

Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

by Tim Conway

This sermon delves into the paradoxical nature of Christianity, where believers experience both mourning over sin and joy in Christ. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing the depth of one's sinfulness and the need for genuine repentance before finding true comfort and joy in Christ's salvation. The speaker highlights the necessity of humility, contrition, and a deep sense of vileness before God, alongside the glory of God's grace in Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 5:4, Romans 6:23, Hebrews 6:4, Psalms 34:18, 2 Corinthians 6:10

Topics: "Mourning and Joy", "Repentance and Grace"

Description

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Transcript

Chapter 5 and verse 3, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. We looked at last week. Verse 4, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Let's pray. Father, I pray that you would cause this portion of your word to be alive, living, abiding. Lord, you say that you have a people that you dwell with, a people that you look to.

You specifically say that those people tremble at your word. Lord, we recognize we're not dealing this afternoon with just simply the words of a mere man. This is a message from heaven.

We recognize that Christ said that he came from outside this world, into this world, to bear witness to the truth. And he said that his message was not his own. It came from you.

This is what you want us to know. These are words from heaven, from outside this world. We have a word.

Lord, the greatest thing you could do for us is not just give it to us, but also give us ears to hear it. Give us the ability to ponder it, to reason through it, to understand it, to know it, to believe it, and to walk in the reality of it. I pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen. I think we have to admit, there is a lot about Christianity that is seemingly paradoxical, oxymoronic even.

What you find is, you find realities about the Christian like, you've got to lose your life to find it. That kind of thing. There is just no question about it.

The Christian is an odd bird. Because on the one hand, you've got verse 4, blessed are those who mourn. But right in the same portion of Scripture, when you just simply move down the page, if you drop down to verse 12, rejoice and be exceedingly glad.

So isn't that interesting? The Lord sits down. Can you imagine if you're listening to Him? On the one hand He says, blessed if you mourn. But then on the other hand, He's saying rejoice and be exceedingly glad.

Now, it feels, when I say the Christian is an odd bird, it's because we have these competing realities, that are just, they're true about us. And if you're a Christian, you know it. Your own experience tells you, there's reality here.

So as a Christian, when you sit down and you're reading through the Psalms, and in one place you find David says something like this, I'm troubled. I'm bowed down greatly. I go mourning all the day long.

But then you jump right over, a few Psalms later, the same psalmist says, you've turned for me my mourning into dancing. You see, we feel that. We feel that.

And I'll tell you one of the reasons we feel it, is because we're people of truth. And the truth grips us. And see, this is the problem.

There's aspects of truth, that draw mourning out of us, and tears out of us. And there's aspects of truth, that draw dancing out of us. That's why we get this strange mixture.

Even Christ, was a man of sorrows. We know. But then we know, when we run over to the later chapters of Hebrews, we find that for the joy set before Him.

He felt that. Because of all, He came to bear witness of the truth. And see, He was guided by truth.

He was compelled by the truth. And that's, as Christians, we break out of our darkness. We're translocated over into this kingdom of light.

And suddenly, it is light. See, if you walk in darkness, you don't have fellowship with God. We come out into the light.

And light means truth. And so you've got this... I mean, if there's anything that's a reality about the Christian, it's this. There are truths that pull us to the right, and there are truths that pull us to the left.

There are truths that cause us to mourn, and there are truths that cause us to dance. And we find ourselves in that tension, as Christians. And, the world... Well, you know the world.

Look at their advertising. Look what they sell. Look what they're all about.

If anything the world tries to run from, they don't want anything to do with mourning. They don't want anything to do with sorrow. I mean, I remember that.

I remember being lost, and going to a funeral. It's like, I was like Samson coming out of there. Not that I was strong like that, but I wanted to shake myself.

You know how he shook himself? The Philistines were... But we come out of those funerals, and we want to shake ourselves. It's like, let's go get drunk. Let's go eat.

Let's go... You just want to shake that off. That's how the world is. The philosophy for the world is what? Have fun.

What a cheap word. You ever hear John Piper talk about the word fun? I think he's right. Fun is just a cheap word.

And we say it all the time. Somebody's going somewhere. Well, have fun.

Have fun? That's just so worldly. Have fun? Christ never talked that way. Why? Because it's so cheap.

It's so shallow. It resonates with the world. What's the world like? Pleasure mania.

Let's go get drunk and drown our sorrows. Or, you know what? You can drown your sorrows in a lot of things. It can just simply be a movie.

It doesn't have to be alcohol. It doesn't have to be drugs. But you know what Scripture says.

