**Thorough Heart Examination**

Ps 73:1—Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.

15 If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.

16 When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me;

17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.

(He went where the mind of God would be met with) Isa.1:18

23 Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.

24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

25 Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.

26 My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

Eph 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.

28 But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

Ro 8:37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

* The Heart is being tested
* Our walk of faith and work of love is being tested
* Our Armor is being tested
* Our friendship is being tested

Ge 18:3 And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:

Pass me not, O gentle Savior, hear my humble cry;

while on others thou art calling, do not pass me by.

Let me at thy throne of mercy find a sweet relief,

kneeling there in deep contrition; help my unbelief.   
 Trusting only in thy merit, would I seek thy face;

heal my wounded, broken spirit, save me by thy grace.   
 Thou the spring of all my comfort, more than life to me,

whom have I on earth beside thee? Whom in heaven but thee?

23 Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.

1. The Godly
   1. have God’s Presence, Ps.16:11
   2. support, Gen 17:1

Ge 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

* 1. guidance,
  2. glory Isa 43:7

Find not only their greatest safety, but also their highest joy.

##### God’s purpose in creation

Isa. 43:7 - Glory

Rev. 4:11 - Pleasure

Psa. 102:18 – Praise the Lord

Isa. 65:18 – to be glad rejoicing Joy

**Abraham Was Visited By God Himself**

1. **The Godly have A Growing Faith—**
   1. **How to Be a Friend of God, 18:1-15**

**Introduction**:

The greatest problem man faces today is how to be a friend of God.

A friend is a person who holds affection and respect for another person.

The affection and respect attaches them together.

If they have feelings and respect for one another, they become attached; they become friends.

If they do not have affection and respect for one another, they are not friends; they are enemies.

This is the problem man has with God. Man does not hold affection and respect for God, not enough to become attached to God, not enough to become a close, intimate friend with God.

Man just does not care and respect God enough to subject himself to God, to elevate God to the position He rightly holds: the Creator and Sustainer of life, the Sovereign Lord and Master of the universe.

As Christ said: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14).

But man is not willing to do what Christ commanded, not willing to love and serve God nor to keep His commandments.

Man breaks God's commandments and rebels against God.

Man stands up against God and refuses to obey Him.

Thus man stands as an opponent of God, as an enemy of God.

However, this is not true of every single person upon earth.

Some persons want to be friends with God.

They have the deepest affection and respect for God, and they are forever seeking a deeper friendship.

In fact, some are seeking the deepest and most intimate friendship possible with God. Such a passion should burn within the heart of every person. It did within Abraham.

This is what this passage is all about: Abraham Was Visited by God Himself

**Ge 18:1 ¶ And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;**

1. **Friendship**
   1. How can we become a friend of God?
   2. Know that the Lord seeks friendship.
   3. It was the Lord Himself who appeared and sought the friendship of Abraham.

Scripture actually uses the word "friend" in describing the relationship of man to God.

1. Abraham is called "the friend of God" three times, two times in the Old Testament and one time in the New Testament.

⇒ Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, said this in one of his prayers to God:

**"Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?" (2 Chron. 20:7).**

⇒ God Himself said this to Israel:

**"But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend" (Isaiah 41:8).**

⇒ James the writer of the New Testament book said this:

**"And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (James 2:23).**

2. Jesus Christ Himself deliberately said that His followers were His friends.

**"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:14-15).**

**"These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (John 11:11).**

The Lord appeared to Abraham in order to strengthen their friendship. God wanted a closer friendship with Abraham; He wanted to draw closer to Abraham and to have Abraham draw closer to Him. The Lord desired the most intimate friendship possible with Abraham.

The experience of Abraham and the experience of Christ with His disciples tells us that God wants a closer friendship with us. God wants us to open our hearts and lives so that He can draw closer to us and us to Him. God wants us to develop a deep affection and respect for Him, to develop the most intimate friendship possible with Him.

**That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3).**

**I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved (Psalm 16:8).**

**The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit (Psalm 34:18).**

**The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth (Psalm 145:18).**

**I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways Ps119:15**

**Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).**

 Meditation and prayer is a must to draw closer to God, become a close, intimate friend with God.

1. Meditation draws us closer to God.

**But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him. Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Ps 4:3-4**

**Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer 19:14**

**Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all 1 Tim. 4:15**

2) Prayer draws us closer to God.

**If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).** **Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually 1 Chr 16:11**

**He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him" (Psalm 91:15).**

**Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity" (Isaiah 58:9).**

**And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).**

18:11-15) **Unbelief— Lying— God, Power; Knowledge of**: How can we become a friend of God? Conquer unbelief. Note three significant things.

1. The causes of unbelief are clearly seen in this experience of Sarah.

a. Sarah and Abraham were looking at an impossible situation, humanly speaking. They were both beyond childbearing

Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety years old.

b. Sarah allowed negative thoughts to enter her mind.

she had heard the Lord's promise to Abraham, but she knew the impossible circumstances. The whole situation just seemed laughable to Sarah, and she actually laughed to herself, somewhat mockingly and skeptically. She murmured silently to herself, "How can I who am so old bear a child, and Abraham also being so old—impossible! Sarah was responding to God's promise in unbelief: she just did not believe God's promise, did not believe it was possible. It was physically impossible to her.

she was thinking of the circumstances, not thinking of God and His promise and power.

