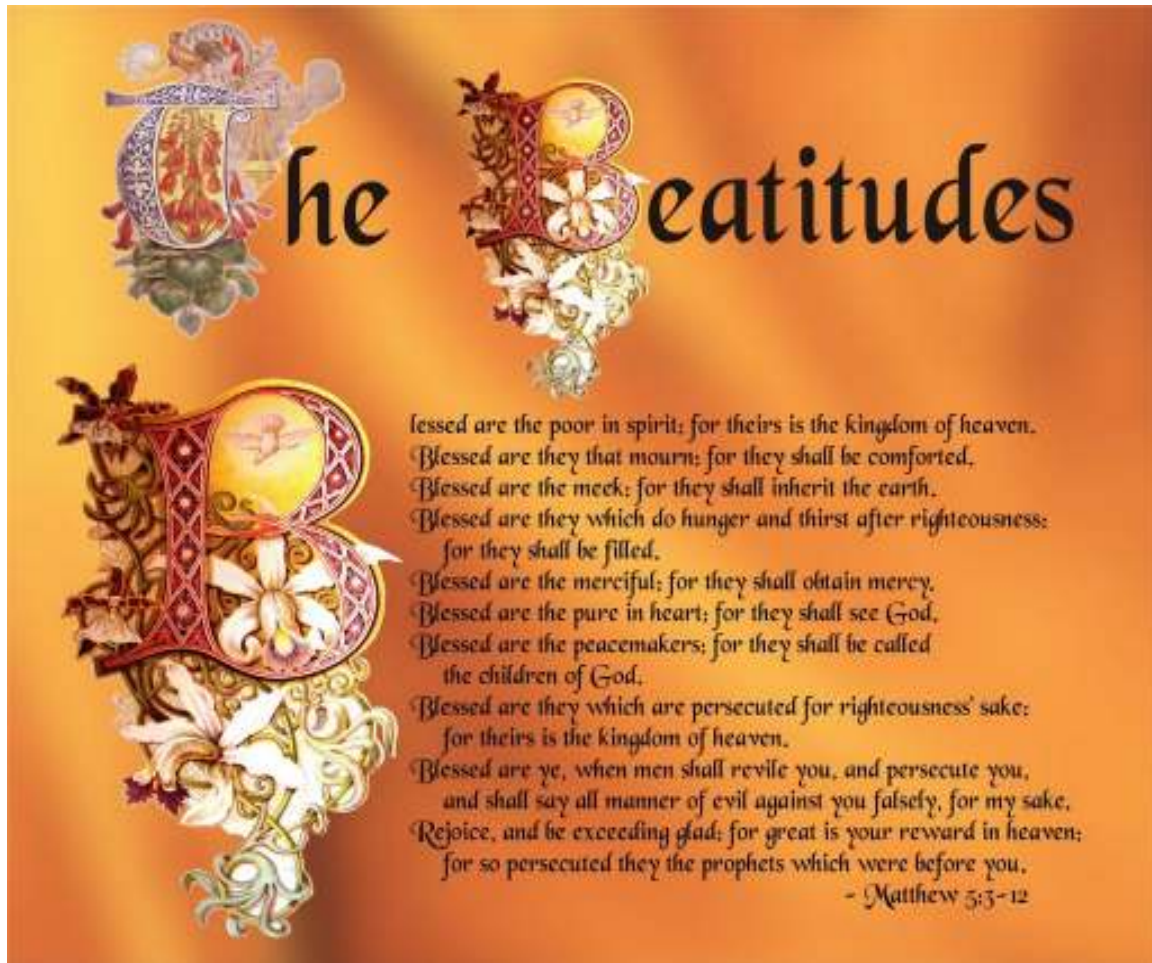


January 2020

Congregational Devotions



by
Thomas Watson

January 1 – Wednesday

“Poverty Of Spirit”

Matthew 5:3

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”.

Some are of opinion, that this was the first sermon which ever Christ gave, therefore it may challenge our best attention. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit'. Our Lord Christ, beginning to raise a high and stately fabric of blessedness, lays the foundation of it low—in poverty of spirit. But all poverty is not blessed. I shall use a fourfold distinction.

1. I distinguish between 'poor in estate', and 'poor in spirit'. There are *the Devil's poor*. They are both poor and wicked—whose clothes are not more torn than their conscience. There are some whose poverty is their sin, who through *improvidence* or excess have brought themselves to poverty. These may be poor in *estate*—but not poor in *spirit*.

2. I distinguish between 'spiritually poor' and 'poor in spirit'. He who is without grace is spiritually poor—but he is not poor in spirit; he does not know his own beggary. 'You know not, that you are poor' (Revelation 3:17). He is in the *worst* sense poor—who has no sense of his poverty.

3. I distinguish between 'poor-spirited' and 'poor in spirit'. They are said to be poor-spirited who have mean, base spirits, who act below themselves. Such are those misers, who having great estates—yet can hardly afford themselves bread; who live sneakingly, and are ready to wish their own throats cut, because they are forced to spend something in satisfying nature's demands. This Solomon calls an evil under the sun.

'There is an evil which I have seen under the sun—a man to whom God has given riches, so that he lacks nothing that he desires—yet God gives him not power to eat thereof' (Ecclesiastes 6:2). True religion makes no man a cheapskate. Though it teaches prudence—yet not sordidness. Then there are those who act below themselves as they are Christians, while they sinfully comply and prostitute themselves to the desires of others; a base kind of metal that will take any stamp. They will for a piece of silver—part with the jewel of a good conscience. They will be of the *popular* religion. They will dance to the devil's pipe, if their superior commands them. These are poor-spirited but not poor in spirit.

4. I distinguish between poor in an *evangelical* sense—and poor in a *popish* sense. The papists give a wrong gloss upon the text. By 'poor in spirit', they understand those who, renouncing their estates, vow a voluntary poverty, living retiredly in their monasteries. But Christ never meant these. He does not pronounce them blessed—who make themselves poor, leaving their estates and callings—but such as are evangelically poor.

Thomas Watson

January 2 – Thursday

“Poverty Of Spirit”

Well then, what are we to understand by 'poor in spirit'? The Greek word for 'poor' is not only taken in a strict sense for those who live upon charity—but in a more large sense, for those who are destitute as well of *inward* as outward comfort. Poor in spirit, then, *signifies those who are brought to the sense of their sins, and seeing no goodness in themselves, despair in themselves and sue wholly to the mercy of God in Christ.* Poverty of spirit is a kind of self-annihilation. 'The poor in spirit' (says Calvin) 'are those who see nothing in themselves—but fly to *mercy* for sanctuary.' Such an one was the publican: 'God be merciful to me a sinner' (Luke 18:13). Of this temper was Paul: 'That I may be found in Christ, not having my own righteousness' (Philippians 3:9). These are the poor, who are invited as guests to wisdom's banquet (Proverbs 7:3, 4).

Here several questions may be propounded.

[1] Why does Christ here begin with poverty of spirit? Why is this put in the forefront? I answer, Christ does it to show that poverty of spirit is the very basis and foundation of all the other graces which follow.

You may as well expect fruit to grow without a root, as the other graces without poverty of spirit. Until a man is poor in spirit, he cannot mourn. Poverty of spirit is like the fire under the still, which makes the water drop from the eyes. When a man sees his own defects and deformities, and looks upon himself as undone—then he mourns after Christ. 'The springs run in the valleys' (Psalm 104:10). When the heart becomes a valley and lies low by poverty of spirit, now the springs of holy mourning run there. Until a man is poor in spirit, he cannot 'hunger and thirst after righteousness'. He must first be sensible of need, before he can hunger. Therefore Christ begins with poverty of spirit—because this ushers in all the rest.

[2] What is the difference between *poverty of spirit*, and *humility*? These are so alike that they have been taken one for the other. Chrysostom, by 'poverty of spirit', understands *humility*. Yet I think there is some difference. They differ as the *cause* and the *effect*. I think that poverty of spirit is the cause of humility, for when a man sees his need of Christ, and how he lives on the alms of free grace—this makes him humble. He who is sensible of his own vacuity and indigence, hangs his head in humility with the violet. Humility is the sweet spice which grows from poverty of spirit.

[3] What is the difference between poverty of spirit, and self-denial?

I answer, in some things they agree, in some things they differ. In some things they **agree**; for the one who is poor in spirit is an absolute self-denier. He renounces all good opinion of himself. He acknowledges his dependence upon Christ and free grace.

But in some things they **differ**. The self-denier parts with the world for Christ; the poor in spirit parts with himself for Christ, that is—his own righteousness. The poor in spirit sees himself nothing without Christ; the self-denier will leave himself nothing for Christ. And thus I have shown what poverty of spirit is.

Thomas Watson

January 3 – Friday

“Poverty Of Spirit”

The reasons are:

1 Until we are poor in spirit—we are not capable of receiving grace. He who is swollen with self-excellency and self-sufficiency—is not fit for Christ. He is full already. If the hand is full of pebbles—it cannot receive gold. The glass is first emptied, before you pour in wine. God first empties a man of himself, before he pours in the precious wine of his grace. None but the poor in spirit are within Christ's commission. 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted' (Isaiah 61:1), that is, such as are broken in the sense of their unworthiness.

2. Until we are poor in spirit—Christ is never precious. Until we see our own wants, we never see Christ's worth. Poverty of spirit is salt and seasoning, which makes Christ relish sweet to the soul. Mercy is most welcome to the poor in spirit. He who sees himself clad in filthy rags (Zechariah 3:4,5), what will he give for change of raiment, the righteousness of Christ! What will he give to have the fair crown of salvation set upon his head! When a man sees himself almost wounded to death—how precious will the balm of Christ's blood be to him! When he sees himself deep in arrears with God, and is so far from paying the debt that he cannot sum up the debt—how glad would he be for a surety! 'The pearl of great price' is only precious to the one who is poor in spirit. He who needs bread and is ready to starve, will have it whatever it cost. He will lay his garment to pledge; bread he must have—or he is undone! So to him who is poor in spirit, who sees his need of Christ—how precious is a Savior! Christ is Christ and grace is grace to him! He will do anything for the bread of life! Therefore will God have the soul thus qualified—to enhance the value and estimate of the Lord Jesus.

3. Until we are poor in spirit—we cannot go to heaven. 'Theirs is the kingdom of heaven'. Poverty of spirit tunes and prepares us for heaven. By nature a man is puffed up with self-esteem, and the gate of heaven is so narrow that he cannot enter. Now poverty of spirit lessens the soul; it pares off its superfluity, and now he is fit to enter in at the 'narrow gate'.