Let's eat and drink for tomorrow we die. That's basically the mindset of the world. Let's live it up.

You know it's true. This was me lost. I lived for the weekend.

But you know what? Here in the UK, you guys really like your holiday. That's a big thing here, right? I mean, that's one of the things I saw when I was comparing life in the UK with life in the United States. They said people in the UK really like their holidays.

And they typically get a whole bunch more than what they get in the United States. People live for that. Or they live for their retirement.

But you just look around. Good times. Entertainment.

How much does the world throw into entertainment? How much money? How much effort? And then, I don't know if you really use this term here. We've got our amusement parks in the United States. You probably use the term amuse.

Muse means to think. Amuse. Amuse.

You've got that negative article at the front. You know what? That is the way the world is. That's what happens when you walk out of that funeral.

You don't want to deal with it. You don't want to deal with the fact you're going to be that body in there in a few more rolling suns at most. Going to land me right in that coffin too.

You don't want to think about it. For you, nope. Let's eat and drink.

Another day, tomorrow maybe, I'm going to die. But not today. Let's live it up today.

That's the mindset of the world. Stop. Amuse yourself.

Just stop thinking. Let's sit down and watch the movie. Parents, you don't do a favor to your children if you park them in front of the television all the time.

And you just let them amuse themselves. Listen, there's profitable things. You can learn.

You want to use your computer and your TV to learn. To learn good things. To learn things about the truth.

Things about God. But the philosophy of the world, amuse. Stop thinking.

Let's have another round so I can just forget my troubles. But you know what the gospel says? Blessed are those who mourn. And that's truth.

Our Lord speaks even more startlingly when He talks this way in Luke 6. Because there He says, Blessed are you who weep now. And He says the opposite. Woe unto you who laugh now.

Do you know woe? That's a curse. Do you know what Jesus does? He condemns. Woe unto you that laugh now.

People like to go see the comedian. Do you know what happened? I don't know if there was a corresponding, I imagine there was a corresponding depression in your economy back before World War II. But you know, you go look.

What I find, what I've heard, is that in seasons of war, in seasons of depression, recession, people watched a lot of movies. Do you know why? They want to break with reality. Because reality is full of problems.

Reality is full of pain and death and sorrow. And people want to forget it. But Jesus comes, you know people like to come in and they sit in front of that big screen and they laugh.

They go and watch the comedian. They have amusement. Have you ever seen an advertisement for an amusement park where everybody had frowns on their face? You see, they laugh it up.

Laughter. I don't know why, but when I was preparing this, back in the 70's they had a show called The Love Boat. And I remember the captain used to say, smiles everybody, at the beginning of the show.

That's so characteristic of the smiles everybody. It's all put on. I mean, you don't say that to people who are already smiling.

It's like, fake it. We want to make everybody happy. Oh, for our 25th wedding anniversary, we had a cruise bought for us.

If you could see the depression on the last day, the people were in a cloud of gloom. Why? Because they've been looking forward to this cruise. Oh, you should have seen them when they were boarding.

Compared to how they were when it was over. Ruby and I are looking at that, and we're thinking, we're Christians. Our hope is ahead.

We didn't live for this cruise. In fact, there was a whole lot we could not do, and would not do, and had to stay away from on that cruise. But I snorkeled.

I saw more ale. Now I'm diverging. But brethren, this is the world.

We know it is. It's their philosophy. And Christ comes along, and He pronounces His curse on it.

Whoa! And you know what? That's not to say Christianity is morbid, or that Christ was morbid. That's not true. Because there was a joy set before Him.

He came to do His Father's will. There was a joy in that. He came to redeem a people.

He suffered the shame because of that joy that was before Him. He was moving towards that. Christianity does not produce morbidity, because on the other hand, we're told to dance.

We're told to rejoice and be exceedingly glad. We're told in one place, jump for joy. Because again, we face the tension.

In fact, Paul, I think, sums it up as well as anybody. In 2 Corinthians 6, you know these words. It's so concise.

But he said, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. Don't you love that? Because that should describe the Christian. Because we are people of truth.

Because there are things genuinely worth sorrowing over, and there are things genuinely worth rejoicing over. I mean, just think about it. Sorrow.

See, we're people that deal with truth. We know what it means when they go out from us. We feel that sorrow.

And I'll tell you, I feel it. You pour into somebody for years, or even a decade, and then they walk away. And then John's words are there.

They went out from us because they weren't of us. But see, then an eternal weight of glory. So you see, there's the tension.

Or, our daughter walks away. I mean, and yet, Ruby and I still have a hope of eternal glory. It's there before us, shining like the sun in the kingdom of our Father.

