

CHAPTER TWO

Blessed Are the Brokenhearted

Matthew 5:4

The Illusion of Happiness

Some time ago I read about an airline pilot who was flying a commercial plane over a valley with a beautiful river running through it. He was peering out the window so intently that his co-pilot asked, “What are you looking at?”

He replied, “Do you see that river down there? I used to live in one of those homes by the water. As a little boy, I sat on a log beside it and fished. Every time an airplane flew over, I would look up and wish I was flying. Now, every time I fly over this area, I look down and wish I was fishing.”

During the days of Christ, the Greek island of Cyprus was one of the favorite places for personal retreats. In our day and time, it is considered a resort island where the rich-and-famous moor their yachts and play in the sun.

The island was called “the *makarios* island,” or “the happy island.” The reason this name was used was because it was believed that those who lived on the island of Cyprus had *everything* necessary for happiness: natural resources, fresh water, fruit trees, wildlife, and beautiful flowers everywhere.

The island was essentially self-contained—those who lived there would not have to go anywhere else to find what they needed.

Cyprus was *the* place to live. In other words, if you could live there, happiness was guaranteed.

The Greeks just naturally assumed that if they could live where they never needed anything or

anyone, and where everything to sustain life was readily at their fingertips, they would be truly happy.

Eventually, everyone recognizes that this definition of happiness is flawed. No matter where we live, we would like to live somewhere else—or at least have another closet; or maybe a hundred more square feet; or a back deck; or a bigger yard. No matter what vehicle we drive, we would like to drive something else; no matter where we work, we would like to work somewhere else—for a nicer boss and a few more vacation days . . . if we had all that, and more, we’d be truly happy.

Did it occur to you that this kind of happiness is all about *me*, *my*, and *mine*; this syndrome could aptly be called the *Me*-attitudes.

Me-Attitudes vs. Be-Attitudes

In Matthew 5, Jesus Christ comes along and turns this thinking upside down. He delivers the stunning news that happy people are actually bankrupted, unappreciated, persecuted, reviled, needy, weeping, downtrodden, confessing people.

The truth is, that which serves as the structure of our lives—pleasure-madness, amusement and entertainment, thrill-seeking, time, energy, money, career—are all expressions of our fallen flesh in concert with the world’s blindness to the very thing Jesus Christ said will bring true, genuine satisfaction.¹

In Matthew 5:3, Jesus has already stated that it is not the well-connected and spiritually-altogether who

find happiness, but the spiritually bankrupt who are blessed: “*Happy are the beggars.*”

Now He adds the brokenhearted to that list:

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

This is a new approach—another uncomfortable, upside-down revelation of true happiness.

Happy Are Those Who Mourn

There are actually nine different verbs in the Greek language that express the idea of grief and sorrow, which is a good indication that God fully expects humanity to experience heartache and distress.

Paul tells us that all of fallen creation is literally groaning in pain and awaiting final redemption (*Romans 8:22*).

Christ Himself was called the “Man of Sorrows”—literally, a man of pains and thoroughly acquainted with grief (*Isaiah 53:3*).

Biblical Mourning

The Bible speaks of many kinds of mourning, or sorrow.

1. Tears that flow from sorrow and loss

Abraham grieved over the *loss of his wife*. In Genesis 23:2

... Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

Those who think it is unspiritual to lament the death of a loved one need to take note of this giant of the faith.

They also may have overlooked the example of our Lord who shed tears *at the gravesite* of Lazarus. He openly wept, revealing to all His love-motivated grief (*John 11:35*).

The strongest, most spiritually-minded Man to ever walk the planet shed tears over loss. He, above all, fully understood the sting of death and the sorrow surrounding mortality and the grave.

2. Tears of godly longing

David longed for *an intimate walk* with God and felt deep grief over the lack of communion with Him. He wrote in Psalm 42,

As the deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for

God . . . My tears have been my food day and night . . . (Psalm 42:1-3).

