

Christ's Beatitudes

The Blessed Mourners

The Christian's Sorrow. It is a strange statement indeed. Mourning and blessing don't seem to belong together. The world tries to avoid sorrow as much as possible. The church also tries to avoid being gloomy, convicting and somber. People pursue a superficial kind of joy, and think that if they are filled with the Spirit they must be continually cheerful and bubbly. But it shows how far people have drifted from what the Lord Jesus near the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount says: "blessed are they that mourn." When He says this, He means a **deep mourning** (not a superficial sorrow, but a deep heart-felt grief); and the verb form describes a state of **continued mourning**.

Not every human grief is included here. There is **natural mourning**, for instance at the death of a loved one. There is **sinful mourning**, when grief is self-centered (Gen. 4:13-14; 1 Kings 21:4). J.C. Ryle: "It is possible for a man to feel his sins, and to be sorry for them, to be under strong convictions of guilt, and express deep remorse, to be pricked in his conscience, and exhibit much distress of mind, and yet, for all things, not repent with his heart. Present danger, or the fear of death may account for all his feelings, and the Holy Ghost may have done no work whatever in his soul." There is also **spiritual mourning** (2 Cor. 7:10). The sorrow of the world works death. But godly sorrow is something that God graciously works in the hearts of His people through the Holy Spirit that the soul is humbled before Him, leading to life-giving results. There are three things over which a Christian mourns:

1. **The Christian mourns over his own sin.** Saving conviction of sin (1st beatitude) and contrition for sin (2nd beatitude) go together. Thomas Watson: "sin must have tears." The source of this godly sorrow for sin is the love of God; the conviction that while He is uncovering me to my sin He seeking my good, and that He is willing to receive sinners in His mercy. This makes me feel my separation from the Lord (Is. 59:2), and leads to confession of sin (Lk 15:21). This grief continues right through life (Ps. 38:4,6-7, 17-18; 51:3; Rom. 7:14-24). This is not self-pity, but speaks of hearts made tender by the Holy Spirit. While desiring from the heart to obey, they are dismayed at the vileness of indwelling sin manifested in their own thoughts and deeds. Isaac Watts:

*Lord, I am vile, conceived in sin;
And born unholy and unclean;
Sprung from the man whose guilty fall,
Corrupts the race and taints us all*

Self-centered grief drives to despair; God-centered grief will not, for it looks for deliverance and relief with Him (Ps. 34:18; Joel 2:13; Rev. 3:20; Ps. 51:10).

2. **The Christian mourns over the sin of the church.** God's people mourn because of the sins of their people (Is. 59:11; 61:2, Lamentations). A Christian is broken-hearted and grieves over the sins and failures within the Christian church (2 Cor. 12:20-21). "Paul was a great weeper, and in his tears we sense something of the heartbeat of

biblical mourning, a genuine, loving concern for the spiritual well-being of God's people." (Cf. Ez. 10:6; Dan. 9:3; Ps. 137).

3. ***The Christian mourns over the sin of the world.*** After all, a Christian finds himself living in a fallen, rebellious world (1 Jn. 5:19). Lot was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked (2 Pet. 2:7-8); Paul when he saw the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry (Acts 17:166); Jesus when He looked over the city of Jerusalem (Lk. 19:41). Are we distressed when we see and hear the world breaking God's law? (Ps. 119:136). David Dickson: "Two things in sin chiefly move the godly to mourn for it. One is the dishonour it brings on God. The other is the perdition it brings on the sinner."

The Christian's Comfort. ***The Christian receives rich comfort.*** Mourners in Zion will be comforted. He comforts His guilty people as they mourn over their sin. As they confess their sins, they may at times experience comfort and peace (1 Jn 1:9). While God's people grieve over their remaining sins and infirmities, the Lord has comfort to give with the joy of salvation, the peace that passes understanding, the assurance of forgiveness. While the fullness of this comfort looks for fulfillment in the world to come, it is experienced here and now already. It is a deep comfort. Literally, the word Christ uses means: "to call to one's side." It is not just a pat on the shoulder. "It speaks of being strengthened by resources that are brought alongside to help."

The Christian receives divine comfort. Christ says it in the passive: "they shall be comforted." Who will comfort them? God will comfort them (2 Cor. 1:3-4; Rom. 15:5). Matthew Henry: "In the world they have trouble, but in Christ they have peace. His disciples meet with many tribulations, but they may find comfort in them all... because of His consolation." The Father comforts. The Son comforts. He has been tried and tempted, He is qualified to be the sympathizing highpriest (Heb. 4:14; 1 Jn 2:1-2). The Spirit comforts (Jn 14:16-17).

There is sweet and sure comfort in His Word. Romans 15:4: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Matthew Henry: "That comfort which springs from the word of God is the surest and sweetest comfort." Acts 20:32: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (1 Cor. 14:3).

The Lord also comforts His people through fellowship with other children of God. Acts 28:15: "And when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage." 2 Corinthians 7:6: God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus." Philemon 7: "For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother."

The Christian is also comforted by the certainty of Christ's second coming (1 Thess. 4:18). The day is coming for those who mourn over sin when they will be done with sin, and be like Him, when the Lamb will shepherd them, and He will wipe away all tears (1 Jn 3:2; Eph. 5:27, Rev. 7:17).