

## **Happy Are the Sad**

Scripture: Matthew 5:4

Code: 2199

### **INTRODUCTION**

In Psalm 55 David writes of the pain he experienced from the disappointments and sorrows of life: "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.... I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest" (vv. 6-8). He was echoing a thought most of us have had at one time or another: If only I could escape from my problems and find rest! We desire to be freed from the anguish of this life, and yearn for comfort in the face of pain and disappointment. Yet that comfort is often elusive. Therefore Matthew 5:4 seems to be a paradox: "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted."

The teaching of Christ in Matthew 5:4 seems contrary to human experience. Our society is pleasure mad and has an entertainment-park mentality. People spend much of their money, time, and energy in an attempt to be entertained. They want to enjoy life and put sorrow and pain as far away as possible. Jesus said, "Woe unto you that laugh now! For ye shall mourn and weep" (Luke 6:25). But Christ condemned the superficial laughter of the world and offered blessing and comfort to those who mourn.

### **LESSON**

#### **I. HOW CAN THOSE WHO MOURN BE HAPPY?**

There are nine different Greek verbs used in the New Testament that speak of grief. That there are nine verbs in one language to express the concept of grief is one indication of how much grief is a part of life. History has been a story of tears, yet we haven't yet seen anything like the sorrow that will come during the end times. In Matthew 24 Jesus says, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (vv. 4-8). The history of man will culminate in sorrow.

#### **A. Human Sorrow**

##### **1. It may be caused by the conditions of life**

Weeping and mourning are a part of life. They are acceptable, proper gifts from God. When a person expresses pain and sorrow he releases a pressure valve that releases the burden of pain and stimulates the healing process. Abraham wept when his wife died (Gen. 23:2), releasing his grief

through tears. Scripture is full of pictures that describe such release.

a) Psalm 42:1-3--"As the [deer] panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" The psalmist released his sorrow over the apparent absence of God by crying. That's a normal way of dealing with the sorrow that comes from feeling estranged from the Lord.

b) 2 Timothy 1:3-4--Paul said to Timothy, "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears." Apparently Timothy wept because he was terribly discouraged.

c) Jeremiah 9:1--God called Jeremiah to preach to Israel about a coming judgment. The prophet preached that message with tears: "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

d) Acts 20:31--When the apostle Paul met with the elders of the Ephesian church he said, "Remember, that for the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears." Paul expressed his concern for the church with his tears.

e) Mark 9:23-24--A father brought his demon-possessed son to Jesus to be healed. Jesus said, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

f) Psalm 126:5-6--"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Earnest love can make a person weep.

g) Luke 7:37-38--"A woman in the city, who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him, weeping; and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." The Pharisee was wondering how He could allow a sinful woman to do that to Him. Christ said that those who have been forgiven much are very grateful. Sometimes people cry when they are thankful.

People cry for different reasons--out of love, concern, disappointment, or loneliness. Our Lord wept at the grave of Lazarus because He loved him. He wept over the city of Jerusalem out of compassion. Mary Magdalene wept because Christ was dead. Tears are a God-given way to release the terrible pain in your heart. There is nothing wrong with that kind of mourning. Ecclesiastes 3 observes there is "a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (v. 4).

2. It may be the result of sin

a) Unfulfilled evil desire

Someone might mourn because he can't satisfy his lust. One of David's sons wanted to sexually defile his sister. He mourned until he became sick (2 Sam. 13:2). King Ahab mourned because he couldn't have a vineyard that belonged to a man named Naboth. He coveted Naboth's vineyard so much that "he lay down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food" (1 Kings 21:4).

b) Unwillingness to let go

Some people mourn excessively when they lose a loved one. A while ago I heard of a man who lost his mind because his wife went to be with the Lord. He was too focused on his own grief to rejoice in the exaltation of his beloved wife.

c) Guilt as an atonement

Some people indulge in excessive sorrow because of guilt. They mourn in the hope of atoning for sin. We see that kind of sorrow in 2 Samuel 15-19. Absalom drove his father, David, out of

Jerusalem and planned to destroy him and his army in battle. But when the battle was fought Absalom lost and was slain.

