

SERMON VI.

OR,

GODLY MOURNERS SHALL BE COMFORTED.

'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.'—MAT. v. 4.

THE last day, you may remember, we spake of the first beatitude, the blessedness of the poor in spirit; and that wherein Christ saith their blessedness consists, 'theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' We have opened what the meaning of the kingdom of heaven is, not understanding it to be meant only that when they die they shall go to heaven, though it is true that they shall do so, yet the main scope of Christ here is to shew that even the poor in spirit shall have the good things of the state of the Messias. The Messias being come into the world, and erecting a new kingdom here in the world different from what was before, the poor in spirit shall be made partakers of that kingdom with all the privileges of it. I shall not look back to open further the privileges of that kingdom, only the main scope of the last sermon was to apply this to the poor in spirit, and to shew what blessedness those that are poor in spirit have from this kingdom. The Lord hath chosen the poor in this world that they might be partakers of the kingdom of heaven. And therefore it is a great encouragement to the ministers of the gospel to preach the kingdom of heaven to congregations that have many poor; and I would to God that the poor of this congregation might be got to hear of the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. I should have as great hopes to do good to this place as in any place in the kingdom, if the poor in this place might be brought to hear the gospel; for the very gospel itself is called the kingdom of heaven, because it doth reveal the great things of the kingdom of the Messias. Therefore, you that are poor and do come, be encouraged to come, and do you encourage all your poor neighbours and friends, and tell them that though they be never so poor, yet if their spirits be poor and humble according to their poverty, the kingdom of heaven is open for them likewise; and tell them what you have heard of the kingdom of heaven out of the gospel, what blessed things there are there; and then there may be a great deal of hope that God intends to bring many in this congregation to this his blessed kingdom.

The preaching of the gospel is compared to the casting of a net, and it is compared to it under this title, the kingdom of heaven. We have a great sea here to cast in, but those people that I would most gladly cast the net upon, I am afraid seldom do come within the compass of the net—I mean the poorest and meanest. Oh you that are rich, and are men in place, take some course to bring in the poor that they may come into this net, that when we come to cast the net—that is, the preaching of the gospel—that that may be as the kingdom of heaven to them.

And you that are young ones, do you hearken after the things of the kingdom of heaven, and ask questions about it; when you come home, ask your parents and governors what is the meaning of that of the kingdom of heaven, that poor people may come to be made kings and priests unto God. And the rather have we encouragement to speak to young ones that they should be inquiring, because we find that as soon as ever the kingdom of heaven began to be known, young ones were very earnest about it, and were very much affected with this kingdom of heaven. Compare those two places of Scripture, Mark xi. 9, 10 with Mat. xxi. 15, and there you shall find that the children and young ones were crying 'Hosanna to the Son of David.' And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were sore displeased. Compare this now with Mark xi. 9, 10, 'And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna to the highest.' They cried Hosanna to the highest, because of the kingdom of the Messias that was coming. Now it is said that the chief priests and scribes were troubled at it. Carnal hearts may be troubled to see young ones so forward in the way of the kingdom; but the Lord stirred up these to be affected with the kingdom of the Messias, and Christ doth justify them.

And Jesus said unto them, ‘Have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?’ This is for the honour of Jesus Christ that young ones shall cry Hosanna, &c. And all that hath been said about the blessedness of the poor should teach us to have high esteem of those that are poor in spirit; though they are contemned by the world, yet do not you contemn them. Blessed is he that considereth of these poor. And in James ii. 5 it is said, ‘That God hath chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith. Hearken, my beloved brethren,’ as a thing of admiration, ‘Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him. But ye have despised the poor.’ Take heed that this charge be not upon you to despise any of Christ’s little ones. Those that are poor in spirit, they are highly esteemed by Jesus Christ, therefore let them not be slighted by you. There are many things further about this, but we will leave what further may be said about that that is promised to the poor, namely, the kingdom of heaven.

We come now to the second beatitude.

‘Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.’

