

## Happy the Mourners

### Matthew 5:4

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 2-21-2010

## Introduction – the bookends of mourning are happiness and comfort

We have come to the second beatitude, which is just as contrary to our ordinary way of thinking as the first one was. The literal translation of this would be “happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” And people react to that: “Happy are the sad? How can that be?” But it’s not the mourning *itself* that is a happy state. The word “for” indicates that it is the result that makes you happy.

You see, whereas poverty (which is beatitude #1) forces us to fix our eyes of faith upon the Lord, mourning is the flip side of faith that grieves over anything that comes between Christ and us. It is a mourning that flows out of faith. It is a *Gospel* mourning. When we have once tasted and seen that God is good, we automatically (by God’s grace) mourn when something comes between God’s goodness and our happiness. This is why you find David grieving over any distance that he senses between God and him.

But I love the way He words it here, because it highlights the difference between a *Gospel* mourning and all of the other counterfeits. The mourning of the world doesn’t result in happiness, nor does it result in God’s profound comfort. It leaves you empty, still guilty, still feeling bad. But this word mourning is clothed in the Gospel. It doesn’t leave you feeling bad. I want you to notice that the words “those who mourn” come between two bookends: happiness and comfort. And the literal meaning of the word “comforted” is “to come along side.” It is the picture of a person who comes along side of you as a comforter and puts His arm around your shoulder. That’s the amazing thing: when we mourn, God comes along side and puts His arms around us. He ushers us into a close relationship with Him. And if mourning is a key to God doing that, then mourning is also a key to happiness and fulfillment. And who doesn’t want that closeness of walk with God? So this really is a second key to a fulfilled Christian life.

And I think it is important that we not make it the first key. Otherwise we might think that we can earn God’s favor by mourning well enough. But that would contradict, “**Blessed are the poor in spirit,**” wouldn’t it? Legalism is always looking for ways to save our pride and to earn God’s

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favor. Before Luther became converted he would beat himself with painful whips to try to atone for his sin. He would do all kinds of penance, make holy pilgrimages, weep, and do other hard things to try to prove to God that he was sorry enough and sad enough about his sins. He wanted to enter the kingdom of heaven by fleshly mourning. And we need to make sure that we don't make others mourn that way before we receive them. We need to relate to them in the light of the Gospel too. Anyway, back to Luther, he couldn't mourn properly until he was enabled by God's sovereign grace to (in effect) say, "nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. I can't even offer up proper mourning to you. I come as a poor beggar, empty. And even my poorness of spirit I see as a gift of Your grace."

Remember that we saw last week that everyone is poor, blind, and naked spiritually. They just don't recognize it. God's first act of grace is helping us recognize that we are bankrupt. That's what poor in spirit is – we inwardly (in the spirit) recognize that we are beggars, and there is nothing that we can bring in our hands (not even our mourning) to earn his salvation. Salvation has already come with the first beatitude. So don't forget the order of these beatitudes. Beatitude #1 makes us so empty that we come in faith to receive the kingdom as a gift – a pure gift. Beatitude #2 is the flip side of that coin of faith – it is evangelical repentance. It is true mourning over sin.

But just like with the first beatitude, there are counterfeit interpretations that will keep us from finding the fulfillment that God intended us to have. So I want you to turn to the section of the Sermon on the Mount where Christ addresses this mourning. That is Matthew 7:1-6. If you weren't here for the first sermon, let me quickly inform you that the beatitudes are the outline of the Sermon on the Mount. Starting in verse 11 He gives an exposition of each beatitude in reverse order. This was a very common Hebrew method of speaking that is known as a chiasm.

## **I. What kind of mourning did Jesus have in mind? His exposition (Matthew 7:1-6) makes clear that it is mourning over sin.**

Let's read Matthew 7:1-6. This is the full section that gives Christ's exposition of this beatitude.

### **Matthew 7:1 "Judge not, that you be not judged."**

If we start by judging rather than by being poor in spirit, we will lose the Gospel edge to the sword of the word, and rather than bringing healing surgery, it will kill. And it will not only bring pain, suffering, misery, and death to others, it will do the same for us. Only God can judge. James says

that there is only one Lawgiver and one Judge. This means that even human judges may not judge independently. John 7:24 says that we must judge with righteous judgment, representing the heavenly Judge's judgment. The moment we start judging independently, it will come back to haunt us. Verse 2 says:

**Matthew 7:2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.**

So you've got to start with the attitude of humility that comes from being a spiritual beggar, whom God transfers to being a spiritual steward. And a steward still has nothing in himself, but he has everything in Christ. And if you are a steward, God can trust you to wield the scalpel of His Word to help others in their sin. But the moment you start getting judgmental, or thinking that you are better than someone else, your scalpel turns into a lethal weapon that does not bring healing. It becomes the wrong kind of mourning. So Jesus says:

**Matthew 7:3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?**

**Matthew 7:4 Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me remove the speck from your eye"; and look, a plank is in your own eye?**

**Matthew 7:5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.**

**Matthew 7:6 "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.**

Well, if this is Christ's exposition of beatitude #2, what kind of mourning did He have in mind? It is obvious that Jesus is not talking about mourning over having crashed your car, or mourning over death of a loved one. Yes, God cares about those things too, and you can always cast your cares upon Him, knowing that He cares for you. But that kind of mourning is not what Jesus is talking about in beatitude #2. The specific focus is mourning over sin.

