

What Does it Mean to Mourn?

Rick Railston

July 23, 2011

We're going to start today with a very familiar section of Scripture, but what we want to do is analyze it in a way that maybe perhaps we haven't done before. And so before we turn to Scriptures (a set of Scriptures, several verses), I want you to ask yourself as we read through these verses, "What is the one that's a little bit different than the others? What is the one that stands out from the others?"

And this involves the Sermon on the Mount, Christ's very first sermon. Let's go to Matthew chapter 5. We'll begin in verse 1 and read the first ten verses, commonly known as the Beatitudes. But ask yourself, "Which one of these Beatitudes stands out and is a little bit different?" Matthew 5 verse 1:

Matthew 5:1. *And seeing the multitudes, (NKJ)*

And in chapter 4 and verse 25, it says, "great multitudes."

Matthew 5:1b. *...He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him.
2) Then He opened His mouth and [He] taught them [taught the disciples], saying: (NKJ)*

Verse 3:

Matthew 5:3. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (NKJ)*

Cassirer says, "Those whose spirit makes them think poorly of themselves"—a humble, contrite spirit.

Verse 4:

Matthew 5:4. *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
5) Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
6) Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, [because] they [will] be filled.
7) Blessed are the merciful, (NKJ)*

Other translations say "the compassionate."

Matthew 5:7b. *...for they shall obtain mercy.
8) Blessed are the pure in heart, (NKJ)*

Other translations say, "hearts full of innocence.

Matthew 5:8. *Blessed are the pure in heart, [because] they [are going to] see God.*

9) *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called [the] sons of God.*

10) *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (NKJ)*

Now most of these verses outline character traits that all of us should have. And one, at least, jumps out in my mind and that is back in verse 4. It says:

Matthew 5:4. *Blessed are those who mourn: (NKJ)*

And in a sense, this seems strange. A strange quality that Christ would want in us is to mourn. Because why? And, then, He goes on to say that if you do mourn, you're blessed.

Now hold that thought and let's turn to John chapter 15, a verse we read at the time of the Passover. And we're going to read verses 9 to 11. So contrast the concept of being blessed when we mourn or because we mourn to John 15 beginning in verse 9. Christ said:

John 15:9. *"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; [and] abide in My love. (NKJ)*

Verse 10:

John 15:10. *"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. (NKJ)*

Now notice verse 11.

John 15:11. *"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. (NKJ)*

Now it's obvious that Christ wants us to have joy and to have a fullness of joy, but at the same time He says, "Blessed are you if you mourn." Well, if you mourn, how can you have joy? And if you have joy, how can you have joy and mourn? So, it seems like there's a bit of a contradiction here in what Christ wants us to do. And the question becomes: How do we reconcile these two Scriptures? And more importantly, why would Christ want us to mourn? Why would He want us to do that?

So, what we're going to do in the sermon is investigate the subject of mourning and look into the questions:

- What should we as Christians mourn about?

- And, then, how does God want us to mourn?
- Are there examples as to how He wants us to do that?
- And, then, how does all of that relate to joy?
- How do we reconcile those Scriptures?

So, let's start with the first question. If those who mourn are blessed, as Christ clearly said, then what are we as Christians to mourn about? Think of that subject. Now, there are two giant areas, two big areas. And I know you can think of some others, but these, as far as the big picture is concerned, are the two big areas that God and Christ would want us to mourn about.

The first one is:

I. We should mourn over the state of the societies in which we live and the state of the world in which we live because we know that that world is rapidly heading to destruction.

Let's go to Jeremiah 10 and verse 23 and read a Scripture that I read quite frequently and remind myself about and have proven over and over in my life that this Scripture is absolutely true. Jeremiah 10 and verse 23, a fundamental principle regarding human conduct and human nature, Jeremiah says:

***Jeremiah 10:23.** O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. (NKJ)*

And that tells us that apart from God, human beings do not have the capability of putting one foot in front of another. We don't have the wisdom, the spirit. God said in Deuteronomy 5, "Oh, that they had a heart." We don't have the heart to know to put one foot in front of another and what direction to take. And the reason is because Satan has blinded mankind. We know that. It started back in the Garden of Eden. It has continued ever since.

So, what we're going to do in looking at this first area is just to see how poorly mankind is directing his steps. And then when we see that that gives us a reason to mourn for the condition of the society in which we live. We're going to take several areas.

The first one is:

1. Poverty

These are statistics by the World Bank that they compiled in 2008. Going back to 2005, the World Bank estimates that there are 6.46 (roughly 6 and a half billion) people on this earth. And over twenty percent of that six and a half billion people (or about 1.4 billion people) live on less than a \$1.25 a day. I'm not talking \$1.25 an hour. We're talking a \$1.25 a day—1.4 billion people! Now try to live on \$1.25 a day and see how far it gets you. That's the bottom twenty percent of the world.

The top twenty percent of the world (or 1.3 billion people) live on \$10 a day or more. Now we're part of that. And, of course, we skew those figures way up in the developed nations. But think of it! The best twenty percent live on \$10 a day or more. And they're the blessed ones.

So that means the middle sixty percent (not counting the twenty percent at the bottom or the twenty percent at the top) but everybody else in the middle lives on less than \$10 a day.

