

Sermon Title: Good Mourning
Scripture Text: Matt. 5:4 (Sermon on the Mount #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 6-21-20

This morning, I invite you to return again with me to our newly-begun series in the Sermon on the Mount. We are working our way through the "Beatitudes," one at a time, at least for the first two here; and if that seems like a snail's pace beginning to the Sermon on the Mount, well—it actually is. But that's okay; you will find that this is a foundation upon which many things in the Sermon are built upon, and they will elaborate on them; we'll be referring back to many of these things as we go along. This morning, the title is: "Good Mourning," with a "U" in it. That's not because we're British; it's because we're talking about mourning, not when the sun rises.

Jesus began this sermon by pronouncing blessedness upon people. That's where the word "beatitude" comes from. "Beatitude" is the Latin form of the word for "blessing." The Greek word is *macharios*. Each of these "beatitudes"—or, "blessings"—has two parts. There is a characteristic that is described which is "blessed," and then there's an assurance, or a promise, of what the content of that blessing is.

We saw last time that the word for "blessed" in each of these sayings describes something that is inherently true of God. God is many times described as "blessed," and the significance of this is that these are not things that you conjure up. To be "blessed" in this sense is to be given something by God. For example, First Timothy Chapter 6, Verses 14 and 15, describes "Our Lord Jesus Christ...He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords." (NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted) So the blessings come *from* Him—He is *qualified* to grant those blessings because it is intrinsically true of Him. And what do we get when we are blessed by Christ? Well, nothing less than this: Ephesians 1:3—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." So, what do you have in the Beatitudes? You have a partial, itemized list of *some* of those "spiritual blessings" that are yours "in Christ."

I said last week that this passage—the Beatitudes—is therefore, all at once, several things: It is the *definition* of a Christian, in many senses. It is the *blueprint* of God's plan for shaping your character—because you *should* want to have your character reflect the things that you know God blesses (Ps. 119:5). It's also the *outline*—or the *summary*, if you will—of the attitudes required for entrance into Heaven. And remember: when Jesus spoke this, there were many Pharisees present, and He drew a bullseye on their foreheads and aimed this sermon at them, and said, "You all are going to need a righteousness which *surpasses* that of the scribes and the Pharisees" (see Matt. 5:20)—who humbly regarded themselves as *the* very most righteous people possible, in that situation.

So we're going to take the same outline as last time—probably the same outline for all of the Beatitudes. Number 1—Who is Blessed? Number 2—What Does the Blessing Include? Well, it's not hard to read this one: Matthew Chapter 5, Verse 4—"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." "Blessed are those"—understand, we said this last time as well—that is worded in a way that describes a state or condition *present* right now. He doesn't say, "You will someday *achieve* this blessing if..." He said, "You *are* blessed now, if this describes you." It's not something just reserved for far off in the future.

Sermon Title: Good Mourning
Scripture Text: Matt. 5:4 (Sermon on the Mount #3)

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Date: 6-21-20

"Blessed are those who mourn." Obviously, the key word here—the characteristic described—is "mourning." Believe it or not, I've read that there are nine Greek verbs that were available, in the time the writing of the New Testament, to describe "mourning" or "grieving" in various ways. So, when you have nine ways to do it and you pick one, you're emphasizing *that one*, compared to all the rest of them. This one is probably regarded as the most severe of the nine; it describes an *intense* mourning. It was sometimes used for mourning or lamenting for the dead, or grieving over some other very painful, very serious circumstance of some kind. But this one also carries the nuance of a restrained kind of mourning; so, it's serious, but not really outward—not loud.

When I was in Irian Jaya—it's called Papua now—one night, I was awakened in the middle of the night by these *horrible* sounds, and I found out it meant someone had died in the village; and in that culture, they had—as did the culture of the New Testament times—professional mourners, people whose job it was to come and *wail* out loud in grief. And trust me: they were good at it! I was awake for quite a bit that night.