### ***A. Mourning over my own sin (vv. 2-5)***

And the first sin that Jesus wants us to mourn over is our *own* sin. He says, "**First remove the plank from your own eye.**" It is easy to mourn over the sins of other people – especially if those sins have hurt or offended you. But it is difficult to mourn over our own sins. It's difficult to even *see* our own sins. Right? The natural state of the human heart is to be righteous in our own eyes, but to see the sins of those who are close to us as being huge, and to either ignore sin in the world and to get frustrated that dogs act like dogs, or swine act like swine. Jesus is going to be saying, "Don't be

surprised when unbelievers act like unbelievers. Don't be judgmental of them either. If it wasn't for God's grace, you would be doing the same things they do." And we'll get to that in a bit.

But back to seeing a plank in our own eye, that takes a special work of God's Spirit, and it always flows out of a sense of being poor in spirit. If we were to start with mourning before having been given a poverty of spirit, we could end up suicidal or judgmental. Neither of those is a blessing, and neither of those receives God's comfort. Those who are suicidal may be mourning over how bad they are, but they do not have the kind of *Gospel* mourning that Jesus is talking about, because they are still *more* preoccupied with alleviating their own pain than they are with glorifying God. The kind of mourning that glorifies God flows from the faith that is generated by beatitude #1, sees very clearly my own sin, and only then does it move on to deal with the evil in others. So that's one side of the equation – we've got to avoid the wrong kind of mourning.

But while some people have problems with the wrong kind of weeping (and we'll look at that under the counterfeits section), others swing to the opposite error and they don't engage in weeping over sin at all. But what does this beatitude say? It says, "Blessed are those who *mourn*, for they shall be comforted." If you don't mourn over your sin, you won't enter into the comfort of the Lord or the happiness of the Lord. Some people's view of the Gospel makes them never weep over their sins. They feel comfortable in their sins. And interestingly, they love Matthew 7:1 when others judge them. They don't apply it to themselves, but they love to apply it to others. As soon as somebody points out sin in their lives they bristle and say, "The Bible says 'don't judge.'" They use this verse as a weapon to ward off all judgment.

But those who have gone *first* to beatitude #1 don't need to ward off judgment. When people point out sin in their lives, it doesn't kill their faith in the Gospel. They know that sin plus a hundred more, and while their sin grieves them, it doesn't devastate them because they already have the joy of the Lord, and they already have the kingdom and its fullness. That's beatitude #1. They don't deny their sin. They graciously say, "Thank you for pointing out my sin. It's one more reason why I need the Gospel of Jesus Christ as my only security. And as I repent of that sin (which I do), and take it to the cross of Christ, pray that God's Gospel be powerfully at work in me and that I would keep pressing into my upward calling with joy, and not with grief."

I'm going to keep emphasizing the order of these beatitudes, because if you mix up the order, you lose the comfort of the Gospel. But if you only park on beatitude #1, you lose your growth in Christianity, and as a result, you begin to lose your happiness that comes from walking in the light. Our flesh doesn't want to mourn, but unless we are willing to keep walking in the light and seeing our sin, and mourning over it, we won't keep growing in the happiness.

You know, 1John says that we are liars if we claim that we don't have sin, and it says that this is proof that we are not walking in the light. Light is always going to show dirt, so if you claim that you don't have dirt in your life you have not experienced God's spotlight. But it also says that we are not walking in the light if we do not confess our sin and turn from it in hatred. What does a bright light do when it shines on you? It makes you notice wrinkles and lint in your clothing that you hadn't noticed before. It shows up the crumbs on the table and the dirt on the floor.

Human nature wants to turn off the light so that we don't see the crud<sup>1</sup> in our lives. And by the way, crud is now in the dictionary. It means a loathsome incrustation of filth or refuse. That's what is happening when people misuse this passage and say to anyone who exposes their sin, "The Bible says 'Don't judge.'" They are trying to turn off the light. They don't want to see the crud. But Matthew 7:2-5 says that true believers want to see the plank in their own eyes; they want to see in order to remove it. In fact, we want to see our own plank more clearly than we want to see the sin in a fellow believer's life. The Gospel gives us the security to say, "Yes Lord – as much as it makes me cringe to see the sin in my life, bring on the light. I want to walk in the light." The Gospel of beatitude #1 makes us secure enough in God's grace and the fact that we already possess the kingdom and everything in it and that it will never be taken away from, that we are willing to walk in the light and be shown by God's grace the crud that is in us. And God's grace continues to work by making us mourn over the crud, and start sweeping out the crud. And the more light we have, the more crud that we sweep out.

That's why Jesus speaks of the plank in our own eye as being far bigger than the speck in our brother's eye. He's not denying that our brothers have planks in their eyes too. He's just saying that the Gospel light

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<sup>1</sup> 1. *Slang*

- a. A coating or an incrustation of filth or refuse.
- b. Something loathsome, despicable, or worthless.
- c. One who is contemptible or disgusting.

shines in our own house so brightly that we see far more dirt on our floor than we see on anyone else's floor.