So, the numbers are clear that eighty percent of the people in the world live in poverty—live on less than \$10 a day. And \$10 a day for a family of four is \$14,800 a year. Even in this blessed country, try to live a family of four on \$14,800! And if you're above that, then you're blessed. But almost everybody, eighty percent of the world lives on less than that.

So, we have to ask the question: How is mankind doing so far in taking care of his brothers and sisters in the world when eighty percent live in poverty? Not very well! We're not directing our steps very well at all.

2. Children

Let's look at children. UNICEF in 2007 estimated that children under the age of five, of all the children in the world under the age of five, 9.2 million—this was in 2007—died. Children under the age of five, 9.2 million died! Now, it's hard for us to grasp concepts of millions and billions, but that would mean, that 9.2 million a year that would be over 25,000 a day children die every day in the world. That's over a thousand an hour! And by the time this sermon is finished that means there will probably be 12-1,300 kids die in the world today.

And it's due to malnutrition. It's due to poor hygiene. It's due to lack of access to clean water, inadequate sanitation facilities. All of which can be remedied. If you have programs and enough money, they can be remedied. And two-thirds of those six million every year are easily preventable if mankind would address the problem. But mankind does not do that as we see. So, 9.2 million are dying—kids under five. They never have a chance.

So, we have to ask the question: How is mankind doing so far in directing his steps as far as taking care of children in the world?

3. War

Now what about war?

In World War I, and when I give these statistics, we'll never know the exact numbers. It's probably far more than the numbers we have. But the best estimates in World War I were that about twenty-one and a half million people died in World War I. Now in Germany, between the ages of 19 and 22—of course, that's the fighting age—between 19 and 22 during World War I, Germany lost thirty-five percent of all the young men between 19 and 22. In France, young

men between 20 and 32, they lost fifty percent of the men between 20 and 32 during that war. This is not injuries! These are deaths.

Now, World War I, about 21.5 million roughly died. What about World War II? There were over fifty million people killed during the four plus years of World War II—over fifty million! It's impossible to know the exact numbers.

In Stalin's regime—now this is outside of war. This is not counting World War II, but Stalin came to power in 1924 and he died in 1953 and the estimate is that he killed fifty-two million of his own countrymen staying in power. Not counting deaths in World War II. This is in addition to that.

Hitler during his regime, as you know, he killed the Jews. He killed the gypsies. He killed the handicapped—mentally handicapped, physically handicapped—because he didn't want them reproducing. The median figure is about fifty million in Germany, obviously a much smaller country than Russia.

And then the Chinese Revolution under Mao Tse-tung, he came to power in 1949 and died in 1975. They don't have a clue, but they estimate somewhere between twenty and forty million of his own countrymen he killed staying in power. Because it's such an isolated country, you'll never know the exact numbers.

But if you put all of these together, in the last one hundred years, there have been a hundred and seventy million people killed due to war in the last one hundred years. That's roughly, during the last one hundred years, that's roughly twenty percent of the population in those wars.

Now according to the U.S. Census Bureau—this is an interesting number—they estimate that during Christ's day, there were a hundred and seventy million people alive in the world during Christ's day. And so, in the last hundred years, we've killed a hundred and seventy million. So, it would be like wiping out the entire planet of human beings that existed back in Christ's day—a hundred and seventy million people!

Now, the RAND Corporation in 1961 published a book called The Art of War after a lot of research by experts and scholars in lot of different countries. And they said, "Since 3,600 B.C.—that's 5,600 years ago—the world has known only 292 years of peace. In 5,600 years, the world has only known 292 years of peace. That's one year of peace for every twenty-two years of war. Not a good track record! During this period, they go on to say, there were 14,531 wars, large and small, in which—Get this!—the total number killed since 3,600 B.C. are three billion six hundred and forty million people killed. That's roughly half of the population of the world today that have been killed in war in the last fifty-six hundred years.

Now again, it's three billion six hundred forty million. It's hard to comprehend that number, but Jesus Christ was alive and walking this earth a billion minutes ago. And so, it would be like taking 3.6 people and shooting them in the head every minute, every minute, every minute, every minute going back to Jesus Christ.

Just lining them up, Bam! Bam! Bam! and keeping it up until you go back to the time of Christ as far as the number of minutes. It's just unbelievable!

They also said that since 650 B.C., there have been 1,656 arms races. And only sixteen of those did not end in war. And of those sixteen, they all ended in economic collapse of the nation that entered into the arms race.

Now get this! They estimated the value of the destruction inflicted since 3,600 B.C.—the costs of the armies and the weapons of war, the cost of animals killed, humans killed, buildings, houses destroyed, crop obliterated. Going back to 3,600 B.C., they said it would take a golden belt around the center of the earth ninety-four miles in width and three stories high—solid gold. Now that's a belt twenty-five thousand miles long, almost a hundred miles wide and three stories high!

Now we have to ask the question: If we had taken that money and invested it in children and in education and doing things God's way, where the world be today? But, obviously, that's not the case. So, we have to ask the question: How's man doing so far? How's he doing? It's not very good.

Then, the last subject we're going to talk about under this category of "Mourning for the world," this pales into insignificance all the other figures. And that's:

4. Deaths due to abortion.

We don't often think about that. Guess how many abortions occurred—and this is the last estimate that I could come across— In the United States, it goes back fifteen years ago, but that's the latest figure I could come up with. Just guess? How many abortions occurred in the United States in 1996? It was 1.37 million abortions in 1996. It's much more now. But in 1996 one million three hundred and seventy thousand little babies were murdered in the United States.