We find that Luke cites it in another way, and divers copies have it different. You shall find two or three blessednesses set in a different order there. But for the thing itself, it is one of the strangest paradoxes in the world; ‘Blessed are those that mourn.’ Of all afflictions, the affection of sorrow nature is least beholding to; it doth the least good to nature. Nature gets something by the affection of love, and the affection of joy, and the affection of desire, and of hope, and somewhat by fear; but sorrow is that that weakens nature, and yet Christ doth fall upon this; saith he, ‘Blessed are they that mourn.’ It is more than blessed are they that are sorrowful: so Chrysostom upon this place. He doth not say, Blessed are those that grieve, but ‘Blessed are those that mourn.’ For the word that is here translated mourn, signifieth an exceeding great mourning. The mourning that there is at the death of friends, when any buries an intimate friend, a dear child, or a dear kinsman, what mourning is there in the view of the world! But, saith Christ, Blessed are you then; if you be godly and my disciples, you are blessed in that mourning, though your mourning be the greatest mourning in the world. And it is in the present tense, ‘you that mourn,’ noting the continuance of it. Though you mourn constantly, though you be brought into a mournful condition, and so do live in it all the days of your lives, yet blessed are you that mourn. The world is altogether for jollity and bravery. Oh, blessed are they that are merry, that can drink wine in bowls, and crown themselves with rosebuds, and

chant to the viol, and invent instruments of music like David! They are accounted the blessed men in the world. But we see the judgment of Christ is quite contrary, ‘Blessed are they that mourn.’ They that mourn; surely not all they that mourn are blessed.

First, There is a foolish mourning, in which men and women are not blessed—that is, they mourn they know not for what. This is no blessedness, but folly.

Secondly, A natural mourning; when there is a mourning merely because nature is pinched, and some evil hath befallen it, and you go no further. This hath not a blessedness in it.

Thirdly, A worldly mourning; worldly sorrow causes death; to mourn for the loss of worldly things, as the great and the chief loss of all. This is not blessed, it causeth death; and,

Fourthly, An envious mourning; when men mourn and are grieved for the good of others. Surely this is not blessed, but cursed.

And there is, further, a devilish mourning; when men and women mourn that they cannot have opportunity to satisfy their lusts.

And lastly, There is a hellish, desperate mourning; when men and women mourn in despair. This is hellish, and not blessed. These mourners are not blessed.

But who then? Those that mourn—that is, such as being by the providence of God brought into a mournful condition, either by way of testimony to any truth of God, that they are deprived of many comforts in this world that others have, or by any affliction hand of God are brought into a sad condition, and their hearts are brought under to yield to God’s hand, and to sanctify his name in those his dealings with them; these are blessed. For so you must clear that expression that we have in the verse before, ‘Blessed are the poor;’ not all poor, but the poor in spirit. So, ‘Blessed are they that mourn’—that is, they that mourn in spirit likewise; whose spirits are brought in subjection to God, to honour God in that mournful condition in which they are; whose condition cannot be so low, but their hearts are lower than their condition. These are blessed, but especially these who set the object of their mourning right: who mourn for sin as the greatest evil; who mourn not only for their own sins, but for the sins of others, that God is so little honoured in the world; yea, who take to heart the afflictions of the church, mourning not only for their own afflictions, but for the afflictions of the church. Blessed are these that mourn.

And then all those that mourn in a gracious way.

You will say, When doth one mourn in a gracious way and manner?

First, When any evil is upon one the heart doth freely yield itself up to God, to honour God in such a condition as God hath put it into; not to do it by force, but freely.

And then, secondly, Those whose mourning hath the exercise of grace, in order to regulate their mourning; when the mournings of men and women are under the command of grace, of faith, of love, and of hope, not mourning as those without hope; when grace can command mourning, and can say to those waves of sorrow, hitherto shall ye go, and no further.

Thirdly, When in mourning the heart mourns after God; there is such a comfort that is taken away from me, either in way of testimony to God's truth, or in way of providential afflicting of me; but the thing that I mourn for, it is not so much because the comfort is gone, but because I am deprived of some good that might help me forward towards God, wherein I might be some way furthered in the way of God. And so the soul mourns after God, in the mourning for any affliction that is upon it.

Fourthly, When those that mourn have great care to do the work of their mourning condition; that is a special thing to be considered of in the blessedness of mourning. One that mourns so as he hath care to do the work of that mourning condition; to consider, God hath put me into this mourning condition, and what is the duty that God requires of me in this mourning condition in which God hath set me? Men and women ordinarily are solicitous about their afflictions, and their thoughts are altogether poring upon their afflictions. But now a gracious mourning causes the soul to be solicitous about the work. What is the work of this condition that God hath put me now to? It is not a sullen mourning, but a mourning that hath much activeness in it and stirring. The heart is travailing; for so in John xvi., about the middle, it is compared to a woman in travail. 'You shall mourn,' saith Christ; but there is promise of comfort: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, then she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.' hereby intimating that the mourning of the saints should be like the sorrow of a woman in travail; but some good should come of it. And this is a very useful meditation for us, when at any time we find our hearts much pressed with sorrow, we should consider, But what am I travailing about; I can never have comfort in my mourning, except I bring forth something in my sorrow. And though the Lord should keep them mourning thus all days of their lives, yet they are blessed.

