

## MATTHEW 5:4 Part #4

### *BLESSED ARE THE MOURNERS* 4-24-16

Matthew 5: **1-6** *When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. 2 He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying, 3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.* Specifically today we will look at verse 4 *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.* I said when we began our study of this great sermon of Christ that the least you could say about his teaching is that it is different. It really strikes one as strange to hear these words Jesus says, “Blessed are the poor, the hungry,” and in our text he says, “Blessed are those who weep?” Could anything be more contrary to the way of the world than this? The world says, “Pack up your troubles in an old kit bag and smile, smile, smile.” The world tells us to do whatever we can to flee sorrow and crying. Get away from it and Jesus says, “Blessed are those who weep.” This is different from the philosophy of the world. Furthermore, this is different from the philosophy of the modern church. Yes, even the modern evangelical church - the one that prides itself on being the true church of Jesus, Bible-believing and all. But what do we find? The church too often says, “Smile, smile, smile” and suggests that the Christian life is a perpetual “Ha-ha.” Where is there in the Christian world an understanding of holy weeping?

The Lord Jesus speaks of a weeping that is blessed. The first thing we must do is determine what is this blessed weeping. It is not, it is not, a natural grieving or sorrow. There is a sorrow that is the common lot of every man. A dear saint who walks near to God for fifty years will stand at the grave of a loved one and weep. A scoundrel who cares nothing for Christ and has callously trampled upon his law for years will also stand at the grave of a loved one and weep. There need be no special grace present in one for this to go on. I have mentioned before that birds of prey tend to mate for life and when I was a young man on the farm we had two hawks living on our property. When one of them died the other wailed and cried for weeks. Some animals and all men experience sorrow when someone or something precious is taken from them. This is common to all and cannot possibly form the grounds for distinction between the blessed and the cursed. This is not the kind of mourning Jesus has in mind.

What does, however, separate men is what leads them to tears. What you weep over is very revealing about you. It reveals what is important to you. What do babies care about except getting fed? So they cry when they're hungry. Fortunately, we outgrow that. Most of us do, otherwise when you go to McDonalds you'll stand in line with a bunch of people crying, "I want a Big Mac." Little kids cry when they lose a toy. That's immaturity. I remember as I grew up what I cried over changed. I quit crying about toys and started crying when my Florida Gators lost a football game. By the time I was in high-school I got over that, but I sure remember the night our top-ranked basketball team was upset in the regional tournament. There was a locker-room full of cool, tough jocks just blubbering. But people grow up, and, as they do, the things that make them cry change. What do you cry over? Jesus says, "Blessed is the one who weeps" but not the one who weeps over a game or over a movie or over a death in the family. This blessed weeping is weeping over one thing and one thing only - that is sin. You say, how do we know that? By comparing Scripture to Scripture. We look at the men described in the Bible as blessed men and what do we find them weeping over? Sin and the results of it. Who is the greatest example of the values taught in our text? Who else but Christ Himself. Jesus Christ was not like one of our Christian TV personalities who is always jovial and peppy. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He wept - over what? He wept over the sin of others and the sure results of that sin. Matthew says later in his gospel that when Jesus saw the city of Jerusalem he wept over it and said, Matthew 23:37 "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!* Jesus wept over sin. But he wasn't the first. I believe every man of God throughout history has done this. I think of David who said in Psalm 119:136 *My eyes shed streams of water, Because they do not keep Your law.* I think of Jeremiah who is nicknamed what? Do you know? He has been given the title, "The weeping prophet." Today we have the smiling preachers; Jeremiah was the weeping prophet. 8:18-9:1 (ESV) *My joy is gone; grief is upon me; my heart is sick within me. 19 Behold, the cry of the daughter of my people from the length and breadth of the land: "Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her King not in her? "Why have they provoked me to anger with their carved images and with their foreign idols?" 20 "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." 21 For the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded; I mourn, and dismay has taken hold on me. 22 Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician*