Now worldwide, the estimate is about forty-four million a year. And you'll never know the exact figures because some of them occur in alleys and back rooms. And there's never—nobody will ever know how many because of the lack of reporting.

So, remember I said a hundred and seventy million were killed in war in the last one hundred years? It will take less than four years of abortions to equal that number! And we're doing it to little defenseless babies.

So, again I say, "How's mankind doing?" Clearly, man cannot direct his own steps. And if this doesn't give us a reason to mourn, I don't know what does.

We could talk about other things. We could talk about child abuse. We could talk about divorce. We could talk about incest. We could talk about violence and all kinds of things. This just barely scratches the surface. And we know that this world is under Satan's sway. He's the prince of the power of the air, and this is the direction the world is going.

But let's look at a prophecy of the state of the world at the end of this age. Usually we turn to this prophecy to show how shocked the world will be when Christ returns and that's correct, but there is a secondary application. Let's go back to Matthew 24 and verse 36. And we're going to go beyond that, but as we read verse 36, I wish that fellow that prophesied that the rapture was going to come here a month or ago had read this verse because obviously he did not. Or if he did, he didn't believe it. Matthew 24 verse 36, it says:

Matthew 24:36. *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. (NKJ)*

But let's look at verse 37:

Matthew 24:37. *But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

38) *"For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,*
39) *"and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. (NKJ)*

So, the key is verse 37. It tells us Christ will arrive in days similar to the days of Noah—very much the same. Well, what were the days of Noah? Let's go back to Genesis 6 and look at verse 5. This is the condemnation of the generation of Noah and this is the condemnation of the generation that will be extant when Christ returns. Genesis 6 and verse 5, God looked down from His throne and looked on the earth and it says:

Genesis 6:5. *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (KJV)*

The New King James says that "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil."

The New International says, "every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time."

So this tells us what the state of the world will be when Christ returns.

Now the Hebrew word for "imagination," where it says "every imagination of the thoughts of the heart was only evil," The Brown, Driver, and Briggs Commentary says of this word, it says "the form is as in the framing or the purpose"(meaning the intent of the mind), "as in a pottery maker or a graven image maker" (meaning that before you shape the image, you have an intent and a thought to shape it in a certain way).

The Gill Commentary says this:

[There was] not one good thing in their hearts, not one good thought [or] one good imagination of thought; and so it was "continually" from their

birth, from their youth upwards, [and] throughout the whole of their lives ...
night and day, and day after day without intermission:

Meaning they did not have good thoughts in their head. And this is the condition of the people when Christ returns. And it was also the same during Noah's day.

Now a potter sits down with a lump of clay and he envisions in his mind what's he's going to make, what he wants to make. The same is true of a person that makes idols. They have a thought. They have a picture in their head that they want to make.

And their thinking has been—referring now to Genesis 6 and verse 5 in the days of Noah and in the days prior to Christ's return—their thinking has been formed from their youth upwards to be evil. Just like a piece of pottery or a graven image is formed based on the thoughts of the image maker—the potter or the sculptor—that form is a result of the thoughts in the mind. And we're being told here that these people's thoughts are evil continually in their mind before they go out and actually do something. And this is formed from their youth on and it continues throughout their lives.

I mean look at the young people today. Look at the movies and TV that they watch every day. Look at the violent and gruesome video games that they play every day. Look at the peer pressure in the educational system that they have to go through every day. And their very thought processes and their very thoughts themselves are being molded by these things from their youth upwards. And not only do these things affect the young people, they affect all of us to one degree or another as much as we allow them into our minds.

So, not only will the return of Christ take the world by complete surprise, but the state of the world when Christ returns will be very similar to the state of the world at the time of Noah. Their thoughts, the thoughts of man are evil and selfish continually.

Now let's look at an example from the Bible to see how God wants us to mourn the condition of the world. Let's see how God wants us to do that.

And this is a situation where mourning actually saved lives. And we're going to look at a case of there were four incredible abominations that we're going to investigate. And God makes it plain the reaction He wants in us when we see abominations like these. So with that in mind, let's go to Ezekiel chapter 8 and we'll begin in verse 1. This is the reaction God wants His people to have and this tells us very plainly the abominations that existed in Ezekiel's time. We will have and do have worse than these! I'm going to read it out of the New King James. It's a little more clear. Ezekiel 8 verse 1:

Ezekiel 8:1. *And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house with the elders of Judah sitting before me, that the hand of the [Eternal] fell upon me there. (NKJ)*

Ezekiel goes on in verse 2.

Ezekiel 8:2. Then I looked, and there was a likeness, like the appearance of fire—from the appearance of His waist and downward, fire; and from His waist and upward, like the appearance of brightness, like the color of amber.

3) He stretched out the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my hair; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the north gate of the inner court, where the seat of the image of jealousy was. (NKJ)

Now what is this "image of jealousy?" He says:

Ezekiel 8:3b. ...which provokes to jealousy. (NKJ)

Provokes God to jealousy! Verse 4:

Ezekiel 8:4. And behold, the glory of the [Eternal] of Israel was there, like the vision that I saw in the plain.

5) Then He said to me, "Son of man, lift your eyes now toward the north." So I lifted my eyes toward the north, and there, north of the altar gate, was this image of jealousy in the entrance. (NKJ)

The NIV says, "an idol of jealousy."