Before the battle David told his soldiers, "Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man, even with Absalom" (2 Sam. 18:5). He wanted a vile, rebellious man to be dealt with gently--a sign of his warped perspective. Then when he was told that his son was dead, he cried, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (18:33). His love for his son is understandable but his thinking was clouded. Israel needed David to rule, not the proud, egotistical Absalom. But David was full of guilt from having been a terrible father and hoped that his sorrow would wash his soul clean from his failures.

We know that because Absalom's rebellion and death was part of the outcome of David's adulterous relationship with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband. Second Samuel 12 recounts how the prophet Nathan asked David what should be done with a rich man who stole and slaughtered a poor man's only lamb. David said, "As the Lord liveth, the man who hath done this thing shall surely die; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold" (vv. 5-6). But Nathan's question was really a parable to illustrate the crime David himself had committed. He told the parable as an illustration of the crime David was guilty of: stealing another man's wife and then having the man himself murdered (v. 7). As a result the Lord promised that the sword would not depart from David's house (v. 10). Four great tragedies came to David: the baby born to Bathsheba died, his daughter Tamar was raped, and his sons Amnon and Absalom were slain.

After the death of Absalom David carried on so much that his soldiers were actually ashamed they had won the battle. Joab, David's commander-in-chief, told him, "I perceive that, if Absalom had lived and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well" (2 Sam. 19:6). David's grief was improper because it was really caused by his own sin.

Some say Matthew 5:4 is saying that after you've wept you feel better. They point out that sorrow has a way of building up and strengthening a person. William Barclay illustrated that perspective with this poem in his commentary on Matthew (The Gospel of Matthew, vol. 1, rev. ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], p. 94):

I walked a mile with Pleasure, She chatted all the way, But left me none the wiser For all she had to say.

I walked a while with Sorrow, And ne'er a word said she, But, oh, the things I learned from her When Sorrow walked with me!

An old Arab proverb says, "All sunshine makes a desert" (Barclay, p. 93). That's a nice sentiment, and it is true that sorrow teaches us many things. But Matthew 5:4 isn't talking about feeling better after weeping or being strengthened as a result of mourning. Jesus was not talking about the sorrow of the world, whether legitimate or illegitimate. He spoke of godly sorrow.

## **B. Godly Sorrow**

### **1. It is sorrow over sin**

Second Corinthians 7:10 tells us that "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death." A person can weep bitterly because of loneliness, discouragement, earnest love, or unfulfilled lust, but that kind of sorrow will never bring about eternal life. The only kind of mourning that results in salvation is godly sorrow over sin because it leads to repentance. In Matthew 5:4 Jesus wasn't saying that the lonely or discouraged are blessed but that those who are distressed and mournful about their sin will be.

### **2. It begins with poverty of spirit**

The Beatitudes begin, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). A person who is poor in spirit knows he is spiritually bankrupt. He knows that in his flesh there is no

good thing (Rom. 7:18). When you are convinced intellectually that you are spiritually bankrupt you will respond emotionally by mourning.

Those who are poor in spirit recognize that spiritually they are nothing but cowering beggars with no capacity to help themselves (Matt. 5:3). A person cannot enter Christ's kingdom apart from an overwhelming sense of spiritual poverty, and he never loses that perspective as a child of God. If you have never recognized your spiritual poverty and do not have that perspective now, it is questionable whether you are a Christian.

George MacDonald referred to that truth in his exposition on the Sermon on the Mount: "The poor, the beggars in spirit, the humble men of heart, the unambitious, the unselfish; those who never despise men, and never seek their praises; the lowly, who see nothing to admire in themselves, therefore cannot seek to be admired of others; the men who give themselves away--these are the freemen of the kingdom, these are the citizens of the new Jerusalem.

"The men who are aware of their own essential poverty; not the men who are poor in friends, poor in influence, poor in acquirements, poor in money, but those who are poor in spirit, who feel themselves poor creatures; who know nothing to be pleased with themselves for, and desire nothing to make them think well of themselves; who know that they need much to make their life worth living, to make their existence a good thing, to make them fit to live; these humble ones are the poor whom the Lord calls blessed.

"When a man says, I am low and worthless, then the gate of the kingdom begins to open to him, for there enter the true, and this man has begun to know the truth concerning himself" (Life Essential: The Hope of the Gospel [Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw Pub., 1974], pp. 43-44).