You see, there's tension. On the one hand, there's sin in the church. There's disunity in the church.

There's error in the church. God is dishonored. We see that.

It causes us to sigh. It causes us to groan. So few people want to even take the tract from us.

It causes us to groan because we know we're likely going to see that person on judgment day. And they're going to be cast away because they were so foolish and blind and hard in their sin. And we feel for them.

We feel more for them than they feel for themselves. There's that reality. We feel it.

We look at our children, and they're yet lost, or grandchildren, or our parents. We feel that. Or then they die.

And we know they died without Christ. And we feel that. These are the tensions.

These are the things. There's so much evil in the world. We look around, and it causes us to groan.

It causes us to sigh. And there are things that draw forth tears. Why? Because we're people of truth, and we recognize how it really is.

And we recognize that few there be that find it. And we recognize many of our family members, and many of our co-workers, and many of the people that live around us, and our neighbors, they are perishing, and very likely they are going to die without Christ. And hell is fiercely.

It's a fierce damnation. It's a forever reality. And yet, at the same time, we know to be absent from the body is to be present with Christ.

And He's going to wipe away every tear. You see, the hope. Tim talked about the hope.

We want to talk to people that are thinking of committing suicide. See, we have the hope. And it doesn't go away.

But listen, the mourning of Matthew 5.4 is primarily, you can see the flow of the beatitudes. It's the mourning that we feel over our own sin. Because it comes right on the heels of being poor in spirit.

It's the mourning that flows from being poor in spirit. It's the mourning that flows from being spiritually bankrupt. It's nothing other than the sorrow that attends a conviction of sin.

And that's not something that just happens when we first get saved. That's something in an ongoing fashion that is a reality. But you want to pay particular attention to the order of things.

Notice this. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Now, there's a truth here that is so important.

This is massively important. Mourning precedes comfort. You say, okay, we see it.

No, no, no. You need to really see this. Do you know what I find? There are many people, many people, who come to a head knowledge of truth.

They have some idea about doctrine. They have some academic understanding of the gospel. They know enough about hell to fear it and not want to go there.

And they are trying to find assurance. They are trying to find comfort. They are trying to find joy without ever having traversed the veil of tears.

And there is an order here. And I'll tell you, if you get people and they're in the church and they've been subject to the truth and they fear hell, and that makes them very uncomfortable, but they've never really faced the conviction of sin, and they're looking for the comfort, they're looking for the joy, it's totally out of order. It's not going to happen that way.

You see it here. Mourning, first. Comfort, after that.

A real sense of sin has to come before there can be true comfort and joy of salvation. And so many people spend their lives trying to find the joy without first knowing anything about that deep conviction of sin that clearly is here. Jesus shows the essential order.

You see, the Apostle Paul says this. This is a reality about the Christian. He said, we know that the whole creation groans.

But he goes on and he says, it's not just the creation. He says, not only that, we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves. And you want to make that connection.

The first fruits of the Spirit. Because you know what Jesus said? When He comes, He convicts. Sin, righteousness, or a lack thereof, that's really the issue.

God has a standard of righteousness and you don't have it. You have sin. And He convicts you of judgment.

And that it's real, you deserve it. You see, the first fruits of the Spirit result in a person groaning within themselves. Why? Because we're longing for when we're going to be set free.

Why? Because we're attached to this body. This body, the flesh, this is where sin tries to reign in our mortal body. That's what Romans 6 says.

This is the place. This is the flesh. This is where, you see, if you put to death the deeds of the body, it's by the Spirit.

If you put to death the deeds of the body, by the Spirit, you will live. You see, it's the deeds of the body. See, we're connected to this body.

That's the issue. And we groan. We feel it.

Why? Because we're renewed. We're new creations in Christ. And suddenly there is, we're going to get to it.

We hunger and thirst after righteousness. But we see there is a competing something within us. And it causes tears.

It causes grief. 2 Corinthians 5.4 We who are in this tent groan, being burdened. You have this.

Listen to this. God actually said something concerning the new covenant that we don't quote a lot. Or I don't.

And I don't hear it quoted a lot. But listen to it. Ezekiel liked to tell us about the new covenant.

Just like Jeremiah did. I will establish. This is Ezekiel 16.62 Don't turn there, but I just want to give you that address.

In case you're interested where it comes from. God says this. He says, I will establish my covenant with you.

Okay? Then you shall know that I am the Lord, that you may remember and be ashamed and never open your mouth anymore because of your shame when I provide you an atonement for all you have done, says the Lord God. What I find very interesting, this is a covenant of atonement. I'm going to provide a sacrifice to atone for your sins.