The great rope cannot go through the eye of the needle—but let it be untwisted and made into small threads, and then it may. Poverty of spirit untwists the great rope. It makes a man little in his own eyes, and now an entrance shall be made unto him, 'richly into the everlasting Kingdom' (2 Peter 1:11). Through this temple of *poverty*, we must go into the temple of *glory*.

It shows wherein a Christian's riches consist, namely in poverty of spirit. Some think if they can fill their bags with gold—and then they are rich. But those who are poor in spirit, are the rich men. They are *rich in poverty*. This poverty entitles them to a kingdom! How poor are those who think themselves rich! How rich are those who see themselves poor!

I call it the 'jewel of poverty'. There are some paradoxes in piety which the world cannot understand; for a man to become a fool that he may be wise (1 Corinthians 3:18); to save his life by losing it (Matthew 16:25); and by being poor to be rich. Carnal reason laughs at it—but 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom'. Then this poverty is to be striven for more than all riches. Under these rags, is hidden cloth of gold. Out of this carcass comes honey.

January 4 – Saturday

“Poverty Of Spirit”

If blessed are the poor in spirit, then by the rule of contraries, cursed are the proud in spirit (Proverbs 16:5). There is a generation of men who commit idolatry with themselves; no such idol as self! They admire their own parts, moralities, self-righteousness; and upon this stock graft the hope of their salvation. There are many too good to go to heaven. They have commodities enough of their own growth, and they scorn to live upon the borrow, or to be indebted to Christ. These bladders the Devil has blown up with pride, and they are swelled in their own conceit; but it is like the swelling of a dropsy man whose bigness is his disease. Thus it was with that proud religious one: 'The Pharisee stood and prayed, God, I thank you that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican; I fast twice in the week, I give tithes... ' (Luke 18:11).

Here was a man setting up the topsail of pride; but the publican, who was poor in spirit, stood afar off and would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven—but smote upon his breast saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' This man carried away the garland. 'I tell you' (says Christ) 'this man went down to his house justified rather than the other'.

Paul, before his conversion, thought himself in a very good condition, 'touching the law, blameless' (Philippians 3:6). He thought to have built a tower of his own righteousness, the top whereof should have reached to heaven; but, at last, God showed him there was a crack in the foundation, and then he gets into the 'rock of ages'. 'That I may be found in him' (Philippians 3:9). There is not a more dangerous precipice than self-righteousness.

This was Laodicea's temper: 'Because you say I am rich and I have need of nothing... ' (Revelation 3:17). She thought she wanted nothing when indeed she had nothing. How many does this damn! We see some ships that have escaped the rocks—yet are cast away upon the sands; so some who have escaped the rocks of gross sins—yet are cast away upon the sands of self-righteousness; and how hard is it to convince such men of their danger! They will not believe but that they may be helped out of their dungeon with these rotten rags. They cannot be persuaded their case is so bad as others would make it. Christ tells them they are blind—but they are like Seneca's maid, who was born blind—but she would not believe it. The house, says she, is dark—but I am not blind. Christ tells them they are naked, and offers his white robe to cover them—but they are of a different persuasion; and because they are blind, they cannot see themselves naked.

How many have perished by being their own saviors! O that this might drive the proud sinner out of himself! A man never comes to himself until he comes out of himself. And no man can come out, until first Christ comes in.

Thomas Watson

January 5 – Sunday

“Poverty Of Spirit”

If poverty of spirit be so necessary—how shall I know that I am poor in spirit? By the blessed *effects* of this poverty, which are:

1. **He who is poor in spirit—is weaned from himself.** 'My soul is even as a weaned child' (Psalm 131:2). It is hard for a man to be weaned from himself. The vine catches hold of everything that is near, to prop itself upon. Just so, there is some bough or other a man would be catching hold of to rest upon. How hard is it to be brought quite off himself! The poor in spirit are divorced from themselves; they see they must go to hell without Christ. 'My soul is even as a weaned child'.

2. **He who is poor in spirit—is a Christ-admirer.** He has high thoughts of Christ. He sees himself *naked*—and flies to Christ, to be clothed in the garments of His righteousness. He sees himself *wounded*—and as the wounded deer runs to the water, so he thirsts for Christ's blood, the water of life. "Lord!" says he, "give me Christ or I die!" Conscience is turned into a fiery serpent and has stung him; now he will give all the world—for a brazen serpent! He sees himself in a state of *death*; and how precious is one leaf of the tree of life, which is both for food and medicine! The poor in spirit sees all his riches lie in Christ, 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification . . .'. In every need, he flies to this storehouse! He adores the *all-fullness* in Christ.

They say of the oil in Rheims, though they are continually almost using it—yet it is never used up. And such is Christ's blood—it can never be emptied. He who is poor in spirit has recourse still to this fountain. He sets a high value and appreciation upon Christ. He *hides* himself in Christ's wounds. He *bathes* himself in his blood. He *wraps* himself in Christ's robe. He sees a spiritual dearth and famine at home—but he flees to Christ. 'Show me the Lord (says he) and it suffices!'

3. **He who is poor in spirit—is ever complaining of his spiritual estate.** He is much like a poor man who is ever telling you of his needs. He has nothing to help himself with—he is ready to starve! So it is with him that is poor in spirit. He is ever complaining of his needs, saying, "I want a broken heart—and a thankful heart." He makes himself the most indigent creature. Though he dares not deny the work of grace (which would be a bearing false witness against the Spirit)—yet he mourns he has no more grace. This is the difference between a hypocrite and a child of God. The hypocrite is ever telling what good he has. A child of God complains of what good he lacks. The one is glad he is so good; the other grieves he is so bad. The poor in spirit goes from ordinance to ordinance for a supply of his needs; he would gladly have his stock increased. Try by this if you are poor in spirit. While others complain they want children, or they want estates—do you complain you want grace? This is a good sign. 'There is one who makes himself poor—yet has great riches' (Proverbs 13:7). Some beggars have died rich. The poor in spirit, who have laid all their lives at the gate of mercy and have lived upon the alms of free grace—have died rich in faith, heirs to an eternal kingdom!

Thomas Watson

January 6 – Monday

“Poverty Of Spirit”

4. He who is poor in spirit—is lowly in heart. Rich men are commonly proud and scornful—but the poor are submissive. The poor in spirit roll themselves in the dust in the sense of their unworthiness. 'I abhor myself in dust' (Job 42:6). He who is poor in spirit looks at another's *excellencies*—and his own *infirmities*. He denies not only his sins—but his duties. The more grace he has, the more humble he is—because he now sees himself a greater debtor to God. If he can do any duty, he acknowledges it is Christ's strength more than his own (Philippians 4:13). *As the ship gets to the haven more by the benefit of the wind than the sail—so when a Christian makes any swift progress, it is more by the wind of God's Spirit than the sail of his own endeavor.*

The poor in spirit, when he acts most like a saint, confesses himself 'the chief of sinners'. He blushes more at the defect of his graces—than others do at the excess of their sins. He dares not say he has prayed or wept. He lives—yet not he—but Christ lives in him (Galatians 2:20). He labors—yet not he—but the grace of God (1 Corinthians 15:10).

5. He who is poor in spirit—is much in prayer. He sees how short he is of the standard of holiness, therefore begs for more grace; Lord, more faith, more conformity to Christ. A poor man is ever begging. You may know by this—one who is poor in spirit. He is ever begging for a spiritual alms. He knocks at heaven-gate; he sends up sighs; he pours out tears; he will not leave the gate—until he has his alms.

6. He who is poor in spirit—is content to take Christ upon his own terms. The proud sinner will argue and bargain with Christ. He will have Christ—and his pleasures; Christ—and his covetousness. But he who is poor in spirit sees himself lost without Christ, and he is willing to have him upon his own terms, a *Prince* to rule him—as well as a *Savior* to save him: 'Jesus my *Lord*' (Philippians 3:8).

A castle which has long been besieged and is ready to be captured, will surrender on any terms to save their lives. He whose heart has been a garrison for the devil, and has held out long in opposition against Christ, when once God has brought him to poverty of spirit, and he sees himself damned without Christ, let God propound whatever articles he will—he will readily subscribe to them. 'Lord, what will you have me to do?' (Acts 9:6). He who is poor in spirit will do anything—that he may have Christ. He will behead his beloved sin! He will, with Peter, cast himself upon the water to come to Christ.

7. He who is poor in spirit—is an exalter of free grace. None so magnify God's mercy—as the poor in spirit. The poor are very thankful.

When Paul had tasted mercy, how thankfully does he adore free grace! 'The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant' (1 Timothy 1:14). It was super-exuberant grace! He sets the crown of his salvation—upon the head of free grace! As a man who is condemned and has a pardon sent him—how greatly he proclaims the goodness and mercifulness of his prince! So Paul displays *free grace* in its magnificent colors. He interlines all his epistles with free grace. As a vessel which has been *perfumed* makes the water taste of it—so Paul, who was a vessel perfumed with mercy, makes all his epistles to taste of this perfume of free grace! Those who are poor in spirit, bless God for the least crumb which falls from the table of free grace!

Poverty of spirit is the foundation stone, on which God lays the superstructure of eternal glory!

January 7 – Tuesday

“Poverty Of Spirit”

There are four things which may persuade Christians to be poor in spirit.

1. **This poverty is your riches.** You may have the world's riches, and yet be poor. You cannot have this poverty without being made rich. Poverty of spirit entitles you to all Christ's riches.
2. **This poverty is your nobility.** God looks upon you as people of honor. He who is vile in his own eyes—is precious in God's eyes. The way to rise—is to fall. God esteems the *valley* highest.
3. **Poverty of spirit sweetly quiets the soul.** When a man is brought off from himself to rest on Christ, what a blessed calm is in the heart! I am poor—but 'my God shall supply all my needs!' (Philippians 4:19). I am unworthy—but Christ is worthy! I am indigent—but Christ is infinite! 'Lead me to the rock that is higher than I' (Psalm 61:2). A man is safe upon a rock. When the soul goes out of itself and centers upon the rock, Christ—now it is firmly settled upon its basis. This is the way to comfort. You will be wounded in spirit—until you come to be poor in spirit.
4. **Poverty of spirit paves the pathway for blessedness.** 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' Are you poor in spirit? You are blessed people! Happy for you that ever you were born! If you ask, "Wherein does this blessedness appear?" read the next words, 'Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven'.
5. The poor in spirit are enriched with a heavenly kingdom!

