on the cross as the way to be forgiven from their own sin is not because

the idea is too hard to understand. It's because it is too easy. It is foolishness for simpletons, as an unbeliever sees it.

Humanity at large has failed to come to know God through human wisdom. The language Paul uses suggests that God, in His wisdom, did not allow human wisdom to bring them to Him. Instead, it pleased Him to save those who believe through the folly of what Paul and the other apostles preach.

In other words, Paul understands that his message, the gospel, looks and sounds foolish to most of the world. People trusting their own wisdom or the wisdom of others will miss it. The gospel is not something that can be worked out by logic and philosophy. Evidence can lead us towards the truth (Romans 1:18–20; Psalm 19:1; Matthew 7:7–8), but that truth ultimately has to be accepted as revelation from God.

Does this mean Paul discourages the use of the mind or logical arguments? Based on his writings in Scripture, he clearly does not. He was an intelligent, well-educated man who routinely used powerful arguments in his ministry (Philippians 3:4–8; Acts 17:17). His point is that human wisdom, knowledge, and logic cannot bring someone to faith in the Christ who died for their sin on the cross.

1 Corinthians 1:22, NIV: Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom,

What does 1 Corinthians 1:22 mean? [\[↑ See verse text ↑\]](#)

Paul is presenting an idea that would have been startling to some people: Faith in Christ and His death on the cross for human sin cannot be arrived at by human intellect, human wisdom, or human logic. It must be believed by simple faith in the foolish-sounding revelation of God's Word. "Knowledge" is not the same thing as "trust," and merely understanding facts does not lead a person to salvation (James 2:19).

Paul now points to the characteristics of the two primary cultures of his day that make this simple faith so difficult. He writes that the Jews demand signs. By this, Paul says that the Jewish people of his era wanted to be convinced by miracles

and not by faith. They want the tangible evidence experienced by their forefathers in the parting of the Red Sea and the collapse of Jericho's walls. Christ's death on the cross offers no visible evidence of anything other than a man dying on a cross. Paul will discuss the miracle of the resurrection later in this letter.

While the Jews demand signs, Paul writes that the Greeks seek wisdom. As Paul has shown in the previous verses, this seeking is not for wisdom from the revealed Word of God. The Greeks placed enormous value both on human wisdom and a life dedicated to looking for it. They prided themselves for the conclusions human philosophy could generate.

None of those conclusions, however, could lead them to faith in Christ's death on the cross for human sinfulness. Evidence and philosophy can lead a person to *understand* the truth, but it does not force them to accept it (Romans 1:18–23). Truth must be accepted, through trust, believed after hearing the "foolish" preaching of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 1:23, NIV: but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,

What does 1 Corinthians 1:23 mean? [\[↑ See verse text ↑\]](#)

Paul is describing why the gospel message he preaches seems so foolish to so many people. "Foolish," or "folly," in this case, comes from the same Greek word used to form terms such as *moron*. It's not merely that the world sees the gospel as odd, or unusual. They see it as stupid—as idiotic.

In the previous verse, Paul wrote of the two main cultural forces of his era: religious Jews and intellectual Greeks. He said that the Jews demand miraculous signs as verification that God is at work. The Greeks seek human wisdom by means of logic and skillful speech.

The gospel does not satisfy either group. Instead, Paul says that he and the other apostles preach Christ crucified as the central truth of the gospel. The Jewish people stumble over any suggestion that the Messiah would not

immediately overthrow Israel's enemies by the miraculous power of God. They certainly did not want to believe the Messiah would be executed by Israel's occupier Rome in the most humiliating way possible. After all, Deuteronomy 21:23 says that a hanged man is cursed by God, the Jewish leaders would argue.

For the Gentiles, the idea of a God who would serve humanity by offering His own beloved Son as a sacrifice for sin was ridiculous. From a pagan perspective, strong gods required service from people in order to be rewarded. Only the weakest of gods would serve mortal humans, especially in death.

Paul is emphasizing why faith in Christ cannot be arrived at by human religion and human wisdom. For those who believe, however, he will show it holds extraordinary power.

