

# The Sermon on the Mount

DEVOTIONAL STUDIES FROM THE  
MEN'S MORNING FELLOWSHIP

Matthew 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn,  
For they shall be comforted.

Jesus ascended this mount. It was a visual illustration of the sermon He delivered. There He was, seated on the top of the mount. The words He spoke and the way He lived them out were the summit for Christian living.

You, too, must make the ascent... But you cannot, on your own, even begin to climb. The very first thing He said was that you must be **poor in spirit**. The words mean you are a spiritual beggar. You have no assets that mean anything in the spiritual realm.

You are a spiritual beggar, with no hope of making an ascent – until you realize you are a spiritual beggar with no hope and cry out to God to save you!

It is that crying out that was next described when Jesus said, **O how happy and to be envied are those who mourn.**

The word used for **mourn** is the strongest choice possible. It is the word that would be used for mourning for the dead. In fact, you could translate this phrase, **Blessed is the man who mourns like one mourning for the dead.**

Who's dead? Who are we mourning for? I'm going to suggest that it is you, and I, who is dead.

The apostle Paul is a great resource on this subject. Near Tarsus, where the Apostle Paul was born, a tribe of people lived who inflicted a most terrible penalty upon a murderer. They fastened the body of the victim to that of the killer, tying shoulder to shoulder, back to back, thigh to thigh, arm to arm, and then drove the murderer from the community. So tight were the bonds that he could not free himself, and after a few days the decay in the body of death spread to the living flesh of the murderer. As he stalked the land, there was none to help him remove the body of death. He had only the frightful prospect of his own slow, gangrenous death.<sup>1</sup>

Drawing from this physical analogy, Paul made a spiritual application of the body of death. He described himself, in Romans 7, by saying, **O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?** (v24). Paul, as a Christian, saw himself carrying around within him a **body of death**. He described this internal **body of death** several different ways:

v14 ...I am carnal...

v17 ...sin...dwells in me...

v21 ...evil is present with me...

v25 ...the flesh...

This internal **body of death** is the flesh that continue to exist within you after you are saved. As a result a great struggle begins, a spiritual conflict - a war within. As you read in Galatians 5:17 **...the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.**

The dead man you **mourn** for... **Is you!** You are born dead in trespasses and sins, with no hope of Heaven.

Paul made much of *indwelling* sin and its power in the seventh chapter of Romans:

v17 ...sin dwells in me...

v18 ...in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells...

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<sup>1</sup>Barnhouse, *Romans*, Vol. 3, Book 2, p.241.

v20 sin...dwells in me...

In chapter eight he will make much more of God the Holy Spirit *indwelling* you, giving your new nature its power:

v9 ...the Spirit of God dwells in you...

v11 ...the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you...His Spirit...dwells in you.

Also in chapter eight, Paul says,

Romans 8:23 Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

This groaning was a common thread in Paul's writings:

1. In Second Corinthians five he said that *we who are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.*
2. He then described himself as *earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.*

This groaning within, and this earnest desire to be free from the flesh, is your spiritual **mourning**. It is the bemoaning of our condition now that you are born-again and encounter the internal struggle.

- being changed to bring change -

Jesus, atop the mount, delivering these words, must always be our fullest example. He is the embodiment of these words. He is the epitome.

How did He **mourn**? Certainly not for any struggle within Himself - since He had no sin nature. He mourned, though, for the human condition. He mourned for others.

You see, for example, Him mourning over the condition of Jerusalem. He would have gathered them, but they had rejected Him. It was because of their pitiable flesh, their sin nature, that they needed a Savior, but were rejecting God's provision.

If you mourn for the body of your sin and of others, you **shall be comforted**. What is the comfort? It seems it is in the understanding that you are now indwelt by God Himself, by God the Holy Spirit.

It's not a coincidence that the word used for comforted is from the same Greek word rendered **Comforter** in John 14:16 – used first of Jesus, then of the Holy Spirit Whom He would send in His place after He ascended to Heaven.

The very struggle within; the wretchedness; the conflict; is only possible if you are a new creation in Christ, with the Holy Spirit convicting you of sin. He is present within you; He is the Comforter; the Comforter comforts!

To go back to Paul: Immediately upon reaching wretchedness, he exclaimed,

Romans 7:25 I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

He thanked God because there *is* victory in the war within. It isn't in keeping some external law; it is in the Lord. The **mind** is a reference to your new nature, willing to **serve the law of God**. The **flesh** is constantly at war within you. The Lord's presence in you by God the Holy Spirit tips the battle in favor of your new nature whenever you yield to His influence, to His promptings, to His leading.

As you are probably already aware, the Bible as it was originally written had no chapter breaks. The translators added them later for your convenience. What is chapter eight to us is still part of Paul's discussion from the previous verses.

Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*

Paul used the analogy of the condemned murderer who carried around a decaying **body of death** to describe indwelling sin. But now he says that, even though sin is still present within you, you are not condemned to be subject to its decay and death!

Isn't that a comfort? It is... And it gets better as you contemplate the future. One day we will be free from the flesh entirely. We will be raised in, or Raptured into, a glorified physical body that has nothing of our old sinfulness to contend against.

This sense of being comforted both now and later is captured in the verb tense of the beatitude, **shall be comforted**. It means to be *continually* comforted – both now and forever.

The blessedness from **mourning** is in being **comforted**. It is *not* the **mourning** that blesses you; it is God's **comfort**.

Mourning is not misery. You don't go around bemoaning your sin and doing nothing about it. You receive God's **comfort** and go forward with a renewed awe at His grace that saved you and sustains you every moment of every day.