Thomas Watson

January 8 – Wednesday

“Poverty Of Spirit”

"Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3

Here is high advancement for the saints. They shall be advanced to a heavenly kingdom! There are some who, aspiring after earthly greatness, talk of a temporal reign here—but then God's church on earth would not be *militant*, but *triumphant*. But sure it is—that the saints shall reign in a glorious manner: 'Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.' A kingdom is the pinnacle and top of all worldly felicity, and 'this honor have all the saints!' So says our Savior, 'Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' *All Christ's subjects are kings!* By the *kingdom of heaven*, is meant that state of glory which the saints shall enjoy when they shall reign with God and the angels forever; sin, hell and death being fully subdued.

A. For the illustration of this, I shall show first—**wherein the saints in heaven are like kings.** Kings have their insignia or regalia, their ensigns of royalty and majesty.

1. Kings have their CROWNS. So the saints after death have their royal crown. 'Be faithful unto death—and I will give you a crown of life' (Revelation 2:10). Believers are not only *pardoned*—but *crowned!* The crown is an ensign of honor. A crown is not for everyone. It will not fit every head. It is only for kings and people of renown to wear (Psalm 21:3). The crown which the poor in spirit shall wear in heaven, is an honorable crown. God himself installs them into their honor and sets the royal crown upon their head. And this crown that the saints shall wear, which is divinely glorious and illustrious, exceeds all other.

[1] It is more pure. Other crowns, though they are made of pure gold—yet they are mixed metal; they have their *troubles*. A crown of *gold*, cannot be made without *thorns*. It has so many vexations belonging to it, that it is apt to make the head ache. Which made Cyrus say, did men but know what cares he sustained under the imperial crown, he thought they would not stoop to take it up. But the saints' *crown* is made without *crosses*. It is not mingled with *care of keeping*—or *fear of losing*.

What Solomon speaks in another sense, I may say of the crown of glory, 'It adds no sorrow with it' (Proverbs 10:22). This crown, like David's harp, drives away the evil spirit of sorrow and disquiet. As there can be joy in hell—so there can be no grief in heaven!

[2] This crown of glory does not draw envy to it. David's own son envied him and sought to take his crown from his head. A princely crown is oftentimes the mark for *envy* and *ambition* to shoot at! But the crown the saints shall wear is free from envy. One saint shall not envy another—because *all* are crowned! And though one crown may be larger than another—yet every one shall have as big a crown as he is able to carry!

Thomas Watson

January 9 – Thursday

“Poverty Of Spirit”

[3] **This is a never-fading crown.** Other crowns quickly wear away and tumble into the dust: 'Does the crown endure to all generations?' (Proverbs 27:24). Henry VI was honored with the crowns of *two kingdoms*, France and England. The first was lost through the faction of his nobles; the other was twice plucked from his head. The crown has many heirs and successors. The crown is a *withering* thing. Death is a worm which feeds in it; but the crown of glory is imperishable, 'it fades not away' (1 Peter 5:4). It is not like the rose which loses its color and fragrantcy. This crown cannot be made to wither—but it keeps always fresh and resplendent. *Eternity* is a jewel of the saints' crown!

2. Kings have their ROBES. The robe is a garment with which Kings are arrayed. 'The King of Israel and the King of Judah sat clothed in their *robes*' (2 Chronicles 18:9). The robe was of scarlet or velvet lined with ermine, sometimes of a purple color; sometimes of an azure brightness.

Thus the saints shall have their robes. 'I beheld a great multitude which no man could number of all nations and kindreds, clothed in white robes' (Revelation 7:9). The saints' robes signify their glory and splendor; white robes denote their sanctity. They have no sin to taint or defile their robes. In these robes they shall shine as the angels!

3. Kings have their SCEPTERS in token of rule and greatness. King Ahasuerus held out to Esther the golden scepter (Esther 5:2); and the saints in glory have their scepter, and 'palms in their hands' (Revelation 7). It was a custom of great conquerors to have palm branches in their hand, in token of victory. So the saints, those kings have 'palms', an emblem of victory and triumph. They are victors over sin and hell. 'They overcame by the blood of the Lamb' (Revelation 12:11).

4. Kings have their THRONES. When Caesar returned from conquering his enemies, there were granted to him four triumphs in token of honor, and there was set for him a chair of ivory in the senate, and a throne in the theater. Just so—the saints in heaven returning from their victories over sin, shall have a throne more rich than ivory or pearl—a throne of glory! (Revelation 3:21).

[1] **This shall be a HIGH throne.** It is seated high above all the kings and princes of the earth. Nay, it is far above all heavens (Ephesians 4). There is the *atmospheric* heaven—which is that space from the earth to the sphere of the moon. There is the *starry* heaven—the place where the stars are. There is the heaven of heavens, which is called the 'third heaven' (2 Corinthians 12:2). In this glorious sublime place, shall the throne of the saints be erected.

[2] **It is a SAFE throne.** Other thrones are unsafe; they stand *tottering*. 'You have set them in slippery places' (Psalm 73:18); but the saints' throne is sure. 'He who overcomes shall sit with me upon *my* throne' (Revelation 3:21). The saints shall sit with Christ. He keeps them safe, that no hand of violence can pull them from their throne. O people of God, think of this—you shall shortly sit upon the heavenly throne with Jesus!

Thomas Watson

January 10 – Friday

“Poverty Of Spirit”

B. Having shown wherein the saints in glory are like kings—let us see **wherein the kingdom of heaven excels other kingdoms.**

1. It excels in the FOUNDER and MAKER. Other kingdoms have *men* for their builders—but this kingdom has *God* for its builder! (Hebrews 11:10). Heaven is said to be 'made without hands' (2 Corinthians 5:1), to show the excellency of it. Neither man nor angel could ever lay stone in *this* building. God erects this kingdom. Its 'builder and maker is God'.

2. This kingdom excels in the RICHES of it. Gold does not so much surpass iron—as this kingdom surpasses all other riches. 'The gates are of pearl' (Revelation 21:21). 'And the foundations of the wall of it are garnished with all precious stones' (verse 19). It is enough for *cabinets* to have pearl; but were '*gates* of pearl' ever heard of before? It is said that 'Kings shall throw down their crowns and scepters before it (Revelation 4:10), as counting all their glory and riches but dust—in comparison of it.

This kingdom has deity itself to enrich it, and these riches are such as cannot be weighed in the balance; neither the heart of man can conceive, nor the tongue of angel express the magnificence of the heavenly kingdom!

3. This kingdom excels in the PERFECTION of it. Other kingdoms are defective. They have not all provisions within themselves, nor have they all commodities of their own growth—but are forced to trade abroad to supply their needs at home. King Solomon sent for gold to Ophir (2 Chronicles 8:18). But there is no *defect* in the kingdom of heaven!

Here are all delights and rarities to be had! 'He who overcomes shall inherit *all* things!' (Revelation 21:7). Here is beauty, wisdom, glory and magnificence. Here is the Tree of Life in the midst of this paradise. All things are to be found here—but sin and sorrow—the absence whereof adds to the blessedness of this kingdom!

4. This kingdom excels in SECURITY. Other kingdoms fear either foreign invasions or internal divisions. Solomon's kingdom was peaceable a while—but at last he had an alarum given him by the enemy (1 Kings 11:11,14). But the kingdom of heaven is so impregnable, that it fears no hostile assaults or inroads. The devils are said to be locked up in chains (Jude 6). The saints in heaven shall no more need fear them than a man fears a thief who is hanged up in chains. The gates of this celestial kingdom 'are not shut' (Revelation 21:25). We shut the gates of the city in a time of danger—but the gates of that kingdom always stand open—to show that there is no fear of the approach of an enemy. The kingdom has gates for the *magnificence* of it—but the gates are not shut because of the *security* of it.

Thomas Watson

January 11 – Saturday

“Poverty Of Spirit”

5. This kingdom excels in its **STABILITY**. Other kingdoms have *vanity* written upon them. They cease and are changed; though they may have a *head of gold*—yet *feet of clay*. 'I will cause the kingdom to cease' (Hosea 1:4). Where is the glory of Athens? the pomp of Troy? What is become of the Assyrian, Grecian, Persian monarchy? Those kingdoms are demolished and laid in the dust! But the kingdom of heaven has *eternity* written upon it! It is an 'everlasting kingdom' (2 Peter 1:11).

Other kingdoms may be *lasting*—but not *everlasting*. The apostle calls it 'a kingdom which cannot be shaken' (Hebrews 12:28). It is fastened upon a strong foundation—the omnipotence of God. It runs parallel with eternity. 'They shall reign forever and ever!' (Rev. 22:5).

C. I shall next show the truth of this proposition—that this kingdom is infallibly entailed on the saints. In regard of God's free grace. 'It is your Father's good pleasure to *give* you the kingdom' (Luke 12:32). It is not for any desert in us—but the free grace in God. The papists say we merit the kingdom—but we disclaim the title of merit. Heaven is a gift of God's grace.

There is a price paid. Jesus Christ has shed his blood for it. All saints come to the kingdom, through blood. Christ's hanging upon the cross was to bring us to the crown. As the kingdom of heaven is a *gift* in regard of the Father—so it is a *purchase* in regard of the Son.

1. This shows us that true religion is no unreasonable thing. God does not cut us out work—and give no reward. Godliness enthrones us in a kingdom! When we hear of the doctrine of *repentance*, steeping our souls in brinish tears for sin; the doctrine of *mortification*, pulling out the right eye, beheading the king-sin; and we are ready to think it is hard to swallow down this bitter pill. But here is something in the text which may sweeten it. *There is a glorious kingdom reserved for us—and that will make amends for all.* This glorious recompense as far exceeds our thoughts—as it surpasses our defects. No one can say without wrong to God, that he is a hard master. God gives double pay. He bestows a kingdom upon those who fear him. Satan may disparage the ways of God, like those spies who raised a bad report of the good land (Numbers 13:32). But will Satan mend your wages if you serve him? He gives damnable pay! Instead of a kingdom—he gives 'chains of darkness' (Jude 6).

