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# Love's Qualifications

## (6:20-23)

John Kachelman

*"And turning His gaze on His disciples, He began to say, 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets'" (6:20-23).*

A convert in India was urged to give up his faith in Christ. He replied, "I love Jesus Christ because He loved man. I must obey Him. Even if I knew that heaven was filled and there was no room for me, I would still love Him and live for His honor and glory." Efforts were made to convince him by argument. He said, "Should one be able to bring a sophisticated argument which I could not answer, I would not be troubled. I have obeyed the Word of God which cannot be shaken or removed." His relatives wept over him as going into perdition. He said, "Threats I can bear; argument do not shake me. But the hardest thing to bear is the persecution of others. It almost breaks my heart to hear of them, but not even this will cause me to leave Christ!" Other converts there were told of his resolve and they, too, were encouraged to steadfast faith. This new convert confidently said, "Even if my own soul were not worth saving, I would cling to Christ because His great love for me prompts my great love for Him!"

This man provides an excellent illustration of the love that is to mark those in God's kingdom. Our Lord stressed love for God as the one undeniable principle behind obedient faith. "If you love Me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). It is this love that causes us to "abide" in the commandments of God (John 15:9-14). This "love" is vital to the Christian's faith.

As our Lord spoke of the kingdom's citizenship in 6:20-23, He focused upon this love. In these verses, we find the qualities which make this love so significant. In a series of four beatitudes, Christ sums up the essence of this unique love.

Christ had been discussing how the "new" order was different from and incompatible with the "old" order (cf. 5:36-39). In this paragraph He says that a certain kind of "love" is the true distinguishing factor. This "love" will be eager to accept the conditions of membership in the "new" order (kingdom/church) which the Lord was to establish. Thus this paragraph is a most impressive description of instructions to the honest search of truth. All who maintain this "love" will find a blessed reward. Pay close attention as this "love" is discussed and its qualifications are outlined. All who possess this love will find divine blessings.

### THE ATTITUDES OF DEDICATED LOVE

In comparison with Matthew's account (5:1-12), it is quickly noticed that while Matthew lists eight beatitudes, only four are mentioned by Luke. This has caused some to suggest that the text in

Luke was not spoken at the same time as Matthew 5, but the discrepancy is resolved by understanding that Luke is concerned with the “new” order’s inauguration. Hence, the first four beatitudes in Matthew agree with these of Luke telling us what qualifications must be met for *entering* the kingdom. The remaining four in Matthew tell us of the disposition required for men to *remain* in the kingdom. Luke’s emphasis is on instructing us about what qualifies one to become a member in Christ’s kingdom. He thus does not include those instructing us on the behavior that will enable one to remain in the kingdom. Once this point is understood, there will be no discrepancy evident between the two narratives.

As Luke speaks of the conditions for entering into the kingdom, he observes four attitudes that must be seen.

*First, there must be an attitude toward self.* “Poor” conveys the idea of humiliation rather than poverty. The word literally means “to make oneself little; to crouch.” An humble heart is ready to admit that the Almighty is the Master and man is the servant. Those who seek God’s kingdom must possess hearts where arrogance and self-centered pursuits are absent. The importance of humility is underscored by its place of priority in this list. All who do not possess this trait will be unable to possess any of the remaining traits! Solomon agrees, for he says, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way, . . .” (Proverbs 8:13; cf. Micah 6:8; 1 Samuel 2:3).

God’s kingdom only has room for those who are willing to bow humbly to the Almighty’s will. “I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite” (Isaiah 57:15; cf. Philippians 2:3-5; James 4:6-10). As our Lord discussed His kingdom’s members, He began by saying that only those who are humble are qualified to become members.

*Second, there must be an attitude of yearning for spiritual matters.* The term “hungry” denotes those whose poverty condemns them to a life of toil and privation. Because of our humble status in seeking God’s will, we will not share in the world’s abundance as others will. There will be within the hearts of those seeking God’s kingdom a deep desire to know divine truth. This is likened to the panting deer who has stopped to drink the cool waters (Psalm 42:1, 2a). In Mary’s

song we find reference to this desire and the Lord’s supply: “He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed” (1:53). All who desire the deep spiritual things will be filled: “He has satisfied the thirsty soul, and the hungry soul He has filled with what is good” (Psalm 107:9).

One of the most uplifting sights that you can ever witness is one who “hungers” after God’s righteousness because of an intense love.

*Third, there must be an attitude of sensitivity toward sin.* “Weep” refers to those who are pressed down with trials and unhappy events. This describes an understanding of our inability to live blamelessly. It would include the heartaches over family and friends who refuse God’s gracious salvation. It refers to one who understands the true calamity of sin in man’s life (cf. Psalm 119:81, 82a, 136, 143; Jeremiah 9:1). Those whose love for God causes them to feel sin’s tragedy are qualified to be members of God’s kingdom (Romans 10:1).

