

The Beatitude for Sorrow

by J.R. Miller

J.R. Miller's sermon emphasizes the paradox of finding blessing and comfort in sorrow through Christ's teachings.

Scripture: Psalm 34:18, Psalm 147:3, Isaiah 61:1-3, Matthew 5:4, John 14:27, Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 2 Timothy 1:7, Revelation 21:4

Topics: "Comfort in Sorrow", "The Blessing of Mourning"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes that the gospel speaks to those who suffer, asserting that Christianity is particularly a religion for sorrow. He explains that Christ's beatitude, 'Blessed are those who mourn,' reveals the profound comfort found in God's love during times of grief. Miller illustrates that true comfort strengthens individuals to endure their sorrow, and he encourages believers to find hope in the memories of loved ones and the assurance of God's unchanging love. He concludes that sorrow, while painful, can lead to deeper blessings and a greater appreciation for divine comfort.

Transcript

A great preacher has said, "It is worth our thought how small that audience must be that would assemble, life through, to listen to a gospel that said nothing to sufferers, nothing to sorrow." An old theological professor said to his students, "Never go through a service without some word, in sermon or prayer, for the troubled; for in every congregation there will be at least one heart hungering for comfort."

The gospel is for all experiences. The religion of Christ is for our times of gladness--as well as for our days of trouble. It is not merely a lamp to shine in our dark nights. We never need Christ more than when the world is shining upon us. Yet Christianity is peculiarly a religion for sorrow. This is one reason the Bible is so precious to men and women everywhere. It is full of sympathy. On every page it has words of comfort. In every chapter we feel the heart-beat of divine love. The preacher who has no comfort in his sermons, will soon find his congregation melting away. Longfellow once said that a sermon was no sermon to him--if he could not hear the heart-beat in it. Poor, aching hearts, will not long come to a ministry in which they do not find warm sympathy, in which they do not feel continually the heart-beat of Christ.

Many people must think at first reading, that Christ's beatitude for mourners is a strange one: "Blessed are those who mourn." Blessed means something very good, very beautiful. To be blessed is to be happy, prosperous, favored. But if we are asked to name the people who are happiest and most favored of all we know--we would not likely name those who are passing through affliction. How can the strange paradox of

Christ's beatitude be explained?

"Blessed are those who mourn--for they shall be comforted." There must be something very precious, very rich, in God's comfort, that makes it worth while even to have sorrow and loss to get it.

What is comfort? Some of us think we are comforting people when we sit down beside them in their trouble, and sympathize with them, as we call it, going down into the depths with them--but doing nothing to relieve them, or lift them up. When will godly people learn that their errand to their friends in sorrow is to help them, to put courage and cheer into their hearts? To comfort, in the Bible sense, is to strengthen. We comfort others truly, when we make them stronger to endure, when we enable them to pass through their sorrow victoriously. That is the way Christ comforts. He does not merely sit down beside troubled ones, and enter into their experiences. He does sympathize with them--but it is that he may make them strong to endure.

Christ comforts in bereavement, by showing us what that which we call death, really is to the Christian. If we could see what it is that happens to our beloved one when he leaves us--we could not weep!

There is a beautiful tale of a boy whose young sister was dying. He had heard that if he could secure but a single leaf from the tree of life that grew in the garden of God, the illness could be healed. He set out to find the garden, and implored the angel sentinel to let him have one leaf. The angel asked the boy if he could promise that his sister would never be sick any more if his request were granted, and that she would never be unhappy, nor do wrong, nor be cold or hungry, nor be treated harshly. The boy said he could not promise any of those things. Then the angel opened the gate a little way, bidding the child to look into the garden for a moment, to have one glimpse of its beauty. "Then, if you still wish it," said the angel, "I will myself ask the King for a leaf from the tree of life to heal your sister."

The boy looked in; and, after seeing all the wondrous beauty and blessedness within the gates, he said softly to the angel, "I will not ask for the leaf now. There is no place in all this world so beautiful as that. There is no friend so kind as the Angel of Death. I wish he would take me too!"

If we could look in at the gate through which our beloved godly ones pass when they leave us, we would be comforted. "Absent from the body," they are "at home with the Lord." Dying is merely passing into a blessed glorious life. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away!" Revelation 21:4

Another comfort in bereavement comes in the assurance of God's unchanging love. When his children were dead, Job gave expression to his faith in the words: "The Lord gave--and the Lord has taken away." It was the same Lord who gave--and who took away--and the same love. It does not seem so to us. But if we could see all things as God sees them, we would find the same goodness in the one as in the other. Some day we shall see it. Jesus said, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Faith accepts this promise, and believes that whatever God does, must be right. In this confidence it abides, and, believing, finds comfort and peace.

