

Chrysostom Hom. 15, pp. 201-202

[4.] Now having begun, as you see, where most need was, He proceeds to another commandment, one which seems to be opposed to the judgment of the whole world. For whereas all think that they who rejoice are enviable, those in dejection, poverty, and mourning, wretched, He calls these blessed rather than those; saying thus,

*Blessed are they who mourn.* [Matt. 5:4a ONT]

Yet surely all men call them miserable. For therefore He wrought the miracles beforehand, that in such enactments as these He might be entitled to credit.

And here too again he designated not simply all that mourn, but all that do so for sins: since surely that other kind of mourning is forbidden, and that earnestly, which relates to any thing of this life. This Paul also clearly declared, when he said, *For the sorrow in accordance with God worketh out repentance to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world worketh out death.* [2 Cor. 7:10 ONT]

These then He too Himself calls blessed, whose sorrow is of that kind; yet not simply them that sorrow did He designate, but them that sorrow intensely. Therefore He did not say, "they who sorrow," but *they who mourn*. For this commandment again is fitted to teach us entire self control. For if those, who grieve for children, or wife, or any other relation gone from them, have no fondness for gain or pleasure during that period of their sorrow; if they aim not at glory, are not provoked by insults, nor led captive by envy, nor beset by any other passion, their grief alone wholly possessing them; much more will they who mourn for their own sins, as they ought to mourn, shew forth a self-denial greater than this.

Next, what is the reward for these? *For they shall be comforted* [Matt. 5:4b ONT], saith He. Where shall they be comforted? tell me. Both here and there. For since the thing enjoined was exceeding burthensome and galling, He promised to give that, which most of all made it light. Wherefore, if thou wilt be comforted, mourn: and think not this a dark saying. For when God doth comfort, though sorrows come upon thee by thousands like snow-flakes, thou wilt be above them all. Since in truth, as the returns which God gives are always far greater than our labors; so He hath wrought in this case, declaring them that mourn to be blessed, not after the value of what they do, but after His own love towards man. For they that mourn, mourn for misdoings, and to such it is enough to enjoy forgiveness, and obtain wherewith to answer for themselves. But forasmuch as He is full of love towards man, He doth not limit His recompense either to the removal of our punishments, or to the deliverance from our sins, but He makes them even blessed, and imparts to them abundant consolation.

But He bids us mourn, not only for our own, but also for other men's misdoings. And, of temper were the souls of the Saints: such was that of Moses, of Paul, of David; yea, all these many times mourned for evils not their own.

St. Leo the Great:

*IV. The blessedness of mourning discussed.*

After the assertion of this most happy humility, the Lord hath added, saying, "Blessed are they which mourn, for they shall be comforted." This mourning, beloved, to which eternal comforting is promised, is not the same as the affliction of this world: nor do those laments which are poured out in the sorrowings of the whole human race make any one blessed. The reason for holy groanings, the cause of blessed tears, is very different. Religious grief mourns sin either that of others' or one's own: nor does it mourn for that which is wrought by God's justice, but it laments over that which is committed by man's iniquity, where he that does wrong is more to be deplored than he who suffers it, because the unjust man's wrong-doing plunges him into punishment, but the just man's endurance leads him on to glory.