Well, this isn't that kind of a thing. It isn't the copious shedding of tears, the crying out in anguish. This is *inner* grief. This isn't an eruption, it's an attitude. This is describing the mourning of someone who is mourning in recognition of their own sin (e.g. Ps. 38:4-8, 18; 40:12; Ezek. 6:9; 36:31; Lk. 18:13; Acts 2:37; Rom. 6:21). It doesn't necessarily make itself heard by others—except, of course, by "God, who knows the heart" (Acts 15:8). Simply put: this mourning is that Christian's response—this is a believer's response—to his own sin. Like the first Beatitude—"Blessed are the poor in spirit," those who realize that, when it comes to spiritual things, they are bankrupt—this is the one who realizes: when it comes to dealing with my own heart, I recognize it is "deceitful" and "desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9, NKJV).

So, this kind of mourning is a cry to God of contrition—sorrow for sin (see Ps. 51:17). Obviously, it involves confession—where you agree with God about your sin (Lk. 7:29; cf. Ps. 32:5; 51:4). It is recognizing that your only hope is in God's mercy. So, as I said: logical connection to "poor in spirit"—recognizing I am spiritually bankrupt, recognizing that I am fully sinful on the inside (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 7:18a).

There are lots of valid, legitimate reasons for mourning. We live in a fallen world. There are sad things. Life brings us unexpected blows. There are pains and injuries and wrongs, inequalities, injustices, losses. There are natural disasters. There is death itself, which is a relentless, indiscriminate reminder of the fact that the world is under a curse (Gen. 3:17-19), and we live with its consequences all the time (Rom. 5:12; 8:20-23).

But, the "mourning" of this Beatitude is unique to one who sees the heart as God sees it. This is sorrow over sin itself—not *merely* sorrow over the *consequences* of sin. Paul wrote a passage to the church at Corinth that I think illustrates well what this is all about. His letter that we know of as First Corinthians—it was actually the second letter that he wrote to Corinth—it was very strong. He confronted serious problems in that church, and he did not mince words in rebuking them. But the *good* news is that they responded well to First Corinthians, and look what Paul says when he sent them another letter that we call

Sermon Title: Good Mourning
Scripture Text: Matt. 5:4 (Sermon on the Mount #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 6-21-20

Second Corinthians: Second Corinthians Chapter 7, Verses 6 and 7—"But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your *mourning*, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more." Notice, he mentions "comfort" several times, and he mentions: I was "comforted" because of "your mourning."

Titus went to Corinth on Paul's behalf; he probably read and taught them First Corinthians; and he came back to where Paul was in Ephesus with a good report of the response to his letter, and "mourning" was part of that response. Though it's not the same word as the word for mourning in this Beatitude, it's one of those other eight, and it conveys pretty much the same idea—along with the connotation that they were more *outward* with their sorrow over their sin because it had been a public, collective rebuke, and there was a public, collective response that had taken place, and Titus could say [to Paul], "God moved them, using your word."

Now, read on in Second Corinthians 7:8 and 9—"For though I caused you sorrow by my letter"—another word related to mourning—"I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while— I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us." There is *one time* that it is clearly God's will for you to be sorrowful, for you to mourn—and that's when you have recognized your sin (Jas. 4:8-9). And Paul said: "This moved you to repentance"—a change of mind, with an accompanying change of behavior, in light of sin (Prov. 28:13).

Now, there is "repentance" in the sense of changing your mind and changing your direction, as in: hearing the gospel and coming to Christ—and in that sense, when we say, "Someone repented," that's another way of saying someone believed, someone came to faith, someone was saved, someone professed Christ (see Mk. 1:15; cf. Is. 55:7; Lk. 13:3, 5; 2 Tim. 2:25; 2 Pet. 3:9).