1 Corinthians 1:24, NIV: but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

What does 1 Corinthians 1:24 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Who would not want access to the very power and wisdom of God? Paul has chosen to use key ideas sought by the cultures of his culture: Jewish spiritual power and Greek wisdom. The religious Jews and the intellectual Greeks cannot accept, however, the gospel message that it is available only through "Christ crucified." That idea is foolishness and a stumbling block. "Foolishness" or "folly" as used by Paul comes from a Greek term which means "moronic" or "idiotic."

Now Paul identifies the one group that not only accepts but fully believes that Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, died on a Roman cross to pay with His own blood the penalty for human sinfulness. Jews and Greeks who are called by God believe it. Their faith gives them access, by God's grace, to the power and wisdom of God that all others are seeking.

This group, these believers, are not smarter, wiser, or better educated than those who reject the idea of a crucified Christ. They did not cleverly figure out what others could not. They believed because they responded to God's gift of calling

them to faith, opening their eyes to see what others could not or would not. Faith itself is a gift from God.

1 Corinthians 1:25, NIV: For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

What does 1 Corinthians 1:25 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

This verse must be read carefully and in the context of this chapter to be understood correctly. Paul is not saying that God contains any foolishness or weakness, at all. Instead, he has taught why so many people reject the idea of a crucified Christ as weak and foolish. Paul uses the Greek word *mōron*, which implies precisely what it appears to in English: something stupid, idiotic, or silly. From a godless perspective, it's stupid to think God would sacrifice His only Son to pay the penalty for human sin. Pagan religions, in particular, would call a deity "weak" if it could be killed on a cross like any common criminal or political dissenter.

Those called by God to believe, however, recognize God's foolishness in giving His Son as the greatest of all wisdom. They see the incredible strength required for Christ to remain on the cross and die instead of exercising His power over those who would kill Him.

It's also important to remember that Paul was well-educated (Philippians 3:4–8), experienced (Acts 17:17), tested (Acts 17:11) and frequently encouraged others to use their God-given minds (Colossians 2:8; 2 Timothy 2:15). At no point does the Bible embrace ignorance or sneer at the importance of reason. What Scripture does, clearly, is distinguish between *knowing about* God (James 2:19) and having a *trusting faith in* God (Matthew 18:3).

1 Corinthians 1:26, NIV: Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.

What does 1 Corinthians 1:26 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul has described why so many intelligent, well-educated, and thoughtful people reject the gospel message. Many bright and rational persons recoil at the suggestion that the Son of God was crucified on a Roman cross to pay the price for human sin. From their perspective, such a god would be foolish and weak. Anyone who believes this, by extension of their thinking, must also be foolish and weak.

Paul now asks the Corinthian Christians to think about everyone in their congregation. He wants them to evaluate those God called to believe in Jesus on a human scale. How do they stack up? His answer is not flattering to them. Few of them were wise by human standards. In other words, they didn't have many PhDs or academics or skilled speakers who could debate with eloquence.

In addition, few of the believers in Corinth had much power, in human terms. They did not command armies or run large corporations. They did not possess extraordinary wealth so that they could control the actions of many other people in service to themselves.

Finally, not many of the Corinthian believers were born into nobility. In the highly segregated social system of Paul's day, being born into the right family brought with it incredible privilege and status that was difficult to lose and impossible to earn. Those people didn't tend to come to Christ and join the Corinthian church.

Paul describes those who are in Christ in Corinth, and in most places, in the following verses. His emphasis here is not to denounce learning, since the Bible is full of exhortations towards wisdom and reason (Acts 17:11; 1 Peter 3:15; Colossians 2:8). Rather, he is pointing out the enormous gap between merely *understanding* the gospel and accepting it (James 2:19).

1 Corinthians 1:27, NIV: But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

What does 1 Corinthians 1:27 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul has asked the Christians in Corinth to take a good look at the people in their congregation, their brothers and sisters in Christ. In the previous verse, he wrote that very few of them are wise or powerful in human terms. Not many of them were born into nobility. His point is not to put them down, but to emphasize that God does not require brilliance or power to become a believer. In fact, many people rely on their intellect or wealth so much that it keeps them from trusting in God (Matthew 19:23).

Paul is continuing to reveal why so few Jews and Greeks believe in the crucified Christ. They think that any god who could or would die on a cross to save people would be foolish and weak. By extension, those who would believe such a thing would also be foolish and weak. The term used for "foolishness" here is the same one behind the English word *moron*.