But when I do that, when you're an object of this covenant, one of the things God is promising is I'm going to cause you to remember your shame. I'm going to cause you to remember and be ashamed. Remember what? Well, obviously things that we should be ashamed of.

And you're never going to open your mouth anymore because of your shame. In other words, you're going to be a person that is not constantly trying to vindicate yourself that somehow you're righteous, either before men or before God. You're not going to be parading all your goodness out there.

God puts His finger on it and says, you have to remember for the joy that was set before Christ, He endured the shame of the cross. That is our shame. And God convinces us of that.

That's what the Spirit of God does. Convinces us that's your shame. And we feel it.

There's a groan. And we go on feeling it. There is a groaning.

There is a burden. There are tears. Listen, when a man truly faces himself, examines himself, examines his life, her life, it's a man who of necessity is going to mourn.

Again, I come back to this. If anything is true about this first and second beatitude, it is this. It is a people who are coming face to face with truth.

And when a person really looks at themselves and they recognize who they actually are, listen, pride is a blinder. Pride puts people's eyes out. The proud man cannot acknowledge that he is bad and ought to be ashamed.

The proud man is ready to throw out there. Lay all his credentials out. Say, I'm not that bad.

I'm okay. I'm not as bad as so and so. No, this person, Jesus is saying, blessed are those who have this kind of sensitivity.

I'll tell you, if Jesus is saying anything about anything in this beatitude, it is this. He designs his people to feel. And not just, I recognize, not just feel about anything, but we are people who feel.

We are people who suddenly, we have emotions that get opened up that maybe were just not there before. They were quenched. They were squelched.

They weren't given freedom to blossom. And he causes, we begin to feel things that we didn't feel before. We can actually feel for the lost.

But we have this keen awareness of how could I do that? How could I think that? Where could that come from? What is it in me? And the thing with the Christian is, there's suddenly a warfare. There's a battle. And see, the battle creates the groan.

If you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit, you put to death the deeds of the body. You see, there's a killing.

And it's by the Spirit. And there's groaning. And it's fierce.

And we take the kingdom by force. And there's something radical begins to happen. There's this turmoil.

And we begin to recognize the sin. And we try to kill it by the grace of God and the power of God. But listen, it's fierce.

And yes, we cry out. This is the reason why there's so much discussion and debate about Romans 7. Well, we know it. Wretched man that I am.

We feel that. No matter what the truth about Romans 7 might be, we know that those words resonate in the child of God. Or the song, we sing it, prone to wander.

Lord, we feel it. I would have sang it, but we sang it last week. But that's a reality.

We feel it. And the groaning, it's like just when you think, I ought to be mature enough. I ought to have advanced enough.

I ought to be some point in my life to have matured to the point where you'd think that that wasn't going to be an issue anymore. I remember Ruby's sister. I have always counted Ruby's sister as an extremely godly person.

And yet, I remember not too long ago, hearing that her greatest complaint is that after all these years of walking with the Lord, she is still struggling with certain sins. That she's struggled with the whole time for decades. And that she doesn't have more victory.

And you see, listen, this isn't imaginary. This happens with the Christian. The sighs and the groans.

This is actual to our experience. It's true to the fact. God, what is this terrible thing within me that would... You know, we can go and remember the Lord in the Lord's Supper.

And we can think about Him being jealous for us. We can think about Him laying down His life for us. We can think about Him putting the cup to His lips and drinking it in our behalf to purchase for Himself a bride of which I am one.

And we can have this appreciation. And then, how could such a rebel thought or something come into... How could I be suddenly gripped by this unbelief or not trust Him? How could I be so shaken? Jesus, obviously, by this beatitude, again, you remember, no imperatives. He's not telling us, thou shalt mourn.

He's basically saying this. He's saying the same truth that Ezekiel is saying. That if you're a partaker of this covenant, this is what's going to be true of you.

This will be true of you. And I know, we exhibit sensitivity differently. Some are far more prone to weep than others.

I recognize that. But you know, you can weep without a tear running down your cheek. There's a way to groan.

And there's different ways that we can express it. But I'll tell you this. These people alone are blessed in this world.

You see, I say it to you again. We all have to confront this Sermon on the Mount. I can't hide from it.

Because you know, I'm not up here telling you my invention. Blessed are those who mourn. And they are the blessed ones.

And that's it. And you know, the truth is in a lot of churches, laughter. You talk about the entertainment thing, the amusement thing.

