

Scriptures certainly speak to that in the following passages. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together". [Romans 8:17] "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" [2 Corinthians 4:17]

It is true that all who have mourned for sin, and have fled to Christ for refuge, will receive perfect comfort and joy in the world to come. Yet as with all the beatitudes the comfort is present as well as future. For those who mourn for sin now receive comfort as they are pardoned of their sins. It is now they obtain the Holy Spirit to dwell within them and know of joy unspeakable in Christ Jesus their Lord. It is now they have access to God as their heavenly Father through Jesus Christ.

They are comforted now, for it is now in the present that the Spirit applies to them the benefits of Christ's atoning death. It is now that Jesus acts as their High Priest, interceding for them at the throne of heaven. Is this not comfort, oh child of God? We may have no one representing us in human courts before which we are accused, but we are well represented by our Savior in a court from which there is no appeal!

We presently enjoy the comfort of the Holy Spirit. His work is not only to convict of sin and lead us to repentance, but also to sanctify us and make us fit for our dwelling with God in heaven. He is doing that now, and conforming us to the image of our Savior. Is that not rich comfort?

There certainly will be a perfecting of our comfort when Christ returns to earth, to receive His people to Himself. Then we will no more mourn for sin, for it will be done away with. We will no more mourn for corporate sins, for the church of Christ will be glorious, without spot or wrinkle. We will no longer mourn for the sins of the world, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas. The new heaven and a new earth will be the home of righteousness. Beloved hearer, I pray you will be among this glorious company on that day. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted". [Matthew 5:4]

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Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



Blessed Are They That Mourn

We come now to the second of the beatitudes as found in Matthew 5:4, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

Once again we have a paradox, that is, we do not expect happiness and mourning to go together. The saying could literally be rendered 'Happy are the unhappy'. This certainly demonstrates what we said last time, that the word 'happy' is not the best translation. This clearly shows that.

Let us first look at what it does not mean. The word used for mourning here means lament for the dead, or mourning for some painful loss. We find this word used in the Old Testament Greek translation in such places as when Jacob heard the news from his sons that Joseph had been killed by some wild beast. This word is used in the New Testament of the disciples mourning and weeping over the death of Christ. So this mourning is heartfelt grief. Now some apply the words of Jesus to those who have lost a loved one, and you often find this verse quoted at funerals. But this is not what our Lord means, for not all who mourn this way are members of the kingdom of heaven or considered blessed in the eyes of God. In fact some hate God for the loss they suffer and could hardly therefore be said to be blessed by Him.

Not all mourning is blessed. There is such a thing as sinful mourning. We have cases of it in Scripture. Let us look at a few examples. Cain, after he had been sentenced by God to be a fugitive for the murder of his brother, wept because his punishment, he said, 'was more than I can bear'. Ahab, the wicked king of Israel, lay on his bed sulking because he could not obtain the vineyard of Naboth. We have the case of Judas who wept after he had betrayed Christ and felt deep remorse. Yet it did not lead to a good result, certainly not to blessing, for he went out and hanged himself.

So what kind of mourning is it that Jesus pronounces blessed? The mourning here meant, my friends, is one that is over sins. It is not mourning over merely sins of others, but one's own primarily. It is not mourning simply out of fear of the consequences, but for sin itself, because it is displeasing to the Lord. The person who is the subject of the Holy Spirit's work will mourn when he realizes how utterly sinful he is. He will see that he is worthy of nothing but to be cast from the presence of God forever. Have you ever been led to mourn for your sins in this manner? If so, bless God, for it is His work

in your heart. The natural man does not mourn but brags about his sin. Cain, Ahab, and Judas all exhibited worldly sorrow that never led to repentance which leads to salvation. This mourning is due to the Spirit's work in the heart of a sinner who is destined to be a child of God. As Thomas Watson put it, "Sin must have tears, and these tears must flow before a person can enter the kingdom of God".