Only those God calls to believe in the gospel can see the strength and wisdom in this act of love. Now Paul confirms that God does indeed choose foolish and weak people, as defined by human terms, to come to Him through faith in Christ. Why does God do this? He wants to shame those who consider themselves too wise or strong to believe such a thing.

Paul, of course, is not saying that the believers in Corinth—or the humble Christians in other places and times—are truly foolish and weak. The world *sees them as* idiots and losers, because they occupy service positions, are not well-educated, or do not have money, rank, or social standing. Even more so, the world sees them as fools for believing in Jesus. In truth, though, by God's grace, these believers are the only ones who see clearly enough to receive what is actually wise and strong.

1 Corinthians 1:28, NIV: God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are,

What does 1 Corinthians 1:28 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul continues his thought from the previous verse. He has written that God chooses those who will believe in the seemingly foolish message of Christ

crucified. God mostly does not choose those of great status in human terms. He does not tend to choose respected academics, people of great wealth, or those born into rank and privilege. Those people have rejected the idea of Christ crucified as weak and foolish. Despite evidence and reason, they are too arrogant to trust in God (Romans 1:18–23; James 2:19).

Instead God shames their unbelief by choosing people the world sees as weak and foolish. Now he adds that God chooses for belief those who are low and despised in the world. He turns what the world sees as "something" into "nothing." And, in another sense, God brings meaning and value to those the world ignores; God chooses the "nothings."

To call people "nothings" may sound harsh and exaggerated to modern and western ears. Most of us cannot imagine the daily lives of those in a strict caste system. We cannot fathom life without any social position due to being in the slave class, or servant class, or birth into a low-reputation family, or with the "wrong" ethnic origin. Or maybe we know it better than we realize. In such cultures, human life without the protection of social and political standing was considered worthless, and certainly expendable.

That's who God chooses, Paul writes. He calls the "nothings" to faith in Christ looking forward to the day when all the "somethings" who rejected faith in Christ as foolish and weak will become the true nothings, in a sense, as they stand before Him.

1 Corinthians 1:29, NIV: so that no one may boast before him.

What does 1 Corinthians 1:29 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Nobody gets to stand before God and boast they were wise and strong enough to make it into His presence. Period. In fact, wisdom and knowledge can only lead us to understanding of truth (James 2:19); it does not force us to trust in that reality (Romans 1:18–23). Knowledge of God is useless unless a person seeks to know and love God.

Paul has identified two primary groups of people existing in the world of his day. Those who are "somethings" and those who are "nothings." The somethings, by the measure of society, were wise, well-educated, wealthy, respected, and held positions of social standing. For the most part, these somethings had rejected the gospel message that faith in a crucified Christ is the only way to become right with the one, true God.

The nothings, on the other hand, were the disposable, replaceable people in human terms. They had little hope of ever increasing their position in society. They received little respect or recognition.

God chose mostly from among the nothings those who would believe in Christ crucified. Since He is the one who chose them, they will not boast before Him on the day of judgment about their own wisdom and strength to believe in Jesus. They will know they received their faith as a gift.

More importantly in God's eyes, all the somethings will see that their rejection of Christ was not wise or strong or brave. They will understand that it is the reason they have become nothings before God. There will be no boasting.

God takes with deadly seriousness any rejection of His offer to come to Him in humility through faith and Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:30, NIV: It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

What does 1 Corinthians 1:30 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul has written in the previous verses that, as we stand before God on judgment day, all the important and high-status people in this life who rejected faith in Christ as weak and foolish will become "nothings." They will stop boasting about their wisdom and strength once and for all. They'll be confronted with the reality that their rejection of Him was based in pride and arrogance, not facts or reason (James 2:19; Romans 1:18–23).

Those who God chooses to believe in Christ will also not boast. We will understand our faith, our place in Christ Jesus, to be a gift from God.

We will know that it is Christ who is the wisdom of God in human form. He is the one who made it possible for us to be declared righteous by God because we are in Christ and He is righteous. Christ is the reason we have been sanctified, meaning that God has set us apart as His own special possession (1 Corinthians 1:2). It is with Christ's death for our sins that God has redeemed us, purchased us out of our slavery to sin, and welcomed us into His family as sons and daughters.