How much that's come into the church. And I know Reformed churches. You know the problem with the Reformed church? Is a false mourning.

You know, the long faced. That's so typical of at least where I was in Michigan. Before I moved to Texas.

There's this very stoic form of Christianity. Morbid. It reeks more of pride and Phariseeism.

Because one of the things that you find where you have people that make up this reality. Is they are people that grieve and they sigh. And they can shed tears.

But then you know, you can also see them full of joy. And dancing. Why? Because again there's this tension.

When you talk to Ruby about the fact that her daughter walked away. Well she shed tears. But then you know what? We can shift.

And we can talk about our hope. And what Christ. We begin to talk about Him.

And there can be tears. And then there can be joy. And that's where we're at.

And this is the kind of people that Jesus produces. That's what this second beatitude is all about. And these alone are the blessed ones.

These in the churches. I'll tell you. You either have this morbidity on the one side.

Or you've got, you know, they're trying to introduce entertainment. They want to entertain people in the churches. And it's, brethren, what we find in the second beatitude is this.

Grief and joy correlate. I mean there's a relationship. A healthy relationship between them.

And you can, you know, you recognize this. The comfort comes from God. And so basically what happens is the spirit produces the mourning and the grief.

And then the spirit moves the eyes of the mourner to Christ. And to the healing. And to the hope.

And that's where the comfort comes from. Our comfort here. I know there's going to be comfort and glory where the tears are wiped away.

And the veil is totally drawn back. But here, there's comfort as well. And the spirit is in the business of this.

The spirit is in the business of glorifying Christ. And what happens is when we feel ourselves broken. And weep.

And mourn. And sigh. And groan.

That spirit is in the business of then lifting up our eyes upon the cross. And finding light and life there. And hope.

And comfort. And joy. And like I say, you don't want to pursue the comfort without this path first.

We need a healthy doctrine of sin in the church. And so I just want you to think about your sin for a second. I'll tell you where a lot of the proper response.

Where a lot of the second beatitude is going to find its foundations. Is if we simply have a healthy doctrine of sin in the church. Because I'll tell you, these churches that are all about entertainment.

The churches that are seeker sensitive. They don't want people to feel bad. They don't talk about sin.

They don't talk about hell. Why? Because they don't want to make people feel uncomfortable. People don't want to.

Because they're trying to appeal to the lost man out there. Of course they don't want to hear about that. Brethren, let's think about our sins.

Because the truth is, a lot of times we can just minimize. We can count these things trivial. Sin.

Have you ever? There's none good. And you know in that portion of Romans 3? You find sinners. Venom of asps.

You know what an asp is? It's a snake. Basically sin is like venom. Sinners are compared to snakes in scripture.

But that's not where it ends. We keep going. Sin is called vomit.

And you know full well Peter uses that. A dog. You've seen a dog.

A dog will throw up and then eat it. Been around dogs. You've seen that happen.

They eat nasty things. Worse than vomit. And you know Peter has no problem using that very imagery.

Sin is like vomit. And sinners like a dog. He also uses mire.

The filth. Have you ever seen the kind of stuff pigs love to roll in? That's what sin is like. And sinners like the swine.

Or our throats are open sepulchers. Or Jesus could look at the Pharisees and say you're like sepulchers. You've basically got rotten decaying people inside you.

Our throats are open sepulchers. You see we could just read across this. This is just the average guy.

This isn't Hitler. This is just our lost children. Rotten sepulchers.

Sin is called, you know this in Isaiah, oozing sores. Covered with sores from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet. We know full well.

Don't often like to admit it or say it. Sin is like a filthy menstrual cloth. That's what Isaiah says.

Paul likens the things his idols that he trusted in to dung. To excrement. Unclean.

Impure. Have you ever read Hosea? Basically the idolater is called a whore. Over and over and over.

Whores. This is the sinner in scripture. Wicked.

Evil. Twisted. Perverse.

And the thing about it is, no matter how trivial you might take that sin to be, the soul that sins will die. And that's why Christ died on the cross. Because no matter how small we may think those sins, God doesn't think them small.

And Christ had to die for the small ones. The wages of sin is death. There's no getting around it.

I'll tell you this. You think about this. Jesus' pride was found in one angel one time.

And God threw him down from there. And a third of the angels came down with him. When one man sank his teeth into one fruit, that seems pretty small.

Like a child taking a cookie out of the cookie jar when he was told not to. By the one man's offense, many died. By the one man's offense, death reigned through that one.

Through one man's offense, judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation. By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners. You think it's small? You think yourself okay? You've been pretty good.