Manasseh, what Manasseh probably did in those day if you look at the history and do some research, he probably made a cross and put it there right next to the temple.

Verse 6:

Ezekiel 8:6. Furthermore He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, to make Me go far away from My sanctuary [from My Temple]? Now turn again, you will see greater abominations."

7) So He brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, there was a hole in the wall.

8) Then He said to me, "Son of man, dig into the wall"; and when I dug into the wall, there was a door. (NKJ)

Verse 10:

Ezekiel 8:10. So I went in and saw, and there—every sort of creeping thing, abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed all around on the walls. (NKJ)

Drawings of abominations, drawings of idols and this is likely on the walls of the dwelling places of the priests in the Temple—idolatrous shrines, the animals gods of Egypt were all depicted in their dwelling places.

Verse 13:

Ezekiel 8:13. *And He said to me, "Turn again, and you will see greater abominations that they are doing."*

14) So He brought me to the door of the north gate of the LORD's house; and to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz. (NKJ)

The pagan god, Tammuz; many believe Tammuz was the name of the reincarnated Nimrod. And in God's Temple, women were bowing down and weeping because Tammuz died. And it was a pagan custom for the women to weep for Tammuz.

Let me quote from The Babylonian Mystery Religion by Hislop. He says "Legend has it that Tammuz was killed by a wild boar when he was forty-years-old." Hislop (who wrote The Two Babylons) points out that:

... forty days - a day for each year Tammuz had lived on the earth - were set aside to 'weep for Tammuz.' In olden times, these forty days were observed with weeping, fasting, self-chastisement -- to gain anew his favor -- so he would come forth from the underworld and cause spring to begin. This observance was known not only in Babylon but also among the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, the Mexicans, and, for a time, even among the Israelites.

And to this day, we have forty days of Lent. That's where it comes from, the forty days of Lent—weeping for Tammuz.

Verse 15, now to the fourth abomination:

Ezekiel 8:15. *Then He said to me, "Have you seen this, O son of man? Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these."*

16) So He brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the [Eternal], (NKJ)

Right at the door of God's Holy Temple!

Ezekiel 8:15b. *...between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the [Eternal] and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east [as the sun was rising]. (NKJ)*

It wasn't overhead. It was over the horizon in the east.

Now, remember in Daniel, it tells us very clearly. Daniel prayed toward Jerusalem, toward the Temple three times a day. They had their backs to the Temple. They were in Jerusalem and yet had their backs to the Temple. And they were praying toward the sun in the east.

Verse 17:

Ezekiel 8:17. *Then He said to me [He says], "Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose. (NKJ)*

What on earth is that? If you do the research, the branch was the Asherah. And the Asherah was a phallic symbol. And trees were cut into the shape of that phallic symbol and they were called the groves. The groves were referred to many times in the Old Testament. And, so, they shaped nature in the form of the male organ. And this "worship" was introduced to the Temple and to its courts. When He says, "They put the branch to their nose," that's what God is referring to.

The evil here is putting the Asherah to the nose of God Himself! And they made God angry when they do that. It's open disrespect to God.

Verse 18, God says, "Because they do that," He says:

Ezekiel 8:18. *"... I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them." (NKJ)*

Now Ezekiel chapter 9 verse 1:

Ezekiel 9:1. *Then He called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, "Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each with a deadly weapon in his hand."
2) And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen and had a writer's inkhorn at his side.*

And both Daniel and Revelation tell us that somebody clothed with linen is symbolic of a holy servant of God—white, clean.

Verse 3:

Ezekiel 9:3. *Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, (NKJ)*

It's likely one of the two that are symbolically over God's throne and were over the Mercy Seat.

Ezekiel 9:3. *Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, [He said the one] who had the writer's inkhorn at his side;
4) and the [Eternal] said to him, "Go through the [middle] of the city, through the [middle of Jerusalem], and put a mark on the foreheads of the*

men [And, of course, the women too].who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it [inside Jerusalem]." (NKJ)

Now the Hebrew word "sigh" means to groan or to mourn—those who mourn over these abominations. The Hebrew word for "cry" means to shriek.

And so the message is here: God is saying, "Go through the streets of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of everyone who mourns over the outrageous obscenities being done in My Holy City." That's what He's saying.

Verse 5:

Ezekiel 9:5. *To the others He said in my hearing, "Go after him through the city and kill; (NKJ)*

"Go after the one clothed in white linen. After he puts the marks on the Brethren who sigh and cry after all that's going on, go after him through the city and kill:"

Ezekiel 9:5b. *...do not let your eye spare, [do not] have any pity. 6) "Utterly slay... (NKJ)*

The Complete Jewish Bible says, "Slaughter them all!"

Ezekiel 9:6b. *...old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary." (NKJ)*

So, those that were spared mourned over the state of Jerusalem. And this is a type of the mourning that we should have over the state of the world in which we live. And we've seen here an example of proper mourning of the state of the world and the state of the society in which we live and we've seen that we should sigh and cry over the state of this society as they did and they were saved. So, we should mourn over the state of this world, the state of our individual nations. And we should pray for the day to come when all of this stops.

The Second Thing is:

II. We should mourn over our own sins.

We mourn over the sins of the world. We mourn over the direction the world is going, but we need to mourn over our own sins.