1 Corinthians 1:31, NIV: Therefore, as it is written: 'Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.'

What does 1 Corinthians 1:31 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul quotes from Jeremiah 9:23–24 that all boasting should be in the Lord only and not in ourselves and our wisdom and our strength. In the previous verse, Paul showed that everything that makes Christians "something" before God comes to us only in and through and because of what Christ has done for us. Our human wisdom and strength gains for us nothing of any lasting value. Knowledge is good and commendable (2 Timothy 2:15), but it cannot save us (James 2:19).

In the Lord, though, we have everything that matters, and we have it forever. Paul encourages us to boast about our high standing in God's eyes because of what Christ has done. He encourages us to boast about God's wisdom and strength and our place with Him because of His grace.

He has shown that those who have rejected faith in Christ because it seems foolish and weak will find humility on the day they stand before God. Nobody will boast of their own position or accomplishments or wealth before Him (1 Corinthians 1:29).

Matthew chapter 5

New International Version

1 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him,

2 and he began to teach them. He said:

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.

Context Summary

Matthew 5:1–12 contains the beautiful Beatitudes delivered by Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount. The series of nine sentences describes an unlikely group of people as blessed: the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those hungry for righteousness, and the merciful. All are blessed because of their part in the kingdom of heaven. This includes those persecuted for the sake of righteousness and on account of Jesus. Instead of despairing, they should rejoice for the great rewards they will receive in heaven. These are not prerequisites for salvation; instead, they are the natural expressions of saving faith in the life of those who know Christ.

Matthew 5:1, NIV: Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him,

What does Matthew 5:1 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

The previous chapter ended with a description of great crowds who came from far and wide to hear Jesus' teaching and witness His miracles. Now Matthew slows the action down. He focuses on one specific day in Jesus' ministry, when He saw how large the crowds around Him were and wanted to teach them.

Matthew was a tax collector before He followed Jesus (Matthew 9:9). This would have required some education, including the ability to read, write, and handle record-keeping. Ancient writings, like the gospel of Matthew, were typically arranged by topic instead of in strict time order, so even though Matthew's conversion is *described* after the Sermon on the Mount, he might have begun to follow Jesus during His earlier ministry (Matthew 4:23–25). If he was there, scholars believe Matthew might have transcribed Jesus' words in this message. While some biblical records of Jesus' words may be paraphrased, this passage may well be an exact, word-for-word register of this sermon.

Jesus goes up "on a mountain" to teach the people. In the context of that region, this doesn't mean something like Mount Everest. Rather, these are what people in many other cultures would think of as steep hills. Galilee contains many such hills. Jesus likely wanted to get some elevation above the crowd so He could be heard by as many people as possible. Matthew does not describe the exact location of the sermon. Tradition points to a ridge of hills northwest of a town called Tabgha, which is near Capernaum with a view of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus sat down to teach, which was the normal practice of rabbis. Matthew often describes Jesus as sitting down to teach in many different locations. The use of a sloped hill would have made this easier, by allowing people to see Him more easily.

Matthew writes that Jesus' "disciples" came to Him. In this context, the term refers to all of those who were there with a sincere interest in learning. He spoke to everyone who was following Him and open to His message.

Matthew 5:2, NIV: and he began to teach them. He said:

What does Matthew 5:2 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Matthew 5–7 contains the first of five long speeches from Jesus recorded in Matthew's gospel. It is called the Sermon on the Mount, and it begins with what are known as the Beatitudes in verses 3–12. Luke 6:17–49 also presents a sermon from Jesus, containing much of the same content. As a former tax collector (Matthew 9:9), Matthew would have been fluent in both reading and writing and might have been there to record Jesus' words verbatim. Writings such as the four Gospels were often topical, not time-ordered, so Matthew may have been present, even though his conversion is explicitly described later in this book. If he was not there, in person, he would have been able to compile the message through Jesus' later, repeated teachings.

Some scholars suggest Matthew and Luke are describing parts of the same sermon. It is likely that Jesus spoke many more words than those recorded in either version. It's possible the Matthew and Luke, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, emphasized different parts of the same, longer message.