2. See here the mercy and bounty of God, who has prepared a kingdom for his people. It is a favor that we poor 'worms and no men' (Psalm 22:6) should be allowed to live. But that worms should be made kings—this is divine bounty! It is mercy to *pardon* us—but it is rich *mercy* to crown us! 'Behold, what manner of love' is this! Earthly princes may bestow great gifts on their subjects—but they keep the kingdom to themselves. Though Pharaoh advanced Joseph to honor and gave him a ring from his finger—yet he kept the kingdom to himself. 'Only in the throne will I be greater than you' (Genesis 41:40). But God gives a kingdom to his people, he sets them upon the throne! How David admires the goodness of God in bestowing upon him a temporal kingdom! 'Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord and said, Who am I, O Lord God! and what is my house, that you have brought me hitherto?' (2 Samuel 7:18). He wondered that God should take him from the sheepfold and set him on the throne! that God should turn his shepherd's staff into a king's scepter! O then how may the saints admire the riches of grace, that God should give them a glorious kingdom above all the princes of the earth, nay, far above all heavens!

January 12 – Sunday

“Poverty Of Spirit”

3. This shows us that Christianity is no disgraceful thing. Wise men measure things by the final end. What is the end of godliness? It brings a glorious kingdom! A man's sin brings him to shame (Proverbs 13:5).

What fruit had you in those things, whereof you are now ashamed? (Romans 6:21). But religion brings to honor (Proverbs 4:8). It brings a man to a throne, a crown, it ends in eternal glory! It is the sinner's folly to reproach a saint. It is just as if Shimei had reproached David when he was going to be made king. It is a saint's wisdom to despise a reproach.

Say as David when he danced before the ark, 'I will yet be more vile' (2 Samuel 6:22). If to pray and hear and serve my God, is be to be vile—I will yet be more vile'. This is my excellency, my glory. I am doing now, that which will bring me to a kingdom. O think it no disgrace to be a Christian! I speak it chiefly to you who are entering upon the ways of God. Perhaps you may meet with such as will reproach and censure you. Bind their reproaches as a crown about your head. Despise their *censure* as much as their *praise*. Remember there is a kingdom entailed upon godliness. Sin draws hell after it; grace draws a crown after it!

4. See here that which may make the people of God long for death. Then they shall enter upon their glorious kingdom! Indeed the wicked may fear death. It will not lead them to a kingdom—but a horrid dungeon. Hell is the jail where they must lie rotting forever with the devil and his demons! To every Christless person—death is the king of terror; but the godly may long for death. It will raise them to a kingdom.

Believers are not perfectly happy until death. A Christian at death shall be completely installed into his honor. The anointing oil shall be poured on him, and the royal crown set upon his head. The saints are now 'heirs of the kingdom' (James 2:5). Does not the heir desire to be crowned?

Truly there is enough to wean us and make us willing to be gone from hence. The saints 'eat ashes like bread'. They are here in a suffering condition. 'Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cuts wood' (Psalm 141:7). When a man hews and cuts a tree the chips fly up and down; here and there a chip. So here a saint wounded, there a saint massacred; our bones fly like chips up and down. 'For your sake we are killed all the day long' (Romans 8:36). But there is a kingdom a-coming; when the body is buried the soul is crowned. Who would not be willing to sail in a storm—if he were sure to be crowned as soon as he came at the shore? Why is it that the godly look so ghastly at thoughts of death, as if they were rather going to their *execution*, than their *coronation*? Though we should be willing to stay here awhile to do service—yet we should with Paul, 'desire to depart—and be with Christ'. The day of a believer's *dissolution*—is the day of his *inauguration*.

Thomas Watson

January 13 – Monday

“Poverty Of Spirit”

But how shall we know that this glorious kingdom shall be settled upon us at death?

1. God has set up his kingdom of *grace* within each of his children.

'The kingdom of God is within you' (Luke 17:21). By the kingdom of God here—is meant the kingdom of *grace* in the heart. Grace may be compared to a kingdom. It sways the scepter; it gives out laws. There is the law of love. Grace beats down the devil's garrisons. It brings the heart into a sweet subjection to Christ. Is this kingdom of grace set up in *your* heart? Do you rule over your sins? Can you bind those kings in chains? (Psalm 149:8). Are you a king over your pride, passion and unbelief? Is the kingdom of God within you? While others aspire after earthly greatness—do you labor for a kingdom within you? Certainly if the kingdom of *grace* is in your heart, you shall have the kingdom of *glory*. If God's kingdom of grace enters into you, you shall enter into his kingdom of glory. But let not that man ever think to reign in glory—who now lives a slave to his lusts!

2. If you are a *believer*—you will go to this blessed kingdom. 'Rich in *faith*, heirs of the kingdom' (James 2:5). Faith is a heroic act of the soul. It makes a holy adventure on God, by a promise. Faith is the crowning grace. Faith puts us into Christ, and our title to the crown comes in by Christ. By faith we are born of God, and so we become children of the royal blood. By faith our hearts are purified (Acts 15:9, 10), and we are made fit for a kingdom; 'rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom'. Faith paves a highway to heaven. Believers die heirs to the crown.

3. He who has a noble, kingly spirit—shall go to the heavenly kingdom.

'Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.' (Colossians 3:2). He who has a heavenly spirit—shall go to the heavenly kingdom. Do you live above the world? The eagle does not catch flies—she soars aloft in the air. Do you pant after glory and immortality? Do you abhor that which is sordid and carnal? Can you trample upon all sublunary things? Is *heaven* in your eye—and *Christ* in your heart—and the *world* under your feet? He who has such a kingly spirit, who looks no lower than a crown—'he shall dwell on high', and have his throne mounted far above all heavens!

Thomas Watson

January 14 – Tuesday

“Poverty Of Spirit”

The exhortation has a double aspect.

1. The exhortation looks toward the WICKED. Is there a kingdom to be had, a kingdom so enameled and bespangled with glory? Oh then, do not by your folly make yourselves incapable of this glorious blessing! Do not for the satisfying of a base lust, forfeit a kingdom. Do not drink away a kingdom. Do not for the *lap of pleasure*—lose the crown of life!

If men, before they committed a sin, would but sit down and rationally consider whether the present gain and sweetness in sin, would countervail the loss of the heavenly kingdom—it would put them into a cold sweat, and give some check to their unbridled lusts. Jacob took Esau by the heel.

Look not upon the smiling face of sin—but 'take it by the heel'. Look at the *end* of it. It will deprive you of a kingdom, and can anything make amends for that loss? O, is it not madness, for the unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11), to lose a kingdom? How will the devil at the last day reproach and laugh at men, that they should be so stupidly small minded for a *rattle*—to forgo a *crown*! Surely it will much contribute to the vexation of the damned—to think how foolishly they missed of a kingdom.

2. The exhortation looks toward the GODLY, and it exhorts to two things.

[1] Is there a kingdom reserved for us? Then let this be a motive to duty. Do all the service you can for God while you live. 'Spend and be spent.' The reward is honorable. The thoughts of a kingdom, should add *wings* to prayer, and *fire* to zeal.

Inquire what you have done for God. What *love* have you shown to his name? What *zeal* for his glory? Where is the head of that *Goliath lust* which you have slain for his sake? What a vast disproportion is there between our *service*—and our *reward*! What is all our weeping and fasting—compared to a kingdom! Oh improve all your talents for God. Make seasons of grace, opportunities for service.

And that you may act more vigorously for God, know and be assured—that the more work you do, the more glory you shall have. Every saint shall have a kingdom—but the more service any man does for God, the greater will be his kingdom. There are *degrees of glory* which I will prove thus:

First, because there are degrees of torment in hell. 'They shall receive *greater* damnation' (Luke 20:47). Those who make religion a cloak for their sin, shall have a hotter place in hell. Now if there are degrees of torment in hell, then by the rule of contraries, there are degrees of glory in the kingdom of heaven.

Again, seeing God in his free grace rewards men according to their works, therefore, the more service they do the greater shall their reward be. 'Behold I come quickly and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be' (Revelation 22:12). He who has done more—shall receive more. He who gained ten times what was entrusted to him, was made ruler over ten cities (Luke 19:16, 17). This may very much excite to *eminency* in religion. The more the lamp of your grace shines, the more you shall shine in the heavenly orb. Would you have your crown brighter, your kingdom larger, your palm-branches more flourishing? Be *eminent* Christians. Do much work, in a little time. While you are laying out, God is laying up. The more glory you bring to God, the more glory you shall have from God.

January 15 – Wednesday

“Poverty Of Spirit”

[2] **Walk worthy of this kingdom.** 'You should walk worthy of God, who has called you to his kingdom' (1 Thessalonians 2:12). Live as kings!

Let the *majesty of holiness* appear in your faces. Those who looked on Stephen, 'saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel (Acts 6:15). A kind of angelic brightness was seen in his visage. When we shine in zeal, humility, and holiness—this beautifies and honors us in the eyes of others, and makes us look as those who are heirs to a heavenly crown.

Here is comfort to the people of God in case of poverty. God has provided them a kingdom: 'Theirs is the kingdom of heaven'. A child of God is often so low in the world, that he has not a foot of land to inherit. He is poor in purse—as well as in spirit. But here is a *fountain of consolation* opened.

The poorest saint who has lost all his golden fleece, is heir to a kingdom—a kingdom which excels all the kingdoms and principalities of the world, more than diamond excels dirt! This kingdom is peerless and endless. "The hope of a kingdom," says Basil, "should carry a Christian with courage and cheerfulness through all his afflictions!" And it is a saying of Luther, "The sea of God's mercy, overflowing in spiritual blessings, should drown all the sufferings of this life!"

What though you go now in rags? You shall have your white robes! What though you have only bread and water? You shall feast when you come into the kingdom! Here you drink the brinish water of tears—but shortly you shall drink the wine of paradise. Be comforted with the thoughts of your glorious kingdom!

Thomas Watson

January 16 – Thursday

“Gospel Mourning”

Matthew 5:4

*“Blessed are those who **mourn**, for they shall be comforted.”*

Here are *eight steps leading to true blessedness*. They may be compared to Jacob's Ladder, the top whereof reached to heaven. We have already gone over one step—and now let us proceed to the second. *‘Blessed are those who mourn.’* We must go through the valley of tears—to paradise!

Mourning would be a sad and unpleasant subject to address—were it not that it has *blessedness* going before, and comfort *coming* after. *Mourning* is put here, for *repentance*. It implies both *sorrow*, which is the cloud, and *tears* which are the rain distilling in this golden shower!

The words fall into two parts, first, an assertion—that mourners are blessed people; second, a reason—because they shall be comforted.

The ASSERTION—mourners are blessed people. ‘Blessed are you who weep now’ (Luke 6:21). Though the saints’ tears are *bitter* tears—yet they are *blessed* tears. But will *all* mourning entitle a man to blessedness? No! there is a twofold mourning which is far from making one blessed. There is a *carnal* mourning, and a *diabolical* mourning.