Now in a past sermon, you might recall that when the Law was read during the time of Josiah and Ezra, they rent their clothes as an outward symbol of repentance. And then I quoted Joel 2 and verse 13. It says, "Rend your hearts and not your garments."

And when we talk about mourning over our own sins, we should rend our hearts. It's easy enough to focus on the sins of the world, which we just did in Point

Number One. But we have to focus on our own sins. And we have to rend our hearts over our own sins.

And this question is critical to proper mourning: Do we comprehend the magnitude of our own sins? Do we do that? Or do we just blow off our own sins and focus on the sins of other people or the sins of the world?

Now our sins are so great, obviously, Christ had to die for us. Didn't He? Let's go to 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 21. This is a fundamental fact that we cannot forget. 2 Corinthians 5:21:

2 Corinthians 5:21. *For He made Him [referring to Christ; God the Father made Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us [to be sin in our stead], that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (NKJ)*

And, because of our sins, Christ became sin in our place and died on the cross. And our sins are so great that Christ had to do that and we cannot forget that.

Now, Paul speaks to the magnitude of our sins in a most graphic way. And it's a way that I fully didn't understand until a few weeks ago when I began researching this. Let's go to Romans chapter 7. I'm going to read it out of the NIV because it's more clear, but Paul is speaking of the magnitude of our sins. Romans chapter 7, we're going to read verses 14 through 20 and then jump to verse 24, out of the NIV. Paul says:

Romans 7:14. *We know that the law is spiritual; (NIV)*

Now this is a man who studied at the feet of Gamaliel. This is a man who was very intelligent and very well-read and knew the Scriptures backwards and forwards. And we also know that he was converted in a very dramatic way and God used him very powerfully. But notice what he says.

Romans 7:14. *We know that the law is spiritual; but [he says,] I [of my flesh] am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.
15) [He says,] I [don't] understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. (NIV)*

Verse 16:

Romans 7:16. *And if I do what I [don't] want to do, [he says,] I agree that the law is good.
17) As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but [the] sin [that lives inside] me. (NIV)*

Verse 18:

Romans 7:18. *I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. (NIV)*

Meaning: "Humanly, I can't carry it out apart from God."

Verse 19:

Romans 7:19. *For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. (NIV)*

And we have been there. We have done that. We have just tore at our clothes almost and said, "Why do I keep on doing this? Why do I say this? Or why do I do this?" And Paul is lamenting the same thing.

Verse 20:

Romans 7:20. *Now if I do what I [don't] want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. (NIV)*

Verse 24:

Romans 7:24. *What a wretched man I am! Who will [deliver] me from this body of death? (NIV)*

Now in years past, you just read past this and say, "Yeah, a 'body of death,' the body's going to die. That's what he's talking about." No, that's not what he's talking about. We read right over this term "body of death."

Now, remember Paul is writing to Christians at Rome. And Paul is using a term that any Roman of his day would recognize. When he says, "body of death," they would know exactly what he's talking about. Today we don't. But back then, they would. It's a term that is referring to a diabolical form of torture—"this body of death." That's what he is referring to. And I'm here to tell you that roasting and burning and racking and drawing and quartering, they were nothing compared to this form of torture that Paul is referring to when he's says, "body of death."

Let me read from Adam Clarke's Commentary (Romans 7:24).

... there seems to be here an allusion to an ancient custom of certain tyrants, who bound [Now, get this!] a dead body to a living man, and obliged him to carry it about, until the contagion from the putrid mass took away his life!

What they would do is a form of torture. They would take a living man who is going to be tortured. They would take a freshly dead body and they would strap it face-to-face to this living man—this corpse. They would tie straps around his head, around his neck, several places on the chest, around both arms, around both legs so that this man had this dead corpse looking right in his face.

The Roman poet Virgil, who wrote about a hundred years before Jesus Christ, said the following. I'm quoting now [as found in Adam Clarke Commentary on Romans 7:24, emphasis added].

What tongue can such barbarities record,
Or count the slaughters of his ruthless sword?
'Twas not enough the good, the guiltless bled,
Still worse, he bound the living to the dead:
These, limb to limb, and face to face, he joined;
O monstrous crime, of unexampled kind!
Till choked with stench, the lingering wretches lay.
And, in the loathed embraces, died away!

Now think about that torture as that body starts to decompose! And you are flesh-to-flesh. And the body begins to decompose and, then, those poisons and that decomposition begin to decompose the living person's body.

Servius who wrote commentaries on Virgil in the fourth century remarks on this passage from Virgil [as quoted in Adam Clarke Commentary on Romans 7:24].

... from the dead body, produced the [slow decay] in the blood of the living.

Now you can imagine that they were strapped together and, initially, the man could move and walk around, but as that body began to putrefy and began to decay, then the living person's body began to absorb those poisons. And, then, that person began to get sick and weak and run fevers and develop all kinds of diseases as the decaying body began to creep into his body. And then finally, he couldn't walk. He had lay down. And he lay there until he died. This could take days, weeks!

Now this is what Paul was referring to when he said in Romans 7:24 "this body of death." This is a dead body strapped to me. And this is what our sins make us! You see he's drawing the analogy that our sins are like strapping this dead body to us—a stench of decay when we strap sins to ourselves. And he's trying to draw a very graphic analogy about how God views sins and how we should view sins. And if we don't repent of them, we will become slowly polluted by our sins as this living individual would be slowly polluted by the poisons emanating from this dead body.

