



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS



Happy are the Sad

Tim Badal | October 6, 2013 | Matthew 5:4

The Upside-down Kingdom Series, Lessons Learned from the Sermon on the Mount, Part 2

Let's open God's Word to Matthew 5 again. We have just started a series entitled "Upside Down Kingdom: Lessons Learned from the Sermon on the Mount." Last time we had an introduction to get to know a little bit about the greatest sermon ever preached by Jesus Himself and to learn about some of the people who are part of this sermon. At the end of our introduction, we looked at what it means to be poor in spirit as that is a prerequisite for understanding this series. In order to glean anything from this series we need to understand our spiritual bankruptcy before God. Even greater than that we need to understand that our spiritual bankruptcy is a prerequisite to inheriting the Kingdom of God and to receiving all that God has—not only in eternity but in this life as well.

Now we come to the second of the Beatitudes—those Kingdom attitudes—that God is calling us to be part of and to make our own. We're going to look at Matthew 5:4. Let's get into our text right away. Starting in verse 1:

¹ Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

This last verse is our primary text, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Let's turn to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we come to You out of a dependent heart, knowing that apart from You we can do nothing. We come knowing we are spiritually bankrupt and need Your grace every day. Every hour we need You. So we turn to Your Word that is truth and pray that You would sanctify us by Your truth. Open our hearts and minds. What You're going to share with us seems so foreign to us as a people, yet this is the true way to abundant living. We put ourselves in submission to Your Word, acknowledging You know best. We know Your ways are always higher and better than our ways. So to You we give the glory and the honor for all that is said and done in this place. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

As we continue in the first part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and begin to address the Beatitudes, it very quickly becomes quite evident that Jesus loves to keep His listeners on their toes. Jesus is a master of His words and He uses them with great effectiveness. Whether a skeptic, a seeker or a disciple and follower of Jesus, His words throughout this sermon literally stop His listeners in their tracks and it will do the same for us.

The second Beatitude stops people right away at the beginning of His message and causes them to think. I wonder if there was a Jerusalem Times or Jerusalem Herald newspaper journalist there who no doubt had to go back and ask, "Jesus, are You sure that's what You want Your quote to be?" when He says, "Blessed [happy] are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

If that doesn't bring some questions out in our minds something's wrong. Jesus is literally saying, "Happy are the sad." Now, there's a paradox in terms! "So Jesus, are You telling me I need to be a mourner to have that

blessed, happy life which is established in the approval of God Himself? That means I need to be sad? Are You telling me I have to mourn to find joy? Are You saying I have to live in a perpetual state of urgency because of the sadness brought to me in order to find peace?"

It is here that Jesus begins to flip the world's kingdom upside down. Jesus is telling us about a life that is very different from that of the world because this life is going to be found in Him and He is looking for us to be mourners. Now, what in the world does that mean and how do we begin to apply this truth to our own lives? There are four things I want to look at under the heading "Happy Are the Sad":

The Practice Commanded

The Places for Which We Should Be Mourning

The Process to Proper Mourning

The Peace Only God Can Provide

1. The Practice Commanded

First we need to understand that the Beatitudes are not suggestions. Jesus isn't saying to us, "Hey if you could cry a little more, then you would really appreciate what it means to be happy." He's not telling those people who find themselves a little more melancholy that they're doing a good thing. He's not suggesting that who walk around a little more discouraged than others have found what it means to live the abundant life.

We need to understand what Jesus is saying and recognize it is not a suggestion but a command. God is saying, "If you want to live a blessed life, then it means you are going to have to be a mourner." What does He mean by that?

A Spirit of Anguish

Let's examine this. "Blessed are those who mourn." Jesus uses the Greek word pentheō which shows us He's talking about a spirit of anguish. In the New Testament Greek there are nine words for sorrow or sadness and the word pentheō is the strongest or most severe of them all. It represents the most heartfelt and deepest grief in the entire Greek language.