Comfort in bereavement comes also through our memories of our beloved ones. The first shock of sorrow oftentimes leaves the heart stunned, like a young bird thrown out of its nest by a wild storm sweeping through the branches. For a time all is confusion. Even faith seems for a while to be staggered. One sees nothing but the desolation of grief. Every beautiful thing appears to be shattered. No voices of comfort are heard in the soul's anguish. Even God seems far off. In the amazement and bewilderment, it appears that

life never can have any joy again, that its old tasks never can be taken up. All the memories, are memories of loss and sorrow. The beautiful years of life, with their love and their gentle ministries, are hidden for the time, in the one great sense of bereavement.

But, as the days pass, this bitterness also passes. A gentle hand takes up the little bird, and helps it back to its nest again. The anguish is soothed by the assurance of divine love that creeps into the heart. Comfort comes, as the morning comes after the night.

In these after days, when the poignancy of the grief is past, when the light has begun to come again, and when the grace of God has reappeared full of love--the heart begins to find comfort in precious memories of those who are gone. Death sweeps away the faults, the flaws, the imperfections, which were so apparent in our friends when they were close beside us--and brings out in them all the beautiful things, only half understood, half perceived, when they were with us. Forgotten kindnesses of years past, are remembered when friends are gone. A thousand fragments of beauty in character and conduct--hidden, unnoticed before--memory now gathers up. The result is a transfigured life, in which all that was good, true, lovely, and worthy has a place.

A middle-aged man said recently that his mother had been far more to him the ten years she had been in heaven--than the ten years before her departure. A woman of advanced years said that her first child, who had been with Christ for fifty years, had been a softening, refining, spiritualizing, upward-drawing influence in her life all those years. There is no doubt that in thousands of cases, our godly friends are more to us in heaven--than ever they were while they were with us. The influence of departed Christian children on parents and homes, is very marked. A godly child in heaven, means more to many fathers and mothers--than a baby in their arms. It is a magnet to draw their hearts heavenward.

When they began to build a great wire suspension bridge over a wide river, a kite was sent across with the first fine wire. This was fastened, and then on it other wires were drawn across, until the great bridge hung in the air, and thousands were passing over it. From many a home a godly loved one, borne to heaven, carries the first heavenward thought of a worldly household. But from that moment, and on that slender thread, their thoughts, affections, and longings go continually heavenward, until there is a broad golden bridge hung between their home and God's house, and prayer and love are constantly passing over.

There is no doubt that sorrow is one of the secrets of the truest, deepest home happiness. Perhaps few marriages reach their sweetest, fullest blending--until the wedded pair stand hand in hand beside the grave of a loved member of their home circle.

The beatitude of Christ shows that the blessing of sorrow, lies in the comfort. A large portion of the Bible is comfort--which can become ours only through sorrow. We can say, "Blessed is night--for it reveals to us the stars." In the same way we can say, "Blessed is sorrow--for it reveals God's comfort."

The floods washed away his home and mill--all the poor man had in the world. But as he stood on the scene of his loss, after the water had subsided, broken-hearted and discouraged, he saw something shining in the bank which the waters had washed bare. "It looks like gold!" he said. It was gold! The flood which had beggared him--made him rich.

So it is oftentimes in life. Sorrow strips off beloved possessions--but reveals the treasures of the love of God. We are sure, at least, that every sorrow that comes, brings to us a gift from God, a blessing which may be ours--if we will accept it. Sorrow should always be treated hospitably and reverently, as a messenger from

heaven. It comes not as an enemy--but as a friend. We may reject it, just as we may reject any other messenger from God, and miss the blessing. But if we welcome it in Christ's name, it will leave in both heart and home--a gift of love.

Clouds gather in the sky with ominous threatening. But they pass, and leave their rich treasure of rain. Then the flowers are more fragrant, the grass is greener, and all living things are lovelier.

Sorrow comes. There is agony in the heart. There is crape on the door. There is a new grave in God's acre. But all hearts are softer. Love is tenderer. Prayers are more fervent. There is more of heaven in the household life. The cloud has left its treasures of rain!

"Blessed are those who mourn--for they shall be comforted."

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