This illustration helps us realize what a stench sin is and how sin can pollute our entire body! It's very graphic! And it also gives an indication of how God looks on us when we sin. We've got these stinky smelling, polluting, corrupting sins strapped to us. And that's how God views it and that's how God sees it.

And once we realize the magnitude of our sins, God gives us a tremendous gift. He gives us a gift that is or— Excuse me. God gives us a tremendous gift in that He gives us a blueprint on how we should mourn and how we should look at our sins.

Now, let's recall this blueprint which is found in the example of David in the situation with David and Bathsheba. Now, let's set the stage for this of how we should mourn for our sins. Let's recall this example of David.

He had reigned twenty years in Jerusalem. And it says, we're told when the spring came and the kings went out to do battle, David stayed home. He didn't go to the battle. He stayed back in Jerusalem. And remember he was looking down from his porch and he saw Bathsheba and then he called to her. He had relations with her. He got her pregnant. He tried to cover it up. Remember he had her husband Uriah come back from the war in an effort to get him to sleep with his wife. And he [Uriah] was so righteous that he wouldn't do that. And so, ultimately he [David] had Uriah killed.

Now think on these facts. Uriah was one of thirty-seven mighty men in David's court. We find that in 1 Chronicles 11. One of thirty-seven mighty men! His father [-in-law], Eliam, was another of the thirty-seven. And his grandfather [-in-law], Ahithophel, was David's chief of staff. So, this is a very connected family to the King, David.

And David handpicked the homes of those in court with him. In other words, wherever they lived—they might have farms; they might be businessmen, whatever, or military men stationed somewhere else, but—when he called them to court, he would provide homes for them. And they would live where he wanted.

And David picked the home of Uriah. And David had to know where Uriah lived and he had to know Bathsheba. This wasn't a situation where he just up on his deck and kind of looked out and saw Bathsheba taking a bath and started lusting. He knew exactly what was happening. He knew exactly where she lived. He knew her. He knew her husband. He knew her lineage. And this was not some accident that David was just wandering around looking off his balcony. It was not that at all. David knew exactly what he was doing with Bathsheba from start to finish.

Now, think of the commandments that he broke. The Tenth Commandment, he coveted. The Ninth Commandment was lying and deception. The Eighth Commandment, he stole. He stole another man's wife. The Seventh Commandment, he committed adultery. The Sixth Commandment, he committed murder. He had Uriah murdered. The Third Commandment, he took God's name in vain. He caused God's name by his sins to be blasphemed in all the nation and in the surrounding nations. And then the First Commandment, he broke the first one, which is idolatry. He put himself before God. He put his desires before God. So, he broke seven of the Ten Commandments in this instance.

And we can see how we can't sin in isolation. Our sins affect other people. And in this case, it affected all those around him in Jerusalem, his court, his family. It affected the nation. Our sins hurt and impact so many others.

And, yet, despite all of this, for a while David couldn't see his sin! Until, remember Nathan the Prophet came to him, told him the story about the lamb and the poor servant and then, this wealthy man? The poor servant had one lamb and it was like part of the family. It was a pet. And this wealthy had a guest

come and he wouldn't take of his own flock. He took this poor man's lamb and had the lamb killed—served for dinner. And David jumped up and said, "That man ought to die." And then, Nathan said, "You're the man!" And then, it all came flooding into David's mind. And at that point, David recognized the magnitude of his sins. It was like a thunderbolt! It hit him right between the eyes.

And then, as a result of that, David left us a blueprint on how we should mourn. And that is in Psalm 51. So, let's turn over there. David left us a blueprint on how we should mourn. Now, notice verse 1 of Psalm 51. It says, "To the Chief Musician, a Psalm of David when Nathan the Prophet went to him after he had gone into Bathsheba."

Now, it is no accident that Psalm 51, this psalm, occurs right after Psalm 50 because Psalm 50 focuses on calling into account and focuses on sacrifice. Look at Psalm 50 and verses 21 and 22.

Psalm 50:21. These things [have you] done, and I kept silence; (KJV)

Now God kept silence for nine plus months while Bathsheba carried the baby.

Psalm 50:21. These things [have you] done, and I kept silence; [you thought] I was altogether such a one as [yourself]: but I will reprove [you], [I will] set them in order before [your] eyes.

22) Now consider this, [you] that forget God [referring to David], lest I tear you in pieces, and [there's] none to deliver [you]. (KJV)

He says, "You put God on the shelf during this whole thing. From the time you went to Bathsheba and the whole nine months and after Uriah was killed and all the deception and all the lying. And now you've taken her for your wife. Because I kept quiet, you thought I was your co-conspirator here," God is saying.

Now, look at the very first verse the first half of Psalm 51. David finally realizing this, coming to himself—a term that Christ uses:

Psalm 51:1. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to [Your] lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of [Your] tender mercies... (KJV)

The Hebrew word for "mercy" is *chesed* (*kheh'-sed*) and it means "unfailing steadfast love."

Now we see here a pattern of how we should behave when we ourselves confront our sins. The first one is:

1. We must acknowledge the sin.

That's the first thing. You can't solve a problem unless you admit you have a problem. So, look at verse 3. David says right in the beginning.