But, there is *also* "repentance" in the Christian life. Look at Verse 10 of Second Corinthians Chapter 7—"For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation..." So, he's saying: "Think back to when you came to faith. That was a *drastic* change of direction. Then, I had to rebuke you for some of the things that you were doing in mishandling the Word of God, in not living up to who you are. You were *still* acting like babies, even though you should have been mature in Christ." But he says: "The sorrow of the world produces death"—*you* have manifested "the sorrow that is according to the will of God."

What's the difference between what Paul calls "the sorrow of the world" and "sorrow according to the will of God"? Well, the difference is: the difference between being sorry you got in trouble, and being sorry for your sin; being sorry that something you did maybe damaged a relationship, versus realizing: "I have offended Almighty God!" That's the difference.

Sermon Title: Good Mourning
Scripture Text: Matt. 5:4 (Sermon on the Mount #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 6-21-20

Only the most callous, demented kind of people aren't sorry when they face the *consequences* of their sin. The world has invented terms like "sociopath" and "psychopath" to describe people who don't have any conscience, who don't have any sense of right and wrong, and they're just so wrapped up in themselves that they do whatever they want (see Prov. 21:10). But, everybody—generally speaking—recognizes when there's consequences to their sin. The sorrow that *Jesus* wants—the "mourning" that He blesses—is recognizing that *sin itself* is the issue, *whether or not* there are earthly consequences involved.

Not only do we have that general description from Paul, let me give you a flesh-and-bones example: Remember David in the Old Testament, how he sinned, giving in to his lustful desire, and he committed adultery with Bathsheba. Then, he made it worse: he compounded the sexual sin by trying to manipulate her husband Uriah. Then he added more lies and further compounded the whole thing. He forsook the welfare of his own army, and he arranged for Uriah to be killed—in essence, he arranged for his murder. And then he topped it off with his own plunge into polygamy by marrying Bathsheba, even though he was already married (2 Sam. 11:1-27). And you know the story, how God used the prophet Nathan, who finally got through to David, and David turned from that illustration of spiritual pond scum into an example of true confession, true repentance.

As you read through the book of Psalms, remember the numbers 32 and 51. Psalm 32 and Psalm 51 are both understood to have been written by David to express his heart after he admitted his sin, after he turned from it. Listen to some of what he wrote: Psalm 51, Verses 3 and 4—"For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge"—referring to what Nathan had told him (2 Sam. 12:10-12, 14), and he's admitting: "Yeah, I was wrong!"

Now, look at those words: "Against You, *You only*, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight." Well, what about Bathsheba? What about Uriah? What about your whole army? You see, he's realizing: those were *awful*, but they were the *side effects* of the *sin*—the "sin" that is "ever before me."

He went further in acknowledging his understanding of the sinfulness of his heart. Back in Psalm 19, he said: "Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults" (vs. 12). David is understanding and saying, "Look, I will confess to You, but I know my own heart is *so deceitful* that I might not even be *seeing* it all! So, acquit me of my *hidden* faults—I want my *sin* dealt with, not just the ones I get around to manifesting. I want to deal with my relationship with You!" This is very important. Understand: Apologizing when you sin against somebody—apologizing for specific incidents—that's important, *very* important, in keeping relationships healthy. But that's *not* the same as recognizing the sinfulness that resides in your heart (Matt. 15:19; cf. 1 Kings 8:38).

Don't fall into the *ditch* of thinking that, since Jesus died for all your sins, and now you stand in His grace, therefore, when you do something wrong, all you have to do is check off that box and say, "I'm sorry! Please forget me, and then let's move on!" If you're not

Sermon Title: Good Mourning
Scripture Text: Matt. 5:4 (Sermon on the Mount #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 6-21-20

dealing with the depth of the sin which all originates from your heart, you're not really getting to the issue (Ps. 51:6). It *should* grieve you when you harm someone, when you snap at somebody in your family, when you pop off, when you have some evil thought—you *should* deal with that, you *should* ask for forgiveness. But it should bother you *even more* that you understand *why you need* to ask for forgiveness, than that you actually have to ask for forgiveness (see 1 Sam. 24:13). Do you get it? We're not just talking about dealing with this on a *surface* level.

