

## Mourning over Sin and Hatred of it

~Other Speakers M-R: Thomas Reade:

### 30. MOURNING OVER SIN AND HATRED OF IT

"I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning." Psalm 38:6

A lover of the world will perhaps say, If the effect of religion is to make me like a mourner bowed down with grief at the funeral of some beloved friend, let me escape it. Life is given us for enjoyment. Our natural appetites were formed to be gratified. Therefore, as the time is short, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.

All this might seem reasonable, did we die like the beasts that perish. But, even were this the case, formed as we are with minds capable of improvement, and living as we do under a Divine Moral Government, where cause and effect are made to operate for our weal or woe, would it not increase our temporal enjoyment to cultivate the virtues of temperance, sobriety, and prudence, with all the charities of domestic and social life? Every day's experience proves the truth of this, from the destructive consequences which result from a life of thoughtless dissipation, and those anti-social crimes which desolate the earth.

The whole framework of society, with its complicated changes, demonstrates a Moral Governor of the world, who has established laws over which the libertine, the spendthrift, and the infidel have no control. Do men throw the reins upon the neck of their lusts? They fall unhappy victims to their excesses. They live not out half their days. Do they squander away their property in splendor or dissipation? They sink into the depths, either of poverty or disease. Do they deny the immortality of the soul, or a day of future retribution? They are emboldened in crime, until, violating the laws of their country, they pay the penalty by dying an ignominious death.

If these things are so, what a friend is true religion to mankind. What unnumbered blessings follow in her train. But what is true religion? It is the religion of Jesus Christ, as revealed to us in the word of his grace. The entrance into this way of life is indeed strait, and the path in which we must walk is narrow; but, though it be commenced with tears and sorrow, the tears of repentance, and sorrow for sin, it will terminate with songs and everlasting joy.

The way of the world, on the contrary, allures the heart by its gaieties and pleasures, but its end is eternal death! "Blessed," then, "are those who mourn; for they shall be comforted." "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." "What sorrows await you who are rich, for you have your only happiness now. What sorrows await you who are satisfied and prosperous now, for a time of awful hunger is before you. What sorrows await you who laugh carelessly, for your laughing will turn to mourning and sorrow."

What an evil and bitter thing is sin! How dreadful are the polluting injections of Satan. But here lies the believer's comfort, that the Spirit of Light is greater than the spirit of darkness; that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. As God is a sin-hating, and a sin-avenging God; so is sin a soul-tormenting, and a soul-destroying evil. We behold its direful effects in our fallen world, under every form of misery. But at the Cross of Christ, the awful character of sin is written in letters of blood! There we learn its dreadful nature, so offensive to a God of Holiness, so rebellious against a God of Justice. Either the Eternal Son of the Most High must suffer in our stead, or a world of sinners must perish everlastingly!

Oh! may a view, a saving view of the Cross of my Emmanuel, melt my whole soul into contrition and love. Crucify, O Lord, your enemies and mine. Slay them all before you. Let no Agag, no first-born of the flock, be spared. Fortify my heart against the inroads of Satan. Enable me to keep a constant watch against those inbred corruptions, from which nothing but death will wholly rid me.

Mourning over sin may appear to some, as little better than the cant of the enthusiast. The language of humiliation does not necessarily prove the heart to be humbled. But when the soul, like David's, is truly broken and contrite, it will express its feelings, without regard to the opinions of men; it will pour out its sorrows to God, who hears and answers prayer. "I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning," is not the language of the nominal, but of the deeply tried and experienced Christian. It is most important to examine ourselves, for nothing is so easy as self-deception.

When sin is working within us, do we allow the enemy quietly to carry on his work of destruction, or do we fly instantly to the throne of grace for strength to resist him? The efficacy of believing prayer is truly wonderful.

When the soul is troubled; when it is bowed down under the weight of conscious guilt; the prayer of faith, resting on the promises, and pleading the merits of Christ, obtains deliverance, and is turned into a song of praise.

The liberated Christian, though released from his fetters, does not forget his state of bondage, nor does he cease to humble himself before his pardoning God. The language of his heart is, Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you. I long for your sanctifying grace. I mourn over my abominations. I desire the indwelling of your Spirit. I pant after a greater conformity to your will; an increased delight in the way of your commandments. I wait for your call to leave this world, and enter into the heavenly rest, where all your saints enjoy a state of perfect holiness, an eternal separation from all evil, an everlasting enjoyment of your presence and love.