However, Luke describes his version of the sermon as occurring "on a level place." A more likely possibility, then, is Matthew and Luke record two different speeches, delivered in different places. Jesus was a traveling preacher, and He may have preached the same content repeatedly as He came to different places. This is no different in speakers and preachers of the modern era. Matthew's Sermon on the Mount and Luke's Sermon on the Plain would considerably overlap, because Jesus taught similar things in multiple presentations.

Matthew 5:3, NIV: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

What does Matthew 5:3 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Matthew 5:3–12 contains what have come to be known as the Beatitudes. This title comes from the Latin word *beatus*, which means "blessed" or "happy." Each of the Beatitudes begins with a reference to those who are blessed, in connection to some behavior or attitude. The idea of being "blessed" in Jesus' sermon does not mean feeling happy, necessarily. Rather it means recognizing what is truly

good in a person's life and why. It refers to those on the right track, who are following a godly pattern of thoughts and actions.

Jesus begins by saying that the poor in spirit are blessed. This is not a reference to money or finances. To be "poor in spirit" is the opposite of being self-confident or self-reliant, especially in any spiritual sense. The poor in spirit recognize they are incapable of providing for themselves by their own strength, goodness, or righteousness. They know themselves to be spiritually bankrupt of true goodness. They cannot hope to bargain or earn their way into the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus says, though, that they are blessed because the kingdom of heaven is theirs already. In other words, admission that one does not deserve a place in God's kingdom is a requirement for entrance into that kingdom. This is the opposite of assuming one has earned citizenship by his own merit.

Even as part of a sermon from Jesus, these words need to be understood in careful context. Jesus is not teaching, in this one single verse, every detail of the plan of salvation. As He continues to teach, Jesus will be clear—and the New Testament will emphasize—that nobody comes to the Father except through faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sin.

A corresponding attitude to salvation is that of being poor in spirit. The kingdom of heaven will be populated by the humble and not the arrogant. In that way, the poor in spirit are blessed.

Matthew 5:4, NIV: Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

What does Matthew 5:4 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is teaching a series of statements often referred to as the Beatitudes. Each starts with the words "blessed are." Blessing, in this sense, refers to a declaration of what is good and why. It does not mean that the blessed person will feel happy, necessarily.

The difference between happiness and being "blessed" is especially obvious in this verse. This beatitude states that those who mourn are blessed. Those who

mourn, by definition, are not *happy*. Jesus wants His followers to understand that those who experience mourning are not *hopeless*.

Within the context of Jesus' teaching about the coming kingdom of heaven, those who mourn may do so because of their own sin or because of the sin of Israel. The Jewish people experience a state of mourning under the harsh oppression and occupation of Rome. Those faithful to God and Scripture understood this to be a result of Israel's sin and unfaithfulness, since God had promised to prosper them when they were faithful and to judge them when they were not.

Both John the Baptist and Jesus preached that Israel must repent. Repentance involves sadness as we recognize and confess our sinful selfishness. Those who mourn while repenting of their sin are blessed, however, because the kingdom of heaven will come; they will be rescued. The season of judgment will end.

Not all commentators agree that Jesus is referring only to mourning that comes with repentance from sin. Much sadness in life, of course, is not the result of sin. It comes from living on a planet ruled by death. Of all who mourn, those in Christ are blessed because they will be comforted by God in the here and now (2 Corinthians 1:3–7) and free from mourning for eternity (Revelation 21:4).

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

What does Matthew 5:5 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Jesus continues to describe the Beatitudes: sayings about who is blessed and why, especially as it relates to the coming kingdom of heaven. Now Jesus declares those who are meek to be blessed because they will inherit the earth. The word meek does not mean "weak," though that's how many misinterpret it. The word is best understood as "gentleness," or a refusal to take control by brute force or manipulation. Meekness, from a Christian perspective, is about faith. It is about trusting God to win the battle in the end instead of going to extremes to win the battle on our own terms. The concept is often referred to as "strength under control," rather than "strength seeking control."

This is exactly backwards from the world's common understanding. Most believe the world to be controlled by those strong and ambitious enough to take what they want. The world belongs to the rich, the dominant, and the bold. Jesus flips that around. He declares that the true inheritors of the earth are the meek.

Once again, Jesus' meaning here is in connection to those who have faith in Him. If we belong to the Lord, and if the Lord becomes king of the earth, as the Messiah will, then all those who are His will inherit the earth with Him.