And when you look back at Matthew 5:4, understand that, that word "mourn" is one of those present tense participles. It means God says: "The kind of person I bless is the kind of person who is *constantly* grieved over his sin." And so, my goal this morning is to make you as *miserable* as possible, all the time! No, that's not it—there's another half to this first, alright? Don't *leave it* there. But there is no time in your life on this earth when grief over sin, when contrition over sin, becomes unwarranted.

You know Martin Luther's famous "95 Theses" that he nailed into the wall of the church in Wittenberg, supposedly touching off the Protestant Reformation—certainly a momentous day. In the first of his 95 Theses, Luther said that the entire life should include continuous repentance. Well, I think he had read Matthew 5:4. He understood that he had jumped through *all of* those hoops, doing *all of* those things, *all of* those times—constantly on a treadmill to try to gain merit before God, and he realized: "I'm spiritually bankrupt! I need what *only* God can give me." (see Phil. 3:9).

Now, about this difference between a Christian and a Non-Christian, I think Luther was right on point. Let me show you a passage, and then I'll come back to it later. First John Chapter 1, Verses 8 through 10. John writes: "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." If anybody says that, he says, "You don't know the truth. The truth is: you have a sin problem." Verse 9—"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Verse 10—"If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." Do you see the contrast? You're lying if you say you don't have a sin problem; you are the one who is forgiven, you are the one who is practicing righteousness, when you are constantly *acknowledging* that you are spiritually bankrupt, and that you hate your sin (see Rom. 7:15-16, 21-25).

So, same outline as last time: Who is Blessed? "Blessed are those who mourn." Well, we sure don't want to stop there! Let's look at the rest of the verse. What Does the Blessing Include? "Blessed are those who mourn, for *they* shall be comforted." Now, understand: again, like we saw last week, when it says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for *theirs* is the kingdom of heaven," and I pointed out the emphatic pronoun "theirs"—"*theirs and theirs alone* is the kingdom of heaven." There will not be *one single member* of the Kingdom of Heaven who *ever* got there by *any* means other than saying: "I'm bankrupt. Help me!" Here's another emphatic one: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they *and they alone* will experience the comfort of God." Again, David is a good example of somebody who mourned over his sin, and he experience God's comforts. In Psalm 71, Verses 20 and 21—not to mention elsewhere—David writes: "You who have shown me many troubles

Sermon Title: Good Mourning
Scripture Text: Matt. 5:4 (Sermon on the Mount #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 6-21-20

and distresses will revive me again"—there, he's talking about the consequences of his sin; it *really* messed things up! But he says: "You...will revive me again and will bring me up again from the depths of the earth. May You increase my greatness and turn to comfort me." He understood: it was when he *came clean* that he received the comfort (see Ps. 32:5, 7; 51:7-8, 12).

And the *nature* of this comforting is very significant. The word "comfort" there, as in: "they shall be comforted"—this is a translation of one of those wonderful New Testament words. This word is a *workhorse* in the New Testament, because it has one root meaning and it has *so many* nuances to it. It literally means: "to call alongside," and the noun version of it means: "one who is called alongside." The use of this word in this phrase—"they shall be comforted"—implies that the comforting is accomplished by God Himself "coming alongside," coming to your aid. It's talking about His presence with you. The form of the word here is "passive voice"—now, don't get hung up on the grammar, but the significance of that is: No one who is comforted can do it for himself. You can't comfort yourself this way! You *need* this! Why, you're bankrupt! It has to be given to you as a gift. It has to be given to a beggar.

