

Comfort & Joy: The Mourner's Privilege

by Thomas Watson

The sermon explores the profound connection between mourning for sin and the subsequent joy and comfort found in Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 42:3, Psalm 126:5, Isaiah 61:3, John 14:16, Romans 15:13, 2 Corinthians 7:10, 1 Peter 1:8

Topics: "Christian Sorrow", "Gospel Comfort"

Description

Thomas Watson preaches about the significance of mourning as a pathway to solid joy in the Christian life. He emphasizes that holy mourning leads to the sweetest joy, comparing it to the process of sugar melting to reveal its sweetness. Watson highlights the importance of gospel-mourning as a precursor to experiencing true comfort and the everlasting consolation that God provides to His mourners.

Transcript

Mourning is one way to solid joy. "The sweet wine is that which comes out of the wine-press of the eyes," says Chrysostom. The soul is never more enlarged than when it can weep. Closet tears are better than court music. The soul of a Christian is most eased when it can vent itself by holy mourning. David who was the great mourner in Israel was the sweet singer in Israel. "My tears were my meat" (Psalm 42:3). "The tears of the penitent," says Bernard, "are sweeter than all worldly joy". A Christian thinks himself sometimes in the suburbs of heaven when he can weep. When Hannah had wept, she went away and was no more sad. Sugar when it melts is sweetest. When a Christian melts in tears, he has the sweetest joy. When the daughter of Pharaoh descended into the river, she found a babe there among the reeds; so when we descend into the river of repenting tears, we find the babe, Jesus, there who shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. Mourning goes before comfort as the lancing of a wound precedes the cure. The antinomian talks of comfort, but cries down mourning for sin. He is like a foolish patient who, having a pill prescribed him, licks the sugar, but throws away the pill. The libertine is all for joy and comfort. He licks the sugar but throws away the bitter pill of repentance. If we have true comfort, we must have it in God's way and method. Sorrow for sin ushers in joy: "I will restore comforts to him, and to his mourners" (Isaiah 57:18). The true sunshine of joy is that which comes after a shower of tears. We may as well expect a crop without seed, as comfort without gospel-mourning.

Observe that God keeps His best wine till last. First He prescribes mourning for sin and then gives the wine of consolation. The devil does quite the contrary. He shows the best first and keeps the worst till last. First, he shows the wine sparkling in the glass, then comes the biting of the serpent. (See Proverbs

23:32). Satan sets his dainty dishes before men. He presents sin to them colored with beauty, sweetened with pleasure, silvered with profit, and then afterward the sad reckoning is brought in. He showed Judas first the silver bait, and then struck him with the hook. This is the reason why sin has so many followers, because it shows the best first. First, the golden crowns, then comes the lion's teeth. (Revelation 9:7,8).

Observe, gospel tears are not lost; they are seeds of comfort. While the penitent pours out tears, God pours in joy. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." (Psalms 126:5). It was the end of Christ's anointing and coming into the world, that He might comfort them that mourn (Isaiah 61:3). Well then may the apostle call it "a repentance not to be repented of" (2 Corinthians 7:10). A man's drunkenness is to be repented of; his uncleanness is to be repented of; but his repentance is never to be repented of, because it is the inlet to joy. "Blessed art they that mourn, for they shalt be comforted." Here is sweet fruit from a bitter stock. Christ caused the earthen vessels to be filled with water, and then turned the water into wine (John 2:9). So when the eye, that earthen vessel, has been filled with water, then Christ will turn the water of tears into the wine of joy. "Holy mourning", says Basil, "is the seed out of which the flower of eternal joy grows."

Reasons why the mourner shall be comforted:

Because mourning is made on purpose for this end. Mourning is not prescribed for itself, but that it may lead on to something else, that it may lay a train for comfort. Therefore we sow in tears that we may reap in joy. Holy mourning is a spiritual medicine. Now a medicine is not prescribed for itself, but for the sake of health. So gospel-mourning is appointed for this very end, to bring forth joy.

The spiritual mourner is the fittest person for comfort. When the heart is broken for sin, now it is fittest for joy. God pours the golden oil of comfort into broken vessels. The mourner's heart is emptied of pride and God fills the empty with His blessing. First, the comforts of God's Spirit are laid in deep conviction: "And when He (that is, the Comforter) is come, He shall reprove (or, convince) the world of sin" (John 16:7,8). Why does conviction go before consolation? Conviction fits us for comfort. By conviction the Spirit sweetly disposes the heart to seek after Christ and then to receive Christ. Once the soul is convinced of sin and of the hell that follows it, a Savior is precious.

The comforts of the Spirit are humbling. The more water is poured into a bucket, the lower it descends; the fuller the ship is laden with sweet spices, the lower it sails. The more a Christian is filled with the sweet comforts of the Spirit, the lower he sails in humility. The fuller a tree is of fruit, the lower the branch hangs. The more full we are of "the fruit of the Spirit, joy and peace" (Galatians 5:22), the more we bend in humility. Those who say they have comfort, but are proud, who have learned to despise others and have climbed above ordinances; their comforts are delusions. The devil is able, not only to "transform himself into angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14), but he can transform himself into a comforter. It is easy to counterfeit money, to silver over brass and put the king's image upon it. The devil can silver over false comforts and make them look as if they had the stamp of the King of heaven upon them. The comforts of God are humbling. Though they lift the heart up in thankfulness, yet they do not puff it up in pride. The comforts reserved for the mourners are "filling comforts" "The God of hope fill you with all joy . . ." (Romans 15:13). "Ask . . . that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). When God pours in the joys of heaven, they fill the heart and make it run over. "I am exceeding joyful . . ." (2 Corinthians 7:4).

The comforts which God gives His mourners are infinitely, transporting and ravishing. So delightful are they and amazing, that they cause a jubilation which, as some of the learned say, is so great that it cannot be expressed. Of all things joy is the most hard to be deciphered. It is called "joy unspeakable." (1 Peter

1:8). You may sooner taste honey than tell how sweet it is. The wine of the Spirit can sweeten the waters of Marah. They who are possessed of these heavenly comforts can gather grapes of thorns, and fetch honey out of the lion's carcass. They are strong consolations indeed, that can stand it out against the fiery trial, and turn the flame into a bed of roses. How powerful is that comfort which can make a Christian glory in tribulations! (Romans 5:3). A believer is never so sad but that he can rejoice. The bird of paradise can sing in the winter.

The comforts that God's mourners have are heart-quieting comforts. They cause a sweet acquiescence and rest in the soul. The heart of a Christian is in a kind of discomposure, like the needle in the compass; it shakes and trembles till the Comforter comes. Some creatures cannot live but in the sun. A Christian is even dead in the nest, unless he may have the sunlight of God's countenance. "Hide not thy face from me, lest I be like them that go down into the pit" (Psalm 143:7).

The comforts of the Spirit are abiding comforts. As they abound in us so they abide with us. "He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you forever" (John 14:16). Worldly comforts are always upon the wing, ready to fly. They are like a land-flood, or a flash of lightning. All things here are transient, but the comforts with which God feeds His mourners are immortal. "Who hath loved us and given us everlasting consolation" (2 Thessalonians 2:16). Though a Christian does not always have a sunbeam of comfort, yet he has a dawning of it in his soul. He always has a ground of hope and a root of joy. There is that within him which bears up his heart, and which he would not on any terms part with. Behold, then, the mourner's privilege, he shall be comforted. David who was the great mourner of Israel, was the sweet singer of Israel. The weeping dove shall be covered with the golden feathers of comfort. Oh, how rare and superlative are these comforts!

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