Only the beggar in spirit can say with Isaiah, "Woe is me! For I am undone" (Isa. 6:5). Only a destitute person will say, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). After David committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband killed he saw how spiritually poor he was. He wrote, "In sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5). He mourned deeply over his sin--his soul was wrenched to its very depths. Job was a rich man who was humbled and made to realize who he was compared to God: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). All who have a true understanding of who they are in relation to God have that same reaction.

3. It involves deep internal agony

The Greek word translated "mourn" in Matthew 5:4 (*pentheo*) is the strongest of all the Greek words used in the New Testament to express grief. It often refers to mourning for the dead--the passionate lament expressed for a lost loved one. In the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament) it is used of Jacob's grief when he was told his son Joseph was dead (Gen. 37:34). A form of the word is used in Mark 16:10 of the disciples "as they mourned and wept" over Jesus. It is also used to describe those who will bewail the death of their commerce in the destruction of Babylon the Great during the Tribulation (Rev. 18:11, 15, 19).

*Pentheo* conveys the idea of deep inner agony-- not just external grief. David expressed that kind of pain in Psalm 32, saying, "When I kept silence [about my sin], my bones became old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer" (v. 4). In Psalm 51 David agonized over his sin with Bathsheba. He wrote, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (vv. 1-3).

David was devastated by the effects of sin on his relationship to God. He wrote, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit" (vv. 10-12).

When David mourned over his sin and confessed it to God he was cleansed. Therefore he could say, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Ps. 32:1). The reason those who mourn over sin are happy is that their sins are forgiven. Everyone else in the world lives without relief from the guilt of sin.

#### 4. It results in forgiveness

The comfort mentioned in Matthew 5:4 doesn't come from your sorrow but from God's response to your sorrow. Bottled up sin ruins a life, but confession results in the freedom and joy of forgiveness. David experienced tears of loneliness, rejection, discouragement, defeat-- even illicit sorrow over his guilt in sinning with Bathsheba. But nothing broke his heart as much as the way his sin separated him from God.

#### What Good Is Your Old Kit Bag?

The world says, "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile!" The kind of mourning the Bible demands is little seen in the world today. James 4:8-10 says, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." We ought to be crying more than laughing. In fact, too much in today's church is frivolous and does not call attention to the necessity of mourning over one's sin. No one will enter the kingdom of God without that attitude, and a Christian ought to have a continual sense of grief over the sin in his or her life. That will produce happiness because of God's forgiveness, but it won't last unless the person continues to deal with his sin.

Ezekiel warned the Israelites, "A sword is sharpened, and also polished; it is sharpened to make a great slaughter; it is polished that it may glitter. Should we then make mirth?" (21:9-10). God was ready to strike. Ezekiel saw nothing to laugh about. Isaiah pronounced a similar warning against Jerusalem: "In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth. And, behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine; let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die" (Isa. 22:12-14). As long as someone laughs over sin he will not be cleansed.

Do you laugh when you see evil? Do you laugh at ungodly jokes and television shows? Proverbs 2:14 says there are some who "delight in the perverseness of the wicked." In 2 Thessalonians 2:12 we read of those who take "pleasure in unrighteousness."

Many in the church today have a defective sense of sin. As a result the world often thinks the Christian life is a joke, and the church is made fun of. However, that's not to say Christians aren't to have any fun. Proverbs 17:22 says, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." But the church today is out of balance: too many professing Christians do not mourn over sin. Conviction of sin is a necessary part of salvation. It's the path to blessedness. Happiness is not found in counseling or books--it's found in mourning over your sin.

#### 5. It requires a specific response

People respond to a knowledge of personal sin in different ways. Some, like the Pharisees, deny they are sinners. They put on a phony front and make people think they are perfect. Others admit they are sinners and try to change themselves by self-determined effort. Others may even kill themselves, like Judas did.

The proper reaction upon realizing one's spiritual bankruptcy is to depend on God's grace and mercy. When the prodigal son sensed his sin he didn't deny the repugnance of his circumstances and try to adapt. Nor did he give up in despair. He admitted his sinfulness and returned to his father (Luke 15:11-24).

Many people think they are Christians even though they've never come mourned over their sin. When asked how they know they are Christians, they typically say something like, "I came forward in church" or "I signed a card." Their assurance is based on something that happened in the past. But the New Testament doesn't speak of walking an aisle, signing a card, or having a counselor tell you you are a Christian. It says if you're a Christian your life will show it.