Psalm 51:3. I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. (NKJ)

Now you have to believe during the nine plus months that the child was being carried by Bathsheba that he wrestled with himself. And he would have thoughts of all that he did—putting Uriah to death and the lies. And the deceit would come up, but then he would press it down. And, undoubtedly, as God said, "Because I kept silent, you think that maybe I just winked at it."

I heard a man back in the Worldwide days—if I said his name, you would all know his name—he said—he had committed some grievous sins, similar to what David committed. And he just said that "God winks at my sin because of the good I do for the work." And, so, it's like he's saying, "I get a pass because of who I am."

But that's not what Psalm 51 says. It says we're called into account.

So, David undoubtedly wrestled with guilt for nine plus months. It would come up. He would push it down. It would come up. He would push it down. And this was so unlike himself. Before he came to himself, he wouldn't acknowledge the sin. But, then, after he came to himself, after Nathan said, "You're the guy!", then he acknowledged the sin. And he immediately admitted his sin and he immediately repented.

And so the message here is the first thing we have to do is acknowledge the sin. You can't repent of a sin that you don't acknowledge you have. You can't solve a problem unless you admit you have a problem. And that's what David did. So the first step is acknowledging the sin.

The second step is:

2. Repent of the sin and ask God to forgive us.

Ask for the sin to be washed away and to be forgiven. Look at the latter part of verse 1. He says right out in the beginning:

Psalm 51:1b. ...blot out my transgressions. (NKJ)

Verse 2:

Psalm 51:2. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. (NKJ)

Now there are four Hebrew words for "sin". And David uses every one of them in the first four verses. They all have different shades of meaning, but they all imply missing the mark. And he uses every one because he's not trying to diminish his sin. He's not trying to walk away from his sin. But they mean missing the mark or deviating from God's standard.

Look at verse 4. I'm talking about repenting and asking to be forgiven.

Psalm 51:4. *Against You, [and] You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight— (NKJ)*

Now David definitely hurt Uriah. He had him killed. And then, David hurt Bathsheba. And he hurt so many others. He hurt the nation. And the fact is though when he said, "I've done this evil in Your sight," sin is the transgression of God's Law. Not man's law. Therefore, we can only sin against God.

This is also the reason that only God can forgive sin because we sin against Him. He defines what sin is. And, then, when we go to Him, He is the only one who can forgive. Now, when somebody sins against us or offends us, it's our responsibility to give up the human desire to retaliate, to get back, or to get even. But only God can forgive sins. We can't forgive sins at all. Let's understand that.

Look at verse 16.

Psalm 51:16. *For You do not desire sacrifice, or else would [I] give it; you [don't] delight in burnt offerings. (NKJ)*

David's getting to the core of the matter. Verse 17, he says:

Psalm 51:17. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise. (NKJ)*

God's saying, "I don't care about the physical sacrifice. And He says, "What I want is I want you. I want your heart to be turned. I want your heart to be contrite."

Now, contrast David's humility now back with the time of the nine plus months when he was denying the sin, when he was ignoring the sin and he took Bathsheba away from another man and had him killed. He violated his conscience for over nine months. He refused to kneel before God and admit his sin. And now, after all of this, he is coming to God in deep repentance.

So, the question for us is: Have we become apathetic to our sins like David? Or do we tremble with a contrite heart before God Almighty?

So, the second is:

2. Repent and we have to ask to be forgiven.

The third is:

3. We need to create in us a clean heart so we don't repeat the sin.

God forgives us. We repent. And, then, I've seen over the years we can fall back into the same sin. So, we repent and then repeat it again. Repent again and repeat it again. And you just go on in this endless cycle that gets you

nowhere. And so, we have to ask and this is why David asked for a clean heart so that we don't repeat that.

Verse 5, he says:

Psalm 51:5. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, (NKJ)

Now, other translations say "into iniquity," meaning into a world of sin.

The Catholic Church and certain Protestant Churches use this as a term "original sin." And we all pay for Adam's sin. That's not the case.

He says, "I was brought forth into iniquity," meaning in a world full of sin, in Satan's world.

Psalm 51: 5b. ...and in sin [meaning into a sinful world] my mother conceived me.

6) Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, (NKJ)

The John Darby Translation says, "in the hidden parts," meaning down in our gut.

Psalm 51:6b. ...and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. (NKJ)

David denied the truth and hid the truth for nine plus months and he just refused to confront it. And he would just push it down, push it down, not think about it and not think about it. And this, in a way, is like contrasting the academic knowledge that we have of the Bible or of sin versus the feeling in our gut when we wake up at 3:00 a.m. or 2:00 a.m. and our conscience bothers us about something we did or something we should have done. That's a gut level thing versus academic knowledge. And David finally got the gut level feeling when he says, "You desire truth in the inward parts," what's down deep, not denying the sin.

Then He goes on in verse 7. He says:

Psalm 51:7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. (NKJ)

Now, what's he referring to here? The fact is that lepers had to present themselves to the priest after purifying themselves. Once they were cleansed of the leprosy, they had to go to the priest. They had to purify themselves and then go to the priest. When the priest affirmed that they were cleansed—there was no leprous skin on them—he would sprinkle them with water and hyssop. So, that's what David is saying. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean."

Today, we are cleansed of sin by the blood of Jesus Christ. Not by a sacrifice of an animal. We are cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. And then, when we are cleansed by Christ's blood, then what David said, "I shall be whiter than snow," because God' holds us guiltless at that time.