there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored? 9 Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Jeremiah says, “It is not within me to cry enough, so awful are the sins of Jerusalem.” This is the man who wrote Lamentations, the book of laments, of sorrows, of groanings. What was he weeping over? Sin and its results Jeremiah 9:**2-3** (NLT) *Oh, that I could go away and forget my people and live in a travelers’ shack in the desert. For they are all adulterers—a pack of treacherous liars. 3 “My people bend their tongues like bows to shoot out lies. They refuse to stand up for the truth. They only go from bad to worse. They do not know me,” says the Lord.* This, this is the blessed weeping to which Christ refers. We find this also in Ezra chapter 9 where Ezra gets word of sin among the people who had returned to Israel from exile. 9:**3-7** *As soon as I heard this, I tore my garment and my cloak and pulled hair from my head and beard and sat appalled. 4 Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles, gathered around me while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice. 5 And at the evening sacrifice I rose from my fasting, with my garment and my cloak torn, and fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God,<sup>6</sup> saying: “O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you, my God, for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens. 7 From the days of our fathers to this day we have been in great guilt. And for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame, as it is today.* This is Ezra whom it says had devoted himself to the study, practice and teaching of God’s word and he is broken up because the people are sinning and suffering for it. Ezra 10:**1** *Now while Ezra was praying and making confession, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, a very large assembly, men, women and children, gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept bitterly.* This weeping, this weeping is of God. Oh, may we be visited in such a way today.

Well, let’s look also at a thoroughly New Testament man lest you say this weeping business is for the Old Testament. In Acts 20 Paul is addressing the elders of Ephesus and he says Acts 20:**18-19a** *And when they had come to him, he said to them, “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time,<sup>19</sup> serving the Lord with all humility and with tears. 31 Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.* You wonder what made Paul such an influential

man? May I suggest that this is it? Robert Murray McCheyne was one of the most respected preachers in the history of Scotland and yet the man died before he was thirty. I wondered how a man could have the impact he did in such a short lifetime and then I read someone who said McCheyne seldom preached but that he broke out in tears as he pleaded with his hearers. I want to be more that kind of preacher. Often and even in these last weeks it is the desperate yearning of my heart for you to break thru in a new commitment to Christ, but God seldom gives me tears in the pulpit. He gives me tears as I pray and prepare but I long to have a heart like Paul's so I could say as a pastor Acts 20:31c *I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.*

The great apostle wept over sin in the church. He wrote to the church in Corinth, II Corinthians 2:4 *For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.* This man's epistles to the churches were stained with his tears. He wept too over those so-called Christians whom he knew were still outside of grace. Philippians 3:18 (NIV) *For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.* My friend, do you weep like this over sin in the church? Does it break your heart to see the so-called Christianity being peddled by many? Does it break your heart to see so many following after deceptive religion and after the idols of this world? Does it grieve you when the values that Christ scorned are preached in his name? And does it bring you to groaning to see orthodox believers who are lifeless and cold and apathetic? I remember a poignant experience for me, during what some referred to as the Melbourne renewal in the 1990s in which I had a part. I was at a pastor's meeting listening to a man share his heart to see God work in his hometown. He happened to be from Ocala, Florida which is where I spent my first twenty-one years. As he spoke, the faces of so many in that town came to my mind. I remembered those friends of mine, still without Jesus. I remembered the many Christians there who had been let down so terribly by church leaders who fell into immorality. And I began to do more than cry, I started wailing in the back of the church, so heavy had the spirit of mourning come upon me. I was blubbering so badly my charismatic friends were embarrassed for me. Randy Ostrander, a Pentecostal pastor friend had to pick me up and wipe me off and carry me down front to pray with this brother from Ocala. It was a hard thing, but a sweet thing, because I knew the blessing and heart of God. There is an interesting story in Ezekiel 9. Ezekiel has a vision where God is going to destroy Jerusalem because she was committing abomination after

abomination and he said to this man who holds a writing kit to mark the heads of certain men who would be spared. What men do you think God would spare? Ezekiel 9:4 (ESV) *The Lord said to him, "Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it."* If God were to do this today, if God were to slay every church member except those who sigh and groan over the sin of the church how many would be spared? Would you? Do you ache when you see immorality among those who name the name of Jesus?