And here's the point – if you are walking in the light of the Gospel, there will never be a time in your life when you will not have dirt in your spiritual living room that needs to be swept. How many times do we sweep the floor in our house? Well, we do a deep cleaning every week, but we have to pick up every day. *Every day*. And it's amazing how much dirt we can sweep up. There is constantly dirt in our house. That is a sign of life. It would be an empty house devoid of life if we didn't have to sweep.

So there are two lessons: First, sin will always be a part of your life until you get to heaven. Don't be surprised by it. Don't despair over it. It will keep driving you back to the Gospel. And that will bring you comfort and that will bring you happiness.

But the second lesson is equally important, yet is often ignored. The second lesson is that if you are walking in the light, God won't let you be happy with that sin. He will only let you be happy with the Gospel. The sight of that crud in your proverbial living room will make you get out the Gospel broom and start sweeping. And the more years you sweep, the easier it will become, and the less crunchies you will have under your feet. But you will never have a time when you can quit sweeping the floor, or taking out the planks from your eye. They will be there. This is not a beatitude only for the beginning of your Christian walk.

So first, don't be judgmental of yourself any more than you should be judgmental of others. Second, don't ignore your sin, anymore than you ignore the sin of others. 1 Corinthians 11 commands us to judge ourselves so that we not be judged. Our generation is characterized by an inability to mourn over its own sins. It's become unhealthy.

Let me just give you a word picture. A few years ago, three of us men went into the house of a person who needed some food. There was so much grease on the kitchen walls, counters, and floor that you couldn't see what the original color was. There was trash everywhere. There were places where you couldn't even walk without wading through trash. I walked into the living room, trying hard not to gag at the sights and smells. There was rotting food, paper, cat feces, and other stuff on the floor. I saw a dead cat that was decaying in a corner. And my breakfast kept wanting to come up. We helped that person, but we did more than simply give a financial handout. This person needed finances, yes. She needed love, yes. But she needed training, she needed to learn to hate messes like this. She needed vision

for the future. And we loved her enough to give it. We couldn't bear the idea of leaving her in that mess. We wanted to help her.

Let's apply this to the area of sin. The modern church wants everyone to be so tolerant that they will ignore all sin. And they invite you into their living rooms and want you to be pleased that they are happy in their mess. They think: "Ain't the Gospel great?! It let's us live comfortably in this mess!" You are thrilled that they are saved, and you are not judging them on that account. But you notice that there has been no mourning over sin. Instead of the normal sweeping we would expect as we walk in the light, the church is content to have spiritual pizza that was dropped on the floor two weeks ago remaining on the floor, sticky who-knows-what on the floor from two months ago grabbing the soles of your feet, paper and rubbish up to our knees as we walk through the living room. And as you round the corner in some of these homes, you see a dead cat lying on the bedroom floor, just being ignored. And you see grime and filth everywhere. And when we point out that a dead cat on the floor ought to be dealt with, they reply, "Judge not that you be not judged." They don't care about the planks in their eye, and they don't care about the fact that walking through their living room makes the visitors want to gag. I'm being graphic here because I want a word-picture of what the Gospel is all about that you will never forget. It's about walking in the light through the forgiveness *and* victory of the cross. Yes, all of us had houses like that when we came to Christ, so we reach out to such people. But God doesn't want our houses to remain that way.

And those who switch off the lights and refuse to use the Gospel to sweep their floors on a daily basis are not mourning like David did over his own sin. Here's what James 4:7-9 says to such true believers who have switched off the light so that they can be at peace with their sin. He calls them once again to engage in Gospel mourning. He says,

**James 4:8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.** [We are not talking about legalism here. We are talking about drawing near to the light of the God of all grace. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."] **Cleanse *your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.***

**James 4:9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.** [How can you laugh when you have grimy grease covering every square inch of your kitchen, rubbish up to your knees in the living room, and a dead cat in the corner. That is not acceptable. He says, "Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom."]

**James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.**

These and many other passages indicate that mourning is a key to happiness (and who is going to be happy in a home like that), and mourning is a key to a close walk with God. God doesn't want to fellowship in a home like that. He gags over those sins. Wouldn't you have a hard time fellowshiping over cookies and milk in a house like that? Isaiah 59:2 says, "**your sins have hidden His face from you.**" Jeremiah 5:25 says, "**Your iniquities have turned these [blessings] away, and your sins have withheld good from you.**" He *wants* your good. He *wants* your happiness. He *wants* you to have blessings. He *wants* you to be close to Him.

And so Jesus calls us to pull the log out of our own eye if we are to find happiness, fulfillment, and the blessing of the Lord. And it makes sense: a plank stuck in your eye is not going to make you happy. And that is what all sin is. It is a stick in your eye. Matthew 1:21 tells us that Jesus did not come to keep us in the misery of our sins. He said, "**You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.**" As long as you have sin in your life, you have reason to mourn. You have reason to get the Gospel broom and to start sweeping the living room. And some of us need more than a broom. We need a gospel shovel. So this beatitude is just like the first one – it starts our Christian walk, but it also continues our Christian walk. So there is mourning over our own sin. The book of 1John tells us that this is the only way to have fullness of joy.