1. There is a CARNAL mourning when we lament outward losses. ‘A cry of anguish is heard in Ramah—weeping and mourning unrestrained. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted—for they are dead!’ (Matthew 2:18). There are abundance of these *carnal tears* shed. We have many who can mourn over a dead child—who cannot mourn over a crucified Savior! Worldly sorrow hastens our funerals. ‘The sorrow of the world works death’ (2 Corinthians 7:10).

2. There is a DIABOLICAL mourning and that is twofold:

When a man mourns that he cannot satisfy his impure lust. This is like the devil, whose greatest torture is that he can be no more wicked. Thus Ammon mourned and was sick, until he defiled his sister Tamar (2 Samuel 13:2).

Thus Ahab mourned for Naboth's vineyard, “So Ahab went home angry and sullen. The king went to bed with his face to the wall and refused to eat!” (1 Kings 21:4). This was a *devilish* mourning.

Again, when men are sorry for the good which they have done. Pharaoh was grieved that ‘he had let the children of Israel go’ (Exodus 14:5). Many are so devilish that they are troubled they have prayed so much and have heard so many sermons. They repent of their repentance. But if we repent of the good which is past—God will not repent of the evil which is to come.

Thomas Watson

January 17 – Friday

“Gospel Mourning”

The OBJECTS of spiritual mourning. To illustrate this point of holy mourning, I shall show you what is the adequate object of it. There are two objects of spiritual mourning—sin and misery.

The first object of spiritual mourning is SIN; and that twofold, our *own* sin; and the sin of *others*.

1. Our OWN sin. Sin must have tears. While we carry the *fire of sin* about with us—we must carry the *water of tears* to quench it! (Ezekiel 7:16). 'They are not blessed' (says Chrysostom) 'who mourn for the *dead*—but rather those who mourn for *sin*.' And indeed it is with good reason we mourn for sin, if we consider **the GUILT of sin**, which binds over to wrath. Will not a guilty person weep, who is to be bound over to the penalty? Every sinner is to be tried for his life and is sure to be cast away—if sovereign mercy does not become an advocate for him.

The POLLUTION of sin. Sin is a plague spot, and will you not labor to wash away this spot with your tears? Sin makes a man worse than a toad or serpent. The serpent has nothing but what God has put into—but the sinner has that which the devil has put into him. 'Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?' (Acts 5:3). What a strange metamorphosis has sin made! The soul, which was once of an azure brightness, sin has made of a sable color! We have in our hearts the seed of the unpardonable sin. *We have the seed of all those sins for which the damned are now tormented!* And shall we not mourn? He who does not mourn, has surely lost the use of his reason. But every mourning for sin is not sufficient to entitle a man to blessedness. I shall show what is **not** the right gospel-mourning for sin, and then what is the **right** gospel-mourning for sin.

What is NOT the right gospel-mourning for sin? There is a fivefold mourning which is false and spurious.

A **despairing** kind of mourning. Such was Judas' mourning. He saw his sin, he was sorry, he made confession, he justifies Christ, he makes restitution (Matthew 27). Judas, who is in hell, did more than many nowadays! He confessed his sin. He did not plead necessity or good intentions—but he makes an open acknowledgment of his sin. 'I have sinned!' Judas made restitution. His conscience told him he came wickedly by the money. It was 'the price of blood', and he 'brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests' (Matthew 27:3). But how many are there who invade the rights and possessions of others—but not a word of restitution! Judas was more honest than they are. Well, wherein was Judas' sorrow blameworthy? It was a mourning joined with despair. He thought his wound broader than the plaster. He drowned himself in tears. His was not repentance unto life (Acts 11:18)—but rather unto death.

Thomas Watson

January 18 – Saturday

“Gospel Mourning”

An **hypocritical** mourning. The heart is very deceitful. It can betray as well by a tear—as by a kiss. Saul looks like a mourner, and as he was sometimes 'among the prophets' (1 Samuel 10:12) So he seemed to be among the penitents—'And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord' (1 Samuel 15:24). Saul played the hypocrite in his mourning, for he did not take shame to himself—but he did rather take honor to himself: 'honor me before the elders of my people' (verse 30). He pared and minced his sin that it might appear lesser, he laid his sin upon the people, 'because I feared the people' (verse 24). They would have me fly upon the spoil, and I dare do no other.

A true mourner labors to draw out sin in its bloody colors, and accent it with all its killing aggravations, that he may be deeply humbled before the Lord. 'Our iniquities are increased over our head, and our sin has grown up unto the heavens' (Ezra 9:6). The true penitent labors to make the *worst* of his sin. Saul labors to make the *best* of sin; like a patient that makes the best of his disease, lest the physician should prescribe him too sharp remedy. How easy is it for a man to put a cheat upon his own soul—and by hypocrisy to sweep himself into hell!

A **forced** mourning. When tears are pumped out by God's judgments, these are like the tears of a man who has the stone, or that lies upon the rack. Such was Cain's mourning. 'My punishment is greater than I can bear!' (Genesis 4:13). His *punishment* troubled him more than his *sin*! To mourn only for fear of hell is like a thief that weeps for the *penalty*, rather than the *offence*. The tears of the wicked are forced by the fire of affliction!

An **external** mourning; when sorrow lies only on the outside. 'They disfigure their faces' (Matthew 6:16). The *eye* is tender—but the *heart* is hard. Such was Ahab's mourning. 'He tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his flesh, and went softly' (1 Kings 21:27). His *clothes* were torn—but his *heart* was not torn. He had *sackcloth* but no *sorrow*. He hung down his *head* like a bulrush—but his *heart* was like granite. There are many who may be compared to *weeping marbles*, they are both watery and flinty.

A vain **fruitless** mourning. Some will shed a few tears—but are as bad as ever. They will deceive and be unclean. Such a kind of mourning there is in hell. The damned weep—but the continue to blaspheme God.

Thomas Watson

January 19 – Sunday

“Gospel Mourning”

What is the RIGHT gospel-mourning? That mourning which will entitle a man to blessedness has these qualifications:

It is **spontaneous** and **free**. It must come as water out of a spring, not as fire out of a flint. Tears for sin must be like the myrrh which drops from the tree freely without cutting or forcing. Mary Magdalene's repentance was voluntary. 'She stood weeping' (Luke 7). She came to Christ with ointment in her *hand*, with love in her *heart*, with tears in her *eyes*. God is for a freewill offering.

Gospel-mourning is **spiritual**; that is, when we mourn for sin more than suffering. Pharaoh says, "Take away the plague!" He never thought of the plague of his heart. A sinner mourns because *judgment* follows at the heels of sin—but David cries out, 'My *sin* is ever before me' (Psalm 51:3). God had threatened that the sword should ride in circuit in his family—but David does not say, 'The *sword* is ever before me'—but 'My *sin* is ever before me'. The offence against God troubled him. He grieved more for his treason against God—than the bloody axe. Thus the penitent prodigal, 'I have sinned against heaven, and before you' (Luke 15:18,21). He does not say, 'I am almost starved among the husks'—but 'I have offended my father'. In particular, our mourning for sin, if it is spiritual, must be under this threefold notion:

1. We must mourn for sin, as it is an act of hostility and enmity against God. Sin not only makes us unlike God—but contrary to God: 'They have walked contrary unto me' (Leviticus 26:40). Sin affronts and resists the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). Sin is contrary to God's nature; God is holy; sin is an impure thing. Sin is contrary to his will. If God be of one mind—sin is of another. Sin does all it can to spite God. The Hebrew word for 'sin' signifies 'rebellion'. A sinner fights against God (Acts 5:39). Now when we mourn for sin as it is a walking contrary to heaven, this is a gospel mourning.

2. We must mourn for sin, as it is the highest ingratitude against God. It is a kicking against the *breasts of mercy*. God sends his Son to redeem us, his Spirit to comfort us. We sin against the blood of Christ, the grace of the Spirit—and shall we not mourn? We complain of the unkindness of others, and shall we not lay to heart our own unkindness against God?

May not the Lord say to us, 'These wounds I have received in the house of my friend!' (Zechariah 13:6). Israel took their jewels and earrings and made a golden calf of them. The sinner takes the jewels of God's mercies and makes use of them to sin. Ingratitude is a 'crimson sin' (Isaiah 1:18). Sins against gospel-love are worse in some sense, than the sins of the devils, for they never had an offer of grace offered to them. Now when we mourn for sin as it has its accent of ingratitude upon it, this is an evangelical mourning.

Thomas Watson

January 20 – Monday

“Gospel Mourning”

3. *We must mourn for sin as it is a hardship*; it keeps good things from us; it hinders our communion with God. Mary wept for Christ's absence. 'They have taken away my Lord!' (John 20:13). So our sins have taken away our Lord. They have deprived us of his sweet presence. Will not he grieve, who has lost a rich jewel? When we mourn for sin under this notion, as it makes the Sun of Righteousness withdraw from our horizon; when we mourn not so much that peace is gone, and trading is gone—but God is gone, 'My beloved had withdrawn himself' (Canticles 5:6); this is a *holy* mourning. *The mourning for the loss of God's favor—is the best way to regain his favor.* If you have lost a friend, all your weeping will not fetch him again—but if you have lost God's presence, your mourning will bring your God again.

Gospel-mourning sends the soul to God. When the prodigal son repented, he went to his father. 'I will arise and go to my father' (Luke 15:18). Jacob *wept* and *prayed* (Hosea 12:4). The people of Israel wept and offered sacrifice (Judges 2:4,5). Gospel-mourning puts a man upon duty. The reason is, that in true sorrow there is a mixture of hope, and hope puts the soul upon the use of means. That mourning which like the 'flaming sword' keeps the soul from approaching to God, and beats it off from duty—is a sinful mourning. It is a sorrow hatched in hell. Such was Saul's grief—which drove him to the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:7).

Evangelical mourning is a spur to prayer. The child who weeps for offending his father goes to his presence and will not leave until his father is reconciled to him. Absalom could not be quiet 'until he had seen the king's face' (2 Samuel 14:32, 33).