For they shall be comforted; comfort will come. Now the ground of the blessedness ariseth, first, from the mourning itself; secondly, from the promise. Surely it is a blessed thing to be such a mourner.

First, Because that the lower our hearts are in our subjection to God in this mournful condition, the higher are our respects to God that brings us into this condition. The Lord brings his people into a mournful condition. Now the lower their hearts are in their subjection to God, the higher are their respects that they do shew unto God. There is a great deal of grace exercised in a gracious mourning.

Secondly, A mourning condition, when it is ordered by grace, it is a means of much good in the soul; it is that that takes away the rankness in the hearts of men. There is a rankness in all men's hearts naturally; especially if they enjoy contentment to the flesh, their lusts will grow very rank. As weeds grow very rank in summer time, now in the winter the frost nips the weeds and keeps them under; but if it be a long frost it kills them. And so doth a mournful condition; if it be sanctified, it kills the vermin, it kills our lusts, and is a special means of mortification in the soul; and therefore blessed are they that do mourn, and carry themselves graciously in a mourning condition.

Thirdly, It is that that delivers from many temptations. You think that jollity and bravery is the only happy life, but know there are a great many more temptations in that life than in a mournful condition. It is true, there are temptations in a mournful condition: there are temptations to despair,—but that is grievous to nature,—or to shift for themselves in some unlawful way. But now the temptations in a jolly condition: it is very suitable to a man's nature, and therefore more dangerous; and therefore blessed are they that are kept in a mournful condition, if God gives them hearts to sanctify his name in it.

Fourthly, They are blessed that are in a mournful condition, because God hath chosen for them that mourning condition in the most seasonable time. You know when a man is sick, then bitter things are more seasonable than sweet. Now we are all sickly poor creatures, and it is a great mercy of God in this time of our lives to choose for us a mournful condition—bitter things rather than sweet and luscious things. And if God doth subdue thy heart, so that thou canst be willing to take this, blessed art thou; for thou dost now mourn when it is most seasonable to mourn. A mournful state it is a seasonable state for men, considering what conditions we are here in, in this world. Thou wouldst be choosing of jollity, just like a poor sick man that would be choosing of sweetmeats; but blessed art thou that art willing to be under the choice of God.

Fifthly, And then especially here in this text, because they shall be comforted; it is but to make the comforts sweeter unto thee when they do come. The Lord is but working of thy soul to his own will, and working thee to a greater comfort. You know that when a man would build a structure, a stately building, the stones that he intends principally to build withal are hacked and hewn, that so they may be comely and fit for his building; but as for other stones, they are not regarded as those that are thus polished which he intends to lay. So it is an argument that the Lord hath great things for thee, great comforts for thee; he is now preparing thee in this thy mournful condition for great comforts. Thou shalt be comforted.

For first. There is a time coming when all tears shall be wiped from thine eyes. Do but read Rev. vii., from the 14th verse to the end, and there you shall find what is said to the people of God that are brought up in a mournful condition in this world.

And as all tears shall be wiped from thine eyes, so thou shalt have the fruit of all the promises. It is hard to look over the many promises, Isa. xxxv. 10, and li. 3, with many others which we must not stand to read unto you, but these, and as you read along the book of God you shall find many the like: and among many other promises that promise of Christ's coming again, in John xvi. 20, that is made as the great comfort, when Christ tells them that though they did weep and lament now, yet they should be comforted. Why, I will come again saith Christ. They should have the enjoyment of Jesus Christ, and all the good things that Christ hath purchased by his blood shall be theirs: surely thou shalt then be comforted. Jesus Christ pleads, Lord, whatsoever good all my sufferings hath purchased, let this soul be made partaker of. Surely if thou comest ever to be made partaker of all that good that Jesus Christ hath purchased by his blood thou shalt want no comfort.

And all thy comfort shall be proportionable to thy sorrow; as it is said of the whore of Babylon, so much as her pleasure hath been, so much torment give her. So, on the contrary, so much sorrow as thou hast had for my name's sake, so much joy and comfort shalt thou have, and that in a proportionable way. Christ hath many mansions in his Father's house. And he hath comforts in a proportionable way to all thy sorrow and mourning. It may be if thou hadst a more comfortable life in this world thou mightst have less comfort reserved for thee hereafter.

They shall be comforted.

But when, when shall they be comforted?

When? Why, they shall be comforted when the wicked shall be sorrowful. In Isa. lxv. 13, where there is set forth the different condition of the saints, and

the wicked and ungodly, 'Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.' Then shall you have comfort when the ungodly shall be ashamed.