I'm not that bad. You're going to have that argument with God? Are we going to put that on the table? Is that the credential you want to throw out there? I'll tell you this. You start looking.

Israel. They were out there in the wilderness. You know what they found? They found a man picking up sticks on the Sabbath.

They locked him up. Lord, what should we do? He said, I want you to kill him. And I want the whole lot of you to come out, and I want you to stone the man.

You ever seen somebody stoned? I haven't. Craig over in San Antonio told me he came across some Muslim YouTube video of a woman being stoned. He said it was massively disturbing.

Picked up sticks. Small sin? In fact, the ox stumbled. Uzzah is trying to keep the ark out of the mud or the dirt or the dust.

God killed him on the spot. The Corinthian church. We saw this just recently.

Christians. They begin to despise the church. 1 Corinthians 11.

And Paul says, you know why some of you are sick and why some of you are dead? I think it's a small sin. See, earlier in 1 Corinthians, he said a little leavens the whole lump. See, what's that? A little leaven.

You let a little leaven, it spreads. It infects. This is the way sin is.

Sin in one man infects the whole. Sin in one angel, a third of them come crashing down. This is the reality of sin.

Our iniquities separate us from God. And God comes along and He says, Christian men, just act in a sinful way towards your wife and watch how fast I will not answer your prayers. Oh, but it's a small thing.

I just said something mean to my wife. And God says, aren't your prayers hindered? Do you want something to come between me and you? You know what Scripture says? Covetousness. I know it's couched in some other sins.

Covetousness. Just you have an inordinate desire for something. The Apostle Paul says, because of sins just like that, the wrath of God is coming.

Really? I just desired that little thing? You think Adam's fruit was sweet? How about Esau's bowl of porridge that he sold his birthright for? How about the quail? Still in the teeth. Think it tasted good? After their complaining out there in the wilderness? See, the Scriptures are too clear on this. Sin, even the things we think are small.

Jesus said, let me tell you, there's a place where the worm does not die. There's a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. And the fire is eternal.

And it's forever. And this is real. And is there not a place for us to look and say, ought we not to mourn over the fact that we so cheaply... Do you know what sin does? They walked with God in the cool of the day.

They forfeited fellowship with God. People who go after sin, do you know what the Bible says? There is joy. I mean, joy.

Peter says, joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. And men, they want to be angry. They want to be proud.

They want things. Their heart goes after them. Ought we not to mourn that we so easily tolerate this? I'll tell you this, sin is never one bit less filthy and vile and abominable to God just because we count it insignificant or want to forget it or want to even put a spin on it to make it seem righteous.

So, I mean, do you recognize that, Lord, what's the greatest commandment? The greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself. Have you done that? And you see, the thing is, that's good. That is righteous.

That is desirable. That is honorable. Anything apart from that is shameful.

It's not one less bit wicked just because you think it's small. I mean, just thinking, is a wolf one less bit a wolf because it's a puppy? Is the devil one iota less than the devil because he comes as an angel of light? Sin. You see, sin.

It is sin. It is transgression of God's law. You know what they did to Christ? They beat Him.

They put a bag over His head and they beat Him and they said, prophesy. You know what else they said? When you get it from the Old Testament, they tore His beard out. Do you know one of the vile things they did? Not only did the Jews do it, but the Roman soldiers did it.

They spit in His face. That face before whom angels fall. Men spit in His face.

And I thought, that's exactly what we do. That's exactly what we do when we sin. And I just think, oh, that we could.

I remember when Bob Jennings was dying. He came to San Antonio and he pleaded with young people. He said, don't let sin in your life.

Don't let it in your house. Because he said, it's not easy to die when you've got this sin in your life. Oh, that God would give us a view of sin right now that we'll feel when death has its grip around our neck.

Or even more, when we come to stand before God in judgment. You do not want to take it a light thing when Paul says, we all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account for the things that we've done in our body, knowing therefore the terror of the Lord. Where did that come from? You think you're just going to skip out there when it's your turn to stand before God? I'll tell you, the only hope any of us have and the place where the comfort is going to come is Lord, I'm a guilty man aside from the fact that He paid it all.

We sang it. No condemnation. Why? Lord, I don't have anything on my own.

Christ died in my place and I've trusted Him. He's my only hope. That's it.

My only hope. Brethren, the reality is, knowing therefore the terror of the Lord. You know where that comes from? One day is coming when sin is going to be unmasked for what it really is.

And all these things we thought were so trivial, you know, people all the time, well I'm not that bad. I never killed anybody. I never raped anybody.

