

September 8, 2015

## Godly Mourning

Matthew 5:4 (NASB), **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”**

Over the past week or so we have been considering the issue of godly mourning as Jesus declared that those who mourn are blessed. But what does true mourning really mean? One thing we have learned is that this mourning that the Lord instructs on here is mourning over sin. What does true mourning over sin involve? How can we become godly mourners then?

The first step which we must take is to eliminate any hindrances that would keep us from mourning, the things that make us content with ourselves, that make us resist God's Spirit and question His Word, the things that harden our hearts. The hardened heart is insensitive to God and His plow of grace cannot then break it up. This hardened heart then only stores up wrath till the day of wrath.

So what are some of these hindrances? The first one is the *love of sin*. This is the primary and foremost hindrance to mourning. When we hold on to our sin this will freeze and petrify our heart and causes to ignore God and His call to repent of our sin. The second hindrance is that of *despair*. Despair hinders our ability to truly mourn because despair is giving up on God, refusing to believe that He can save us and help us. Despair is putting ourselves outside of the grace of God. Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 18:12, **“But they will say, ‘It’s hopeless! For we are going to follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.’”** The person who is in despair believes that they are destined to sin. Because they believe that God has given up on them, so they in turn give up on God. Despair allows one to excuse sin by choosing to believe that there is no choice. Despair hides God's mercy behind a self-constructed cloud of doubt.

The next hindrance to godly mourning is that of *conceit*. Conceit tries to hide the sin itself, choosing to believe that there is nothing over which to mourn. This is like the doctor who is treating cancer as if it were a cold. If it was necessary for Jesus Christ to shed His blood on the cross to save us from our sin, our sin must be immense!

*Presumption* also hinders us from godly mourning. Presumption is really a form of pride. Presumption recognizes the need for grace, but not too much grace. It is satisfied with what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called “cheap grace.” It expects God to forgive little because there is little to forgive. Presumption says that our sins are bad, just not bad enough to be confessed, repented of, and thus forsaken. In Isaiah 55:7 though it says, **“Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”** There is absolutely no pardon to the unrepentant, presumptuous person who refuses to forsake his or her sin. Any gospel that teaches

otherwise while being popular, which it clearly is in our day, is a false gospel.

The final hindrance to godly mourning is that of *procrastination*. Procrastination says, “one of these days, when things are just right, I’ll take a hard look and my sins, confess them, and ask God’s forgiveness and cleansing.” This is foolish and dangerous in the extreme because it says in James 4:14, **“Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.”** The sooner one deals with the disease of sin in their life then the sooner the comfort of God will come. If one’s sin is not dealt with, we then have no assurance that comfort will ever come, because we have no assurance we will have time to confess our sins later.

The most important step that one can take then in getting rid of these hindrances to godly mourning, is to look at the holiness of God and the great sacrifice of sin-bearing at the cross. If seeing Christ die for our sins does not thaw a cold hard heart then it is beyond the melting or breaking point.

The second step towards godly mourning is to study sin in Scripture, to learn what an evil and repulsive thing our sin is to God and what a damning and destructive issue it is to us. In Psalm 51:3 David prayed that God would keep his sin ever before him. In Isaiah 6:5 it says, **“Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”** In Luke 5:8 Peter said of himself, **“I am a sinful man.”** In 1 Timothy 1:15 Paul said that he was chief of sinners. As we read and hear these great men of God talking about their own sin, we are then forced to confront the reality of and depth of our own sin.

John MacArthur writes, “Sin tramples on God’s law, makes light of His love, grieves His Spirit, spurns His forgiveness and blessing, and in every way resists His grace. Sin makes us weak and makes us impure. It robs us of comfort and, much more importantly, robs God of glory.”

The third step then to godly mourning is to pray for a truly repentant heart. Only God can give forgiveness but He only gives to those who truly repent and ask. We must always recognize that humility depends on the working of the Lord. The way to godly mourning lies not in pre-salvation human works, but in God’s saving grace.

Knowing whether or not we have godly mourning is not difficult. First, we need to ask ourselves if we are sensitive to sin or not. If we laugh at sin, or take it lightly, or enjoy it, we can be sure that we are not mourning over it and we are therefore outside of God’s blessing. If our mourning is godly however we will grieve for the sins of fellow believers and for the sins of the world. We will cry as the Psalmist did in Psalm 119:136, **“My eyes shed streams of water, Because they do not keep Your law.”**

The second way to determine if we have genuine mourning over sin is to check our sense of God’s forgiveness. Have we experienced the release and freedom of knowing our sins are

forgiven? Do we have His peace and joy in our life? Can we point to true happiness that He has given in response to our mourning? Do we have that divine comfort that He promises to those who have forgiven, cleansed, and purified lives?

Psalm 126:5-6 says, **“Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. 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.”**