And then, secondly, You shall be comforted; there is a time when the Lord will communicate unto you the choicest of his mercies. Now the Lord communicates himself, but in a very small and little way in comparison to what he doth intend. This time of a man's life is not the time of comfort. You know what Abraham said to Dives: Son, remember that in thy lifetime thou hadst thy good things, thy joys, thy comforts, and Lazarus had his evil things, he had sorrow and grief. It is not best, my brethren, for us to seek to have our comforts and portions in this lifetime, because this is not the time for God to communicate the choice of his mercy, but it is a great deal better that our comforts should be reserved to that time when God shall open the rich treasury of his mercy. All the things of this world are but the giving a few crumbs. I remember Luther saith to the whole Turkish empire, 'It is only a crumb of bread that the great Master of the house doth cast unto dogs.' They have but their crumbs here; but there is a time when God will deal out the choice of his mercies: he will open all the treasures of his grace, and communicate them unto his saints. 'They shall be comforted.'

And then we shall be comforted when we shall be more capable of comfort than now we are, and then to be comforted it is the best. 'Blessed are they that mourn, they shall be comforted.' And this comfort that the mourners shall have,

Shall be, first, a pure comfort. We have something that is sweet, but there is a great deal of mixture with our sweet. There is little sweet that we have but there is some poison or other; but this will be a pure comfort, free from danger, free from the mixture of trouble or danger.

And then they are spiritual comforts. Spiritual—by that I mean, not only that it shall be a soul comfort and not a carnal sensual comfort, as the comforts of most men in the world are; but that is not that I mean, especially when I say spiritual comforts, but by that I mean this: that their comforts shall come more firstly in their souls, and so they shall have comfort to their bodies by way of the eradication, as I may so say, of the comfort that they shall have to their souls. The comforts that we now have comes first to the outward man, and so our hearts are comforted by the sympathy with the body; but now the

comforts of the saints shall be firstly in their souls, and come from the soul to the body.

Secondly, Divine comforts they are that they shall have—that is, all comfort is from God one way or other, but from God more immediately. Here we have our comforts at second or third or fourth hand, but now there shall be comfort that shall be from God more immediately. And such comforts as are from the very nature of God himself—that is, such comfort as God is comforted in, such joy as God joys in, and God joys with them in it. It may be thou hast money, and canst go into a tavern, and drink and play, and thou rejoicest in it; but doth God rejoice in this? Is it any joy to God to have wine, good cheer, laughing and playing? But now the consolations that Christ promises here are the consolations of the Almighty. None of the saints that have true comfort even now in this world in some degree, but if their comfort be holy and gracious, the Lord rejoices in their rejoicing; there is joy in heaven, even in the heart of God, that joins with the joy that is in thy heart. And there is no comfort should satisfy a heart that hath communion with God, but such comfort wherein I may have some evidence that when my heart rejoices I know the heart of God rejoices in this my joy. Ask this question of your souls in the midst of your joy: I have a great deal of joy, but doth the heart of God rejoice in this my joy? Such are the comforts of the saints.

Thirdly, It is a full comfort, ‘Ask and you shall have, that your joy may be full.’ What a low kind of expression would this be, Blessed is a man that is sick, for he shall have health: this were a poor kind of expression, because health is but by taking away the evil of the sickness. But now Christ when he saith, ‘Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted,’ he means they shall have that fulness of comfort that would be abundantly more good unto them than all their sorrow could be evil unto them; they shall enter into their master’s joy, the joy not enter into them.

Fourthly, And then it shall be a strong comfort, Heb. vi. 18; such comfort as shall bear down any afflictions or oppositions.

Fifthly, An eternal consolation; so you have it in 2 Thes. ii. 16; in 2 Tim. ii. 11, ‘It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him.’ Mark with what an emphasis the Holy Ghost speaks when he speaks of the certainty of the comfort of the saints!—It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.’ Mourning, it is as the seed that shall certainly have a harvest. In Ps. xxvii. 11, there it is called a seed, ‘Those that sow in tears shall reap in joy;’ and so in Ps. exxvi.

you have the same expression. The mourning of the saints it is their seed-time, and therefore there will come a harvest.

And then, further, The Lord doth delight to communicate himself unto his saints, and therefore they must be comforted. God rejoices in that title, The God of all comfort, and that God that comforts us in all our tribulations.

They must needs be comforted, because God hath so engaged himself in his promises.