So one day, sin is going to be seen for what it is. It's filthy and vile and terrible. More terrible than hell itself.

We will see it. There will be a shame. Can you imagine? As everybody's thoughts are opened up and the whole thing, the books are brought out and everything that guy did when it's his turn is put out there in the open.

The shame. They say even in human court, sometimes they would tie a knife under a man's chin when his sentence was being read, when his accusation was being laid forth so that he could not bow his head. He had to keep it high.

What do you think it's going to be like to stand before God? I'll tell you where you want to be. Where the blood has washed it all away. But see, the gratitude.

I mean, Jesus said, you're my friend, if you do what I commanded you. It's like, you have no greater friend than this that he laid down his life for his friends. After what he's done for us, for us to so easily fall back into it.

We do well to remember that those sins that Satan will come along and paint, put colors on, make it seem so trivial. They cost the blood of that Christ. The most excellent blood.

Small. Are they so small? Yeah, just like picking up sticks on the Sabbath. Just like touching the ark.

Not a big deal, right? Right? The least sin is so contrary to the nature of God. You know one of the things that always jumps out at me when I'm reading about the damned in hell as this Bible comes to an end? Do you know one of the titles, one of the characteristics of people in hell that always jumps out at me? People that are in the lake of fire. Cowards.

You ever seen that? The cowardly. Really, is that such a big sin? Just be a coward. Be afraid to admit how bad you've been.

Be afraid to testify of Christ in front of the lost. Just be a coward. Coward.

Cowards. That's not that big a thing. No.

It's actually the first title given to people in the lake of fire. Sin. It's usurping.

It's encroaching. What I mean is it will take you step by step. There's David.

It says at such a time as the kings went out to war, but he's not at the head of the troops. Count it laziness. He just got to the place, I'm not going out with the troops.

And there's no indication at that point in his life it's because he was old. He just wasn't out at the head of the troops at a time when he should have been. And what did that lead to? A wandering eye.

And what did that lead to? The vile sins that caused God to break His bones and put a curse on His family from then on. You see, what the author of Hebrews says is this. He says, He says, Exhort one another daily while it's called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Did you get that? Hardened by the deceitfulness of sins. Yielding to a lesser sin brings this hardening. You ought to fear sin.

You ought to despise it. You ought to grieve over it. Because what sin does, it gives the devil an advantage.

It's like putting a callus on you. You can feel when there's no callus. Very sensitive.

But there's a hardening aspect of sin. And you see what it is. It's deceit.

Sin makes advances on the soul in almost imperceptible degrees. But what's happening? Insensitivity through deceit. And I'll tell you this, the person that's most ready to fall away, least thinks he is.

Because it's hardening. You don't feel. There's no sensitivity.

Paul says in Romans 6, Sin seeks to reign in our mortal bodies. It attacks us. It seeks to control us.

And what it is? It's a battle of deception. You see that. The clear implication is this.

The more you're deceived by sin, that's what hardness is. Hard is being unresponsive to truth. That's what it is.

And if unchecked, what happens? We fall away. Because sin goes somewhere. You see, you can't think, I'm going to indulge in this.

No, it's just a little one. Yeah. Yeah, a lot of people thought that when they started down that path.

But see, Scripture never allows us to believe that sin doesn't have its consequences. Just ask David. Man after God's own heart.

Sin have consequences? Was he able to just brush it off? I'll tell you, he's got children in hell. And we know the stories full well. Because God said, that sword's not going to depart from your family.

And their wickedness was allowed to come in. You think a father's sins can have impact on his children? You think it's something to weep about? To mourn over? Precisely because it's deception. The deceitfulness of sin.

That guy that believes himself most secure, he's in trouble. But here's the thing, feeling it all and having mourning, having a proper view of yourself, a proper view of sin, a proper despising of it, blessed is that man. That's what we're told.

I just feel like it. Brethren, I'm going to quickly wrap this up. Do you know what happens a lot of times? We make so much out of grace.

This is what Paul said. He deals with it in Romans 3 and again in Romans 5. What do we say then? Should we sin that grace may abound? You see, that's the idea a lot of times that comes into people's minds when we preach grace. What? Seriously? No matter what I've done, I can find forgiveness in Christ? Yes, absolutely.

You see, then people come to this carnal logic. Oh, well then if I have more sin, it shouldn't matter. This is the height of wickedness.

For you to do evil because God's good. And that can permeate. And people can get sloppy.

Brethren, I'll tell you one of the lies that the devil will sell you on. Repentance is easy. Yeah, just ask Esau about that.