### ***B. Mourning over my brother's sin (v. 5)***

Then in verse 5 there is mourning over my brother's sin. Some of you need accountability partners to ask hard questions about pornography, anger, slips of your tongue, gossip, and other sins. You need a person who has so sensed the plank in his eye that by comparison, your sins seem like a speck. Of course, you need to see that speck in your eye as a plank if you are going to be good mutual accountability partners. I don't know about you, but when I get a grain of sand in my eye – wow does it hurt! It feels like a plank in my eye. It may seem insignificant to someone else, but boy is it overwhelming! When you've got two people in mutual accountability with that kind of attitude, it really moves you forward in grace.

So look at verse 5. Jesus said, "**then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.**" It is not a loving thing to leave our brother with a sore eye. It's not loving to say, "Agh! Don't worry about it. I can't even see the speck." Some people think that's loving. This guy is hurting over the speck of sand in his eye, and you are being heartless to leave him there. God calls us to love each other enough, and to mourn over



sin enough, that we are willing to help others with a little bit of Gospel light. It's not just the pastors who are to exhort one another and to stir up love and good works – every believer is according to Hebrews 10:24.

Yes, if the Gospel has been shining in your own living room brightly, you will be so preoccupied with your own sweeping, that love will cover a multitude of sins in the lives of others. A “multitude of sins” is the majority of sins in another person's life. That's why you are only dealing with the speck, and not the whole plank. You won't ordinarily see the fact that he's got a plank in his eye too. It just looks like a speck to you because the Gospel light is shining too brightly in your living room for you to see that much of his dirt. But when he's got a stinking dead cat in one of the rooms of his house, you will love your brother enough to tell him, “That's not healthy brother. It's not good for your family to keep that dead cat. Please, let me take the speck out of your eye. Please let me help you.” But we are not to do it with a spirit of judgmentalism, but with a spirit of love. Judgmentalism always thinks that I am better than somebody else. That's not the point. According to verses 2-5 you can help somebody else even though you feel you are worse than them – you've just finished taking a plank out of your eye. But that sin is so hurtful to you, and God's Gospel has ushered you into such happiness and comfort, that you want that happiness and comfort for others too.

### *C. Mourning over the world's sin (v. 6; Ezek. 9:4)*

Verse 6 says that it is only when we are rightly dealing with our own sins, and rightly dealing with sins of brothers inside the body, that we can mourn over the sin in the world properly. We are going to take our own sins the most seriously, our brother's sins less seriously than our own, and the world's sins the least seriously – at least in terms of confrontation. He says, **“Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.”**

What are the pearls and bread that he is talking about? You can't yank this out of context. He's talking about the Gospel mourning over sin and helping each other out of sin. It is bread; it is pearls. It's precious. It's what brings us to happiness and God's comfort. And we are to share this bread and these pearls with brothers. Brothers who have God's grace at work in their lives via beatitude #1 feel like they too have a plank in their eye, and when you treat it as a speck, they are quite willing to have you help them out.

But unbelievers aren't in the same boat. Should we preach the Gospel to them? Yes. We are compelled by love to do so. And that means preaching the law to the world too. But when they repeatedly reject it and show their unregenerate nature by persecuting you, don't get angry that dogs act like dogs. Don't get angry when pigs act like pigs. There does come a time when you can stop talking to them about the Gospel. And Christ explicitly told His disciples that there comes a time when you shake the dust off your feet and stop preaching to some people. You don't have to confront unbelievers over all their sins. But Jesus calls us to balance here. You are not going to deal with an unbeliever's sins in the same way that you deal with a brother's sins. And if you do, you are either not loving your brothers enough, or you are not loving the world the way Christ wants you to – you are pointing out too many of their sins.

Should we mourn over the world's sin? Yes. Ezekiel 9:4 says, “**And the LORD said to him, ‘Go through the midst of the city, ... and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.’**” God protected only those who mourned over the sin in the world. That means that true believers will always mourn over the sins that are in the world. In Revelation God put the same mark on the head of His people in the New Covenant. There is something wrong when we don't mourn over the behavior of dogs and swine. What I am saying is that it is impossible for a man who is walking in the light not to mourn over the sins in the world. But in your relations with the world you don't need to keep expecting them to act as if they have grace when they don't. Jesus frees you up to mourn without being judgmental of even the world. All judgmentalism must be taken away from our hearts.

***D. But it is always mourning without judgmentalism (vv. 1-2)***

And so let me quickly distinguish between being judgmental and being a mourner. Mourning is not judging. Nor is helping others out of their sins.

1. The judgmental person acts as the judge (obviously), whereas the mourner allows God's Word to be the judge. There is a big difference between the two. When people tell us to quit judging, you can say, “I'm not judging you brother. This is God's Word. God judges both of us, and I want happiness for both of us. Please repent and look to God's grace.” In that case, I'm not the judge. I'm just a messenger of the judge.