In 2 Corinthians 12:21 Paul expressed the fear that when he visited the Corinthians he would cry over those who had no sorrow for their sin. God demands that sin be recognized, mourned, and repented of. That's not self-pity but a turning away from sin. Paul did warn against the possibility of being swallowed up excessive in sorrow (2 Cor. 2:7) but happiness does come after true mourning. Psalm 51:17 says, "A broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

6. It is a lifelong sorrow

A true Christian mourns over sin all his life. Some people think Paul's account of his struggle with sin in Romans 7 indicates that his struggle ended, and that Romans 8 shows he came to the point of never having a problem with sin again. But that isn't true.

Paul said, "That which I do I understand not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.... It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.... I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. So, then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin" (vv. 15-25). That fight didn't stop until the day he met Jesus Christ face-to-face.

In Romans 8:22-23 Paul says, "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body." Creation wasn't the only thing groaning over sin--Paul obviously was sick of it as well. That's why he said to depart and be with Christ is far better than living on earth (Phil. 1:23). He also wrote, "In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" (2 Cor. 5:2).

7. It is characterized by confession

First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." One sign of whether a person is truly a Christian is that he continually confesses his sin. Some time ago a college student said to me, "I've been liberated! Someone has just reinterpreted 1 John 1:9 and told me I don't have to confess my sins anymore." I replied, "Do you still confess your sins?" He said, "Yes--that's what bothers me!" Whatever error that student had learned it was overruled by his new nature in Christ.

## **II. WHAT IS THE RESULT OF MOURNING OVER SIN?**

Those who express sorrow for their sins will receive comfort. They are not blessed because they mourn but because they are comforted. There is no happiness in the sorrow of the world because it is not over sin. The pronoun translated "they" in Matthew 5:4 is placed emphatically; only those who continually mourn over their sin will be comforted.

### **A. Comfort from Above**

Scripture tells us God is a comforter (Ps. 30:5; 50:15; Isa. 55:6-7; Mic. 7:18-20). He helps us, hears

our cries, and meets our needs. He is always at our side admonishing, consoling, strengthening, and forgiving us. Paul called God "the God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3). As our brokenness over sin rises to the throne of God His unsurpassed comfort reaches out through Christ to us. Jesus Himself said, "I will pray to the Father, and he shall give you another comforter [the Holy Spirit]" (John 14:16).

God's Word is also a comforter. Romans 15:4 says, "Whatever things were written in earlier times were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." God's Word was given to comfort us: it tells us about God's love, forgiveness, help, encouragement, and presence. Also, believers comfort one another (2 Cor. 1:4)--the apostle Paul was comforted by Titus (2 Cor. 7:6).

## **B. Comfort Throughout Life**

Although "blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted" sounds like a promise of comfort in the future, the implication in the Greek text is that comfort runs alongside of mourning: as long as you continue to mourn you will be comforted. It's true we will receive comfort in the eternal kingdom. Revelation 21:4 says, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." But those who truly mourn over their sin--Christians--also receive comfort now.

Happiness comes to mourners because their sadness leads to comfort. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). People do not look for rest until they know they are carrying a burden. They have to feel the weight of their sin. Christ takes away that heavy load and replaces it with His yoke, which is easy, and His burden, which is light (Matt. 11:30). Freedom in Christ and the standards He sets are far easier to carry than the weight of one's own sin. When a believer confesses his or her sins daily to the Lord He gives him comfort.

## **III. HOW CAN I TRULY MOURN OVER SIN?**

### **A. Things That Hinder**

A person who desires to become a mourner must eliminate anything masking sin in his or her life. Such hindrances will lead to hardheartedness. A stony heart will not mourn. Only soft soil will receive the seed of God's Word and mourn over sin.

#### **1. Love of sin**

Love of sin freezes a heart into impenitence.

#### **2. Despair**

A person in despair may believe God will not forgive what he has done. Despair drives one to undervalue God's power and grace and minimize the atoning power of Christ's blood. Israelites of Jeremiah's day said, "There is no hope, but we will walk after our own plans, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart" (Jer. 18:12). Despair hides God's mercy behind ignorance and His grace behind doubt. Even the most evil heart is no match for the transforming power of God.