Pentheō was used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to speak of the grief that struck Jacob when he learned his son Joseph had been killed. Do you remember the story of Jacob? He had 12 sons but Joseph was the one with whom he had a special relationship. Jacob gave him a coat of many colors. One day Joseph was given the assignment to take food and provisions to his brothers who hated him. They despised him because their father had taken a liking to him. As a result of their jealousy and rage they sold Joseph as a slave. His sons took the coat, ripped it, stained it with blood, then brought it to their father Jacob and said, "A wild animal has killed your son." So Jacob mourned. Deep grief was felt by a father who lost his son.

Then in Mark 16:10 we see that the disciples mourned in this way over the death of Jesus Christ. When Mary came to announce that Jesus had risen just as He said He was going to (Matthew 28:6 NIV), Scripture says she came into the place where "they mourned and wept." The word pentheō speaks of a deep inner agony which may or may not be expressed by outward weeping, wailing and lament.

You see, Jesus is not saying, "Blessed are those who shed tears over a Hallmark movie. Blessed are those who find themselves a little more teary-eyed over a melancholy situation or spirit." He's talking about the kind of grief that takes your breath away, the deep and profound agony and loss that makes time stand still.

I've seen it once in my life. Many of you know I lost my older brother in a car accident. The morning that my parents found out about the loss of their firstborn son, I had gone to school not knowing that my brother had not made it home. When I came home, my mom was with the police officers in the foyer. I want you to picture this: She was on her hands and knees begging this cruel joke to be over and begging for her son to be brought to her. When they continued to tell her, "We're sorry, Mrs. Badal, but your son is dead," guttural noises came

from the depths of my mother which literally brought chills to my spine. The agony she was facing was something I had never experienced before and even the very mention of it now some 20 years later undoes me.

You see the kind of anguish and agony Jesus is talking about doesn't affect just the mourner but also all those around. It cuts to the very depth of who we are. Jesus is not saying, "Blessed are those who just shed a tear." He is saying, "Blessed are those who are cut to the heart—who are broken-hearted—for they will find the comfort God brings." It's the spirit of anguish.

An Active Mindset

Look at the text. Jesus doesn't say, "Blessed are those who have mourned." He doesn't say to my mom, "Hey Michelle, blessed are you. You lost a son and that's sad, but now time has covered all of those issues and struggles so you've been comforted." He doesn't say, "Blessed are those who have mourned."

Notice He also doesn't say, "Blessed are those who might mourn, or will mourn." He doesn't speak of it in the future tense. He says it in the present tense, "Blessed are those who mourn." This is a continual state of mourning. A better translation of this passage would be, "Blessed are the mourners who are in an ongoing pursuit of mourning."

Many of you know my dad is an immigrant from the Middle East—from Iraq—and mourning is a part of the culture and custom in Middle Eastern funerals. Just to help you understand, if you were to bring a Middle Eastern person to a Western funeral they would think it's a party. At a funeral, we take a moment as we walk by the casket to pay our respects, then we quickly move on to the chairs in the funeral home and talk everyday business. Yes, we're somber. Yes, there's a sense of respect, sadness and solemnity to the occasion, but then interaction begins. Depending on the type of death that has taken place, people go on very quickly with their lives.

In Middle Eastern culture you don't have that opportunity. Not only does the family bring to the funeral those who are mourning because they are close to the family, they also literally bring mourners to the funeral. That means there are people—usually it's a group of older women—who come and weep and wail. You might ask, "Why would they do that? They may not have known the person." They have come to the point that they recognize how awful death is. So they come and—in loud voices—weep, wail and mourn.

Why do they do that? It is so everyone who is a part of the funeral will recognize it is not a time of joy. This is not a time of celebration or fun and games. This is a time dedicated to mourning over someone who is lost. In Middle Eastern culture, 40 days go by before your life gets back to normal—in other words, before you do anything fun. So if you are going to have a wedding on October 20th and there's a death two weeks beforehand, your wedding will be postponed because there's no reason to celebrate during the 40 days of mourning.

We need to understand the culture that Jesus is dealing with in our passage because took weeping, wailing and mourning as a very serious thing. It was very much part of their culture. Mourning was not something to be pushed away or set aside just for a moment before quickly getting back to real life and business.