2. The answer to unbelief is twofold (Genesis 18:13-14).

a. God's omniscience, His knowing all things. God asked Abraham why Sarah had laughed, revealing that He knew all about Sarah's unbelief.

b. God's omnipotence, His power to do all things (Genesis 18:14). "Is anything too hard for the Lord" (Genesis 18:14). God can do anything, no matter how impossible it seems. He clearly said that He would give Sarah a child despite the deadness of her womb Ro 4:19

**I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee (Job 42:2).**

**But Jesus beheld [them], and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26).**

**For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37).**

The conquest of unbelief (Genesis 18:15). Sarah lied: she denied that she had laughed, for she feared a severe rebuke from the Lord and perhaps from Abraham. But the Lord made it clear: she did laugh—laughed in unbelief—and He knew all about her failure to believe the promise of the promised seed. Moreover, she was now lying about the matter.

What the Lord was doing was telling Sarah that she needed to confess, repent, stop the deceit and lying, and believe the promise. God could perform the miracle, overcome the circumstances of life, no matter how impossible they might appear. God could fulfill His promise. Sarah could conquer unbelief only if she confessed, repented, and believed the promise of the promised seed.

Unbelief will always keep us from being a friend of God. The friend of God believes God; he never disbelieves. We must, therefore, conquer unbelief:

⇒ We must not look at circumstances as though they are impossible for God.

⇒ We must not allow negative thoughts to surround the promises of God, questioning His promises.

⇒ We must believe that God knows all things and can do all things

⇒ We must confess and repent of our sin of unbelief, of distrusting the promises of God.

This is the only way to conquer unbelief. This is the only way to become a friend—a true friend—of God.

**And immediately Jesus stretched forth [his] hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? (Matthew 14:31).**

**And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? Mark 4:40**

Heb 10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Ps 74:11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom.

1. Christ draws a picture , with every line of truth spoken we should honestly and carefully *compare ourselves.*

The declarations of Christ’s is so different from the popular view among men! The world view is, Blessed are the rich, for theirs is the kingdom of the world.

1. Christ says "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," which is better than being rich and better than all the kingdoms of the earth;
2. The keynote of all His teaching is not what a man does but what he **is**in the sight of God. "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

There is pride in the poor as there is in the rich. Both the Poor and the Rich must be emptied out of self.

1. This poverty of spirit receives seed for the fruit of Love which is a spiritual grace wrought by the Holy Spirit in those whom He renews, restores and delivers. (Rom.5:5)

By nature we are well pleased with ourselves, and mad enough to think that we deserve something good at the hands of God. Only a miracle of God’s grace can change our heart. Of a rich in spirit attitude, proud, filling our hearts instead of emptying our hearts from self-righteousness.

Poverty of spirit is **not** found among the majority. Often we see advertised "promotions for the higher life," but who ever heard of one for furthering the *lowly* life?

Mat. 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

2Cor. 8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

"filled with the Spirit" - “led by the Spirit” and be spiritually emptied of self—emptied of self-confidence, self-importance, and self-righteousness.

**A Deep sense of Trust in Him not a insufficiency and nothingness.**

That which is of great price in His sight is despised by men—by modern Pharisees, who hold nearly all the positions of prominence in Christianity. Almost all of the so-called "ministry’s" of this generation feeds pride, instead of denying the flesh; puffs up, rather than abases; and frowns upon searching and stripping. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." And *what is* poverty of spirit?

1. It is the opposite of pride, haughty, self-assertive and self-sufficient disposition which the world so admires and praises. It is the very reverse of that independent and defiant attitude which refuses to bow to God, which determines to brave things out, which says with Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" To be "poor in spirit" is to realize that I have nothing, am nothing, and can do nothing, and have need of all things.

Poverty of spirit is a consciousness of my emptiness and my nothingness. This only results from the Spirit’s work within, but He never leaves us empty but He Fills us with **His** virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brothertly kindness, **Love**.

Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

It comes from the understanding that all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags. It follows the awakening that my best performances are unacceptable, yea, an abomination to the Lord.

Isaiah 64:6—*But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*

1. Poverty of spirit corresponds to the awakening of the prodigal in the far country, when he "began to be *in want.*"

Preached not only to their ears, but to their hearts!

Mat. 11:5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

1. Poverty of spirit may be termed the negative side of faith. It is that realization of my utter worthlessness which precedes the laying hold of Christ, the eating of His flesh and drinking His blood. It is the Spirit emptying the heart of self that Christ may fill it: it is a sense of need and urgency or destitution.
2. This first Beatitude, then, is foundational, describing a fundamental trait which is found in every regenerate soul. The one who is poor in spirit is nothing in his own eyes, and feels that his proper place is under God. He may, through false teaching or worldliness, leave this place, but God knows how to bring him back; and in His faithfulness and love He will do so, for it is the place of blessing for His children. How to cultivate this God-honoring spirit is revealed in Matthew 11:29.
3. Poverty of spirit is "blessed." because he has a disposition the very opposite of what was by nature, He has the first sure evidence that a Divine work of grace has been wrought in his heart, because he is an heir of the "kingdom of heaven"—the kingdom of grace to glory.

Many gracious promises are addressed to the poor in spirit.

Eph. 3:19—*And to know the* ***love*** *of Christ, which passeth* ***knowledge****, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. (Be emptied out for His Fullness)*

Ps 40:17 But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

Ps 69:33 For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners.

Ps 72:13 He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.

Ps 107:41 Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.

Isa 57:15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Isa 66:2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

1. Let the Holy Ghost stir us up to pray earnestly for more of this poverty of spirit that we might have a good heart for the Love of God and Love for Truth.