There were the tears of Paul, longing for the *growth and protection* of the Ephesian church (*Acts 20:31*).

3. Tears that accompany normal living

Timothy shed tears of *discouragement* and Paul told him,

. . . I remember you constantly . . . As I remember your tears . . . (II Timothy 1:3b-4a).

A father with a sick child came to Christ, crying tears of *agony* for his child (*Mark 9:24*).

There were the tears of *gratitude and devotion* from a woman who literally washed the feet of Jesus with her tears (*Luke 7:38*).

There were tears while praying for *healing from sickness*, when Hezekiah was told by the prophet that God said,

. . . I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears . . . I will heal you . . . (II Kings 20:5b).

Esther cried tears of *pleading* before the king, asking him to change the edict that would annihilate the Jewish people (*Esther 8:3*).

Job, when *suffering*, said,

. . . my eye pours out tears to God (Job 16:20b).

Those who suffered *injustice* shed the tears of the oppressed (*Ecclesiastes 4:1*).

Paul shed tears of *anguish* over the church in Corinth, telling them,

[Even as I am writing you I am in] *anguish of heart and with many tears . . .* (II Corinthians 2:4).

And this is just the beginning!

The truth is: growing older in Christ does not mean we will cry less; it might mean we will cry *more*. Undoubtedly, spiritual maturity redefines the things that make us cry.

Warren Wiersbe records in his commentary the story of a terrible train accident that killed a number of passengers. In one of the train cars was a mother, still holding a little child in her lap. The mother was dead but the child was unharmed. When the rescuers took the child away from her mother, the little girl laughed and played. The rescue worker noticed that her candy was dirty and gently took it from her; only then did she begin to cry. She did not know anything about death, but she knew about candy.ⁱⁱ

That which grieves our hearts and causes us to weep and mourn at the age of fifty should be different from the cause of crying at the age of five.

Unbiblical Mourning

Still, many people at fifty are crying over *candy*—their “toys”; not having their own way; a plunge in the stock market; the loss of a promotion.

They don’t weep over an estranged marriage; a bungled family relationship; the loss of integrity. They are mourning for the wrong reasons.

The Bible records several examples:

1. Diabolical mourning

This is the mourning of a man who cannot satisfy his impure *lust* after sin. He grieves that he lacks money and opportunity to sin even more.

While in high school, I worked at the toll booths in Portsmouth, Virginia, collecting tolls from motorists who were driving over the bridge into downtown Norfolk. One night one of the older guys said to me, “Look over the bridge at that huge waterfront hotel. Do you see all those windows? Do you realize how many people in those rooms right now are doing all kinds of [wicked] stuff? And I’ve gotta be here working tonight. Man, I wish I were over there!”

This guy was literally grieving that he had to work and was not in the act of sin at that moment in some hotel room.

Thomas Watson, the Puritan, wrote, “This is the grieving of the devil, whose greatest torture is that he can be no more wicked.”ⁱⁱⁱ

This is Ahab mourning [*coveting*] Naboth’s vineyard. I Kings 21:4 records, if you can imagine this,

... [the king] *lay down on his bed and turned away his face and would eat no food.*

King Ahab was literally *pouting* because he could not get his way! Pouting turned to murder as his wife Jezebel killed Naboth on trumped-up charges. She then gave Ahab the vineyard, and immediately his spirits lifted.

By the way, this is a necessary warning to parents who allow a child to get his way with tears and anger and pouting at the grocery store or the clothing store. Do not reward self-centered tears. That is sinful mourning and the child may never grow out of it!

2. Deceitful mourning

These are crocodile tears . . . it’s all for show. This is the masquerade of sorrow used only to garner *pity* and *sympathy*, or even *support*.

These are the Pharisees in Christ’s day who rubbed ashes onto their cheeks to make their faces look gaunt with fasting. Jesus preached later in this message in Matthew 6:16,

... *do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. . . .*

These are the people who are always putting themselves down, hoping to hear people tell them how wonderful they really are instead. This kind of “mourning” is really a ploy to garner pity and stoke their pride.