If you put a couple of Scriptures together, I think you can see that the comforting that is promised here is a ministry of God directly, personally, to every believer (see Ps. 23:4; 86:17; 119:76; Is. 49:13; 51:12; 66:13). It is made into a present reality by the presence of His Holy Spirit. Second Corinthians Chapter 1, Verses 3 and 4—one of my favorite little New Testament excerpts: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort"—see, the blessedness starts with God—"who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." Now, when you see a word used *five times* in one sentence, I *think* it's justifiable to say: "That's a theme!" This is about comfort. It comes from the "Blessed...God [our] Father...the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort." And if *that* didn't impress you—to see it five times in that one sentence—go ahead and read the next three verses; you'll find the word "comfort" *five more times*; that's what this passage is about.

And remember: Jesus promised that He was going to send the Holy Spirit, whom He referred to as "the Comforter," and He will "abide with you" (Jn. 14:16, KJV). He promised that the Spirit would come and comfort them, *as He had been* their comfort in the three years that they had spent together. John Chapter 14, Verses 16 and 17—just the night before He went to the Cross, Jesus says: "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper"—that's the noun form of the same word that is translated "comforted" in Matthew Chapter 5, Verse 4; this is "the Comforter" who is to come, "the One who comes alongside and brings comfort." "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever"—how do you get this comfort?—"that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you." There's the promise that, "After I ascend to the Father, I will send the Holy Spirit who will be with you. He is your Comforter." And what is translated "Helper" there is the same word that is translated "comforter" elsewhere; and the verb, meaning: "to comfort."

Sermon Title: Good Mourning
Scripture Text: Matt. 5:4 (Sermon on the Mount #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 6-21-20

So, every mourner receives comfort. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted," just as: "Blessed are those who are spiritually bankrupt, for theirs—and theirs alone—is the kingdom of God."

So, do you need comfort? Do you recognize your sin? Do you recognize you don't *deserve* God's grace, you don't *deserve* His mercy? It's all a free gift. Will you receive His comfort? The comfort may be delivered to you in the form of the Word of God (Rom. 15:4; cf. Ps. 119:50), which is inspired by His Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21). It may be the forgiveness of God, which is applied by His Spirit (Titus 3:5). It may be the abiding of the Holy Spirit Himself, who ministers comfort in special, personally-designed ways (Acts 9:31). It could be by means of the ministry of the Holy Spirit working through other believers (2 Cor. 7:6); how nice it is sometimes to have someone come along side and comfort you. So, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Now, I want us to walk away from this with the appropriate application, so I want to circle back to that passage that I read a couple of minutes ago in First John Chapter 1, Verses 8 through 10—"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." You're not in the truth if you're denying that you have a sin issue, because have to deal with your sin issue in order to come to the "God of truth" (Ps. 31:5; cf. Ps. 51:6). "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And then, back to the other side of the contrast: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us."

Now, focus on what you know as First John 1:9—"If we confess our sins..." Notice that "we" is significant there. John is including all believers, including himself. He often taught by contrast; he's the Apostle of Contrasts, or the Apostle of Black-and-White—he likes to set things in opposition to other things. Unbelievers—liars, heretics, anybody denying Christ—they deny that they really have a problem with sin (Prov. 30:12). What's the opposite of that? *Admitting* you have a problem with sin! If we are *confessing* our sins, "He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Unbelievers deny, believers confess.

"Confess" is a crucial word. I would suspect this may have had something to do with why Martin Luther worded Thesis Number 1 the way he did it. "Confess" means "to say the same thing, to agree with somebody, to say the same thing as the one who really knows." In other words, we are calling our problems what they are: they are *sins*, they are violations of God's eternal, unchangeable standard of right and wrong (see 1 Jn. 3:4; cf. Rom. 3:23). "Confess" is present tense: "If we are *in the habit of* confessing our sins..." This, ultimately, is not really a verse about turning to Christ; it's a verse about *living* as a Christian, as opposed to the contrast: living as a Non-Christian. So, we "say the same thing" about our sins. We call them what they are: they are sin, they are not "mistakes," or "weaknesses," or "tendencies," or "problems"—they are *sins*. In our world, we love to whitewash things. "Well, you know, there was an 'affair.'" Well, an "affair" can be high tea in the middle of the afternoon. It can be a banquet. No—this is *adultery*! Call things what they are!

