

The Process & The Fruit

"Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted."
-Matt. 5:4-

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There is a typical mis-interpretation of this text that is unfortunate. Someone will read this beatitude and conclude this "mourning" is about anybody who is sad. Regardless of one's attitude toward God or one's response to the gospel of Christ - that is, apart from any spiritual/moral considerations - it is believed if you are sad about something, you become a recipient of this blessing. Note: there is a tendency in some religious/theological circles to materialize and socialize the "beatitudes," making them social maxims instead of kingdom principles. Thus, some will read about the "poor" instead of the "poor in spirit," and turn the teaching of Christ into a "special blessing" for people with a certain economic status. Likewise, "mourn" is made to mean a general sadness about anything. The "beatitudes" have to do with spiritual condition. They are not tenets of a "social gospel."

The "mourning" of the Lord's teaching here is not sadness in general; this is about a specific kind of sadness.

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A fornicator may be sad, because his opportunity for immorality is limited; he has no comfort from God.

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A thief may mourn because he was caught, convicted and must be placed in captivity. He doesn't become an automatic recipient of this blessing.

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There is a "sorrow of this world that worketh death," (see 2 Cor. 7:10).

Yes, the mourning of this passage is not sadness in general; rather, it points to personal grief over sin that occurs in repentance.

One command Jesus emphasized repeatedly was REPENTANCE. One chapter earlier (Matt. 4:17), the writer says that "...Jesus began to preach and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'" During His earthly ministry, Jesus often approached the Jews (who were guilty of unbelief and submitting to human tradition), and He told them of their need to change; to repent; to cease their sinful ways, and turn to God.

In the process of repentance, there is a place for personal grief over sin. No man can truly repent unless he is really sorry for his sins, and ashamed that he or she has offended God. This sorrow over sin, this mourning (as part of full repentance) returns comfort to the mourner from God! "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

One of the great functions of gospel preaching is to open the eyes of men and women who have sinned; to so testify of Christ and so present God's truth about the human condition, that people begin to mourn over their lost condition. When that mourning becomes part of the larger process of repentance, obedience and conversion to Christ, the mourner is comforted. Illustrations can help us ...

Isaiah mourned over his sin, and was blessed.

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." (Isaiah 6:5, NIV).

Saul of Tarsus mourned and was blessed.

"...but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin ... What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..." (Romans 7:14, 24, 8:1, NIV).

David was convicted, he mourned and was blessed when he repented.

"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah" Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said,

"I will confess my transgressions to the LORD" -- and you forgave the guilt of my sin. ... Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit." (Psalms 32:3-5, 1,2, NIV). Note: David's mourning, promoted by his own conscience as touched by Nathan, led to a discerning of his sin, and subsequent penitent confession. This was the process, and the fruit was deliverance from God. David's specific mourning drew repentance from his heart and deliverance from God.

Here are three people. They came to recognize their sin. They were overwhelmed with shame and they mourned over their participation in sin ... their personal participation in sin. As this shame and godly sorrow produced repentance, they were comforted by God. **"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."**

When we allow the Word of God to evaluate us, from the inside out; when we let the Word tell us what we've done, and where we stand with God, that may prompt in us the shame and sorrow that leads to repentance. We need to let that process bear its intended fruit! We need to cease our involvement in any sin, come before God in full repentance, make whatever amends we need to make with those we've sinned against, and then start doing what's right. Only as we go through this process of humility and conversion, can we be blessed and comforted by God. Sin is our problem ...

"In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:30,31, NIV).

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