How about your response to sin in the world at large? Does the corruption of our society grieve your heart? Do you ache when you read the newspaper and see what's on TV and the movies? Have you shed a tear over the millions of babies assaulted in the womb every year? Have we grown calloused and cold and indifferent to a world that is headed to hell? May God give us tears! George Whitefield, whose preaching sparked the greatest revivals ever in England and America was a great orator but he was more than that - he was a man of holy passion. One woman said to him, "Mr. Whitefield, I've heard you twice today and both times your shirt was wet with your tears, why" And he said, "Madam, I weep for the sins you won't weep for." While some church folks laugh at evil jokes and evil movies and evil people Christ says, "Blessed are those who weep now." Men and women of God, let's weep over the sins of others.

But, if you are going to hate sin and weep over sin you don't have to leave the doors of your own heart do you? The man or woman who weeps over sin weeps most over his own. When David sinned against God he wept. When Peter denied Christ it says he wept bitterly. Those of you familiar with Nehemiah 8 and the revival described there will remember it said that when the Scriptures were read the people were smitten with a sense of their own sin. They wept in loud wailing. This is a mark of revival - tears over sin. And Brethren, if you really believe that your sin is a great offense against God will you not hate it and weep over it? If you are poor and hungry - is it any wonder that you will mourn? I've heard stories of how in the late 1920s when the stock market crashed millions became suicidal and more millions wept. Why? They thought they were rich and in an instant learned they had nothing. So it happens too when a man learns of his sin. When's the last time you wept over your sin Christian? If I asked today how many of you spoke an unkind word to your spouse or indulged the flesh to excess or in some way brought dishonor to Christ you would almost all raise a hand. How many of you were grieved in heart by that sin?

Wesley wrote a wonderful hymn that so expresses a desire of my heart. It says, “I want a principle within of watchful, godly fear, a sensibility of sin, a pain to feel it near.” The hymn ends with this request, “O may the least omission pain my reawakened soul, and drive me to that grace again which makes the wounded whole.” Blessed are they who weep over the sin of the church, the world, the self.

On to our second major head which is why this kind of weeping is blessed. And it is so, first of all, because it is this contrition over sin that ushers a person into the kingdom of God. It is this mourning over sin that we call *repentance*. And without repentance there is no salvation. But this weeping is not simply present at the entrance to God’s kingdom, but it is a mark of a Christian living as a disciple. Now you say, “Wait a minute, my Bible says the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. How can you say the Christian must mourn?” Well, Jesus says it, not me, but maybe I can explain it. I think we must conclude from the life of the man who taught about the fruit of the spirit, from the life of our Master who sent the Spirit, that Christian joy, whatever it is, is not something incompatible with tears. In fact, we learn that the same Holy Spirit who produces joy was sent into the world to convict men of sin. And which of these two is logically prior? The conviction of sin and its resultant weeping. Every tree that brings forth the fruit of holy joy has at its root, holy mourning. Every tree that brings forth the fruit of holy joy has at its root, holy mourning. And if you know so little true joy could it be because this holy weeping is not at the root of your life? Turn to II Corinthians 7:**8-10** (NIV) *Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—<sup>9</sup> yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us.<sup>10</sup> Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation. And part of that salvation is Christian joy. **10** Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.*

How does weeping lead to joy? Because it leads to forgiveness, it leads to being reconciled with our God. The man whose conscience is sensitive and easily wounded is the man who has sweetest fellowship with God, who enjoys His presence most thoroughly and His smile most often. Psalm 34:**15** *The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous And His ears are open to their cry. **17-18** The righteous cry, and the Lord hears And delivers them out of all their troubles. <sup>18</sup> The Lord is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit. Would you be near to God today?*

Would you have his joy? Here is how - cry over your sin. You say, that makes no sense. Yet I tell you it's true. My times of greatest peace and joy are often the times when I most ache over the sin of Christ's church and over the sin in my own life.