Sermon Title: Good Mourning
Scripture Text: Matt. 5:4 (Sermon on the Mount #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 6-21-20

We all face "problems." We all have "tendencies" in the wrong directions. We are all "weak" in certain things, and different people's weaknesses are different than other ones. But the *core problem* for everyone is our sinfulness. To "confess our sins" in specific situations is the *natural consequence* of mourning over our *inborn* sinfulness. We're saying: "God, I've had an outbreak again! And I understand *the disease* isn't going to be taken away until I'm with You, but we've got to control these symptoms! We can't let this thing go on. We can't let it affect anyone else. We can't let it *infect* anyone else." If you love Jesus Christ, you need to love what He loves. If you love Jesus Christ, you need hate what He hates. He loves righteousness (Ps. 11:7). He hates sin (Ps. 79:10; Prov. 8:13).

So are you seeing that those who mourn are the only ones who are going to deal with sin the way God requires? Do you realize: they, *and they alone*, will be comforted? And do you realize that this is *not at all* the way our world thinks about these things? We have a fairly new religion in our society. Most of its adherents—as a matter of fact, practically *all* of its adherents—don't *admit* that it's a religion, but it *is* a religion *antithetical* to Biblical Christianity, and it is something that is *very* widespread. It's called "Psychology." It's one of those *great words* that have been hijacked. "Psychology" comes from the Greek word *psuchē*, spelled "psyche" in English; and "ology"—"the word about." *Psuchē* is your soul. "Psychology" would be "the word about the soul." In the sense of *Biblical Psychology*, it's "what the Bible says about your soul." Great word. But, modern psychology starts with the *foundational premise* that *everybody* is basically good. The problems are external.

And so, in the medical model of "therapy," as opposed to "confession," the medical model takes sins of people and redefines them as symptoms of a "disease," or as the inevitable results of genetic programming. Well, *that is true*—it's because we're all descended from Adam (Rom. 5:12), but you know what I mean: They'll say that this person was *born* with this propensity to be this way. So, take an example: In the psychological model, someone with an addiction to alcohol is not taught to repent and "walk in the Light" (1 Jn. 1:7)—they are taught that, "You have disease. Maybe you were even *born* with a propensity for that disease. So you need to spend the rest of your life in 'recovery.'" That's like saying, "We know you have cancer, but right now, you don't have symptoms."

Understand: God does not teach you how to *live with your sin*! He sent His Son to die so that you can be *set free* from your sins! (see Rom. 6:2) First Corinthians 6:9—"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" Then, Paul gives a grocery list of the kinds of people who "will not inherit the kingdom of God," and one of the things on that list is alcoholics—the Bible word is "drunkards" (vs. 10). And he says, "Such *were* some of you" (vs. 11). So understand: it all begins with *agreeing with God about the problem*! "Christ died for our *sins*" (1 Cor. 15:3)—that's where the problem lies. That's where the solution is.

Now, please don't take this further than it is meant. It is *wise* for a person who has been a slave to alcohol to *stay away from it completely*. As a matter fact, I would suggest to you: I can't find a *single* good thing that happens from people consuming mind-altering substances—caffeine isn't included, of course. But you understand what I'm saying: If it alters your thinking, it's a problem (Prov. 23:33). You should never "put the Lord your

Sermon Title: Good Mourning
Scripture Text: Matt. 5:4 (Sermon on the Mount #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 6-21-20

God to the test" (Matt. 4:7) by putting yourself in any situation in which you *know* you're going to be tempted to dive back into your sin-of-choice, regardless of what sin it is that you might happen to be particularly good at (Prov. 4:14-15; 22:3; 2 Cor. 15:33; cf. Prov. 13:20). People who find themselves physically attracted to people of the same sex—they need to deal with *what the Bible says* about man and woman "created...in the image of God" as "male and female" (Gen. 1:27; cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:10). The problem is not that the rest of society treats them as "victims," and they need to accept them as different, and understand they were really born that way. People need to get right with God—*whatever* your most prolific sin might be. The problem, ultimately, is the same.