When he sought it, it was not so easy. The devil loves to tell you that. Well, just indulge in sin today and confess it tomorrow.

Yeah. You think repentance is that easy? See, for one, repentance comes from God. Have you ever read the Pilgrim's Progress? The man in the iron cage? Have you ever read Hebrews 6? Do you know what happens when you trod upon the blood of Christ? You know what Jesus said? Jesus said you get the truth brought to you and you despise it and you think you're just going to go on with sin and then one day you're going to do this in your own time.

He says it's going to be more tolerable for Sodom and for Tyre and Sidon than for those people that saw that truth. Brethren, I'll tell you this. Scripture says if you knew the Master's will, you knew what it was.

You had that light. And you didn't do it? Many stripes. The reality is of Scripture that those who basically say let us do evil and you know that good may come at some point, certainly God's grace and God... Paul basically says their destruction, their damnation, their death, it's just.

And I'll tell you this too, if there's not weeping, you can sin and God makes your way to hell smooth, that's bad. If you can sin and you don't feel anything, you just keep going down that path. You ever read this? It's one of those fearful Old Testament passages.

Ephraim has gone after idols. Leave him alone. Wow.

I just want to end with this. Charles Simeon was an Anglican. Church of England.

Very godly man. Years ago, John Piper did his biographical sketch. Piper's done maybe 30 different biographical sketches.

Highly recommend them. One he did on Simeon. Highly, highly recommend it.

Piper says this, Simeon was utterly unlike most of us today who think we should get rid of feelings of vileness and unworthiness as soon as we can. Simeon is an example of the second beatitude par excellence. I want to glean from this, and I want you to as well.

For him, the glory, see the comfort aspect, the glory only grew in the freshly plowed soil of humiliation for sin. So he actually labored to know his true sinfulness and his remaining corruption as a Christian. And I'll tell you, I've just been reading Mack Pelminson's book on John Brainerd, which half the book is on David Brainerd.

And that so characterized him too. Just bemoaning his sin, but then also being wafted up to glory. And so Simeon says this, I have continually had such a sense of my sinfulness as would sink me into utter despair if I had not an assured view.

And that's the comfort of the sufficiency and willingness of Christ to save me to the uttermost. With this sweet hope of ultimate acceptance with God. I've always enjoyed much cheerfulness before men.

But I've at the same time labored incessantly to cultivate the deepest humiliation before God. There are but two objects that I have ever desired for these 40 years to behold. The one is my own vileness.

The other is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. I've always thought they should be viewed together. Just as Aaron confessed all the sins of all Israel whilst he put them on the head of the scapegoat.

You see, he's remembering and articulating the defilement. While at the same time putting them on the head of the scapegoat. Both are present.

Both the disease and the remedy. And that's it. Mourn.

Comfort. The disease did not keep him from applying to the remedy. Nor did the remedy keep him from feeling the disease.

Simeon said this, By this I seek to be not only humble and thankful, but humbled in thankfulness before God and Savior continually. Now, Piper says this, If Simeon is right, vast portions of contemporary Christianity are wrong. In the name of forgiveness and grace, we've thrown the ballast of humiliation overboard.

Simeon's boat was steady and on course. And the mastheads were higher and the sails bigger. Now you see the ship.

What he's saying is those sails went up. Those masts that caught the glory of the winds of God. Because the ship down below was full of the ballast of humiliation.

We have people in the church today, they want the sails full. They want the joy. They want the assurance.

But the ballast isn't there. And so their boat does not have the stability that his did. That's what he's driving at here.

He says, In 1794, a friend of Simeon's named Marsden entered his room and found Simeon so absorbed in the contemplation of the Son of God and so overpowered with a display of Christ's mercy to his soul that he was incapable of pronouncing a single word till at length he exclaimed, Glory! Glory! But a few days later, Simeon was found scarcely able to speak from something else, from a deep humiliation and contrition. Simeon's biographer says, These two experiences are not alternating excesses of an imbalanced mind. Rather they are the two poles of a sphere of profound experience.

And I would just say this, They are the two extremes of the second beatitude. Mourning and comfort. That's the reality.

For Simeon's adoration of God grew best in the plowed soil of his own contrition. Simeon had no fear of turning up every sin in his life and looking with great grief and hatred because he had such a vision of Christ's sufficiency that this would always result in deeper cleansing and adoration. Listen, a real sense of sin is always going to come before this comfort and joy of salvation.

Always. Psalm 34 18 The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart. Just remember that.

That's the reality of the second beatitude. He comes near. Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Father, I pray that you might use these words to some good effect. I pray all of this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

You're dismissed.

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