

Russell Kelfer

One More Reason to Cry

530-B

Series: The Beatitudes

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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One More Reason to Cry

We have been watching God cry, and we have been asking ourselves, “What kinds of things make the Creator God, the Alpha and the Omega, the king of Kings, actually grieve and weep?” As you would expect, as we search the Scriptures, we find the answers. Because we have the Word of God, we have seen God alive on planet earth, and we have seen Him cry. When Jesus wept, the Father was weeping. We know that because Jesus always did exactly and only what the Father did. He always reflected the Father’s heart. Therefore, when we saw Jesus cry, we saw God cry.

Understanding that, we know first of all that God cries when others are hurting. We saw Him at Lazarus’ grave. We watched in awe as He looked at Mary and the others, His grief welled up within Him and He wept. We then listened to Paul explain in Romans 12 that, like Him, we are to weep with those who weep as well as rejoice with those who rejoice. We learned in II Corinthians 12 that there will be schisms in the church and that the solution to those schisms will be found if when one person in the body cries, the rest of the church weeps with them.

Then we learned a second reason God cries: He weeps over the results of sin and unbelief. He wept over the lost as He looked at Jerusalem. He cried over what sin was doing to the world as He looked at Lazarus and recognized that sin had brought about sickness, separation, death, immorality, impurity, hatred, and enmity between God and man and between man and man.

Lastly, we watched God cry as Jesus wept on His knees in Gethsemane, knowing that His only reason for living was to do the perfect will of His Father, and knowing as well that often doing the Father’s will meant pain and suffering and hardship. That made God cry. We asked ourselves these questions:

1- Do we know what it means, what it really means, to weep with grief when others weep? Or do we keep just far enough from one another’s hearts to remain detached, not letting their grief affect us emotionally?

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2- Do we really know what it means to pray until we weep over the lost that are all about us? Or do we casually mention the names of the those we know or suspect are unbelievers without the depth of love that accompanies knowing that their lostness means an eternity in hell?

3- Do we know what it means to have real grief over the effects of sin in this world? Do we truly grieve and weep before God, seeking to find His perfect will in every aspect of our lives, whatever the cost?

Our goal was to see why God cries and then free Him as He lives His life through us, to release that kind of grief in us. The reason for our inquiry into this seemingly private part of the heart of God has to do with the second Beatitude,

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

God was saying that self-contained joy is available to the believer who is willing to be placed in a position where God can comfort him. As He receives that comfort, the fulness of God's kingdom power flows into his life, and he is transformed

...in ever increasing splendor from one degree of glory to another.
(II Corinthians 3:18)

To receive that comfort, however, we must allow, we must become excited about God's placing us in life's hard places where weeping can be turned into joy. We all want the joy. We all want the comfort that brings the joy. What we don't seem to want are the circumstances that bring about the weeping. We want the privilege without the process and the triumph without the trials. That is not an option.

In this study, we come to one final reason why Christians should cry. It is a problem Jesus never had, but a problem you and I have every day. We were instructed in Scripture to weep, to lament, and to mourn over our own sins and over what those sins cost God. It is really the logical sequence to being poor in spirit. The Christian is told to develop an increasing sensitivity to his own sin. Let's begin once more by asking ourselves some questions.

1- What chronic activities or attitudes exist in my life that if projected on a screen in front a group would bring embarrassment, humility or grief? If God were to display on a screen the attitudes

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and activities in our lives that we continually, chronically allow to maintain a hold on our lives, what would be our response? How often, when you are in your private prayer chamber with God, do you discuss these things openly and honestly with God? Often I find that I pretend that they are not there until a crisis comes. I tend to ignore them and pray in generalities such as, "Dear Lord, forgive my sinful attitude." I love that phrase because it is kind of a catchall, a basket into which we want everything to fall. We think it wipes the slate clean and we don't have to deal with individual sin.

2- What attitude best describes your feelings toward these besetting sins? Do you have an attitude of apathy, indifference, occasional concern, discouragement, anger at God, anger at yourself, humility or grief? The mourner is humbled in the sight of God at the thought of his sin and grieved in his heart over two things:

1) He is first of all grieved over the hurt those sins have caused the Father.

2) He is grieved over the shame those sins have cost the Son.