God is the One who can set *anyone* free from the temptation to do those things which are an abomination to Him (Matt. 26:41; 2 Pet. 2:9), and only a fool keeps running *toward* temptation instead of running away from it. Second Timothy 2:22 says "Flee"—the word *pheugō*: be a "fugitive" from—"youthful lusts." (see Prov. 5:8; cf. Matt. 5:28; Jb. 31:1). But it all begins with agreeing with Him about the problem. It begins with mourning over the corruption in our hearts. It agrees with saying the same thing that God says, instead of redefining it in such a way is to allow us to cling to our favorite sins (Prov. 28:13).

So, "if we confess our sins"—and he means, if you're in the habit, the *repeated* habit, the *ongoing* habit, the *daily* habit of "saying the same thing" about your sinfulness that God says—*then* you're going to deal with it based on God's provisions for your sins (Gal. 5:16). Living a holy life is *never*, in this life, a matter of complete transcendence over your sin—it's daily basking in the refreshing grace of God, because you mourn over your sinfulness, you confess your specific acts of sin. Hence, Romans Chapter 5, Verse 2. If there is a "theme verse," a "motto verse" that we would have for Heritage Bible Church, it is this one: "We have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God."

Again, don't take this further than it's meant. The goal is *not* to maximize your misery. The goal is not to get you to spend *every moment* in grief over your sin, and to never do anything except lament how awful you are, because understand: the verse says, with the right attitude, you "will be comforted"—and oh, what a *blessing* this comforting is! The Christian life includes the habit of confessing and repenting, but *also* it includes forgiveness! It includes refreshment! (see 2 Cor. 1:5; cf. Ps. 51:8, 12)

We come to faith in Christ—the ultimate act of repentance: turning from our slavery to sin (Rom. 6:17), turning to our Lord and Savior, who died for our sins (Acts 26:18; Gal. 2:20). And then we're in this new life, and we begin to grow and grow; we get better and better at our obedience to the Lord, and we learn His Word better and we live by it better, and we control the outbreaks of the problem from our heart better and better—but we *still* fall short of perfection every day (Phil. 3:12-14), so we confess every day, and we mourn over anything that dishonors Him. I remember when I first gave my life to Christ—Oh, what a change! It was like *the light came on*, and suddenly I could see things for what they were, and His Word was so precious (Jer. 15:16), and I began to grow in my faith and in my walk with the Lord. And you know what? I began to sin less and less *overtly*.

Sermon Title: Good Mourning
Scripture Text: Matt. 5:4 (Sermon on the Mount #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 6-21-20

I began to sin less and less of the "big ones." And you know what? It's now over half a century later—I'm pretty good at acting spit-shined, at least in public! You know what? I mourn over my sin *now* more than I ever did (see Ecc. 1:18), and I have more *joy* of my standing in His grace *now* than I ever did, and I stand in His comfort.

Notice First John 1:9—"If we confess our sins"—notice, that's plural. You don't just say, "Lord, let's take care of it for the whole day: I'm a sinner! God bless everyone. God bless the missionaries. Thank You for the food. Amen." We "confess our *sins*"—individually, not just speaking in general. You understand that when you sin, you are violating God's standard (Jas. 2:10; cf. Is. 5:24b).

