

Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
by Mr J.K. Popham on Sunday Morning  
4th October 1936

Text Matthew 5 verse 4

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Let me read this beautiful beatitude to you, Jesus in the beginning of His ministry, having performed miracles and preached the gospel, "And when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: And He opened His mouth and taught them saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you," (verses 1-12).

These beatitudes are very definite and absolute, both in regard to the persons spoken of, and of the blessings pronounced. They are ineffable, beautiful, glorious beyond all human words. If we are interested in them, we shall have to die to know the fulness of the blessings here pronounced. What a wonder it is that the glorious Person, of whom we have been singing, should have condescended to take our nature into union with His Divine Person, and become surety for debtors, a substitute for sinners and received the imputation of their sins and guilt, and die for them. Thus making an end of sin and bringing everlasting righteousness to them. He is the speaker in this text, certain people are spoken of, their condition is set forth and a blessing promised. They mourn, a gloomy religion the world says, a mourning religion. Men who never mourn in the sense of the text while they live here, will howl through eternity under the just punishment of God for their sins. Mourning is a rather common thing, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." (Job 14 verse 1). And so we must distinguish a little here, there is a wrong mourning, a mourning which amounts to rebellion against God.

Samuel mourned in that way, "And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel." (1 Samuel 16 verse 1). We may mourn the loss of some things unnaturally, and so rebel against God. We may mourn the things lost or taken from us, while the loss or removal may be a great gain and blessing to us. Mourning here, I understand is to have a fulness of grace, an exercise of the Spirit of God upon the soul, and a setting faith before soul matters which should be mourned over. You must have your eyes opened to see these things. Blessed are the eyes that see sin in God's light, so as to mourn over it. That is my first word.

Blessed are they that mourn on account of their sins, John Bunyan has a word like this, "Sorrow except it be sorrow for sin is sinful sorrow." Very few probably believe that. Yes, it means mourn for sin, first for original sin. We are all born in sin, as the scripture informs us, and so the Holy Spirit teaches His people. Born in sin, born enemies to God and goodness, alienated from the life of God through ignorance and wicked works. That is true of the best of us, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" (John 3 verse 6). You cannot make anything better of it, for it will always be the same while we live. Now when our original depravity is opened, and set before us in the light of the Spirit, what a case of mourning there then must be. We were created in the image and after the likeness of God. In the day that our father Adam fell, that likeness and image was destroyed, and we were alienated from the life of God. The best of us is nothing better than a huge ugliness of sin.

What of morality? the scripture tells us that, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14 verse 23). If God is not the first object to us, and in us, we sin in all we do. Now this, if we know it, is matter for mourning, sorrow and confession. Does this describe some of you? that you have again and again, more or less continually, as you remember it, to confess your sin, the sin of your nature. Then you come to your sins of practice, not open immorality, thank God if He has kept us moral, but without faith we sin. If we sin, it is a lively thing in us, and of some it is written, or rather God charges some with this sin, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself". (Psalm 50 verse 21). Some of us have thought that, it is what the modernist says today, What God should be, what He ought to do, they judge Him by themselves. Grace comes to one and says, "For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place." (Isaiah 57 verse 15). His eye searches you, He sees the turpitude of your actions, which men may be praising, but they were not done in faith, because they were done with a view to your own honour.

When this is discovered we blush and are ashamed to lift up our face, and lie down in confusion. You may mourn over bad use of good things, and mourn that you have not used the scriptures properly, have not believed in them fully, have walked contrary to them. That you have read them without believing them, and read them feeling no authority in them, or read them and have not been guided by them. Some of us have to do this before God. We have to mourn prayerlessness, little have some of us, made use of the throne of grace, with all its blessed benefits. Little have we sought unto God in our difficulties, perplexities, and necessities. We have to mourn, that we have not looked properly at our providences, Going, "into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:" (James 4 verse 13). Has been about the utmost with some, and when God opens that to them, then they are ashamed. What a selfish dishonouring life have I lived, says each one. We mourn because we profited so little by God's dealings with us in His wise and holy providence.

If in trouble, "This is a grief, and I must bear it." (Jeremiah 10 verse 19). If in prosperity, 'This is what I have managed to do.' Everything fallen nature has to do with it abuses, misuses and dishonours God. Do we mourn thus? Let us examine ourselves, do we mourn these things? If we do, we are well off according to the text. Mourning is used figuratively in some places, "The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate:" (Lamentations 1 verse 4). The earth mourned, and the fields mourned, the cattle mourned, because of adversity, drought and famine, and all brought by sin. These figurative expressions set forth the dealings of God. The gates mourned when the councillors and people are brought there to state their cases, and receive judgement. The ways of Zion mourn, because none come to her solemn feasts, that is the ways that were frequented are now not frequented. Few are found in the ways of Zion, Jeremiah called the weeping prophet, mourned because of the state of things about him, he saw a nation doomed. He prophesied seventy years captivity, and he was scarcely listened to, and he mourned. We all of us naturally have sometimes had something to mourn over, except that one thing. The mourning of the text, may be quite a different thing, or if God by grace, gives us a right spirit we mourn losses, burdens and afflictions, not because we have them, but because we deserve them. And more, it is said of Job, in a way of reproof, by one who did not understand him, "that God exacted less of him than his iniquity deserveth," (Job 11 verse 6). And every one in a right spirit thus mourns, and that is not the end of it. Oh let us thank God, that is not the end of it. "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted."