It Isn't Very Attractive

Not only is mourning done with a spirit of anguish and an active mindset, but it is also something that isn't very attractive to us as Americans because of our cultural shift to Western society. We do everything in our power to push away agony and anguish. In his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, [Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones](#) says, "What Jesus condemns is the apparent laughter and happiness of the world by pronouncing upon it a curse."

Some of you are sitting there thinking, "This is not one of my favorite messages. Where are the jokes? Where is the hoopla? I don't like this kind of thinking. This is not where I want to be on a beautiful Sunday morning. I want to enjoy life. '[The joy of the Lord is my strength](#),' and you are saying that Jesus says I need to mourn. I need to be sad and act like a mourner." Yes, that is what Jesus is saying.

For many of us, the problem is this idea of mourning has become foreign to us. We haven't even talked yet about what we're going to mourn over but the very idea that Christians would gather together with a spirit of mourning seems to be so backwards to the Christian society we know.

Let me remind you that Lamentations is one of the 66 books of the Bible. It's funny that the only Bible verse we usually use from Lamentations is the most positive one in the entire book—[Lamentations 3:22-23](#). We say, "Yeah, Lamentations is there. Anguish and agony are there." So we find Jeremiah on a good moment when he says, "His mercies...are new every morning; great is your faithfulness," and we tell ourselves, "That's Lamentations."

No. Our brother Jeremiah is the weeping prophet. Why is he weeping? Because he didn't get his Prozac? Come on. He weeps because he sees the agony and pain that sin has brought into the world and into his own life. He weeps for his people and the world because they've rebelled against God which will bring dreadful consequences. Here's the thing—we say that we believe this and that the agony of sin is part of our Christianity, but it is the farthest thing from it.

[Kent Hughes](#)—the former pastor of College Church in Wheaton, IL—said, "Christians have structured their lives to maximize entertainment and amusement in an attempt to make the Christian life one big party. We laugh when we ought to not laugh at all. In fact, we laugh at times that we should be crying." How bad is it? The world—even Christians—would say something is wrong with a person who is in mourning—mourning over all that God has called us to mourn over; mourning over sin; mourning over the plight of the world.

Jesus is flipping that upside down and saying, "As a follower of Christ, you are not any more right than when you are mourning." Within churches, why do we have the opposite view? It's not so much your fault—it's the preacher's fault. We are preaching sermons in the pulpits of America that are about you feeling good. God help us if we say something that cuts to the heart because that's not what attracts people. People want to come and hear that things are good and that everything is fine.

Here's the problem—if we do not preach the hard things such as, "Blessed are those who mourn," it will produce a shallow Christianity—if it's Christianity at all. So it would be good for us to leave church each Sunday with a level of mourning—even after the most joy-filled sermon—because we recognize that a joy-filled sermon comes at a cost and that cost. We recognize the great joy and happiness that we are able to experience came through the Son of God losing His life.

2. The Places for Which We Should Be Mourning

Notice there are some places that are involved in this mourning. While we don't see this addressed in Matthew's articulation of the Sermon on the Mount, we do recognize that there are other teachings of Jesus which deal with the subject of mourning. Of course, we have other passages from the prophets and the apostles which also address it.

Lament the Losses of Life

We know that mourning needs to be part of our life because we are called to lament the losses of life. The Bible tells us it is good and right to mourn when things don't go the way we desire. This is true with the small things like the little disappointments that don't go our way, all the way to the big things like the loss of a loved one or friend, the strife in a marriage or financial difficulties. Not only are we told to mourn over these things and to lament the struggles we are having, but our mourning should lead us to do something with it. [First Peter 5:7](#) reminds us to hurl those losses on to Jesus. We are to cast our anxieties—literally taking the net of our cares, worries, concerns, fears, struggles and sin and throwing it out—on to God, because He cares for us.

Right now, some of you are mourning. You're mourning the losses, issues, struggles and battles lost in the spiritual realm and God is telling you to cast those cares and concerns on Him because He cares for you. He doesn't want you to stay in that place of loss but to share your mourning with Him because He loves you.