#### **3. Conceit**

A conceited person thinks he isn't that bad. He looks around himself, sees he is comparatively good,

and decides he needn't mourn over anything. But such people are like a doctor who treats a brain tumor like a common cold. Since Christ had to shed His blood on a cross for men and women to be reconciled to God, all mankind in God's sight must be terribly bad. Those who think they are not bad are in fact worse than other people because conceit is one of the worst sins of all.

#### 4. Presumption

Presumptuousness cheapens God's grace. It is presumptuous to think that a relationship with Christ will not produce transformation. Some think walking down an aisle or getting baptized are acts that save a person. So they feel that once they've done the magic act they can do whatever they want. They don't think they need to confess their sins because they did the magic act. However, Isaiah 55:7 says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ... for he will abundantly pardon." If a wicked person does not forsake his way there is reason to believe he was never pardoned.

#### 5. Procrastination

A procrastinator says to himself, One of these days I'm going to have to take a good look at my sins and do away with them. But tomorrow may be too late. James 4:14 says, "Ye know not what shall be on the next day. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." A person who plans to do things the next day needs to remember that tomorrow may never come. The sooner you deal with your sin the sooner you will receive the comfort and blessedness that accompanies it. If you fail to deal with your sin now, you may spend an eternity in hell apart from God.

#### 6. Excessive merriment

Some people don't want to be realistic about life. For them life is just one big party. They think that if they can keep the party going they will never have to face their problems. Amos 6:5-7 pronounces woe on those who "chant to the sound of the harp, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Therefore, now shall they go captive with the first that go captive." Fools laugh when there is no reason to do so. Sin should never be laughed at but mourned. In the midst of difficult circumstances Job said, "My harp also is turned to mourning, and my flute into the voice of them that weep" (30:31).

Our world is preoccupied with parties and music. One of the things God will do during the Tribulation is to cause all music to cease (Rev. 18:22). People will have to face reality. Don't preoccupy yourself with laughter; face what is really going on in your life.

### **B. Things That Help**

#### 1. An understanding of the cross

A person with a pattern of sin in his life doesn't understand the significance of the cross. If understanding the work of Christ on the cross doesn't break up his stony heart nothing will. The nineteenth-century English poet Christina Rossetti wrote in her poem "Good Friday,"

Am I a stone, and not a sheep That I can stand, O Christ, beneath Thy Cross, To number drop by drop Thy Blood's slow loss, And yet not weep?

Not so those women loved Who with exceeding grief lamented Thee; Not so fallen Peter weeping bitterly; Not so the thief was moved;

Not so the Sun and Moon Which hid their faces in a starless sky, A horror of great darkness at broad noon-- I, only I.

Yet give not o'er, But seek Thy sheep, true Shepherd of the flock; Greater than Moses, turn and look

once more And smite a rock.

If there are any hindrances in your life, take a good look at the cross and see how much you need Jesus Christ. Look at what it cost Him to free men and women from sin.

## 2. An understanding of sin

David said, "My sin is ever before me" (Ps. 51:3). Isaiah said, "Woe is me! For I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5). Jeremiah wept over the sin of his people (Jer. 9:1). Peter said to Jesus, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). Paul said he was the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). Those men were acutely aware of their own sinfulness. A careful study of what they said about themselves and what you are should leave you with no doubt that you are a sinner.

Sin tramples on God's law. It slights His love and blessedness. It grieves His Spirit and affects us drastically. Sin makes us naked and impure. It robs us of our robe and crown, leaving us in filthy garments. Although originally made in God's image, we become like the beasts that perish. Only God can restore man's former glory and give you a contrite heart. He won't turn you down if you ask.

## IV. HOW CAN I KNOW IF I'M MOURNING OVER SIN?

### A. Are You Sensitive to Sin in Your Own Life?

Are you passive about the sin in your life? Do you laugh at it or take pleasure in it? Some people never deal with their sin. They continue in dishonesty, fail to pray, dwell on evil thoughts or plans, or fail to love. A person's reaction towards the sin in his life shows whether he mourns over it or not.

### B. Are You Sensitive to Sin in the Lives of Others?

A true mourner mourns not only over his own sin but also over the sins of others.