Verse 8, the latter part of verse 8, he says:

Psalm 51:8. ...*that the bones You have broken may rejoice. (NKJ)*

Verse 9:

Psalm 51:9. *Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.
10) Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew... (NKJ)*

The Hebrew word "renew" can also mean "rebuild."

Psalm 51:10b. ... *[rebuild] a steadfast spirit within me. (NKJ)*

Now the Hebrew word for "create" ("Create in me a clean heart.") is the same word that's used in Genesis 1 and verse 1 where it says, "God created the heavens and the earth."

What David is saying is "Take that creative power that You have and create a new being in me." This requires God's power. It's not something we can do on our own. And David was just acknowledging that.

So we need to ask God daily for a clean heart.

And the fourth point is then, after we acknowledge our sins and we repent of our sins and then God creates a clean heart in us through His spirit:

4. Joy can be restored. Joy returns!

Look at the beginning of verse 8. He says:

Psalm 51:8. *Make me hear joy and gladness, (NKJ)*

When we were consumed by guilt, we know we're separated from God; we can't have any joy!

We've all been there. We've sinned and we're just sick to our stomachs and we want God to forgive us and we repent of what we've done and our thought processes and our deeds and we're consumed by guilt and we don't feel close to God! We don't feel close to God, but once we vomit it all up and once we repent, then, joy can return. But it's impossible to have true joy when guilt is present, when we are not in a right state with God and Christ, when we haven't been forgiven.

We mourn for our sins. That's what the lesson is here. We mourn for our sins, but once forgiven, then we can have joy! Now we're getting to—in Matthew 5 talking about those who mourn and yet having joy—when we mourn for our sins and once we're forgiven, then joy can return.

Verse 11:

Psalm 51:11. [Don't] cast me away from Your presence [he says], and [don't] take Your Holy Spirit from me. (NKJ)

Now, we won't turn there, but in Psalm 16, David gives us the concept that true joy is being in God's presence. But when we sin, remember, "Our sins separate us from God," as the Prophet Isaiah says. So, we can't have true joy when we're separated from God. On the other hand, if we're in God's presence, if we're washed clean by repentance, then we come back into the presence of God and we can have true joy. It is impossible to have true joy without being close to God. It's just impossible.

And then, of course, here in verse 11, he says, "Don't take Your spirit from me," it speaks to God's holy spirit. And it shows that David and the Patriarchs had knowledge of and access to God's holy spirit. Obviously, on a very limited way, limited to a very small number of people.

And here we understand that if we don't turn from our sins, God's spirit can go away. And David in another psalm, he says, "My feet well nigh slipped." He came very close to the edge. And he finally turned back to God.

Verse 12, he says.

Psalm 51:12. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. (NKJ)

The Living Bible says:

Psalm 51:12b. ... make me willing to obey you. (TLB)

And what this tells us is that we want to get to the point where we obey God because we want to. Not because we have to. We don't obey God out of fear of the tribulation. We obey God because we love Him and we want to be like Him. It's very important concept.

Back in the Worldwide days, I think we started off obeying because we were fearful. We saw the Basil Wolverton drawings of the skulls being heaped up and all of that and we obeyed because of fear. But after all these decades down the road, we should come to obey God because we want to, because we know that is the only way to live.

And let's acknowledge the danger here of drifting away from God, which David did. Over time, he got complacent. He didn't go out to battle where he should have been. He was staying in Jerusalem. He became complacent. And we at the end of this age need to look at that very carefully.

So, let's use this blueprint when we find ourselves confronted with the magnitude of our sins and let's go back and read that.

Now, let's summarize. Remember where we started in Matthew 5 and verse 4. It said:

Matthew 5:4. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. (NKJ)

We have to mourn over the state of the society in which we live, the state of the world, the horrible atrocities that go on in our world and the fact that the world basically is godless. The world does not follow God. Society is bad and it's prophesied to get worse as long as Satan is the god of it, which we know he is.

And then, in addition to mourning over the sins of the world, the state of society that we live in and of the world, we have to mourn over our own sins. Because without Christ's sacrifice, our sins separate us from God and there's no reconciliation. But because of His sacrifice, now we can be reconciled to God. David spent nine plus months alienated from God. He was not reconciled because he had not repented. He hadn't realized the magnitude of his sins.

And Paul likens a sinful human being to one being strapped to a dead body. Because if we don't change, if we don't repent, if we don't vomit it up, that dead body (our sins) remain strapped to us. And it will decay and corrupt our body and the dead flesh will begin to pollute the living flesh; and, then, poisons and toxins go through our body. And, in time, we die just as that horrible form of torture brought a graphic witness to the people of those days.

We must recognize the magnitude of our sins! And we must learn to mourn as David set us the example when he came to himself and when he began to turn his life around. So, let's follow the command of Christ and mourn as the Bible teaches us we should mourn.

Then, if we do that, then, joy can return after a proper period of mourning. We mourn for our sins; we mourn for the state of the world, but joy can return. Remember in John 15 and verse 11, Christ said:

John 15:11b. "... that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. (NKJ)

Because our sins have been forgiven, and also because, it's not long before great joy in our lives will come when Christ actually returns and replaces man's government with His government, replaces man's laws, with His Laws. Then, we look forward to a great time of joy. So, let's understand what it means to mourn.