Be Sorrowful over Our Sin

Notice we are also called to be sorrowful over our sin. This is probably the closest to what Jesus is trying to say in our text. You see, troubles come and go. If Jesus is saying just lament the losses, then when those losses are gone we are no longer mourners. But if we are to be in a perpetual state of mourning, there seems to be the idea that the reason for our mourning will be with us our entire lives. Even as we are being comforted, we are still mourning.

In Matthew 5:3, Jesus seems to say that the person who recognizes they are poor in spirit will then recognize that there's some mourning that needs to take place. We are spiritually bankrupt, not just before we came to know Christ but also when we live as if Christ is not intervening and interceding in our lives each moment of the day—. Our mourning comes from recognizing that our sin cost Jesus His life—the very fellowship within the Godhead was spent on us.

We need to recognize and know that when we make friendship with the world, follow the ways of the world, follow the ways of the devil—even as believers—and when we pursue self instead of pursuing our Savior, we are bringing grief to our heavenly Father. Some of you parents have experienced the grief of a rebellious child. On such a larger playing field, that is what God experiences with our rebellion and He's grieved by it.

Turn in your Bibles for a moment to the Book of James. James tells Christians what we are to do with our sin. He speaks to a group of Christians and says, "Hey, because of our ongoing fight with sin—because you and I continue to fall to sin—we need to be in a state of mourning because we are saved by God's grace but we're trampling the grace of God underfoot." We need to understand this is not fun and games. "Well, I'll try and if I fail then...oh well. I'm just glad I have salvation."

That's not what James says. He says it needs to be a change in our spirits. He says in James 4:4-6a:

You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? But he gives more grace.

Do you see what he's saying? The whole time we are walking our own way and doing our own thing, God could be thinking, "They're doing their own thing again and I have a choice. I can condemn them to hell for their sin as they walk away from the salvation that I've provided." But even in our sin, God gives more and more grace.

Now notice what else he says. In light of God giving us more grace that meets us in our time of sin, he says in James 4:6b-9:

Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

Now why in the world would we do that as followers of Jesus Christ? It comes back to the first Beatitude—we continually recognize that we are sinners in need of God's grace, our sin is an absolute affront to God and God in His love and mercy pours out that grace. So we have the opportunity to be comforted all the while that we are mourning over our sin.

Cry over the Condition of Others

Notice that it's not just our sin but there is mourning over the sin of others. We examine our own hearts and see, "I'm a sinner and my sin has defiled me. It has allowed my depravity to wreak havoc in my own life, in the lives of others and in my relationship with God." I need to recognize what Isaiah did when he said, "I am a man of unclean lips," but he didn't stay there. He went on to say, "I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). Jesus wants us to mourn, not only our sin, but also the sinful condition of others.

So Jesus is saying, "Blessed are those who mourn," and we learn from the mourning what Jesus does. In Luke 19:41—on Palm Sunday—Jesus goes to a high place. The people ushered Him in with a parade, praising Him and singing, "Hosanna, hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matthew 21:9, Luke 19:38). Jerusalem is all aglow with excitement for the Messiah Who has come. Jesus comes to a solitary place where He sees a panoramic view of the city which is filled with excitement. The Bible says that as Jesus approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and He wept.

What does that mean? The word "wept" (klaiō) means Jesus burst into tears. He wept aloud. He sobbed deeply. This is more than just a tear streaming down His cheek. The same word is used in Mark 5:38, speaking of how the family members of Jairus' daughter reacted to the death of a young daughter—they were crying and wailing aloud. While everybody was shouting joyful things on Palm Sunday, Jesus was sobbing over the hard hearts of

people. He was weeping loudly because He knew they were going to suffer and die. He was sobbing because they were lost.

The great reformer John Knox carried the burden of the lost people of Scotland all throughout his life. It was said that night after night he prayed on the wooden floor of his house, pleading with God to give the souls of Scotland a chance to receive the good news. Night after night his wife would plead with him to get off the ground and get some sleep. John Knox would reply, "How can I sleep when my land is not saved?" He would say repeatedly, "Give me Scotland or I'll die."