3- How would you describe your sensitivity to personal sin? As a frame of reference we will use our Christian experience when we had been a Christian one year. Ask yourself these questions: Are you more sensitive to sin now than you were then? Are you less sensitive? Are you about the same?

I picked a year because I have a theory that is based only upon experience. The theory is that, I believe most Christians from the point of their salvation to roughly the first 12 to 24 months of their Christian lives, become increasingly sensitive to the concept of personal sin. Things that never bothered them before begin to weigh heavily on their hearts, and they are grieved and burdened over them. But somewhere within the framework of this 12 to 24 month period, many times we begin to settle into our thinking, a compromise Christian philosophy. We look at those around us, at the church at large, and at our mistakes and failures, and we take a deep a breath and settle into accepting a new standard. It is like grading on the curve, and is something that, I believe, needs to be erased by the Spirit of God. If you and I, as Christians, day by day become more increasingly sensitive to sin as we should, and as we come closer to the light and see our sins more clearly, the body of Christ would become so sensitive to

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the needs in the body of Christ and to the needs of the world, that there would be real revival and power in the world today.

Let's remind ourselves of two basic principles. The first is that God hates sin. It grieves His Spirit. The second is that we love sin, because it pleases our fleshly nature. Whenever we get God's perspective of sin we ought to cry. This is an oversimplification, but sometimes that is what we need. Let's look at this problem from three vantage points:

I- The Principle (James 4)

II- The Portrait (Luke 22)

III- The Practical Practice of It: Our own personal lives

We will begin by looking at the principle and the attitude God expects of Christians. I love this passage because it starts with a question. Anytime Scripture starts with a question, it means that God has an answer. Anytime the world asks questions it is because they want to stimulate our interest. Often it is only to confuse us or evade the reality that the world has no answers. God, on the other hand, never asks a question for which He doesn't have an answer. The question is,

Where do wars and fights come from among you?

(James 4:1 NKJV)

To put it another way, "Why are there so many conflicts among you?" Why can't you get along with the world or even other Christians? Why is there constant conflict in your life? Why are you always lashing out at others and at circumstances? God then, as always, answers the question. The reason is because "There are so many conflicts within you". That is the problem. God then gives us the result of the problem in verse 2.

You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

(James 4:2 NKJV)

James tells us that there are three basic things that happen as a result of these internal conflicts that go on inside of us when they aren't dealt with. We covet, we argue, and we have unanswered prayer.

1- We covet. We are never satisfied with our lot in life. We have one car and we want two. We have two suits and we want four suits. We are not satisfied with our wife or husband, or our job or our church or our friendships. There is a basic discontentment in

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our life, because of the conflicts within us that we are not grieving over.

2- We have external conflict. James said it in verse 1 and repeats it in verse 2. You are not at peace with those about you. You are quarreling and fighting with people you come in contact with.

3- We have unanswered prayer and thus no spiritual power. You have not because you ask not.

The reason is given in the last part of verse 2 and verse 3. You don't understand the principle of prayer. The source of power for the Christian is on his knees. That is God's solution to the problem of internal conflict. Again, the reason is twofold.

1- You don't ask and pray specifically about the problem that is waging a war inside of you. You are not concerned about the internal conflict. If you are concerned, you don't talk to God about it. You just assume God knows about it because He knows your heart, even though He has told you to ask specifically so that you might receive. You don't talk to God about it.

2- When you do ask, you don't ask for the right thing. You don't know how to ask, so nothing happens. He says, "You pray for your own glory. You ask it amiss that you may consume it upon your own lusts. You ask selfishly. You ask circumstantially from your perspective." I want to ask you, how many of you in the last three months have prayed specifically and asked God to make you weep? We are told, "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted". How many of us have asked God to give us a weeping spirit, a mourning spirit before God in order to accomplish His will in our lives?

So this Scripture tells us that we have this conflict going on inside of us. We have not because we ask not. We ask and don't receive because we ask for the wrong thing. We don't ask for the character qualities that God has designed specifically in the Scripture to change us. We say, "Oh Lord, bless me and make my boat work well this weekend." We say, "Lord, please make the grocery store have a special on apples. I love apples." There is nothing wrong with these things, but the deeper things of life that change lives is what we are to pray about.