And notice what he says *comes along* with this: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful"—the word "faithful" means: "comes through every time." To be "faithful" is to get the job done reliably. God *never* rejects His child confessing his or her sin. "He is faithful *and righteous*"—God doesn't just overlook your sins; God never pats you on the head and says, "Oh, I know. I remember when My kid was tempted in all those ways, like you are." He doesn't do that! "He is faithful *and righteous* to forgive us our sins"—now *that* brings us to a difficulty. How can He be fully righteous *and* be forgiving unrighteousness? (see Ecc. 12:14; Nahum 1:3) Well, the only way He can do that is: He provides the righteousness to you (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9)—hence, "to forgive us our sins." "To forgive" means "to let go." You will not be punished for your sins, because the punishment has already gone to Christ (Is. 53:5; cf. Jn. 5:24; Heb. 10:17). That *does not mean* that you don't confess. He will forgive it; He will "let go" of the right to punish you, because Jesus took the punishment (Matt. 20:28), so He forgives (Is. 53:10-11).

Now, there's an interesting little nuance here in First John 1:9. "If we confess our sins"—present tense; we keep going on and on and on, it is our habit to confess our sins—"He is faithful and righteous"—*always*. And then it says: "to forgive us our sins." The word "forgive" is in a different tense that means: "a point in time." What he is saying is: the forgiveness always goes back to one point in time. You don't need a new sacrifice when you sin, because Jesus is the "once for all" sacrifice (Heb. 10:10). You don't need to bring a new animal to the priest to be sacrificed this week for this week's sins as opposed to last week's—it was all taken care of *once* when Jesus cried out, "It is finished!" (Jn. 19:30; cf. Heb. 10:14), and in the temple, the curtain "between the holy place and the holy of holies" (Ex. 26:33; cf. 2 Chr. 5:7) "was torn in two from top to bottom" (Matt. 27:51)—*God made access available* (Heb. 10:19-20). You don't need to live in the spiritual muck of your sins. We confess, we "stand" in His "grace" (Rom. 5:2).

But Christ is not crucified afresh every time you confess your sins (Heb. 9:25-26). As a matter of fact, it's really cool what He *does* do. Read on past first John 1:10; ignore the chapter break there—there's no break in the thought. John writes this: First John 2:1 and 2—"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins"—it's almost like he understands: these are the kind of people who need to keep confessing—"If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The "Advocate" is like your attorney—he pleads your case for you (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). We sin; we confess; Jesus says: "Guilty, but I took the penalty." Why?

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"He Himself is the propitiation"—the satisfactory sacrifice—"for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." That's how God remains "faithful," "holy," and "righteous" while He "forgives" you and "cleanses" you. That means that, according to Romans 3:26, He is both "just"—righteous—"and the justifier of"—the One who declares to be righteous—"the one who has faith in Jesus." (see Rom. 4:3-5)

"The one who has faith in Jesus"—well, that's the one who stands in His grace. "The one who has faith in Jesus"—that's the one who is "blessed...with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3). "The one who has faith in Jesus"—that's the one who comes as an emptyhanded beggar, saying, "I'm bankrupt! I can't *do it any other way!* I need *You!* You are my *only hope!*" (see Lk. 18:13) "The one who has faith in Jesus"—that's the one who truly mourns over sins, and realizes the *magnitude* of the sacrifice of Christ, that "the wrath of God" was poured out on Him (Rom. 5:9; cf. Ps. 78:21; Ezek. 5:15; 7:8; Rev. 14:10-11; 19:15b; cf. 1 Pet. 2:24a).

If you haven't yet watched both parts of the DVD series that we gave you, there's a great—I think it's great—little graphic toward the end of the second one, showing the wrath from the Father poured out on the Son (Is. 53:10), so that the ones believing in the Son are swept back into the relationship with the Father (1 Pet. 3:18). He is both "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus Christ." "Blessed are those who mourn, for they *shall* be comforted."

Let's pray:

Father, we cry out to You for that comfort. We cry out to You, as that man we know of from Luke Chapter 18: "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" Thank You that because we cry out in that way, we can go down to our house "justified" in Your sight. Thank You for Your great faithfulness to us in that way. Father, please don't let a soul leave this place that is not standing in Your grace, and please make it that we are worthy, willing, ready spokespeople for the great news of the Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the One in whose name we pray. Amen.