Blessed are those who mourn, why? Because God blesses them. God rewards their tears. Psalm 126:**5-6** *Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. <sup>6</sup> He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, Shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him!!* David said, "He turns my mourning into dancing." Isaiah 61:**1-3d** *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Because the Lord has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners; <sup>2</sup> To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, <sup>3</sup> To grant those who mourn in Zion, Giving them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of mourning, The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.* Again I say - this tree that brings forth joy, what is at its root? Mourning, ashes (a symbol of contrition), heaviness, but our Lord comforts and gives joy. Oh, brethren, if we but wept over our sin we wouldn't need to paste on a happy face, God would put a song in our hearts. He would show us the glories of His deliverance and we would shout "Hallelujah, what a Savior!" Revivals have always been marked by two things: one is a deep conviction of sin, the other is hilarious joy. Matthew 5:**4** *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.* We are told in the Revelation that when sin, which is the cause of weeping, is gone weeping too will go eventually. Listen to these beautifully words of our King. Revelation 21:**3-4** (ESV) *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."* Matthew 5:**4** *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.* I hope you see immediately from these verses that Jesus is not anti-laughter. He is pro-laughter. He says weepers are blessed because they will laugh. But what about the others? Hell is described for us as a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, eternal weeping without hope of any comfort. This is the lot of those who shut off their conscience. And we need to see things this way. When you see the frivolous man of the world, busy with his partying - don't envy him, pity him. He is not the blessed man. He may laugh now, but what will

become of his laughing when Christ appears in great power and glory? Understand this: every man, every man will mourn over his sin somewhere and sometime. Either he will do it now and receive from God life and gladness or else he will do it forever in hell without comfort. You choose.

We close by looking at what to do if you want this gift of tears. Three things: First, you pray for it. Pray that God would break your crusty, hardened heart and convict you of sin. Are you open to that today? Pray that God burden you with the awfulness of sin in the world, in the church, in you. Secondly, why not expose yourself to preachers who, instead of patting you on the back, seek to penetrate your spirit and help you see your sin. I praise God for the ministry in my life of men like Al Martin and Leonard Ravenhill and the writings of Tozer. Their words often sting. They have brought me low and led me to tears. But their sting is the sting of truth cleaning up my life. The tears are for cleaning. They lead to true joy. Don't just listen to or read those who make you feel good. Open your ears, mind and heart to the convicting word of God.

Thirdly, remember several facts - three to be exact. (1) Remember that all misery results from sin. Most people today will not face up to either sin or to misery. Most people want to escape reality don't they? They refuse to think about the mess we're in, they're in. They fill their lives with amusements - why? They drink their alcohol and take their drugs - why? What's the drunken man say? I do it to forget. That's exactly why they do it. Some people keep the music blaring day and night, why? So they don't have to face the great silence and emptiness of their world. They don't want to think. You want to weep? Well, just open your eyes and your ears. Face reality. Take time to really see. In the light of God's holiness look at the world and look at yourself. The sight, properly viewed, is enough to make you weep. And consider that the misery in people's lives, all of it, results directly or indirectly from sin.

Then remember secondly that hell is a reality. You cannot take sin lightly when you understand its penalty. You cannot laugh when hell is even a possibility for you.

Remember thirdly, Christian, the cross where our blessed Lord suffered - why? For your sins. Can you not mourn the sins that nailed him there? Can you not mourn the sin that sent arrows of judgement into His heart? Can you not mourn the sin that even now grieves the heart of such a loving Savior?

Why do all this mourning? In a hearty pursuit of real happiness. Happiness, real joy comes at the price of tears - are you ready to pay that price? You open up to the work of God in your soul and

you'll come to understand what I'm saying. You will know what Jesus meant. If we all do that then they will one day talk about the Pittsburgh revival of 2016. 5:4 *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*