1. Jeremiah 9:1--Jeremiah said, "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" He cried for those who were going to be judged for their sinfulness.

2. Matthew 23:37--Jesus, weeping over the city of Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them who are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

3. Ezekiel 9:4--God told Ezekiel to "go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst of it."

4. Psalm 119:136--The psalmist, reflecting on the sins of others, said, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." Do you weep like that? Is your heart broken when God's heart is broken?

5. Psalm 69:9--David said, "Zeal [for] thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of those who reproached thee are fallen upon me."

6. Lamentations 1:16--Jeremiah said, "For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water ... because the enemy prevailed." And the enemy prevailed because of the sins of the people.

Do you mourn over the sins of those around you? That doesn't mean mere external sadness like the Pharisees (Matt. 6:16) or the insincere contrition of king Saul. Saul acknowledged to the prophet Samuel that he had sinned but then said, "Yet honor me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel" (1 Sam. 15:30). Saul thought he could purchase a showing of God's favor

by admitting he had sinned. He was not concerned about his sin but with whether people would respect him.

### **Conclusion**

Do you know joy in your life? Do you know real peace and happiness? Divine forgiveness and comfort comes only to those who mourn over their sin. I hope you so mourn--God wants you to be comforted and happy.

### **Focusing on the Facts**

1. Why does Matthew 5:4 seem to be a paradox?
2. What does the fact that there are nine Greek verbs to express the concept of grief indicate?
3. Are expressions of pain and sorrow legitimate parts of human life? Explain.
4. In what ways may sorrow be the result of sin?
5. What kind of sorrow was Jesus talking about in Matthew 5:4? Explain it?
6. What is the relationship between Matthew 5:3 and 5:4?
7. Give some examples from Scripture of people who mourned over their sin.
8. What does the Greek word translated "mourn" in Matthew 5:4 convey?
9. Where does the comfort mentioned in Matthew 5:4 come from?
10. In what ways do people respond to the knowledge of their sinfulness? What is the proper response?
11. What do many people who think they are Christians usually base their assurance on? What does Scripture say a Christian's assurance should be based on?
12. Is sorrow over sin a momentary thing? Explain, using Scripture to support your answer.
13. What is one sign of a true Christian (1 John 1:9)?
14. Why are those who mourn over sin blessed?
15. In what ways does God comfort us?
16. What does Romans 15:4 say about God's Word?

17. When will those who mourn receive comfort? Explain.
18. Freedom in Christ and the standards He sets are far easier to carry than the \_\_\_\_\_ of one's own \_\_\_\_\_.
19. What are some of the hindrances to mourning over sin? Explain what is involved in each hindrance.
20. What are three things that help us to mourn over sin?
21. What two questions can you ask yourself that will help you examine yourself to see if you truly mourn over sin?
22. Give some examples from Scripture that show the proper reaction of believers to the sins of others.
23. Who alone experiences divine forgiveness and comfort?

### **Pondering the Principles**

1. Does conversion to Christ necessarily result in a transformation of one's attitude toward sin? In 1829 the American pastor Gardiner Spring wrote, "When the heart has been renewed, when the soul, enlightened by the Divine Spirit, sees the beauty and the loveliness of the Divine character, it cannot seriously reflect upon a life of sin without unfeigned grief" (The Distinguishing Traits of Christian Character [Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, n.d.], p. 28). The miracle of the new birth means a transformation of perspective takes place. A Christian abhors what was once his delight. "Though a sinner still he cannot remain a sinner in the sense in which he was a sinner once. He manifests a desire to honor the God he has so long dishonored; to undo what he has done against the interest of His Kingdom, and repair the injury he has caused to the souls of men" (Spring, p. 30). True sorrow over sin leads to repentance--a turning away from sin. Is your sorrow over sin the type that will not tolerate the evil that was once such a delight to you? That is the kind of sorrow God is looking for.
2. If sin was once our delight but now is what we mourn over, what are we now to delight in? A.W. Pink wrote, "Sin is a species of anarchy in the spiritual realm, and may be likened unto the waving of the red flag in the face of God. Now the opposite of sinning against God is submission to Him, as the opposite of lawlessness is subjection to the law. Thus, to practice the opposition of sin is to walk in the path of obedience" (Profiting from the Word [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1970], p. 17). Obedience to God is the joy the Christian. Is it your joy?

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