There are many who are willing to confess to sin, but have no remorse or contrition of it. There are others who even weep for sin, but take their weeping as a good sign that they are saved. This is delusion, for our tears cannot wash a single sin. It is mourning that drives us to the only Savior, who alone can take away our sins, that is what leads to the blessed condition. Now there are many Christians today who think any sadness is an indicator we are not Christians. John Stott writes, "Some Christians seem to imagine that, especially if they are filled with the Spirit, they must wear a perpetual grin on their face and be continually boisterous and bubbly". This view is soon contradicted when we turn to the parallel passage in Luke 6:25, "*Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep*".

Today, many have such a superficial view of sin that they have correspondingly a superficial view of joy and true blessedness. Mourning for sin is a sign of a deep work of the Spirit and is what leads on to blessedness. Oh, that we would mourn more often over our sins than we do! Then and only then would we see the preciousness of Jesus Christ and His death for our sins.

Let us look at how those who are the children of God have always reacted to sin. Listen to the words of David in Psalm 38:4, "*For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me*"; Psalm 38:18, "*For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin*". See what David says here, his iniquities are a heavy burden, too heavy for him. He does not seek to hide his sins or make excuses for them, but confesses them and is truly sorry for them. Confession is followed by contrition. There was a time when David did hide his sins, but we read also how miserable he felt, there was no blessedness in covering his sin. It is only when he owned them, and received God's mercy that he experienced blessedness. So it is also when a sinner is the subject of the Spirit's work, bringing him to mourn for his sins and causing him to flee to the only Savior.

Listen again to Isaiah, a prophet of God, as he beheld the Lord of Glory, his sins and that of the nation were seen in their true light, which led to this reaction, "*Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts*". [Isaiah 6:5]

Beloved, it is because today men have a low view of the Holiness of God that they have such a low view of whom they offend. It is only as the

Spirit led him to see God in His holiness that Isaiah declared '*Woe is me!*' This reaction is also seen in Job, who had questioned the ways of God, yet when he stood before him, this is how he felt. "*Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*". [Job 42:6]

We have similar reactions in the two chief apostles in the New Testament as the following Scripture bears out: "*When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord*". [Luke 5:8] "*And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly*". [Matthew 26:75] "*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" [Romans 7:24]

When Peter realized who Jesus was he immediately felt his own sinfulness, even though the request he made was foolish and Jesus did not grant his wish. For God knows what is good for us. It is not that He departs from sinners, but rather that He comes to seek and save them, in His Son. Paul, when he saw his sins and the power they exerted on his life, was led to cry out and speak about his own wretchedness. But he goes on to give thanks that there is deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Martin Luther once said that mourning was 'a rare herb'; John Blanchard adds "today it is an endangered species". Are these words true of you, or can you say sin is the greatest burden to you for it is offensive to your heavenly Father. Blessed are you that mourn.

The child of the kingdom mourns not only for his personal sins, but also sins of those who profess Christ's name, but yet keep not the commandments. "*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law*". [Psalm 119:136] "*And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.*" [1 Corinthians 5:2]

How many of us are led to mourn when we see the awful state of Christ's church? Beloved, have you not seen a decline in the church in your day, as to its sensitivity to sin? Sin is hardly spoken of in sermons, then how will any mourn for it?

Not only does a child of God weep for personal sins, and corporate sins of the church; but also for sins of the world in which he lives. So we read of how Paul was distressed over the idolatry at Athens (Acts 17:16); we read of Jesus weeping over the city of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). What is your reaction to the sins of society? Do you merely condemn them, and feel self-righteous? Do you do anything to change that by bringing the message of Christ to them, so they may be changed?

Our Lord goes on to say, those who mourn will be comforted. As we said last time, this is not to be understood of merely speaking of the future. Now it is true that all those who have mourned for sins, and have undergone suffering for Christ's sake will receive comfort and joy at the last day. The