



## **Matthew 5:3**

(3) "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

## **Psalm 51:6-12**

(6) Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,  
And in the hidden *part* You will make me to know wisdom. (7) Purge me with  
hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
(8) Make me hear joy and gladness,  
*That* the bones You have broken may rejoice.  
(9) Hide Your face from my sins,  
And blot out all my iniquities. (10) Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
(11) Do not cast me away from Your presence,  
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. (12) Restore to me the joy of Your  
salvation,  
And uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit.

## **Psalm 51:14-15**

(14) Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,  
The God of my salvation,  
*And* my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.  
(15) O Lord, open my lips,  
And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

## **Psalm 51:1-2**

(1) Have mercy upon me, O God,

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According to Your lovingkindness;  
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,  
Blot out my transgressions.  
(2) Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
And cleanse me from my sin.

*New King James Version*

The Old Testament supplies the background to Jesus' use of "poor." From statements like David's, we realize that when [God](#) prophesies regarding Jesus—

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound" ([Isaiah 61:1](#))

—He is not speaking of the economically poor but those who are poor in spiritual qualities or poor in terms of a relationship with Him.

One can be spiritually poor regardless of how much money he possesses. He can be brokenhearted though living in grand houses, driving luxury automobiles, wearing the finest apparel, and circulating in the highest levels of society. Is being captive to [sin](#) and [Satan](#) or addicted to drugs, fashion, or the vain praise of men restricted by economic boundaries? Neither are godly attributes.

Jesus is not speaking to any clearly demarcated group. Though riches can motivate [pride](#), the economically poor possess pride too. Jesus says the poor are blessed, but neither poverty nor wealth can confer spiritual blessings, though poverty may help to lead a person to humility. Both poverty and wealth can entail great spiritual peril. A poverty-stricken person can become very self-centered because of his desperate need, and a wealthy person can become equally self-centered through his profligacy. Jesus' words cover the whole span of mankind's circumstances because anyone without a right and true [relationship with God](#) can fall within His description. "Poor," as Jesus uses it, truly relates to a spiritual quality.

"Poor" does not stand alone; Jesus connects it with "spirit" to clarify His intention. Even as the economically poor are very aware of their need, so also are the [poor in spirit](#). Yet a vast difference lies between this and being financially destitute. Poverty of spirit is a fruit not produced in the natural man, but a work of God's [Holy Spirit](#) in the minds of those He has called and is converting, explaining why being poor in spirit can span the whole economic spectrum. It is why an [Abraham](#), [Isaac](#), [Jacob](#), [David](#), or [Joseph of Arimathea](#), all very wealthy men, can be simultaneously poor in spirit and materially blessed of God.

David referred to himself as a "poor" man, in need of what only God could supply. He perceived himself as destitute of the resources to improve his lot. He saw himself as beyond the help of men, afflicted, crushed, forsaken, desolate, miserable—ashelpless spiritually as the poverty stricken are economically. Thus, recognizing his need, he cried out to God, and He heard him.

Another psalm by a thoroughly chastened and humbled David reveals in greater detail his recognition of the spiritual poverty in which he committed his sins. Notice the spiritual things David requested—things only God could supply—to fill his needs in Psalm 51:

Have [mercy](#) upon me . . . blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly . . . cleanse me from my sin. . . . Make me to know [wisdom](#). Purge me with hyssop. . . . Make me to hear [joy](#) and gladness. . . . Hide Your face from my sins. . . . Create in me a clean heart . . . renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your [salvation](#), and uphold me with Your generous Spirit . . . . Deliver me from bloodguiltiness. . . . Open my lips and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. (verses 1-2, 6-12, 14-15)

To be ***poor in spirit*** is to acknowledge honestly and with understanding our spiritual poverty—indeed our spiritual bankruptcy—before God. We are sinners and on the strength of our lives deserve nothing but God's judgment. We have nothing to offer, nothing to plead, nothing with which to buy His favor. But upon profession of our [faith](#) coupled with [repentance](#), He allows by His [grace](#) the blood of [Jesus Christ](#), shed for the sins of [the world](#), to cover our sins, justifying us and providing us with access into His presence.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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**[The Beatitudes, Part Two: Poor in Spirit](#)**

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