Wherein lies this comfort, this blessedness? First is that this mourning is the effect of grace, it is begotten in them by the Holy Spirit. This mourning is before God, and arises from the operations of the Spirit of grace in the soul. Sweet is this thought, wonderful is the feeling that God has given you grace to be sorry for your sins. "For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin." (Psalm 38 verse 18). I am not sorry that I have got trouble, I am sorry for that which has procured it. That is a blessing, value it as you feel it. Oh believing mourning friends, the spirit to mourn and the sight you get of yourself, of your deserving, and the spirit you have to confess all before a Holy God, this has comfort in it. Something that overbalances the sorrow, and the circumstances, that says in your heart, this shall turn for your good.

This will bring you near to God, and wean you from the world, this will destroy self confidence. This will make God the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely, that has comfort in it. Another thing in comfort, is that the Holy Spirit brings the atoning blood of Christ, and by it, purges the conscience from dead works. That is one of the chiefest blessings, God's people have in this world, what the Spirit of Christ performs in their hearts. It is His promised office as Christ said "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." (John 16 verse 14). He takes the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel, and a greater blessing you can hardly conceive in this life, than to have your conscience purged from dead works to serve the living God.

There is in it an ineffableness which you cannot express, of what God has given you, and done in you, when He has forgiven your sins. This is a wonderful comfort in an affliction of a natural earthly kind, nothing can destroy this wonderful peace which comes by the blood of Christ. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4 verse 7). As the garrison keeps the soldiers, it protects and covers them, that is what the peace of God does. Is not that comfort? I know it is for I have enjoyed it.

Peace by His cross has Jesus made; (Gadsby's 925 verse 1).

Peace in the conscience has Jesus made, the stones of the field were at peace with Job, "For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee." (Job 5 verse 23). That is nothing offended him, boulders and stones of the field, and difficulties could not offend, and cannot offend a conscience, while the blood of Christ prevails in its power.

Comforted, sweetly comforted with the divine presence of God. "I am with thee." Isaac and Isaiah had this promise. (Genesis 26 verse 24) & (Isaiah 43 verse 5). "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee." (Zephaniah 3 verse 17). What is this? It is a mysterious, blessed, powerful sense of having Jesus Christ with you, walking with you, and you walking up and down in His name. "And I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in His name, saith the Lord." (Zechariah 10 verse 12). My opinion is, that no human tongue can convey to another person adequately, what this rich comfort is that Christ comes and walks with a sinner, "and they shall walk with Me in white. (Revelation 3 verse 4).

Two mourning disciples had some experience of this, they were perplexed, and had lost their hope because Christ was dead and buried. He joined Himself to them, and drew out the cause of their sorrow, and mournful communications, and He began to preach unto them, and opened their hearts to those things concerning Himself. All that Moses, the Prophets and the Psalmists had said of Him, which made their heart burn within them. A wonderful burning that is, love, sweet love, hope, bright hope, in their hearts. They did not at first recognise Him, "And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way." (Luke 24 verse 31,32). Now that is comfort.

Another comfort is this, that although we are flesh and blood, and "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit," (Galations 5 verse 17), there is the comfortable persuasion that the flesh shall not prevail. That promise in the Romans is beautiful, to one who knows this conflict, "For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6 verse 14). The law never helps one to overcome sin, it provokes sin, and it gives no power against sin. Grace comes against sin and dethrones it, over and over again dethrones it, and brings a sweet confidence in the Lord, that sin shall not have dominion, but one day shall be utterly ended. I have liked to look at those words of Joshua to the captains of Israel when he had five kings at his feet. He said, "Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings." (Joshua 10 verse 24). Every believer will, sooner or later, find the word of God true, recorded by Paul, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Romans 16 verse 20). Oh what a grand prospect, that sin your enemy shall one day be under your feet. Turn to Isaiah in this connection, and read there, "For He bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, He layeth it low; He layeth it low, even to the ground; He bringeth it even

to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy." (Isaiah 26 verses 5,6). Then God having done it, He says to His people, "The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor and the steps of the needy." And a poor feeble sinner shall put his foot on some mighty sin that had plagued him for years. One may be a covetous man naturally, but grace comes and opens his heart and makes him free in his gifts, and one day it may be, the Lord, as it were, says your covetousness wounded and injured you, now put your feet on it, and so of other sins and like things. That is a comfort.