And because God the Father hath anointed Jesus Christ to be a comforter to you, as in Isa. lxi. As I told you of those that were poor in spirit, Jesus Christ was designed by God the Father to preach glad tidings to the poor; so in the same place we have Jesus Christ anointed to comfort those that mourn. As if God should say, I appoint thee, O Son, to this work; and certainly Christ will be faithful in his office.

Lastly, They shall be comforted, because the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, hath his denomination from hence—the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, that is equal with the Father and with the Son; and very glorious in his work. Now the work that he hath to do, it is to comfort the poor mourning saints of God, to be a comfort unto them. If the Holy Ghost be equal with the Father and the Son, his work must be glorious as well as the work of the Father and the Son. How glorious is the work of the Father in creating all things by his own word! How glorious is the work of the Son in the work of man’s redemption! Now the work of the Holy Ghost must have some kind of proportionable glory. It is impossible therefore but that thou must be comforted; so long as there is a Holy Ghost, so long thou must needs have comfort.

Oh the difference from hence between the comforts of carnal hearts and the saints! Thou hast comfort. How? By pouring forth drink into thy throat, or by thy cards or dice, here is thy comfort. What difference is there between a man’s having comfort by a little beer or wine or play, and a man that hath comfort by the Holy Ghost, designed by God the Father and the Son to be the comforter of him to all eternity! And thou that dost slight the comforts of the saints, and rather hast thy carnal heart to choose unto thee comfort and joy by eating and drinking and playing, what is the language of thy soul in this, but thus: O Lord, let me rather have comfort from meat and drink than from any work of the Holy Ghost. We hear in thy word that the Holy Ghost is designed by thyself and thy Son to be the comforter of the saints, but those are the comforts I have no skill in; I had rather have meat and drink and satisfy my lusts, and for the comforts of the Holy Ghost I will venture them whether I have any part in them;

yea, or no. Well, but whatever they do, ye that are of mournful spirits, and God keeps you under, and you go on mourning, and through the grace of God you can deny yourselves those sensual comforts that others let out their hearts unto, be not discouraged, but go on and bless thyself in thy God, bless thyself in this that Christ hath said concerning thee, that certainly thou shalt be comforted. Thus I have but run through the very heads of those things that may give a little light to the opening of these words.

But that which I had thought to have settled on all should have been the application of it, for to have spoken to the people of God, and to be some help to their comfort that Jesus Christ would have comforted; for if Jesus Christ hath said that they shall be comforted, it doth concern all men to comfort them, and especially the ministers of Christ. I shall only speak a word or two for the present to that which concerns us all from what hath been delivered.

First, You may see that there is a great deal of excellency in religion and godliness. Why, it is that that will make the mournfullest condition in the world to be comfortable. Suppose a man or woman had lost all that ever they had, if they be godly, religion will shew how they shall be blessed in this condition, for they are blessed before their comfort comes, so that those that are godly, their saddest condition cannot hinder their blessedness. When others in the world shall wring their hands for their losses, and be very sad, thou mayest be satisfied in this: I have not lost my happiness. Thou mayest say, I have lost my estate, and lost all outward comforts wherein I took so much delight; yet thou canst not say that thou hast lost thy blessedness. Thy blessedness is not in any creature comfort, but it is in thy God. Be not

shy, therefore, and afraid of godly sorrow because it brings trouble and affliction unto thee. Be not deluded with this temptation—for it is a temptation of Satan, whereby many souls are kept in bondage, and kept off from the ways of God—that therefore when once they come into the ways of God, they think they shall never have a merry day after it; but yet we see that there is comfort, abundance of comfort pronounced by Christ himself even unto that duty which seems to be the most contrary to mirth. ‘Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted.’ If the enemies should prevail against you, and you were under their power, yet, being godly, that doth not take away your blessedness. If your bodies be sick and in grievous pains, yet still you may be blessed, being godly. If you have lost your friends, yet blessed still. Be not shy, therefore, and afraid of godliness, because it perhaps brings some trouble to you, and sorrow to you. Many men and women they are afraid to be godly. Why? Because they fear it will take away their joy. But be not gulled with this temptation. It is true, religion may bring some other sorrows than thou hadst before; it may be thou mayest suffer more in the cause of God than before, and thou comest to be more afflicted for thy sin than before. It is true, religion may bring some outward sorrows and afflictions more, but there is abundantly more comforts than sorrows; therefore be not afraid to be one of Christ’s mourners, for Christ hath engaged himself unto thee, that thou shalt be comforted. As we read concerning Egypt, as there were more venomous creatures there than in other countries, so there was in no country more antidotes to cure them than in theirs. So, though religion may bring sorrow and trouble, yet there is nothing brings more cure and more help.