*Fourth, there must be an attitude of separation from worldliness.* Verse 22 is picturesque in revealing how those in God’s kingdom find association with those in the separation that is marked with four steps. There will occur first a feeling of dislike between the two—“hate.” This is followed by a breaking of the association between the two—“ostracize.” This exclusion from activities and associations leads to the third step—“heap insults.” The sinner will be unable to tolerate the believer’s righteousness and will begin a malicious slander campaign against him. The phrase “heap insults” refers to a pronouncing of the saint’s name with disgust. Finally, the sinner can tolerate righteousness no longer, and excommunication results. Literally, this word “spurn” referred to the practice of the synagogues when one was cast out and his name was permanently erased from the roll.

This separation was expected (John 16:2—17:14). The Lord knew that darkness and light were incompatible. Those who love God must be willing to separate themselves from the world (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14—7:1). Only those who love God more than anything else will be able to do this (Matthew 10:34, 35).

## REWARDS FOR A DEDICATED LOVE

These qualifications require a strict love for God. The practice of this love would be difficult,

at best calling for deprivation, humiliation, and separation. Such consequences are hard to accept. To urge His followers to practice this love, Jesus revealed the following rewards as waiting for the faithful saint.

*First*, we will have a deep and abiding joy (6:23a). Throughout this section we read terms referring to inner joy. Those who practice this dedicated love are called “blessed” and told to “be glad” and “leap for joy.” Why? The love they are called to demonstrate will compel them to deny everything the world says leads to joy, but Christ’s kingdom provides another “joy” that far surpasses that of the world (John 14:27; Philippians 4:4-7, 10-12). As hard as it seems, this “greater joy” does await all who are willing to possess the dedicated love required by Jesus.

The apostles demonstrated this unique love required by those in God’s kingdom. They were met with “hatred” and rejection. Yet, they “rejoiced” because they were counted worthy of suffering for the Lord’s name (Acts 5:41; cf. Hebrews 11:26; Romans 5:3; Colossians 1:24; etc.).

*Second*, we will have an identification with God’s saints (6:23). Those who follow the commands and nurture the attitudes of the kingdom’s love will face sufferings. But these sufferings are not new; they have confronted God’s people in every century (1 Peter 4:16; 2 Timothy 3:12). The word “treat” in verse 23 refers to a habit of practice. Thus it is habitually practiced by the ungodly.

Even in great suffering, the saint can find consolation. All who suffer at the hands of the ungodly will rise to the rank of the faithful Old Testament prophets. Chrysostom has said,

If the Empress causes me to be sawn asunder, then let me be sawn asunder for that was the fate of the prophet Isaiah; if she casts me into the sea, I will think of Jonah; if she casts me into the furnace of fire, I will think of the three holy children; if she throws me to the wild beasts, I will think of Daniel in the lion’s den; if she cuts off my head, I have still St. John as my companion; if she causes me to be stoned, what else happened to Stephen?

*Third*, we will have a clear understanding of life’s true values. Those who pursued God’s kingdom and possess the dedicated love required by its membership will see the priorities of life. The kingdom’s importance will be realized (6:20; cf. James 2:5; 1 Corinthians 1:26-29). The proper

view of contentment in life will be seen. We will be “satisfied” (6:21a; cf. Psalms 119:165; 103:1-5). And we will want to be known as faithful servants of God (6:22; Matthew 25:21; Revelation 3:5).

## THE MOTIVE TO DEVELOP A DEDICATED LOVE

All motives for developing this dedicated love can be summed up by one phrase: “Blessed are you.” Why choose any other path which cannot provide this blessed reward? We must develop this love so we will share in the glorious blessings of heaven.

## CONCLUSION

The “new” order which Christ was to begin had one unmistakable mark—it possessed a distinctive love. This love must be constant, never unstable. The instability of love is illustrated by the following account of a young suitor: “He loved Amye, till he saw Floriat; and when he saw Cynthia, forgot them both. But fair Phyllis was incomparably beyond them all. Clorris surpassed her and yet, when he espied Amaryllis he saw her as the sole possessor of his heart. In fact, he loved best her he saw last!” Such an unstable “love” may be laughable at times, but it is never comical in matters of faith.

Listen to our Lord. There are no options in this matter. If we are to enjoy God’s blessings provided in His kingdom, we must possess this dedicated love. Only this unique love will yield the attitudes that lead to divine reward. Let us join the convert from India and find steadfastness because of our love for God.

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## Great Joy! (Luke 6:23)

The dominant attitude of the Christian is “joy.” Joy was heralded at the Savior’s birth (2:10). This great joy is possible because Jesus died on the cross.

1. We can “be glad” in trials.
2. We can find delight in daily life.
3. We can maintain this joy by anticipating heaven’s rewards.
4. We can increase this joy by identifying with others of like faith.