There is nothing spiritual about gloom and despair. Jesus did not say, “Blessed are the *gloomy* Christians.”

Charles Spurgeon, the nineteenth century pastor in London, once remarked that some preachers he knew appeared to have their neckties twisted around their souls.^{iv}

3. Depressed mourning

This is the unhealthy, imbalanced *grief* that robs the soul of hope.

This is Judas, who was filled with this sense of despair, knowing he had sinned. He admitted as much to the chief priests in Matthew 27:4, saying,

... *I have sinned by betraying innocent blood. . . .*

However, the text then adds in Matthew 27:5b that

... *he went and hanged himself.*

Judas, effectively, drowned himself in his despair.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians of this kind of *hopeless* despair:

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death (II Corinthians 7:10).

It is no surprise that the highest level of suicide among all professional occupations is within the field of psychology. Why? Because they have studied the human condition and seen and heard the depravity of the human heart. Without Christ, there is no answer—no *hope*, no cleansing cure. Without Christ, why bother?!

Comfort, Strength, and Courage for Mourners

There is a progression in these Beatitudes. Once we discover the bankruptcy of our heart in Matthew 5:3, we are led to mourn over our sin in Matthew 5:4, which ultimately brings the comfort of burdens lifted and sins forgiven by Christ.

In this pathway to happiness, Jesus is talking about healthy mourning—weeping over sin.

He uses the strongest Greek word for mourning. He is speaking of that same deep level of grief we feel when we mourn over the loss of loved ones.

In this context, Jesus is telling us that mourners discover true happiness because they are the only ones who are grieving over their sins and their sinfulness. And in so doing, these are the ones who come to the Savior for forgiveness.

The first time you mourned over your sin and confessed to Jesus Christ, your status was changed forever—from sinner to redeemed saint.

Cleansing Words

I John 1:7 tells us that as we confess our sins,
. . . *the blood of Jesus . . . cleanses us . . .*

This word is *katharizei*, from which we get our word *catharsis*—cleansing.

This verb indicates that God does more than forgive; He *erases the stain of sin*. Even more encouraging is the fact that the tense is present active—denoting a continual process.^v

The blood of Christ did not just cleanse us in the past, relative to our status; it cleanses us in our ongoing, daily experience. The blood of Christ *continually* cleanses us from all sin. Even today, the blood of Christ is washing you from every stain.

The hymn writer put it this way:

*There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.
Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved, to sin no more.*^{vi}

What great truth this is! Until our final redemption and glorification, the fountain is *never* turned off.

Confident Words

I remember witnessing to a Hindu some time ago; he was cheerful and kind, polite and well-mannered. Although I knew the basic tenets of his religion, I still asked him questions about what he believed.

When I told him that the difference between Christianity and Hinduism could best be summed up by the fact that he was *hoping* to have his sins forgiven and I *knew* that my God had forgiven my sins, his head dropped and his face became pained and saddened. He admitted that his religion could never provide that kind of confidence.

Jesus Christ said, “Do you want to know true happiness? Then it is not about you—because all you can do is sin. Just bring your sin to Me—I *can* and *will* forgive you!”

Comforting Words

Jesus Christ declares in Matthew 5:4:

“Those who mourn over their sin will receive comfort.”

By the way, mourners are not happy because they are mourning . . . [they] are happy because they are forgiven. Happiness does not come from mourning; it comes from God's response to it—which is comfort.^{vii}

The word for *comfort* is the same word which forms the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who is called our *Comforter*. The root word signifies our infusion of strength and courage from Him.

Strengthening Words

This is more than sympathizing. *To sympathize* means *to feel with*, but *to comfort* means *to give strength and infuse courage into another*.^{viii}

When we bring our sinful hearts and hands to God and mourn over our sin, He not only forgives us, He infuses us with enough strength to carry on.

Jesus Christ did not say in Matthew 5:4,

Blessed are those who mourn—period!