So let me ask, what about us? Do we mourn—not only over our own sin, but the sin of others? Does it break our hearts—as it broke the heart of Jesus—that people are on their way to hell? Do you weep over your neighborhood? Do you weep over your workplace? Do you weep over your school? Do you weep because these people are lost and in need of a Savior? Because they are blind, dead and held captive by the devil and need redemption? Oh, that we would be a church that would get on our knees, cry over the city of Sugar Grove and the surrounding areas and say, "Give us this town or we'll die!" Oh God, answer our prayers and allow us to see hurting and harassed people come and experience the compassion of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Are we mourners?

Weep over the World

The final way our hearts should mourn is in the affairs of the world. We live in a world that has become a depository of our sin. We are so quick to move away from that. So many times when I hear of sad situations, troublesome things or unspeakable crimes, I quickly move on to something that will make my day a little brighter. I push away. I don't want to hear those things.

It is good for us as Christians to hear about these things. We hear of murders and shootings. Brothers and sisters, this is not far from us. A city like Chicago will have over 700 shooting deaths in less than a year's time. That should break our hearts. Looking at our nation we see the travesty of millions upon millions of babies being aborted. Our hearts should be broken. When we hear about those in elderly homes who are being abused and neglected, it should grip our hearts and cause us to say sin is an ugly thing.

As we look at our world in a larger sense, we see where innocence is imprisoned. Children are trafficked and defiled. We see there is much to mourn. There are kids going hungry. There is a whole generation in Africa being wiped out because of AIDS. We see children who live in squalor, who have no rights of education and the normal civil rights of all people are not given to them. I could go on and on. It is this kind of world that God saw its need, said that He loved the world and sent His Son. It should grip our hearts.

"Blessed are those who mourn." We too should join the choir of creation to look to a day when there will be no more crying and no more tears. God will come and Christ will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Right now there is much to mourn deeply about because of sin. But that's what should move us to ministry—mourning should move us to give.

Mourning should move us to go and reach far-off lands. When we see the faces of those suffering in Africa that should drive us. We will hear a message from our friend Pastor Ben in Uganda who is living his life just trying to help a handful of orphans whose parents have been taken away because of AIDS. Our mourning over the children living by themselves with no parents and no roof over their heads should drive us to go and serve them. We need to be involved in mourning.

3. The Process to Proper Mourning

Now how do we mourn? There's a process to it. Even though we have looked at four areas of mourning, I want to focus in on the issue of sin and our response to it. Once again, Jesus doesn't tell us in the text how we are to mourn. So we need to look at the Scriptures. When we do, we learn a couple things.

Recognizing the Holiness of God

If we are going to mourn properly, it involves first of all recognizing the holiness of God. We must begin there. We will never mourn over our sins if we don't recognize God as holy. What is sin if there's no holiness? It's just

you making decisions. But when we stop and understand that our sin is an affront to a holy God—that it will break any fellowship we would ever have with God and cause turmoil in our lives—then we begin to understand that we are a sinful people. The only One Who has a right to speak out on that sinfulness is God Himself.

God says, “My wrath and My indignation is being poured out onto sin” (Romans 1:18). He hates sin. He wants nothing to do with it. It was so terrible that He had to forsake His Son on the cross—His one and only beloved Son—because Jesus took our sin upon Himself. We have to recognize and remember that.

We need to recognize the payment that was accomplished. We sometimes sing a song that speaks of the wrath of God being satisfied:

In Christ alone, Who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save.
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied;
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid—
Here in the death of Christ I live.

(“In Christ Alone” by Keith Getty & Stuart Townsend)

There has been some controversy over these words. Some have wanted to change the words from “The wrath of God was satisfied” to “The love of God was satisfied.” Talk about us not wanting to mourn over something or talk about God’s wrath because it will make us feel bad! Love is far easier to swallow, right? So is it God’s love that was satisfied? No! God’s wrath was satisfied, and it was satisfied by putting His Son on the cross.