2. The judgmental person acts as if he is superior, whereas the mourner sees himself as being the chief of sinners.
3. The judgmental person acts in a way that distances himself from the sinner, whereas the mourner wants reconciliation.
4. The judgmental person cares about the sin of another person more than about the relationship, whereas the mourner cares about the sin because he cares about the relationship.
5. The judgmental person is law focused, whereas the mourner is grace focused. Are we getting convicted yet? As I have gone through this passage, I have been very convicted.
6. The judgmental person is prideful, whereas the mourner is humble.
7. The judgmental person is self-satisfied, whereas the mourner is poor in spirit. He is not self-satisfied. He looks to Jesus to be satisfied.
8. The judgmental person thinks, “I would never do that,” whereas the mourner says, “There but for the grace of God go I. I would do exactly the same thing if it wasn’t for God’s grace.”

I’m sure that there are many other contrasts that could be drawn. There is a world of difference between the two. But let me summarize: once we are sensitive to the fact that we are the chief of sinners and we mourn over that, then we have the humility, patience, and love to help our brother with his sin. It is going to help me to hate the sin, but to love my brother.

But this walking in the light also helps us to mourn over the sad state of a world that lives under sin. And so verse 6 is really equivalent to Proverbs 9:8, which says, “**Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you.**” Why do you not rebuke a mocker? Because he will hate you if you do. Here Jesus says that he may turn on you and tear you to pieces. You’re not going to rebuke the world the same way that you rebuke a brother. And by the way, if you are one of those people who simply cannot receive rebuke or correction; if you are one of those people who misuses Matthew 7:1 to deflect all judgment, then Scripture says that you are wanting people to treat you like a mocker, a dog, a swine. I don’t think you want to be in that category. Those who are walking in the light want Gospel reproofs; they want the specks out of their eyes. That’s why David said,

**Psalms 141:5 Let the righteous strike me;**

***It shall be a kindness.***

**And let him rebuke me;**

***It shall be as excellent oil;***

**Let my head not refuse it.**

**For still my prayer is against the deeds of the wicked.**

He cares about wickedness wherever it is found, but he focuses most on his own sins, next on the sins of fellow believers, and lastly on the sins of the world. And just because you overlook a lot of the sins of brothers, and even more of the sins of unbelievers, it doesn't mean that you take an uncaring attitude toward them. David said, "**Rivers of water run down from my eyes, because men do not keep Your law.**" (Ps. 119:136) What a sad state this world would be in if Christians failed to mourn over the state of the world! We would lose a passion for evangelism. We would cease to be salt and light. We would not be able to obey Jude 22-23, which says, "**And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by flesh.**" You are not going to save them by diving into the garbage in their living room and throwing it over yourself saying, "Yeah, I have rubbish in my room too." You are not going to be cavalierly swinging the dead cat by the tail and saying, "Yeah, I've got dead cats in my house too", or saying that Jesus saves us so that we can be comfortable with dead cats in our house too. No! That's not the Gospel. The sin you are rescuing them from will make you mourn; it will make you care. And if it doesn't, eventually we will lose a sense of antithesis between the church and the world. And that is the state of the church in America. We desperately need the working of grace that is being described in these beatitudes. We desperately need Reformation.

## **II. What counterfeits will rob us of this blessing?**

So hopefully I have painted a clear picture of what *kind* of mourning brings the happiness, fulfillment, and comfort of God. But Satan is a master at getting us off track. So let's quickly look at some counterfeit kinds of mourning that Satan will encourage us to have in order to make us avoid the real thing. If Gospel mourning brings happiness and the presence of God in our lives, then Satan will do everything he can to keep us from mourning properly. Let's look at seven counterfeits.

### **A. Mourning that despairs, but lacks faith. See Judas (Matt 27:4).**

The first major counterfeit is a mourning that despairs, but lacks faith to go to God. In Matthew 27:4 Judas said, "**I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.**" He confessed his sin; he acknowledged it. In fact, he threw the money he had gotten on the temple floor. But because he was not poor in spirit, he despaired and did not seek God's forgiveness in faith. He did not

seek restitution with Jesus. That would have been too humiliating. It was easier to go to the priests because they already knew about his sin and were implicated in his sin. That didn't take grace. And it doesn't take grace to despair and commit suicide as Judas did. If you are tempted to commit suicide or in other ways give up, repent of a false mourning. Recognize it as a counterfeit from Satan, flee from it, and run to the Gospel. Gospel mourning is the only mourning that brings happiness and comfort.

***B. Mourning that excuses its behavior by blaming others. See Saul (1Sam. 15:24,30).***

The second counterfeit is mourning that excuses its behavior by partially blaming others. Saul did this in 1 Samuel 15. Once he got caught, he confessed his sin because Samuel already knew about it. It's easy for me to confess my sin when others already know that I have done it. But when you get caught, what does your flesh try to do? It tries to confess in a way that salvages some self-respect. Saul puts a "but" to his confession. "Yeah, I sinned, but it's really not my fault because the other person sinned too." I sinned *but*... 1 Samuel 15:24 – **"Then Saul said to Samuel, 'I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.'**" The implication is that if it hadn't been for those people, I would have done better. I obeyed the people. And when you study the rest of his apology you realize that he didn't take the blame for his own actions. He acts like he couldn't help it. He excused his sin.