Watch the operations of the Spirit in your souls my brethren, in regard to grace working in you to your comfort. They are affected sometimes with a sense of union to Christ, as He said "I in them," (John 17 verse 23). And Paul says, "which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:" (Colossians 1 verse 27). In you, not a picture for you to admire, but in you of that new life. A divine life, righteousness, holiness, peace, strength, comfort, and goodness. With a prospect before you, a sweet prospect. You must have a prospect to understand, it must be set before you, by the Holy Spirit. What is that? "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me." (Luke 22 verses 28,29). If you have continued with Christ by faith, cleave to Him, following Him, hoping in Him, loving Him again and again, committing yourself to Him, to keep you to the end, with all the temptations to the contrary. Continuing thus in Christ, He acknowledges it, "Ye are they which have continued with me." "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Revelation 3 verse 10). And ee'r long ye shall be with Me where I am.

I believe that among the sweet prospects, that are given at times by the Lord to His people, to comfort them, is that in John's first Epistle, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3 verse 2). All this is derived from union with Him. Union with Christ involves everything that they stand in need of here, and all the beauty and glory that God will give them, and they possess and enjoy hereafter. Seek, Oh believing friends, seek more and more a realisation of that union with The Lord Jesus Christ. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ". (1 Corinthians 12 verse 12). One Christ and one in Him. "They shall be comforted." This is the blessing that God gives them, favours which are all contained in the

gospel. They are blessed again in this, that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is their Father. A remarkable message which, you remember Christ sent to His disciples, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me;" (Luke 22 verse 29). And also, "but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and to your Father; and to My God, and your God." (John 20 verse 17). When the spirit of adoption is given to a sinner, a child of God, he can say, and does say in faith, Abba Father. Here it would seem, that his experience rises to its highest pitch during this life. What, God my Father? I wonder I ever found this, and wonder how any person could receive the spirit of adoption, and have dry eyes. It is so marvellous, Oh well do I remember it, the moment when that spirit of adoption was given to me. It is now over sixty years ago, I got that spirit of adoption in much affliction, but everything was straight then. I had a Father in heaven, and I have still one now, He says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13 verse 5). Sin is very bitter but it can never undo that spiritual relationship. It brings the rod, chastisement, and affliction, but it can never undo that relationship. If a son a son for ever, what a comfort that is. A balm for every wound, a support under burdens which otherwise might be intolerable, a sweetness that can never be expressed. Abba Father, The Eternal God, the Father of a worm, the Eternal God calling a sinner His child, His son. The Eternal God opening the treasures of His power, love, wisdom, and goodness, and letting that person know that all he sees, is engaged for his good. The Apostle Paul was inspired to pledge God on the behalf of the Philippian believers, "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippian 4 verse 19). That runs into eternity, what? shall we need in Eternity. Creatureship will be in eternity, therefore need will be in eternity, we shall always be creatures.

Oh I have been thankful for that, I shall be a creature in heaven and have a God over and over to supply my need. The fountain of living waters, to be led to that fountain, by the Lamb in the midst of His wonderful company. And God wiping all tears from their eyes. Oh dear people of God, what comfort awaits you. All tears wiped from the eyes, therefore "blessed are they that mourn". Why should you be mourning over something which you have lost, seeing you have not lost your God.

And if our dearest comforts fall  
Before His sovereign will,  
He never takes away our all,  
Himself He gives us still. (Gadsby's 132 verse 5).

That is enough, it is felt to be enough when the Lord speaks it home to

the heart. Comforted ?, the worldling may look at us and say, well it is a poor religion after all. We can also say that to him,

Boast not ye sons of earth,  
Nor look with scornful eyes;  
Above you highest mirth,  
Our saddest hours we prize;  
For though our cup seems filled with gall,  
There's something secret sweetens all. (Gadsby's 307 verse 2)

This is God with you, Christ in you, The Holy Ghost touching you, and comforting you on every side, it is God entering into a covenant with you, saying, "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wrath with thee, nor rebuke thee." (Isaiah 54 verse 9). "Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more." (Isaiah 54 verse 4).

I have thought sometimes, I can never be without shame, and I believe it is so, and yet there is a sweet sense, in which the sinner is not ashamed. "God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city." (Hebrews 11 verse 16). And he is not ashamed to own the Lord Jesus as his God and Saviour, Honours rest upon Him. Oh the blessed lips of truth which uttered this word, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted".

Do any of you covet this blessing? Do you see it to be a fold into which you would fain be gathered, or belong to a people whose eyes are wet with tears of sorrow for sin, and whose hearts are mourning again and again because they cannot cease from sin? Do you long to be of that company? If so, ask Him to bring you into the fold, ask Him to bless you, and He will. May the Lord bring us to this sweet gospel, and remember Him who uttered this sweet word, put Him in mind of it, tell Him you are sorry for your sin, and ask Him to bring you into the comfort of the everlasting gospel. Tell Him how you fail and fall and slip, tell Him again and again, you often would be at His feet and never depart. He will listen to you. Not one thing can offend in coming to Christ, but we do offend in restraining prayer. But constant petitions, sighs, groans, tears, mourning, these are all pleasing to Him. And the end is that the sinner seeks heaven itself. May the Lord give us to see and feel we are interested in this great word.

Amen.