Gospel-mourning is for sin in particular. The deceitful man is occupied with *generalities*. It is with a true penitent as it is with a wounded man. He comes to the surgeon and shows him all his wounds. Here I was cut with the sword; here I was shot with a bullet. So a true penitent bewails all his particular sins. 'We have served Baal' (Judges 10:10). They mourned for their idolatry. And David lays his fingers upon the sore—and points to that very sin which troubled him (Psalm 51:4). 'I have done *this* evil!' He means his blood-guiltiness. A wicked man will say he is *a* sinner—but a child of God says, 'I have done *this* evil!' Peter wept for that particular sin of denying Christ. It is reported that Peter never heard a rooster crow—but he fell a-weeping. There must be a particular repentance, before we have a general pardon.

Gospel tears must drop from the eye of faith. 'The father of the child cried out with *tears*, 'Lord, I *believe*' (Mark 9:24). Our disease must make us mourn—but when we look up to our Physician, who has made a remedy of his own blood, we must not mourn without hope. Believing tears are precious. When the clouds of sorrow have overcast the soul, some sunshine of faith must break forth. The soul will be swallowed up of sorrow, it will be drowned in tears—if faith does not keep it up from sinking.

Though our tears drop to the earth—yet our faith must reach heaven. After the greatest rain, faith must appear as the rainbow in the cloud. The tears of faith are bottled as precious wine. 'You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book' (Psalm 56:8).

Thomas Watson

January 21 – Tuesday

“Gospel Mourning”

Gospel-mourning is joined with self-dislike. The sinner *admires* himself. The penitent *loathes* himself. 'You shall *loath* yourselves in your own sight for all your evils' (Ezekiel 20:43). A true penitent is troubled not only for the *shameful consequence* of sin—but for the *loathsome nature* of sin; not only the *sting* of sin—but the deformed face of sin. How did the leper loathe himself! (Leviticus 13:45). The true mourner cries out, O these impure eyes! this heart which is a conclave of wickedness! He not only leaves sin—but hates sin. He who has fallen in the dirt loathes himself (Hosea 14:1).

Gospel-mourning must be purifying. Our tears must make us more holy. We must so weep for sin, as to weep out sin. Our tears must drown our sins. We must not only mourn—but turn. 'Turn to me with weeping' (Joel 2:12). What good is it, to have a watery eye and a whorish heart? It is foolish to say it is *day*, when the air is full of *darkness*; so to say you repent, when you draw dark shadows in your life. It is an excellent saying of Augustine, 'He truly grieves the sins he has committed, who never commits the sins he has grieved'. True mourning is like the 'water of jealousy' (Numbers 5:12-22). It makes the thigh of sin to rot. 'You broke the heads of the monster in the waters.' (Psalm 74:13). The heads of our sins, these monsters, are broken in the waters of true repentance. True tears are cleansing. They are like a flood that carries away all the rubbish of our sins away with it.

The waters of holy mourning are like the river Jordan wherein Naaman washed and was cleansed of his leprosy. It is reported that there is a river in Sicily where, if the blackest sheep are bathed, they become white; so, though our sins be as scarlet—yet by washing in this river of repentance, they become white as snow. Naturalists say of the serpent, before it goes to drink it vomits out its poison. In this 'be wise as serpents'. Before you think to drink down the sweet cordials of the promises, cast up the poison that lies at your heart. Do not only mourn for sin—but break from sin.

Gospel-mourning must be joined with hatred of sin. 'What indignation!' (2 Corinthians 7:11). We must not only abstain from sin—but abhor sin. The dove hates the least feather of the hawk. A true mourner hates the least motion to sin. A true mourner is a sin-hater. Amnon hated Tamar more than ever he loved her (2 Samuel 13:15). To be a sin-hater implies two things: first, to look upon sin as the most deadly evil—as the essence of all evil. It looks more ghastly than death or hell. Second, to be implacably incensed against it. A sin-hater will never admit of any terms of peace. *Anger* may be reconciled—*hatred* cannot. True mourning begins in the love of God—and ends in the hatred of sin.

Gospel-mourning in some cases is joined with restitution. It is as well a sin to violate the *name* of another—as the *chastity* of another. If we have eclipsed the good name of others, we are bound to ask them for forgiveness. If we have wronged them in their estate by unjust, fraudulent dealing, we must make them some compensation. Thus Zacchaeus, 'If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold' (Luke 19:8), according to the law of Exodus 22:1. James bids us not only look to the *heart* but the *hand*. 'Cleanse your *hands*, you sinners, and purify your hearts' (James 4:8). If you have wronged another, cleanse your hands by restitution. Be assured, without restitution—no remission.

January 22 – Wednesday

“Gospel Mourning”

Gospel-mourning for sin is perpetual. There are some who at a sermon will shed a few tears—but they are soon dried up. The hypocrite's sorrow is like a vein opened and presently stopped. The Hebrew word for 'eye' signifies also 'a fountain', to show that the eye must run like a fountain for sin and not cease. The waters of repentance must not overflow with more heat in the morning, at the first hearing of the gospel; and at midday, in the midst of health and prosperity, grow cold and be ready to freeze. No! it must be a daily weeping. As Paul said, 'I die daily' (1 Corinthians 15:31), so a Christian should say, 'I mourn daily'. Therefore keep open an outflow of godly sorrow, and be sure it is not stopped until death. 'Let your tears flow like a river. Give yourselves no rest from weeping day or night' (Lamentations 2:18). Daily mourning is a good antidote against backsliding.

Even God's own children must mourn after pardon; for God, in pardoning, does not pardon at one instant sins past and future; but as repentance is renewed, so pardon is renewed. Should God by one act pardon sins future as well as past, this would make void part of Christ's office.

Though sin is pardoned, still it rebels; though it be covered, it is not cured (Romans 7:23). There is that in the best Christian, which is contrary to God. There is that in him, which deserves hell—and shall he not mourn? A ship that is always leaking must have the water continually pumped out. While the soul leaks by sin, we must be still pumping at the leak by repentance. Think not, O Christian that your sins are washed away only by Christ's blood—but by water and blood. The brazen laver (Exodus 30:18) that the people of Israel were to wash in might be a fit emblem of this spiritual laver, tears and blood; and when holy mourning is thus qualified, this is that 'sorrowing after a godly sort' (2 Corinthians 7:11), which makes a Christian eternally blessed.

2. As we must mourn for our own sins—so we must lay to heart the sins of OTHERS. Thus we should wish with Jeremiah, that our eyes were a fountain of tears, that we might weep day and night for the iniquity of the times. Our blessed Savior mourned for the sins of the Jews: 'Being grieved for the hardness of their hearts' (Mark 3:5). And holy David, looking upon the sins of the wicked, his heart was turned into a spring, and his eyes into rivers. 'Rivers of tears run down my eyes, because they do not keep your law' (Psalm 119:136). Lot's righteous soul 'was vexed with the filthy lives of the wicked' (2 Peter 2:7). Lot took the sins of Sodom and made spears of them to pierce his own soul.

Have not we cause to mourn for the sins of others? The whole axle of the nation is ready to break under the weight of sin. What an inundation of wickedness is there among us? Mourn for the hypocrisy of the times. Jehu says 'Come, see my zeal for the Lord'—but it was zeal for the throne (2 Kings 10:16). This is the hypocrisy of some. They entitle God to whatever they do. They make bold with God to use his name to their wickedness; as if a thief should pretend the king's warrant for his robbery.

Thomas Watson

January 23 – Thursday

“Gospel Mourning”

Mourn for the *errors* and *blasphemies* of the nation. Our mourning for sin must be so great as to exceed all other grief. Eli's mourning for the ark was such that it swallowed up the loss of his two children. Spiritual grief must preponderate over all other grief. We should mourn more for sin than for the loss of friends or estate.

We should endeavor to have our sorrow rise up to the same height and proportion as our sin does. Manasseh was a great *sinner*—and a great *mourner*. 'He humbled himself greatly' (2 Chronicles 33:12). Manasseh made the streets run with *blood*—and he made the prison in Babylon run with *tears*. Peter wept bitterly. A true mourner labors that his *repentance* may be as eminent as his *sin*.

Having shown the nature of mourning, I shall next show **what is the OPPOSITE to holy mourning**. The opposite to mourning is 'hardness of heart', which in Scripture is called 'a heart of stone' (Ezekiel 36:26). A heart of stone is far from mourning and repenting. This heart of stone is known by two symptoms:

One symptom is **insensibility**. A stone is not sensible of anything. Lay weight upon it; or grind it to powder—it does not feel. So it is with a hard heart. It is insensible to both its own sin and God's wrath. The stone in the *kidneys* is felt—but not the stone in the *heart*. 'Having lost all sensitivity.' (Ephesians 4:19).

A heart of stone is known by its **inflexibility**. A stone will not bend. That is hard, which does not yield to the touch. So it is with a hard heart. It will not comply with God's command. It will not stoop to Christ's scepter. A heart of stone will sooner *break*, than *bend* by repentance. It is so far from yielding to God, that like the anvil—it beats back the hammer. It 'always resists the Holy Spirit' (Acts 7:51).

Oh Christians, if you would be spiritual mourners, take heed of this *stone of the heart*. 'Harden not your hearts' (Hebrews 3:7,8). A stony heart is the worst heart. If it were bronze, it might be melted in the furnace; or it might be bent with the hammer. But a stony heart is such, that only the arm of God can break it—and only the blood of Christ can soften it! Oh the misery of a hard heart! A hard heart is void of all grace.

While the wax is hard, it will not take the impression of the seal. The heart, while it is hard, will not take the stamp of grace. It must first be made tender and melting. The *plough of the Word* will not penetrate a hard heart. A hard heart is good for nothing—but to make fuel for hellfire.

Hardness of heart makes a man's condition worse than all his other sins besides. If one is guilty of great sins—yet if he can mourn, there is hope. Repentance unravels sin, and makes sin not to be. But hardness of heart binds guilt fast upon the soul. It seals a man under wrath. It is not heinousness of sin—but hardness of heart which damns. This makes the sin against the Holy Spirit incapable of mercy, because the sinner who has committed it, is incapable of repentance.

Thomas Watson

January 24 – Friday

“Gospel Mourning”

This doctrine draws up a charge against several sorts of people:

1. Those who think themselves good Christians—yet have not learned this art of holy mourning. Luther calls mourning 'a rare herb'. Men have tears to shed for other things—but have none to spare for their sins. There are many *murmurers*—but few *mourners*. Most are like the stony ground which 'lacked moisture' (Luke 8:6).

We have many cry out of hard *times*—but they are not sensible of hard *hearts*. Hot and dry is the worst temper of the body. To be hot in sin, and to be so dry as to have no tears—is the worst temper of the soul.