If these, O my soul, be indeed your real feelings and desires, fear not the malice of Satan. These longings after Christ, and holiness, and heaven, if genuine, are the undoubted marks of your adoption into the family of God, however much they may be derided by an ungodly world. The voice may be Jacob's voice, when the hands are the hands of Esau. Hypocrites can speak with oily smoothness, when war is in their hearts. They can speak the language of piety, while indulging in every vice. Surely, then, it is needful to watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation- lest we deceive ourselves.

O, tempted believer, know for your comfort, that sins hated and opposed, though they distress, will not be allowed to destroy you. Temptations resisted, shall not hurt you, if, like Jesus, you can repel the Tempter by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Your safety lies in resting continually on the faithfulness of Jesus; in living in a spirit of watchfulness and prayer. Temptations prove that an enemy is near. In a moment, he can attack you with the battery of hell. Be vigilant; be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; then shall you be able to stand in the evil day, for when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.

Come, O blessed Spirit of Grace, with all your saving power. Descend into my soul, destroy every rebellious inclination, erect the standard of the Cross within me, and when you have enabled me to resist the devil, to crucify the flesh, and to renounce the world, then, O then, receive me into the happy region of glory, where all the church triumphant shall sing the conqueror's song.

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing," is the believer's motto. Godly sorrow and holy joy are blended in his daily experience. He acknowledges his vileness, and esteems Christ precious in his Nature, his Person, his Offices, his Character, and his Work.

Oh! that I may have grace more deeply to enter into the views and feelings of the true believer. Blessed Jesus! speak peace to my conscience, create purity in my heart, destroy the seeds of evil, implant the living principle of faith, and make me wholly to live to you. Seal salvation to my heart. Give me the inward witness, the Spirit of adoption, the earnest of the future inheritance. Leave me not for one moment, lest I fall; and bind me to yourself by the strong, indissoluble bonds, of redeeming, everlasting love!

How precious is the Grace of God. All blessings flow from this eternal fountain. Lord! pity a poor polluted worm, who now looks to You as the God of all grace, mercy, and peace. Take away the heart of stone, my hard, rebellious, heart, which yet pants after You. O, make me sensible of your infinite mercies, and of those innumerable transgressions which are known only unto You. Save me from my secret faults, faults to which I may be blind, through the deceitfulness of sin. Give me self-knowledge. Cause me to know the worst of myself, however humbling, however painful, the disclosure may be. I have no hope but in the atonement of Jesus, my only Savior. May I ever trust in his blood, who is God manifest in the flesh. May I ever be found in him, who is the Lord my Righteousness.

Oh! heavenly Father, send down the Spirit of your Son into my heart, that I may be filled with light and love. Save me, blessed Lord! from the captivating influence of earthly things. My foolish heart is ever wandering from You, the true, and only center of felicity. Everything around me is fleeting and unsatisfying; yet assuming an importance which it does not possess. My soul is boundless in its desires, being formed for immortality. It seeks after happiness, and what but your infinite goodness can satisfy the cravings of my never-dying soul? O, in mercy, draw my heart, and fix it in Yourself. Unite all my scattered affections to fear your name. Let every thought be submissive to your sway.

Satan is never idle. His suggestions are perpetually presented to the mind in one form or other. If gross sin be hateful, and a temptation to it would drive the believer to fervent prayer, the arch enemy craftily avoids such an

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awakening temptation. He, therefore, attacks the believer in another way. By a constant succession of trifling, unprofitable, suggestions; by presenting images of earthly things before the eye of the mind, by filling the imagination with a thousand dreams and fancies, he labors quietly, and without alarm, to draw away the heart from God. He thus distracts the mind, dissipates the thoughts, and entangles the affections, until, at length, the grieved Spirit of God withdraws his comfort, and leaves the unwatchful believer in a state of darkness, bordering on despair.

O, blessed Jesus, you mighty Conqueror of this enemy of my soul, shield me by your grace; arm me with your power, and enable me to resist and overcome this dreadful foe. Lord, I am helplessness itself. Undertake for me. I am nothing but guilt and misery, save me, for your mercy's sake.