No, He said,

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

The verb tenses here in this text denote continuous action. We continuously confess our sin and God continuously infuses us with strength.

Martin Luther, the Reformer, wrote in his 95 Theses [the statements which ignited a future Reformation]: “Our entire life is a continuous act of repentance and contrition.” It was through the comfort of sins forgiven and his justification by faith that Luther found the strength and courage to take his stand.

It is no wonder that the enemy wants us to do everything *except* keep an eye on our sinful hearts and our desperate, daily need for Christ. Because he knows that when we do come to Christ to confess, He responds with *comfort* and *strength* and *courage*.

Five Sources of Comfort

1. We are comforted by God the Father.

II Corinthians 1:3 says that

... God [is] ... *the God of all comfort.*

There are times when we all need a father’s comfort.

There is a vivid memory etched in my mind—a day when one of my sons *hugged* a tree in our back yard. The tree had a “ladder” of nails driven into it, and he used them for climbing. I was about fifty yards away, watching and admiring the athletic prowess of my son, as he hung from the first branch eight feet from the ground. But his foot slipped off the nail and I saw his body swivel around to the other side of the tree.

As he held on to the trunk with one arm and wrapped a leg around the tree, he yelled for help. I began moving quickly toward the tree, but he didn’t wait for me to arrive. He hadn’t yet discovered that sometimes it hurts more to let go than to hang on, so—he released his hold on the branch. He slid down the trunk and skinned himself on the head of every nail protruding from the tree. He was painfully scraped from his waist to his chest.

He hit the ground, immediately bounded up, and came running. His feet were moving so fast that he even fell once as he ran. When he reached me, he leapt into my arms and began to wail. I just held him and hugged him, because I knew he was experiencing more pain than he had ever felt before. I did what comes naturally to any parent witnessing his child in pain ... I comforted him.

Do we really think God will do any less for His children? No, you will find in Him a perfect Father who will provide you with all comfort.

2. We are comforted by God’s Word.

Paul wrote in Romans 15, verses 4 and 13 that

... *through the encouragement of the Scriptures we ... have hope. Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

3. We are comforted by God’s Spirit.

Christ promised His disciples that God the Father would

... *give you another Comforter . . .*
(John 14:16).

This Comforter would be a permanent infuser of hope, comfort, strength, and courage.

4. We are comforted by God’s people.

Comment [LB1]:

II Corinthians 1:4 says that God

... *comforts us . . . that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

In other words, we are in this *together*.

5. We are comforted by God’s promise.

Remember, God has not promised to completely alleviate the conditions that cause mourning until that day, when

He will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes
... (Revelation 21:4).

Do you know one of the distinctive emotional differences between people in heaven and people in hell?

In heaven all tears of suffering and sorrow and tears of mourning over sin will be wiped away. On the other hand, we are told that in hell there will be

... *weeping and gnashing of teeth* [forever]
(Matthew 8:12).

Those in hell will be weeping never-ending tears and will never, ever be able to stop.

Happy Tears

So Jesus is effectively saying in this passage, “Do you know who the truly happy people are? Happy people are the ones who bring their sins to Me; they are the moment-by-moment confessors.”

Now we can better understand Matthew 5:4:

*Blessed are the brokenhearted,
for they shall be comforted.
Not only now—but forever.*

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 3/16/2008 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ John MacArthur, *Kingdom Living* (Moody Press, 1980), p. 55.

ⁱⁱ Warren Wiersbe, *Living Like a King* (Moody Press, 1975), p. 45.

ⁱⁱⁱ Thomas Watson, *The Beatitudes* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1985 ed. of 1660 ed.), p. 59.

^{iv} R. Kent Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Crossway Books, 2001), p. 26.

^v Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Regency, 1976), p. 785.

^{vi} William Cowper, “There Is a Fountain,” *Praise Hymnal*.

^{vii} MacArthur, p. 61.

^{viii} Wiersbe, p. 56.