

# 'Blessed Are They That Mourn'

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Sooner or later we all experience the death and loss of a loved one. It may be the most testing trial we ever have to face: a wife or a husband, a mother or father, a brother or sister, a child. Yet, child of God, know this, there is divine grace even in bereavement for a believer, and spiritual comfort in trusting the Lord when grief threatens to overwhelm our souls.

It was our Lord who gave the promise, 'Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted' (Matthew 5:4), and He who declared, 'I, even I, am he that comforteth you' (Isaiah 51:12). Mark it down, remember it when the time arrives, our Father, our Brother and our Friend has made a promise; personal and particular to you, of a special portion of help for the special form of need that is bereavement.

It is to the promises of scripture our minds must turn when waves of sorrow overwhelm our days and new depths of grief, as yet unplumbed, threaten to engulf our hearts and minds. The promises of scripture are for you, dear saint. They were inspired by the Holy Ghost, recorded by men of like passions as ourselves, and have been tested, proved, and confirmed to be true by countless generations to whom they have been sanctified by the love of Christ. It is Jesus who says, 'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me', and adds, 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you' (John 14:1, 18).

However much the Lord's family may be distressed and disturbed by the changes of life and the passing of loved ones, they shall never be left destitute of mercy and grace. The promise to Paul is equally to you who mourn in Zion, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12:9). We delight in the brightness of Christ's glory, yet in this moment our emptiness and loss is the dark background against which the splendour of His goodness shines.

Submissiveness is seen as negative by today's wisdom but in the walk of faith it is a positive attribute taught by sovereign grace. Our experience of God's grace and goodness does not begin and end in our conversion. Far from it! We long to know the Lord more, day by day, to grow in grace, to deepen our faith and enlarge our appreciation of spiritual truth, yet the means by which this comes is never easy. John Newton wrote,

I asked the Lord that I might grow

In faith, and love, and every grace;

Might more of His salvation know,

And seek more earnestly His face.

'Twas He who taught me thus to pray,

And He, I trust, has answered prayer;

But it has been in such a way

As almost drove me to despair.

The Lord's people have no command or example to pray for afflictions or wish hardship upon themselves. Tribulation will come without being sought and is not to be prayed for. Yet, God in His wisdom will teach His people submission to His sovereign will that they might thereby discover divine love, and experience spiritual comfort in the depths of personal loss. Our Saviour learned obedience by the things that He suffered. Shall not His followers expect the same? It is after we are humbled under the mighty hand of God that we shall be exalted in due time. We must be brought low before we can be lifted up. It is the ploughed and tilled field that produces the best fruit.

The heart of our case is this. Let us under our heavy burdens look to Jesus to give strength and support. Only then shall we be able to resist the enemy of God's elect when he tries to darken our mind, disquiet our spirit, distress our soul, disturb our peace, destroy our confidence and damage our comfort in the dim paths of this world. 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me' (Psalm 23:4).

It is our gift and privilege to trust a loving God and Saviour who delights to treat us with the goodness and gentleness His love demands. Our God is wise, holy, and good to His people both when He gives and when He takes away that which He has given. When this world changes, remember, God changes not. We fix our eyes too readily on the blessings we receive rather than upon the divine Giver whose hand supplies. All true life, peace and happiness comes from Christ and we must look to Him to provide it. Isaac Watts wrote, 'All needed grace will God bestow, and crown that grace with glory, too.'

It is in dark days that believers prove the comfort, peace and light in God's promises.

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