How many are like Gideon's dry fleece, and like the mountains of Gilboa! There is no dew upon them. Did Christ bleed for sin—and can you not weep! *If God's bottle is not filled with tears—his vial will be filled with wrath!* We have many sinners in Zion—but few mourners in Zion. It is with most people as with a man on the top of a mast; the winds blow and the waves beat, and the ship is in danger of ship wreck—and he is fast asleep! So when the waves of sin have even covered men and the stormy wind of God's wrath blows, and is ready to blow them into hell—yet they are asleep in carnal security.

2. This doctrine reproves them who instead of weeping for sin, spend their days in mirth and jollity. Instead of *mourners* we have *jesters*. 'They sing with tambourine and harp. They make merry to the sound of the flute' (Job 21:12, 13). 'They do not give themselves to mourning—but follow after their pleasures'. They live epicures, and die atheists. James bids us 'turn our laughter to mourning' (James 4:9). But they turn their mourning to laughter. Samson was brought forth to amuse the Philistines (Judges 16:25). The jovial sinner amuses the devil.

'The Lord, the Lord Almighty, called you to weep and mourn. He told you to shave your heads in sorrow for your sins and to wear clothes of sackcloth to show your remorse. But instead, you dance and play; you feast on meat, and drink wine. The Lord Almighty has revealed to me that this sin will never be forgiven you until the day you die. That is the judgment of the Lord, the Lord Almighty' (Isaiah 22:12-14). That is, this your sin shall not be done away by any expiatory sacrifice—but vengeance shall pursue you forever!

3. This doctrine reproves those who, instead of mourning for sin, rejoice in sin (Proverbs 2:14); 'Who take pleasure in iniquity' (2 Thessalonians 2:12). Wicked men in this sense are worse than the damned in hell, for they take little pleasure in their sins. There are some so impudently profane, that they will make themselves and others merry with their sins. Sin is a soul sickness (Luke 5:31). Will a man make merry with his disease? Did Christ *bleed* for sin—and do you *laugh* at sin! Is it a time for a man to be jesting when he is upon the scaffold, and his head is to be stricken off? You who laugh at sin now, 'So I will laugh when you are in *trouble*! I will mock you when *disaster* overtakes you—when calamity overcomes you like a storm, when you are engulfed by *trouble*, and when *anguish* and *distress* overwhelm you!' Proverbs 1:24-27

Thomas Watson

January 25 – Saturday

“Gospel Mourning”

4. This doctrine reproves those that cry down mourning for sin. They are like the Philistines who stopped-up the wells (Genesis 26:15). These would stop-up the wells of godly sorrow. Antinomians say this is a legal doctrine—but Christ here preaches it: 'Blessed are those who mourn.' And the apostles preached it, 'And they went out and preached that men should repent' (Mark 6:12). Holy sincerity will put us upon mourning for sin. He who has the heart of a child cannot but weep for his unkindness against God. Mourning for sin is the very fruit and product of the Spirit of grace (Zechariah 12:10). Such as cry down repentance, cry down the Spirit of grace. Mourning for sin is the only way to keep off wrath from us.

MOTIVES to holy mourning

Let me exhort Christians to holy mourning. I now persuade to such a mourning as will prepare the soul for blessedness. Oh that our hearts were spiritual stills, distilling the water of holy tears! Christ's doves weep. 'They that escape shall be like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, everyone for his iniquity' (Ezekiel 7:16).

There are several divine motives to holy mourning:

1. Tears cannot be put to a better use. If you weep for outward losses, you lose your tears. It is like a shower upon a rock, which does no good; but tears for sin are blessed tears. 'Blessed are those who mourn.' These poison our corruptions; salt-water kills the worms. The brinish water of repenting tears will help to kill that worm of sin which would gnaw the conscience.

2. Gospel-mourning is an evidence of grace. 'I will pour upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace, and they shall mourn...' (Zechariah 12:10). The Holy Spirit descended on Christ like a dove (Luke 3:22). The dove is a weeping creature. Where there is a dove-like weeping, it is a good sign the Spirit of God has descended there. Weeping for sin is a sign of the new birth. As soon as the child is born, it weeps: 'And behold the babe wept' (Exodus 2:6). To weep kindly for sin is a good sign we are born of God. Mourning shows a 'heart of flesh' (Ezekiel 36:26). A stone will not melt. When the heart is in a melting frame, it is a sign the heart of stone is taken away.

3. The preciousness of tears. Tears dropping from a mournful, penitent eye, are like water dropping from the roses—very sweet and precious to God. A fountain in the garden makes it pleasant. That heart is most delightful to God—which has a fountain of sorrow running in it. 'The known sinner stood at Christ's feet weeping' (Luke 7:38). Her tears were more fragrant than her ointment. The incense, when it is broken, smells sweetest. When the heart is broken for sin, then our services give forth their sweetest perfume. 'There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents' (Luke 15:7). Jerome calls mourning a plank after shipwreck. Chrysostom calls tears a sponge to wipe off sin. Tears are powerful orators for mercy.

Tears melt the heart of God. When a malefactor comes weeping to the bar, this melts the judge's heart towards him. When a man comes weeping in prayer and smites on his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner' (Luke 18:13), this melts God's heart towards him. God seals his pardons upon melting hearts. Tears, though they are silent—yet have a voice, 'The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping!' (Psalm 6:8). Tears wash away sin.

January 26 – Sunday

“Gospel Mourning”

4. The sweetness of tears. Mourning is the way to solid joy. The soul is never more enlarged than when it can weep.

Closet tears are better than court music. When the heart is sad, weeping eases it by giving vent. The soul of a Christian is most eased when it can vent itself by holy mourning. Chrysostom observes that David who was the *great mourner* in Israel—was the *sweet singer* in Israel. 'My tears were my food' (Psalm 42:3). When Hannah had wept, she went away and was no more sad. Sugar when it melts is sweetest. When a Christian melts in tears, now he has the sweetest joy. When the daughter of Pharaoh descended into the river, she found a babe there among the reeds; so when we descend into the river of repenting tears, we find the babe Jesus there who shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

5. A mourner for sin not only does good to himself but to others. He helps to keep off wrath from a land. As when Abraham was going to strike the blow, the angel stayed his hand (Genesis 22:12), so when God is going to destroy a nation, the mourner stays his hand. Penitential tears melt God's heart and bind his hand. Jeremiah, who was a weeping prophet, was a great intercessor. God says to him, 'Pray not for this people' (Jeremiah 7:16), as if the Lord had said, 'Jeremiah, so powerful are your prayers and tears, that if you pray I cannot deny you.' Tears have a mighty influence upon God. Surely God has some mourners in the land, or he would have destroyed us before now.

6. Holy mourning is preventing remedy. Our mourning for sin here—will prevent mourning in hell. Hell is a place of weeping (Matthew 8:12). He who weeps here is a blessed mourner. He who weeps in hell is a cursed mourner. The physician by bleeding the patient prevents death. By the opening a vein of godly sorrow, we prevent the death of our souls.

7. There is no other way the Gospel prescribes to blessedness, but mourning. 'Blessed are those who mourn'. This is the road that leads to the new Jerusalem. There may be several ways leading to a city; some go one way, some another; but there is but one way to heaven, and that is by the house of weeping (Acts 26:20). I tell you there is but one way to blessedness, and that is, through the valley of tears. If you do not go this way, you will miss of Paradise. 'I tell you, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish' (Luke 13:3). There are many lines leading to the center—but the heavenly center has but one line leading to it, and that is a tear dropping from the eye of faith. A man may have a disease in his body that twenty medicines will heal. Sin is a disease of the soul which makes it sick unto death. Now there is but one medicine will heal, and that is the medicine of repentance.

Thomas Watson

January 27 – Monday

“Gospel Mourning”

8. Consider what need every Christian has to be conversant in holy mourning.

You have lived in secret sin. God enjoins you this penance, 'Mourn for sin'. But perhaps some may say, I have no need of mourning, for I have lived a very civil life. Go home and mourn because you are *only* civil. Many a man's civility, being rested upon—has damned him! It is sad for men to be without repentance—but it is worse to have no need for repentance (Luke 15:7).

9. The benefit of holy mourning. The best of our commodities come by water.

Mourning makes the soul fruitful in grace. When a shower falls, the herbs and plants grow. 'I will water you with my tears, O Heshbon!' (Isaiah 16:9). I may allude to it; *tears water our graces and make them flourish*. 'He sends his springs into the valleys' (Psalm 104:10). That is the reason the valleys flourish with corn, because the springs run there. Where the springs of sorrow run, there the heart bears a fruitful crop. Leah was tender-eyed; she had a watery eye—and was fruitful. The tender-eyed Christian usually brings forth more of the fruits of the Spirit. *A weeping eye is the water-pot to water our graces!*

10. And lastly, to have a melting frame of spirit is a great sign of God's presence with us in an ordinance. It is a sign that the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon us, when our frozen hearts thaw and melt for sin. We are apt to measure everything, by comfort. We think we never have God's presence in an ordinance, unless we have joy.

Herein we are like Thomas. 'Unless (says he) I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, I will not believe' (John 20:25). So are we apt to say that, unless we have incomes of comfort, we will not believe that we have found God in a duty; but if our hearts can melt kindly in tears of love, this is a real sign that God has been with us. As Jacob said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not' (Genesis 28:16). So, Christian, when your heart breaks for sin and dissolves into holy tears, God is in this duty, though you do not know it.

But some may say, My constitution is such that I cannot weep. I may as well go to squeeze a rock as think to get a tear.

I answer—but if you cannot *weep* for sin—can you not *grieve*? Heart mourning is best. There may be *godly sorrow*—where there are no *tears*. The vessel may be full though it lacks vent. It is not so much the *weeping eye* which God respects—as the *broken heart*. Yet I would be reluctant to stop their tears of those who can weep. God stood looking on Hezekiah's tears: 'I have *seen* your tears' (Isaiah 38:5). David's tears made music in God's ears. 'The Lord has *heard* the voice of my weeping' (Psalm 6:8). It is a sight fit for angels to behold—tears as pearls dropping from a penitent eye!

Thomas Watson

January 28 – Tuesday

“Gospel Mourning”

Five HINDRANCES of mourning.

1. The love of sin. The love of sin is like a stone in the pipe, which stops up the current of water. The love of sin makes sin taste sweet, and this *sweetness in sin* bewitches the heart. It is worse to *love* sin than to *commit* it. A man may be *overtaken* with sin (Galatians 6:1). He who has stumbled upon sin unawares will weep—but the love of sin hardens the heart and keeps the devil in possession. In true mourning there must be a *grieving* for sin. But how can a man grieve for that sin which his heart is in love with? Oh, take heed of this *sweet poison*! The love of sin freezes the soul in impenitence.

