
2 REPENTING OF OUR SINS

Matthew 5:4; Romans 7:21-25

Some Christians seem to imagine that, especially if they are filled with the Holy Spirit, they must wear a perpetual grin and be continuously boisterous and bubbly. However, the Christian life, according to Jesus, is not all joy and laughter. The truth is that there are such things as Christian tears, and too few of us ever weep them. And, as the second beatitude teaches, sorrow can be the source of blessing.

Open

■ When is a time when you feel you have mourned for (that is, grieved or felt sorrow over) something or someone?

Study

■ It is one thing to be spiritually poor and acknowledge it, as the first beatitude says; it is another thing to grieve and to mourn over it. In more

theological language, confession is one thing, contrition is another. One might almost translate the second beatitude "Happy are the unhappy" in order to draw attention to the startling paradox it contains.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. (Matthew 5:4)

It is plain from the context that those Jesus promised comfort are not primarily those who mourn the loss of a loved one, but those who mourn the loss of their innocence, their righteousness, their self-respect. It is not the sorrow of bereavement to which Christ refers, but the sorrow of repentance.

1. What does this beatitude tell you about the heart of God?

2. What are some evasions people use to avoid mourning their sins?

3. What forms might godly mourning over sin take?

4. What is the difference between self-pity and genuine grieving over sin?

5. How has the Lord comforted you when you have grieved over your sins?

Summary: Jesus wept over the sins of others, over their bitter consequences in judgment and death, and over the impenitent city which would not receive him. We too should weep more over the evil in the world, as did the godly people of biblical times. It is not only the sins of others, however, which should cause us tears; for we have our own sins to weep over as well.

6. Paul was mourning over his own sin when he wrote to the church in Rome. *Read Romans 7:21-25*. What words and phrases throughout this passage highlight the struggle Paul is experiencing?

7. The apostle Paul was chosen by God to spread the gospel through the Roman Empire. He also wrote most of the New Testament. How could

he still call himself "wretched" (v. 24)?

8. What was the only solution Paul saw for his wretchedness (vv. 24-25)?

We Christians who make much of grace sometimes thereby make light of sin. There is not enough sorrow for sin among us. We should experience more "godly sorrow" (2 Corinthians 7:10) of Christian penitence. ✱

9. Most of us who are known as Christians are living an outwardly respectable life. Why is it so difficult for us to admit inner sin, either to ourselves or to others?

10. Paul wrote about the inner struggle between God's law and the law of sin at work in his body. How do you empathize with his struggle?

11. In your own life what forms has that “war” taken?

12. In your own life what forms has Christ’s “rescue” taken?

Summary: Those who bewail their own sinfulness will be comforted by the only comfort which can relieve their distress, namely the free forgiveness of God. According to the Old Testament prophets, “consolation” was to be one of the offices of the Messiah. Christ does pour oil into our wounds and speak peace to our sore, scarred consciences. Yet still we mourn over the havoc of suffering and death which sin spreads throughout the world. For only in the final state of glory will Christ’s comfort be complete, for only then will sin be no more and “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 7:17).

Apply

■ Think of times you tried to conceal or deny your sins, and then the Lord brought you to the point of repentance. How did you experience mourning over sin?

How did the Lord make his comfort known to you?

Pray

Thank the Lord for his patient pursuit of you and for the undeserved comfort of forgiveness.

Take Paul’s statement “Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” and expand it into your own prayers of thanks: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord for . . . !”