***C. Mourning over the punishment, not over the sin itself. See Cain. (Also Ex. 9:27; 10:16)***

A third counterfeit is mourning over the punishment, but not over the sin itself. Cain was confronted about his sin, but he didn't deal with it. After he murders Abel and gets caught, he still didn't truly repent. He excuses himself. It wasn't until God told him that he was going to be banished that Cain mourned and said, **"My punishment is greater than I can bear!"** There was no sorrow over the sin, only a sorrow over the punishment. We must be certain that when our children only weep over the punishment but not over the sin, that we not be satisfied with that. Don't be judgmental, because we are subject to this failing too. But if you love your children, you will take this additional speck out of their eye and say, "My son. That repentance doesn't take you far enough. It doesn't take you to the Gospel. I want you to hate the sin and to see your need of grace. I want you to receive God's forgiveness, comfort, and joy." It may be that they won't do that right

away, and as a beatitude #1 parent, you will fall on your knees and cry out to God and say, “I can’t change my son’s heart, Lord. I am poor in spirit, and recognize that if you don’t change him, he won’t change. I cry out to you on behalf of my child.”

It’s so easy to mourn over the wrong thing. In Exodus 9 Pharaoh repents with words that sound like a pretty good repentance. He says, “**I have sinned this time.** [And actually, I guess that itself is a little bit of minimizing going on. I’m thinking – “What about the other times.” But Pharaoh says, “I have sinned this time.”] **The LORD is righteous, and my people and I are wicked. Entreat the LORD, that there be no more mighty thundering and hail, for it is enough. I will let you go and you shall stay no longer.**” He is forced to confess his sin, but it is only to get rid of the punishment. As soon as God stops the judgment, he hardens his heart. Then he does the same thing in chapter 10. Mourning over punishment is not the same thing as mourning over sin. I am sure that there will be a lot of mourning in hell, but it will not be true repentance.

***D. Mourning over sin in general, but not over particular sins (Jer. 3:13; etc)***

Another counterfeit is mourning over sin in general, but not over particular sins. Some people pray easily about the depth of sin and the wickedness of their own hearts. And every once in a while I am tempted to ask them, “Could you tell me about five of the sins in this past week that show forth the great wickedness of your heart?” If I did that, I think I would often get a blank stare. You wouldn’t be able to list any. Spurgeon once said,

People make a general confession such as ‘I am a great sinner,’ who would still resist any special charge brought home to their consciences, however true. Say to such a person, “You are a cheater,” and he replies, “No, I am not a cheater!” “What are you then? A liar?” “Oh, no!” “Are you a Sabbath breaker?” “No, nothing of the kind.” And so, when you come to sift it, you find them sheltering themselves under the general term *sinner*, not to make confession, but to evade it.

Apart from grace we are blind to specific sins. It is only a person who has been brought by God’s grace to see himself as utterly poor in spirit who sees his sins everywhere, and who cries out to God about the specifics of his evils. If you find this counterfeit to be true of you, don’t just resolve to be a better confessor. Pharaoh was a better confessor – much better! He was specific, but he was still devoid of grace. Instead, go back to the first step of the ladder (the first beatitude) and cry out to God to make you poor in spirit.

Genuine mourning will always result of being poor in spirit. It is the flip side of faith.

***E. Mourning that does not focus on our offense against God (Zech. 12:10; Ps. 51:4)***

The fifth counterfeit is a mourning that focuses only on how we have hurt each other, but that fails to see how we have offended a holy God. But how does Acts 5 describe the lying of Ananias and Sapphira? It wasn't simply a lie to Peter. Peter says, "**Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...?**" Stephen told the Jews, "**You always resist the Holy Spirit.**" This is why Zechariah says that when salvation comes to Israel in the future, and the Holy Spirit is poured out upon them, "**They will mourn for Him [that is, God] as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn**" (Zech. 12:10). Their mourning will focus on how they have offended a holy God, and that they have been distanced from their heavenly Father. And the closer to God that you become, the more you will see every sin in this light. This is why David said, "**Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight**" (Psalm 51:4). Those who are poor in spirit know that no man has a claim on you like God, because all men are poor and bankrupt. Any claim men may have is a derivative claim from God. If you sense by God's spirit that your mourning is this counterfeit mourning – that it is a humanistic mourning devoid of mourning for *Him*, then go back to the Gospel and claim the grace of true mourning from the throne of Jesus.

***F. Mourning as an outward show (Matt 6:16; 1Kings 21:27) but has no loathing of our sin-nature (Ezek. 20:43)***

The sixth counterfeit is a mourning that is an outward show to please men, but has no self-loathing. The Pharisees were able to mourn even though they didn't think they had done any wrong. But it was expected to mourn over sin on a fast day, so they did it. Even a wicked king like Ahab can put on a good show when it is time to mourn. 1Kings 21:27 says, "**So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning.**" But his heart was unregenerate. He was a man headed toward hell. Ezekiel 20:43 shows what true, God-given mourning looks like when it says, "**And there you shall remember your ways and all your doings with which you were defiled; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of all the evils that you have committed.**" Not, "you shall loathe your neighbors," but "you shall loathe yourselves." I give these

counterfeits, not to beat up on you, but to help you to enter into the true happiness and comfort of God's presence.

