

Mourning

by A.W. Pink

The sermon explains that mourning is a blessed state, resulting from a realization of God's holiness and goodness and our own wickedness, and that God offers comfort and peace to those who mourn.

Scripture: Matthew 5:4, Luke 18:9

Topics: "Comfort in Christ", "Mourning for Sin"

Description

A.W. Pink explores the paradox of mourning as a source of blessing in the Christian life, emphasizing that true mourning stems from a deep awareness of one's sinfulness and separation from God. He contrasts the self-righteousness of the Pharisee with the humility of the publican, illustrating that those who mourn for their sins are the ones who receive God's comfort and grace. Pink asserts that this mourning is not limited to initial conviction but is a continual state for believers, who grieve over their own failings and the state of the world. Ultimately, he reassures that while mourning is painful, it leads to profound comfort and joy through Christ's redemptive work. The sermon concludes with the promise that those who mourn will be comforted both now and in the eternal future.

Transcript

"Blessed are they that mourn" (MATTHEW 5:4).

Mourning is hateful and irksome to poor human nature. From suffering and sadness our spirits instinctively shrink. By nature we seek the society of the cheerful and joyous. Our text presents an anomaly to the unregenerate, yet is it sweet music to the ears of God's elect. If "blessed" why do they "mourn"? If they "mourn" how can they be "blessed"? Only the child of God has the key to this paradox. The more we ponder our text the more we are constrained to exclaim, never man spake like this Man! "Blessed (happy) are they that mourn" is at complete variance with the world's logic. Men have in all places and in all ages, deemed the prosperous and the gay the happy ones, but Christ pronounces happy those who are poor in spirit and who mourn.

Now it is obvious that it is not every species of mourning that is here referred to. There is a "sorrow of the world which worketh death." The mourning to which Christ promises comfort must be restricted to that which is spiritual. The mourning which is blessed is the result of a realization of God's holiness and goodness which issues in a sense of our own wickedness-the depravity of our natures, the enormity and guilt of our conduct and the sorrowing over our sins with a godly sorrow.

We intimated in our last that the eight Beatitudes are arranged in four pairs; proof of this will be furnished as we proceed. The first of the series is the blessing which Christ pronounced upon those who are poor in spirit, which we took to mean, they who have been awakened to a sense of their own nothingness and emptiness. Now the transition from such poverty to mourning is easy to follow, in fact, it follows so closely that it is rather its companion.

The mourning which is here referred to is manifestly more than that of bereavement, affliction or loss. It is mourning for sin. 'It is mourning over the felt destitution of our spiritual state, and over the iniquities that have separated between us and God; mourning over the very morality in which we have boasted, and the self-righteousness in which we have trusted; sorrow for rebellion against God, and hostility to His will; and such mourning always goes side by side with conscious poverty of spirit' (Dr. Person).

A striking illustration and exemplification of the spirit upon which the Saviour here pronounced His benediction is to be found in Luke 18. There a vivid contrast is presented to our view. First, we are shown a self-righteous Pharisee looking up toward God and saying, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess." This may have been all true as he looked at it, yet this man went down to his house in a state of condemnation. His fine garments were rags, his white robes were filthy, though he knew it not. Then we are shown the publican, standing afar off, who, in the language of the Psalmist was so troubled by his iniquities that he was not able to look up (Psa. 40:12). He dared not so much as lift up his eyes to Heaven, but smote upon his breast, conscious of the fountain of corruption within, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and that man went down to his house justified, because he was poor in spirit and mourned for sin.

Here then are the first birth-marks of the children of God, and he who has never come to be poor in spirit, and has never known what it is to really mourn for sin, though he belong to a church and be an office-bearer in it, has neither entered nor seen the kingdom of God. How thankful the Christian reader ought to be that the great God condescends to dwell in the humble and contrite heart! Where can we find anything in all the Old Testament more precious than that?-that He, in whose sight the heavens are not clean, who cannot find in any temple that man ever builded for Him, however magnificent, a proper dwelling place, has said Isa. 66:2 and Isa. 57:15!

"Blessed are they that mourn. Though the primary reference be to that initial mourning, usually termed 'conviction of sin,' it is by no means to be limited to this. Mourning is ever a characteristic of the normal Christian state. There is much that the believer has to mourn over-the plague of his own heart makes him cry, Oh wretched man that I am"; the unbelief which "doth so easily beset us" and the sins which we commit that are more in number than the hairs of our head, are a continual grief; the barrenness and unprofitableness of our lives make us sigh and cry; our propensity to wander from Christ, our lack of communion with Him, the shallowness of our love for Him, cause us to hang our harps upon the willows. But this is not all. The hypocritical religion prevailing on every hand, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof; the awful dishonour done to the truth of God by the false doctrines taught in countless pulpits; the divisions among the Lord's people, the strife between brethren, occasion continual sorrow of heart. The awful wickedness in the world, men despising Christ, the untold sufferings around, make us groan within ourselves. The closer the Christian lives to God, the more will he mourn over all that dishonours Him. With the Psalmist he will say: 119:53; with Jeremiah, 13:17; 14:17; with Ezekiel, 9:4.

"They shall be comforted." This refers first of all to the removal of the conscious guilt which burdens the conscience. It finds its fulfillment in the Spirit's application of the Gospel of God's grace to the one whom He has convicted of his dire need of a Saviour. It issues in a sense of free and full forgiveness through the merits of the atoning blood of Christ. This Divine comfort is the peace of God which passeth all understanding filling the heart of the one who is now assured that he is "accepted in the Beloved." God wounds before healing, abases before He exalts. First there is a revelation of His justice and holiness, then the making known of His mercy and grace.

"They shall be comforted" also receives a constant fulfillment in the experience of the Christian. Though he mourns his excuseless failures and confesses them to God, yet he is comforted by the assurance that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses him from all sin. Though he groans over the dishonour done to God on every side, yet is he comforted by the knowledge that the day is rapidly approaching when Satan shall be removed from these scenes and when the Lord Jesus shall sit upon the throne of His glory and rule in righteousness and peace. Though the chastening hand of the Lord is often laid upon him and though "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous," nevertheless, he is consoled by the realization that this is all working out for him "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Like the Apostle, the believer who is in communion with his Lord can say, "As sorrowful yet always rejoicing." He may often be called upon to drink of the bitter waters of Marah, but God has planted nearby a tree to sweeten them. Yes "mourning" Christians are comforted even now by the Divine Comforter, by the ministrations of His servants, by encouraging words from fellow Christians, and when these are not to hand, by the precious promises of the Word being brought home in power to his memory and heart.

"They shall be comforted." The best wine is reserved for the last. Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. During the long night of His absence, the saints of God have been called to fellowship with Him who was the Man of Sorrows. But, blessed be God, it is written, "If we suffer with Him we shall also be glorified together." What comfort and joy will be ours when shall dawn the morning without clouds! Then shall "sorrow and sighing flee away" (Isa. 35:10). Then shall be fulfilled the saying-Rev. 21:3- 4.

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