We need to recognize our sin put Christ there on the cross. When Mel Gibson produced the movie *The Passion*, he said, “I’m in the movie.” After watching the movie, people said, “You’re not there. Where are you?” He said, “I’m in there. You just need to look a little more closely.” So they looked at the extras but couldn’t find him. Then he finally told the media, “I was there when Christ was being nailed to the cross. It’s my hand that has the hammer and nails and it’s me crucifying Christ on the cross.” When we begin to see our part in the crucifixion of Jesus, we’ll start to mourn and weep. Our laughter will turn into mourning.

Regretting Our Sinful Ways

As we recognize the holiness of God, that leads to regretting our sinful ways. Here’s the problem—regretting and being remorseful is not enough. Even in the unbeliever, regret and remorse is the first inkling toward mourning. You cannot mourn over something if you don’t have regret over it. You don’t mourn over good things; you mourn over bad things. So when we have remorse or we regret something we’ve done, it’s the beginning of the mourning process.

The problem is that many people—in fact all unbelievers—stop there. They stop with regret and they’re remorseful but it doesn’t involve Jesus. The best picture of that is Judas. Judas walked and talked with Jesus. He was engaged as a disciple of Jesus. Then he betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Does it say then that he lived happily ever after? No. He regretted it. He was filled with remorse. But what did he do? He didn’t give it to Jesus. He didn’t find comfort; he hung himself outside of Jerusalem.

Right now, some of you are wrestling with regret and remorse. You think, “If I could just go back to that singular moment at that decision I made in the past, my life would be totally different. If I had just done it differently. I’d pay all the money in the world to go back to that place.” Here’s the thing: if you live there and you do not invite Jesus into that situation, you will never get beyond that regret. You will never be comforted.

Repenting & Living Obediently

Regret isn’t enough. It must lead to repentance and obedient living. So Judas was Mr. Regret and Mr. Remorse. Then there’s Peter. The same day that Judas betrayed Jesus—everybody was having a bad day in Jerusalem that day—Peter also betrayed Jesus. He disowned Jesus three times. As the rooster crowed, the text tells us Peter ran out of the city and wept bitterly. He was cut to the heart. He was starting to regret and be remorseful.

We need to understand the difference here. Instead of staying away from Jesus—keeping Jesus out of it—Peter eventually allowed Jesus back into his life and Peter was able to repent. Peter took that spirit of mourning and carried it forever in his life. But he was comforted. Three times Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love Me?” Do you think it’s by any coincidence that Jesus asked this three times? Three times Peter said, “You know I love You. You know I love You. You know I love You more than these. I love You more than anything.” So Jesus said, “Okay, then. Let Me comfort you. Feed My sheep. Tend to them.”

Right now some of you are mourning your past and you can’t get over it. I’m telling you to turn to Jesus. Cast your anxieties and cares on Him because He cares for you. It starts with you repenting. It starts with you getting on your knees and—if necessary—weeping bitterly and saying, “Jesus, I’ve blown it. But Your Word says I can experience Your grace. I need Your grace. I need You.” Jesus says that when that happens, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us of all unrighteousness ([1 John 1:9](#)).

4. The Peace Only God Can Provide

The text says that we’ll be comforted. There’s a peace that only God can provide. How does He do it? He shows us the meaning of mourning. Why is there mourning going on in our lives? Why does God allow it? This is the question that many people struggle with—why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?

God Comforts the Hurting

We will never experience the mercy and comfort of God unless God allows us to go low and experience pain. We will never experience His goodness if we’ve not experienced His pain. In the book of Psalms we see what he’s talking about. Allow [Psalm 116:1-10](#) to penetrate your hearts and minds:

I love the Lord, because he has heard
my voice and my pleas for mercy.
Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
The snares of death encompassed me;
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.
Then I called on the name of the Lord:
“O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul!”

Gracious is the Lord, and righteous;
our God is merciful.
The Lord preserves the simple;
when I was brought low, he saved me.
Return, O my soul, to your rest;
for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

For you have delivered my soul from death,
my eyes from tears,
my feet from stumbling;
I will walk before the Lord
in the land of the living.

I believed, even when I spoke:
“I am greatly afflicted”...

“You have delivered my soul.” God wants to deliver you who are hurting.