***G. Mourning that does not involve the mind, emotions, and will.<sup>2</sup>***

**1. Regret is being sorry – the mind recognizes that this was not a good thing, but the emotions and will are not engaged. See Saul.**

The last counterfeit I will mention today is mourning that does not involve the mind, the emotions, and the will – all three. There are many people who have regretted that they did something bad. They are not stupid, and they recognize that their sins have had bad repercussions. But it's only a mental recognition that it wasn't a good move. That's simply regret.

**2. Remorse is being sorry – the mind and emotions are engaged, but not the will. See Judas.**

Remorse goes one step further. It is being sorry with the mind and the emotions engaged, but not the will. Judas is an example of remorse. But he didn't go to Jesus to make things right. And feeling bad did not save him. He felt so bad that he committed suicide. But as I mentioned earlier, that kind of grief is a counterfeit. It can eat away at you and make your life miserable. But remorse does not bring life and liberty; it brings death.

**3. In contrast, “godly sorrow” (2Cor. 7:9-11) is a turning around of mind, emotions, and will. See Matthew.**

But where regret involves the mind, and remorse involves both the mind and feelings, Biblical repentance, or what 2Corinthians 7:9-11 speaks of as godly sorrow, involves the mind, the emotions, and the will. And I'll leave you to study that passage on your own. It's enough to say that true mourning doesn't just gnaw and eat away inside of us.

The prodigal son is a perfect example of this in Luke 15. If he had merely sat in the pigpen thinking how foolish he had been, it would have been regret. “Wow! That was a stupid move.” That's regret. Had he thought about his sins and *hated* himself and loathed himself for committing them it would have been remorse. Perhaps another person would have been too proud to repent and would have allowed remorse to drive him to suicide.

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<sup>2</sup> The word for “mourn” in this beatitude carries in its definition aspects of mind, emotions, and will. According to Trench's *Synonym's of the New Testament* there are three Greek words that indicate an inward sorrow that can be hidden. But he says that the word used here is much stronger. It is used of “those who so grieve that their grief manifests itself externally.” In another place he says of this sorrow, “it cannot be hid.” And one of the reasons it cannot be hid is that it moves the individual. It is not just his mind, but his mind, emotions and will.



But the prodigal son said, “**I will arise and go!**” and he arose and went. That is true repentance. His sorrow was a godly sorrow that motivated him to action. And it led to a resolving of the crisis. The footnote in your outline shows that all of that is tied up in the word “mourn.” I’m not going to go over that, or go over the rest of your outline.

**a) Mind (2Tim. 2:25; Acts 17:30; Jer. 31:18-19; Luke 15:17)**

**b) Emotions (2Cor. 7:9-11; Ps. 38:18; Jer. 31:19; Zech. 12:10; James 4:8-10)**

**c) Will**

*(1) Through confession (Prov. 28:13; Ps. 38:18; Luke 18:13)*

*(2) Through turning away from sin (Ezek. 18:30-31; 2Chron. 7:14; Is. 55:7; Prov. 28:13)*

*(3) Through turning to God and His grace (Acts 26:20; 1Thes. 1:9)*

*(4) Through seeking reconciliation (Matt 5:24)*

### **Conclusion – there should be one goal in mourning – restoration (“they shall be comforted”)**

But I want to end with a true story that I think ties these things together nicely. The evangelist Henry Moorhouse preached on the love of God in one town as a guest speaker. There was a coal miner in that town by the name of Ike Miller who horribly abused his wife and children, especially when he would become drunk. And he seemed to be drunk quite frequently. Many people had prayed for his salvation, and one Christian had invited him to come and hear the guest speaker. He accepted, and the Christians excitedly told Moorhouse that Ike would be attending the meeting and that many would be praying for his salvation.

Moorhouse preached his heart out, but was disappointed that when the meeting was over, Ike immediately got up and left the meeting rather than coming to the front for the altar call. It’s kind of an Arminian approach. You’ve got to walk the sawdust trail. But what really happened was that Ike went straight home, kissed his wife, tenderly gathered his children into his arms – something he had not done for years, and sobbing, he prayed the only

prayer he knew how to pray. He prayed a prayer that his mother had taught him as a child:

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,  
Look upon a little child,  
Pity my simplicity,  
Suffer me to come to thee.

Here was a man who didn't follow the protocol of that day in walking the isle. He didn't even know how to pray properly. But he was soundly converted, and rather than confessing to the pastor, he confessed to the ones whom he had wronged, and most importantly, to the God whom he had offended. He exemplified all of the characteristics of true mourning that led to life, mourning that led to repentance, mourning that led him back to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And that is what I would urge you to do whether you are an unbeliever or have been a Christian for twenty years. We need the Gospel every day because we are poor every day, and we see our sin every day. Even if it is only a light sprinkling of sin, you need to sweep your heart with the Gospel broom every day.