"Meekness" is not a requirement for becoming a true Christian, but meekness is something which naturally comes from having a saving knowledge of Christ.

It should be said that true meekness takes courage; we must fight with ourselves to trust God's plan and His character. It's hard to be humble and patient when we cannot fully understand how good will win in the end.

Matthew 5:6, NIV: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

What does Matthew 5:6 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

The next of Jesus' statements is about an appetite for righteousness. This is another one of the Beatitudes: short statements about blessing from a godly perspective. Here, Jesus states that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed, meaning they have a good thing. Why? Because they will be satisfied. Commentators point to two possible meanings for "righteousness" as used in this verse. First, Jesus could be talking about people who are eager to be declared righteous by God. They want to be made righteous, themselves, and to conform to the will of God. In that way, they are sincerely seeking to be saved. Those who come to trust in Jesus for their forgiveness from sin will receive exactly that from God (Romans 5:17). They will be saved.

Another view is that Jesus has in mind those who are hungry to see righteousness "win." They long for justice to prevail. They want what is right to overcome what is wrong and evil in the world. These people, too, will be

satisfied, because the kingdom of heaven will bring an end to all unrighteousness. Their appetite for righteousness will be completely satisfied.

Matthew 5:7, NIV: Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

What does Matthew 5:7 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Jesus continues to identify those who are truly blessed. This list is commonly referred to as the Beatitudes. Jesus' claims are surprising from a worldly perspective. Instead of declaring that the rich, the beautiful, or the victorious in war are those who have been blessed, Jesus has described as blessed the poor in spirit, those who mourn, and those who are meek. In every case, their blessing comes from the ultimate source of all blessing, which is God. Their status as "blessed" is based on God's response to these humble attitudes.

Now Jesus adds the merciful to those who should see themselves as blessed. Why? They, too, will receive mercy. Jesus is most likely referring to receiving mercy from God. Generally, it is the character of God to show mercy to the merciful (Psalm 18:25). The reverse should also be true but it's not always the case. Those who have received mercy from God ought to be merciful to others (Ephesians 4:32).

Again, Jesus likely has in mind the kingdom of heaven as He speaks. Those who are merciful now, He says, will receive mercy from the king of heaven when He takes the throne. His meaning is not that a person must be merciful *in order to be saved*, but that those who submit to God in salvation will naturally respond with an attitude of mercy towards others.

Matthew 5:8, NIV: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

What does Matthew 5:8 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Jesus adds another "blessed are" to His growing list of those who should rejoice in the way God sees them. Today, we refer to this litany as the Beatitudes. Jesus

now says that the "pure in heart" are blessed, for they will see God. This doesn't mean they'll be happy, but it does mean they should not feel hopeless.

Modern Christians might associate "purity" with a freedom from sexual sin or moral failure. Those who first heard Jesus' words may have connected "purity" to performing the law of Moses, or perfectly following the rules of the Jewish teachers. This would carry the sense of being completely free from sin.

However, Jesus focused much more on the hearts of His listeners, instead of their ability to maintain the rituals of the law. He preached against obeying the law in action only, rather than out of true love for God. "Purity," in its most clear and original meaning, refers to the idea of something being singular, unified, unmixed, or consistent. The pure in heart are focused from the inside out on *one single thing*. In this case, that thing is God.

Jesus promises here that, when the kingdom of heaven arrives, those who are pure in their devotion to God will see Him. This reveals a remarkable idea about God's kingdom. Most Jews would have learned at an early age that nobody can see God and live; He is too holy. Jesus, though, says that those who enter into the kingdom of heaven will see God.

Matthew 5:9, NIV: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

What does Matthew 5:9 mean? [\[↑ See verse text ↑\]](#)

Next in Matthew's record of "the Beatitudes"—a series of statements about godly attitudes and benefits—is a reference to "peacemakers." Jesus declares that peacemakers are blessed: they have received a good thing, because they will be called sons of God. This is an early part of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1–2).