2. Despair. Despair affronts God, undervalues Christ's blood and damns the soul! 'But they will say—It's hopeless. We will continue to follow our plans, and each of us will continue to act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart' (Jeremiah 18:12). This is the language of despair.

Despair destroys repentance, for the proper ground of repentance is mercy. 'The goodness of God leads you to repentance' (Romans 2:4)—but despair hides mercy out of sight—as the cloud covered the Ark. Oh, take heed of this. Despair is an irrational sin; there is no ground for it. The Lord shows mercy to thousands. Why may *you* not be one of a thousand? The wings of God's mercy, like the wings of the Cherubim, are stretched out to every humble penitent. Despair locks up the soul in impenitence!

3. A conceit that this mourning will make us melancholy. 'We shall drown all our joy in our tears!' But this is a mistake. Lose our joy? Tell me, what joy can there be in a condemned condition? What joy does sin afford? Is not sin compared to a *wound* and *bruise*? (Isaiah 1:6). David had his broken bones (Psalm 51:8). Is there any comfort in having the bones out of joint? Does not sin breed a palpitation and trembling of heart? (Deuteronomy 28:65, 66). It does not *eclipse* joy—but *refines* our joy and makes it better. The prodigal dated his joy from the time of his repentance. 'Then they began to be merry' (Luke 15:24).

4. Presumption of mercy. Who will take pains with his heart or mourn for sin—who thinks he may be saved at a cheaper rate? How many drink damnation out of the sweet flower of God's mercy? It is sad when the goodness of God, which should 'lead to repentance' (Romans 2:4), leads to presumption. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him' (Isaiah 55:7). No mercy without forsaking sin, and no forsaking sin without mourning!

5. A conceit of the smallness of sin. 'Is it not a little one?' (Genesis 19:20). The devil holds the small end of the telescope to sinners. To imagine that sin less than it is, is very dangerous. An opinion of the littleness of sin keeps us from the use of means. Who will be earnest for a physician, who thinks it is but a trivial disease? And who will seek to God with a penitent heart for mercy, who thinks sin is but a slight thing? But consider that sin cannot be little, because it is against the Majesty of heaven. There is no *small treason*, it being against the king's person. There is death and hell in every sin. "The wages of sin is death!" (Romans 6:23).

Thomas Watson

January 29 – Wednesday

“Gospel Mourning”

The COMFORTS belonging to mourners

Having already presented to your view the dark side of the text, I shall now show you the bright side, “*They shall be comforted.*” Where observe:

1. Mourning goes before comfort—as the lancing of a wound precedes the cure.

Sorrow for sin ushers in joy: ‘I will restore comforts to him, and to his mourners’ (Isaiah 57:18). That is the true *sunshine of joy*—which comes after a *shower of tears*. We may as well expect a crop without seed—as comfort without gospel-mourning.

2. Observe, **gospel tears are not lost**. They are seeds of comfort. While the penitent pours out tears, God pours in joy. ‘Those who sow in tears—shall reap in joy’ (Psalm 126:5). It was the end of Christ’s anointing and coming into the world—that he might comfort those who mourn (Isaiah 61:3). Christ had the oil of gladness poured on him that he might pour it upon the mourner. Well then, may the apostle call it ‘a repentance not to be repented of’ (2 Corinthians 7:10). ‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.’ Here is *sweet fruit* from a *bitter stock*.

Christ caused the earthen vessels to be filled to the brim with water, and then turned the water into wine (John 2:9). So when the eye, that earthen vessel, has been filled with water to the brim, then Christ will turn the *water of tears* into the *wine of joy*.

The Spirit of God is a *sanctifying*, before a comforting Spirit. As God’s Spirit is called the ‘Comforter’, so he is called ‘a Spirit of grace’ (Zechariah 12:10). Grace is the work of the Spirit. Comfort is the seal of the Spirit. The work of the Spirit goes before the seal. The graces of the Spirit are compared to water (Isaiah 44:3) and to oil (Isaiah 61:3). First, God pours in the water of the Spirit and then comes the oil of gladness. The oil (in this sense) runs above the water. Hereby we shall know whether our comforts are true and genuine. Some talk of the *comforting* Spirit, who never had the *sanctifying* Spirit. First, the heart must be an epistle written with the finger of the Holy Spirit—and then it is ‘sealed with the Spirit of promise’.

First, the comforts God gives his mourners are UNMIXED. They are not *tempered* with any bitter ingredients. Worldly comforts are like wine that is mixed with dregs. ‘In the midst of laughter the heart is sad’ (Proverbs 14:13). But spiritual comforts are pure. They are not muddled with guilt, nor mixed with fear. They are the pure wine of the Spirit. What the mourner feels is joy, and nothing but joy.

Second, the comforts God gives his mourners are SWEET. ‘Truly the light is sweet’ (Ecclesiastes 11:7); so is the light of God’s countenance. How sweet are those comforts which bring the Comforter along with them! (John 14:10). Therefore the love of God shed into the heart, is said to be ‘better than wine’ (Canticles 1:2). Wine pleases the palate—but the love of God cheers the conscience. The lips, of Christ ‘drop sweet-smelling myrrh’ (Canticles 5:13). The comforts which God gives, are a Christian’s music. They are the golden pot of manna, the nectar and ambrosia of a Christian. They are the saints’ festival, their banqueting delicacies.

Thomas Watson

January 30 – Thursday

“Gospel Mourning”

Third, these comforts which God gives his mourners are HOLY comforts. They are called 'the comfort of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 9:31). He who has the comforts of the Spirit looks upon himself as a person engaged to do God more service. Has the Lord looked upon me with a smiling face. He who has the comforts of the Spirit living in him, sets himself against those sins which would murder his comforts. Divine comforts give the soul more acquaintance with God. 'Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus.' (1 John 1:3).

Fourth, the comforts reserved for the mourners are FILLING comforts.

'The God of hope fill you with all joy ... ' (Romans 15:13). 'Ask ... that your joy may be full' (John 16:24). When God pours in the joys of heaven, they fill the heart and make it run over. 'I am exceeding joyful ... ' (2 Corinthians 7:4). The Greek word is 'I overflow with joy', as a cup that is filled with wine until it runs over. Spiritual joys are *satisfying*. 'My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow, and I will praise you with joyful lips' (Psalm 63:5). David's heart was full, and the joy broke out at his lips. 'You have put gladness in my heart' (Psalm 4:7).

The Spirit of God puts gladness into the *heart*. Divine joys are *heart* joys (Zechariah 10:7). 'Your *heart* shall rejoice' (John 16:22). A believer rejoices in God: 'My Spirit rejoices in God ... ' (Luke 1:47).

Fifth, the comforts God gives his mourners in this life are GLORIOUS comforts. 'Joy full of glory' (1 Peter 1:8). They are glorious because they are a foretaste of that joy which we shall have in a glorified estate. These comforts are a pledge of glory. They put us in heaven before our time. 'You were sealed with the Holy Spirit, which is the pledge of the inheritance' (Ephesians 1:13, 14). So the comforts of the Spirit are the pledge, the 'cluster of grapes' at Eshcol (Numbers 13:23), the first- fruits of the heavenly Canaan.

The joys of the Spirit are glorious: 'For this God is our God forever and ever' (Psalm 48:14). The ground of a Christian's joy is glorious. He rejoices in that he is an heir of the promise. The joy of a godly man is made up of that which is the *angels'* joy. He triumphs in the light of God's countenance. His joy is that which is Christ's own joy. He rejoices in the mystical union which is begun here and consummated in heaven. Thus the joy of the saints is a joy 'full of glory'.

Sixth, the comforts which God gives his mourners are infinitely transporting and RAVISHING.

So delightful are they and amazing, that they cause a jubilation which is so great, that it cannot be expressed. Of all things joy is the most hard to be deciphered. It is called 'joy unspeakable' (1 Peter 1:8). You cannot tell how sweet honey is, without actually tasting it. The most elevated words can no more set forth the comforts of the Spirit, than the a pencil can draw the life and breath of a man. The angels cannot express the joys they feel. Some men have been so overwhelmed with the sweet raptures of joy, that they have not been able to contain—but as Moses, have died with a kiss from God's mouth. Thus have we seen the glass oft breaking with the strength of the liquor put into it.

January 31 – Friday

“Gospel Mourning”

Seventh, these comforts of the Spirit are POWERFUL. They are strong cordials, strong consolation, as the apostle phrases it (Hebrews 6:18). Divine comfort strengthens for duty. 'The joy of the Lord is your strength' (Nehemiah 8:10). Joy whets and sharpens industry. A man who is steeled and animated with the comfort of God's Spirit, goes with vigor and alacrity through the exercises of piety. He believes firmly, he loves fervently, he is carried full sail in duty. 'The joy of the Lord is his strength'. Divine comfort supports under affliction: 'Having received the Word in much affliction, with joy' (1 Thessalonians 1:6). The wine of the Spirit can sweeten 'the waters of Marah'. Those who are possessed of these heavenly comforts can 'gather grapes from thorns', and fetch honey out of the 'lion's carcass'. They are 'strong consolations' indeed, which can endure the 'fiery trial', and turn the flame into a bed of roses. How powerful is that comfort which can make a Christian glory in tribulations (Romans 5:3)!

A believer is never so sad, but he can rejoice. The bird of paradise can sing in the winter. 'As sorrowing—yet always rejoicing' (2 Corinthians 6:10). Let sickness come, *the sense of pardon takes away the sense of pain*. 'O death, where is your sting?' (1 Corinthians 15:55). At the end of the rod, a Christian tastes honey. These are 'strong consolations'.

Eighth, the comforts of the Spirit are ABIDING comforts. As they *abound* in us so they *abide* with us. 'He shall give you another Comforter that he may *abide* with you forever' (John 14:16). The comforts with which God feeds his mourners are immortal: 'Who has loved us and given us *everlasting consolation*' (2 Thessalonians 2:16). Though a Christian does not always have a full beam of comfort—yet he has a dawning of it in his soul. He always has a ground of hope and a root of joy. There is that within him, which bears up his heart, and which he would not on any terms part with.

Behold, then, the mourner's privilege, 'He shall be comforted'. David who was the great mourner of Israel, was the 'sweet singer of Israel'.

Thomas Watson