If you have never put your faith in the Lord Jesus, I would urge you to do so right now. Just bow your head and tell the Lord, "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling." Tell God, "Lord, I hate my sin and the way it has offended You, but I know I cannot earn Your favor. So I come to You to receive Your gift of forgiveness. And I thank you for your promise that if we confess our sins You are faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I cast my sins on Jesus and receive His righteousness in my place. And I want to start walking in the light rather than covering my sin as I have done before. Please forgive me for those times that I have excused and covered my sin. And I want your light to so shine on my own living room that I am not only forced to embrace the Gospel every day, but I am forced to be gentle with my brothers and sisters about their sins too. Please give me the happiness of this beatitude. Please put Your arms around me and give me Your comfort. May I never lose the comfort of your presence. May I never grow tired of sweeping the dirt that accumulates every day. And may I never lose the joy of the Lord, which is my strength. In the name of Jesus I pray this. Amen."

And if you have prayed that prayer, God has promised

**Proverbs 28:13      He who covers his sins will not prosper,  
But whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy.**

That means that God now sees you as clean, clothed in the righteous garments of Jesus Christ, fit to be embraced to His bosom. He wants you to put off your sadness and to enter into the joy of the Lord, which is your strength. Let's end the service by singing a hymn that reminds us of our constant need of the Gospel. Not What My Hands Have Done. Please stand as we sing this.

Brothers and sisters, receive the Lord's charge. I charge you to put off the sorrow of the world, which does not produce life, and to put on the Gospel mourning of this beatitude, that you might have a life of fulfillment, happiness, and closeness with God. Ask God to give you the grace to deal with your own sins much more seriously than you deal with the sins of your brothers – and certainly much more seriously than you deal with the sins of the world. And may God usher you into the comfort, happiness, and fulfillment that comes from fellowship with God. Amen.

# Happy the Mourners

## Matthew 5:4

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 2-21-2010



Introduction – the bookends of mourning are happiness and comfort

- If being "poor in spirit" produces faith to receive the kingdom, what does mourning produce?
- Why would inverting the first two beatitudes lead to legalism?

I. What kind of mourning did Jesus have in mind? His exposition (Matthew 7:1-6) makes clear that it is mourning over sin.

A. Mourning over my own sin (vv. 2-5)

- Matt 7:1 - God's word alone can judge, but when we act as judge, the sword brings death rather than healing surgery.
- Why is it easy to see the plank in our brother's eye, and to be blind to our own sin?
- There is a wrong kind of weeping. Why is having no weeping just as much an error?
- Why does "walking in the light" (see 1 John) make us see our sin?
- Why does "walking in the light" help us to be tender toward others who have sin?
- Why does "walking in the light" motivate us to sweep our floors every day?
- What word picture did pastor use to describe the modern church's view of sin?
- How does this word picture help us to have balance, and a healthy view on mourning?

B. Mourning over my brother's sin (v. 5)

C. Mourning over the world's sin (v. 6; Ezek. 9:4)

- This verse is equivalent to Proverbs 9:8.

D. But it is always mourning without judgmentalism (vv. 1-2)

- Try to write down one or two contrasts between a person who is judgmental and a person who mourns.

II. What counterfeits will rob us of this blessing?

A. Mourning that despairs, but lacks faith. See Judas (Matt 27:4).

B. Mourning that excuses its behavior by blaming others. See Saul (1Sam. 15:24,30).

C. Mourning over the punishment, not over the sin itself. See Cain. (Also Ex. 9:27; 10:16)

D. Mourning over sin in general, but not over particular sins (Jer. 3:13)

E. Mourning that does not focus on our offense against God (Zech. 12:10; Ps. 51:4)

F. Mourning as an outward show (Matt 6:16; 1Kings 21:27) but has no loathing of our sin-nature (Ezek. 20:43)

G. Mourning that does not involve the mind, emotions, and will.<sup>3</sup>

1. Regret is being sorry – the mind recognizes that this was not a good thing, but the emotions and will are not engaged. See Saul.
2. Remorse is being sorry – the mind and emotions are engaged, but not the will. See Judas.
3. In contrast, "godly sorrow" (2Cor. 7:9-11) is a turning around of mind, emotions, and will. See Matthew.
  - a) Mind (2Tim. 2:25; Acts 17:30; Jer. 31:18-19; Luke 15:17)
  - b) Emotions (2Cor. 7:9-11; Ps. 38:18; Jer. 31:19; Zech. 12:10; James 4:8-10)
  - c) Will
    - (1) Through confession (Prov. 28:13; Ps. 38:18; Luke 18:13)
    - (2) Through turning away from sin (Ezek. 18:30-31; 2Chron. 7:14; Is. 55:7; Prov. 28:13)
    - (3) Through turning to God and His grace (Acts 26:20; 1Thes. 1:9)
    - (4) Through seeking reconciliation (Matt 5:24)



Conclusion – there should be one goal in mourning – restoration ("they shall be comforted"), and one result of mourning - happiness ("blessed").

<sup>3</sup> The word for "mourn" in this beatitude carries in its definition aspects of mind, emotions, and will. According to Trench's *Synonym's of the New Testament* there are three Greek words that indicate an inward sorrow that can be hidden. But he says that the word used here is much stronger. It is used of "those who so grieve that their grief manifests itself externally." In another place he says of this sorrow, "it cannot be hid." And one of the reasons it cannot be hid is that it moves the individual. It is not just his mind, but his mind, emotions and will.