The commitment to make peace is highly valued throughout the Bible, but what does it mean to be a peacemaker? Biblically, a peacemaker is someone who reconciles people who were formerly in conflict. The heart of Jesus' earthly mission was to make peace between God and those who would come to Him

through faith. This is eloquently expressed by Paul in his letter to the church at Ephesus:

"For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near" (Ephesians 2:14–17). Christ made this peace "by the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:20). In other words, His death in our place on the cross paid for our sins. It removed the barrier between humanity and God. Everyone who comes to God through Christ and the cross finds they have peace with God (Romans 5:1).

It makes sense, then, that everyone who commits to making peace between others, especially by their own sacrifice, imitates what Christ has done. Such a person is called a "son of God" similarly to how Israel was called God's son in the Old Testament (Exodus 4:22).

Matthew 5:10, NIV: Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

What does Matthew 5:10 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Jesus' list of people who are "blessed," which we know as the Beatitudes, continues to grow. The word used for "blessed" can sometimes mean "happy." However, in this context, mere feeling is not the point. In fact, some people Jesus mentioned may feel deep unhappiness due to their circumstances (Matthew 5:1–9). Despite hard situations, however, they are blessed: they are doing what is right and will experience eternal good in the kingdom of heaven.

Now Jesus says those persecuted for the sake of righteousness are blessed, and part of the kingdom of heaven. His early preaching ministry has focused entirely on this kingdom. Both Christ and John the Baptist have called the Jewish people to repent of sin, to be ready for the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 3:1–2; 4:17). John made it clear that nobody would be able to enter it simply because they were Jewish. Bearing fruit, being used by God for good, being faithful to God in

your choices: these have been described as the signs of those who would enter the kingdom Messiah would bring to earth.

The implication here is that those being persecuted have some choice in the matter. In other words, they did not choose to avoid doing what is right, in order to avoid being harassed or harmed. They made a conscious choice to honor God, and to be faithful to Him, despite persecution from those who are unrighteous.

Matthew 5:11, NIV: Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

What does Matthew 5:11 mean? [[↑](#) [See verse text](#) [↑](#)]

This is part of Jesus' explanation of the Beatitudes: a series of statements about those who are "blessed," as proven by certain attitudes or actions (Matthew 5:1–9). In the previous verse, Jesus mentioned those who endured persecution for the sake of righteousness (Matthew 5:10). Here, He adds details about what persecution might look like and what might cause it. For the first time, Jesus moves away from general statements, given to His largely Jewish audience, and focuses more narrowly on Himself, specifically, as the One they are following.

The central issue in true Christian "persecution" is, of course, Jesus Christ. Merely being harassed or treated unfairly isn't necessarily persecution—especially if it's in response to our own wrongdoing (1 Peter 4:15). What Jesus means is that one proof of being "blessed" is willingness to endure unfair treatment on account of faithfully following Him (1 Peter 4:12–14). Those in opposition to Jesus might insult His followers, abuse them, and falsely accuse them of doing terrible things.

At the time Jesus gives the Sermon on the Mount, this hasn't yet happened to those who follow Him. However, this blessing serves as an early warning that such abuse is coming (John 16:1–4). In the following verse, Jesus will continue to explain why those who suffer for being connected to Him are blessed.

Matthew 5:12, NIV: Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

What does Matthew 5:12 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Jesus has declared that those treated badly on His account are "blessed" (Matthew 5:11). Abuses they could expect were insults, persecution, and false accusations about doing terrible things. The context of these attacks is when people are truly following the teachings of God—the world hates them specifically because they emulate Jesus (John 15:21).

Now Jesus explains why willingness to be connected to Him despite harsh treatment is a blessing. Those who do so will receive great rewards in heaven. Jesus does not hold this out as a consolation prize for a difficult life. He tells His disciples to rejoice and be glad about the opportunity to be treated awfully for His sake. The rewards waiting in heaven because of this honor (Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 4:12–13) makes the experience itself a victory worth celebrating.

While Jesus will later predict intense hatred levied against Christians (John 16:1–4), attacks on God's people are not new. God sent many prophets to Israel to deliver messages to the people. Many of those prophets were persecuted for representing God. Now many of Jesus' disciples will be persecuted for representing Him to the world, which will earn them great rewards in heaven, as well.

For the first time, Jesus mentions heaven as the destination of His followers instead of the kingdom of heaven (or kingdom of God). He also describes the blessing of those who are His as including more than just entry into the kingdom, but rewards in heaven.