

## Lesson 3

# Blessed are Those who Mourn

## *Following the example of the first Christians*

### Introduction

Have you ever said to yourself, “I just wish I could leave. I want to go to a place far from here. A place of rest and peace, where I can clear my mind.” Psalm 55 references a time in David’s life when it felt that way for him:

I said, “If only I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and find rest. How far away I would flee; I would stay in the wilderness. Selah I would hurry to my shelter from the raging wind and the storm,” Psalm 55.6-8.

There are certainly times in our life where we might be able to identify with David. Trouble comes upon us, and we want to escape. The deeper our problem . . . the more difficult it seems to find comfort. And yet, in Matthew 5.4 Jesus says:

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

How can those who are sad be happy at the same time? How is it that the path to happiness involves sadness and that the way to rejoicing is found in mourning?<sup>10</sup> It is the exact opposite of human, worldly thinking that says to find contentment everything must be going your way. Here, Jesus turns the conventional wisdom upside down. What did He mean here, and what is in this for us?

### Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

In the previous beatitude, Jesus discussed the need for understanding our true spiritual condition without God. We come to Him destitute and broken, bringing nothing to the table. We are in complete spiritual bankruptcy. We come to Him doing the only thing we can, i.e., pleading for mercy and grace. We come to him void of any pride.

The understanding of our true status before God, the consciousness of our own sin, naturally leads to genuine sorrow. The heart of sorrow, bowed down in humility is the one accepted by God. David understood this after his great sin with Bathsheba. After being confronted by Nathan he comes before God and confesses:

For I am conscious of my rebellion, and my sin is always before me. Against you—you alone—I have sinned and done this evil in your sight. So you are right when you pass sentence; you are blameless when you judge, Psalm 51.3-4.

Truly, David mourned for his sin. When we consider our own sins in light of God’s amazing grace and mercy, we too identify with David’s hurt and sorrow. The realization of what sin does should break our heart.

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<sup>10</sup> Macrthur, p. 154.

The term for *mourn* in 5.4 conveys a deep sorrow or heart-felt grief, usually reserved to describe the grief one experiences over a dying loved one or friend. During New Testament times the word described great sorrow or lamentation, a deep, inner agony. In certain places it could be described as a passionate grief that leads to action. And here specifically, it has to do with those who see the world for what it really is and are not trapped by its temptations.<sup>11</sup>

The type of attitude Jesus speaks of here is especially important as it is popular during our time to laugh off our sin. The world seeks self-gratification and pleasure and neglects the needed introspection to see the weight of sin. As a result, most people do not grieve or mourn over sin or evil. The lack of mourning over one's personal sin leads to a lack of repentance. As we worry about the direction our country is headed, may we pray that collectively the nation begins to wake up to the fact of its wretchedness before God, let that turn into sorrow, and move toward repentance.

Someone has said that there is a great need in the church today to cry instead of to laugh. Many things about Christianity that were intended to bring us to sober mindedness with deep thought and self-examination have been turned into fun or foolishness. Scripture says we are to confess our sins and mourn for them. Only when we do that can we experience genuine happiness ... which no amount of optimism or positive thinking can produce.

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you, James 4.8-10.

As we consider the *mourning* in Matthew 5.4, we should also not forget Isaiah 61 which speaks of mourning people being comforted. Isaiah speaks about the mourning that happens when the righteous suffer, the wicked prosper, and God seems silent about it. In that mourning is an intense desire for God to make it right. And there, as in Matthew, the promise is that the deliverance and comfort from God will come.

## They Shall Be Comforted

Those who mourn for their sin, rest in the fact that they know they will ultimately experience God's deliverance, which will come directly from Him. Happiness doesn't come from the mourning itself; it comes from how God responds to it ... which is supplying forgiveness. This leads to genuine happiness that goes farther and deeper than anything on earth could provide.

The comfort promised here is not just far off in eternity. The blessing comes after obedience. As we continually mourn over our sin, we should be continually comforted ... in this life. God has already given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, 2 Thessalonians 2.16.

"Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest, Matthew 11.28.

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<sup>11</sup> pénthos [grief, sorrow], penthéō [to grieve, sorrow]. See Kittel, Gerhard, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985, p. 825.

He will lift the burden from those who mourn over sin ... and he will bring rest to those who are weary of sin. As we confess our sin, he is faithful to forgive, and for as long as we mourn our sin, he is faithful to comfort.

## **How to Mourn for Sin**

### ***Remove the things that keep you from mourning***

What are the things that make you content with yourself? What are things that make you resist the Spirit and question His word? *A stony heart does not mourn.* Do you need to remove:

- The love of sin?
- Self-conceit?
- Pride?
- Procrastination?

### ***Get into the Word***

The word instructs about the true nature of sin and how destructive it is to us. Think of how the great men of Scripture viewed their sin. As we do, we'll come to see our own reality and the depth of sin we face.

### ***Pray About It***

Pray for contriteness of heart. God never refuses those who ask, Matthew 7.7-9.