God Calls Back the Wayward

Notice that God allows mourning in our lives to call the wayward back to Himself. In the story of the prodigal son, Jesus talked of a man who—even though his father was alive—left home with the inheritance that he demanded of his father. In [Luke 15](#) we see that bad things happened to this young man. He ran out of food. He

lost his job while he was giving his life to loose living and all kinds of fun and debauchery. God brought him to a low place in his life, a place where he found himself fighting with the pigs for food to eat. It's there he remembered that at his father's table even the servants were well fed.

You see, mourning is brought into our lives to bring us back. Some of you are experiencing mourning right now. You're experiencing pain and suffering and you're asking, "Well Lord, why am I not being comforted?" It's because you're in a far-off land right now. You're unwilling to return to the God who loves you so very much. So God allows His discipline to continue on you until you get it—until I get it. We've got to return to Jesus. Until we are willing to hear the call of our heavenly Father for us to come back, we will find ourselves in a state of mourning—one that is not comforted.

God Challenges Our Spiritual Laziness

God allows mourning in our lives to challenge our spiritual laziness. Romans 5:3-5 says that God allows our sufferings. It says, "Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings." How in the world do we rejoice in our sufferings? We rejoice because we have been comforted as we mourn. It continues with even more paradoxes: "Knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

So we recognize that God allows sorrows into our lives to grow us. That is why we can "consider it pure joy, my brothers, when trials of many kinds come upon us" (James 1:2). We're able to experience that sorrow, turn it over to God and God says we will find comfort. That comfort means that we'll be encouraged, receive hope, be strengthened in our walk, have character built in us and it is there that we can find hope in even the greatest times of sorrow.

God Compels Us to Care for Others

As we mourn over our own sin, over the sin of others and over the spiritual state of the world that we live in, it will lead us to something. Second Corinthians 1:3-4 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort..." What does He do? Listen, mourners, "...who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to..." do what? To "comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

Here's the thing: God wants us to be mourners so that as we experience hardship and struggles and find our comfort in God, God then in turn gives us what we need to be a comfort for others. My parents have lost a loved one, their oldest son—God didn't do that just to cause them pain and suffering. He did it to grow my parents' faith. He did that to show them that He draws near to the hurting.

God also did that so that one day—and it's happened numerous times—when my parents come in contact with someone who has lost a loved one, especially a son, my parents can put their arms around that person and say, "We know what you feel. We know what you're experiencing. We know the pain and anguish. We get it. You need Jesus because that's the only thing that got us through this 20 years ago and it will be the only thing that will get you through this."

So you who have struggled with depression, you who have struggled with issues in your marriage, you who have gone through horrific battles with sin—God didn't allow you to go through those things just to say you've gone through them. He's given you those experiences and those struggles so that you can put your arm around somebody and say, "Yeah, it hurts to be there. But comfort comes from the Lord."

So we mourn and we grieve, but Paul tells us we don't grieve as those without hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). We grieve because we know what our sin has done to a holy God, but we have hope and that hope is Jesus Christ. "Blessed are those who mourn." Because of Jesus Christ, we shall be comforted.

Let's pray.

Father God, we come before You and I pray that You'd speak to our hearts. We are a sinful people and while You have allowed for laughter and fun and have given us happiness—You say a joyful heart is good medicine—we recognize in moments like this that there's much to mourn. I have wronged You this week and have gone about my days not repenting of those things, even at times not regretting those things. This is a reminder that says shame on me.

Lord, we are a people who have offended You greatly. Let that offense be brought to our minds so we'll never forget that or take Your grace for granted because we mourn over our sin. We mourn over the sin of others and the sinful world around us. We see the absolute disaster that comes when we live for sin instead of our Savior. We confess that to You. Break our hearts for the things that break Your heart so that we may get closer to Your heart and in turn live according to Your will and Word.

Lord, we're going out into a world that says, "I'm fine. You're fine. Everything's fine." Remind us that there are hurting people—some who don't even know it at this point—who need Your gospel. Let us be bold. Let us pray for them, speak to them and show acts of love to them so that they may see You in the process. Oh God, we love You. We are so thankful for Your Word and what it teaches us. Now change us by Your Spirit we pray. Amen.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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