In verse 4 James gives us an illustration. I didn't like this illustration personally because it was convicting. He says,

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Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
(James 4:4 NKJV)

James likens the unstable Christian to an unfaithful marriage partner who stands up in public and vows to be faithful to God for all eternity, and then becomes an adulterer with his spouses' greatest enemy. In other words, he is saying that each Sunday when you come to church, you are saying, "I do affirm that this Jesus Christ is my lawfully wedded Savior." Then you go out and commit spiritual adultery with His enemy, no less. We learn in verse 5 that this grieves and breaks the heart of a jealous God, a God who looks after us as a loving father does his children. It is not the kind of jealousy that is selfish. It is the kind of jealousy where there is a jealous guard over us that doesn't want anything to happen to us that is not in our best interest.

He gives the solution in verses 6-8, and it is an interesting parallel. The solution to the problem is to become poor in spirit. In verse 9 he tells us that the second step is to learn how to mourn.

But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. (James 4:6-9 NKJV)

In verses 6-8 he tells us that we are to become poor in spirit and then we will find more grace because God resists the proud. He tells us to submit ourselves to God, humble ourselves, be in subjection and do as we are told. We can't live the Christian life by ourselves, but God can do it through us. We are to draw close to God, cleanse our hands and purify our hearts, because we are double-minded. James really makes an issue of double-mindedness. In an earlier passage he says that a double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways. Around Christians he is Mr. Spiritual, but in the world he is Mr. World. He can't choose God's standards and stick with it. You and I basically have to deal with this principle of double-mindedness.

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We are then led to verse 9 where it says we are to do three things:

1- We need to humble ourselves and realize who we are and who we aren't. He wants us to be afflicted, mourn and weep. The Greek word for afflicted here means to be touched or affected with the sense of misery. It can thus be defined "to be moved by the gravity of your sin, as though suddenly, the Holy Spirit walked up to you and put His finger on your shoulder and said, "Thou art the man." You are affected with a sense of misery and shock at your sin. James tells us that once we have been shocked into our senses, we need to learn to mourn. In our last study, we discussed that the definition of "mourn" is to grieve until your heart breaks.

2- There are two possible responses once you recognize that the Holy Spirit is speaking to you. You can mourn, or you can fight. Some of us would rather fight than switch. You can come up fighting which is what we will find later in this study that Peter did, or you can, on the other hand, say, "Yes, Lord, You are right," and bow your head and weep at least internally over your sin.

3- James goes on in the rest of verse 9 and says to let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness. In other words, let the lighthearted attitude toward sin that you possess be transformed into grief over sin and its consequences.

Let's examine three principles and two problems as a possible walk into a deeper understanding of this issue. The principles are designed to deal with this concept of decreasing sensitivity by confronting us with God's standard of increasing accountability.

Principle 1- The principle of increased information leading to increased responsibility.

We find this in Luke 12:48. There we read that,

...to whom much is given, much will be required.

(Luke 12:48)

It means that every new principle that you learn makes you more responsible to gain wisdom or understanding. Every time you are exposed intellectually to a new spiritual truth, you are more responsible to put it into your life. For example, if you do a study on unjust suffering in I Peter 2:23, you will learn that it is a blessing to be persecuted or blamed for something you didn't do.

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God gives an abundance of grace for that and He loves you when you respond properly. You may say, “I never knew that before, but now I do.” If so from this point on, you are responsible to begin personally making application to your own heart.

Principle 2: The principle of increased understanding and increased accountability.

This principle is found in James 4:17. It says,

...to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. (James 4:17 NKJV)

Once a principle passes from the level of information to understanding, you become increasingly accountable to obey. You have applied the new information to your own life and agreed with God over its relevance to you. Now you have multiplied your accountability to God. Having personalized truth, not practicing what you have personalized becomes sin.

Principle 3: The principle of increased responsibility and accountability ought to produce honest ministry.

My brothers, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. (James 3:1 NKJV)

The Amplified Bible rewords it like this:

Not many (of you) should become teachers (or leaders) my brethren for we (who lead) will be judged by a higher standard with greater severity (than other people, thus we assume greater accountability and more condemnation.) (James 3:1 Amplified Bible)

So there are three principles. The first is the more you hear, the more accountable you are to gain understanding. The second is the more you begin to understand, the more accountable you are to obey. The third is the more responsibility you assume in the Kingdom, the greater the severity of the judgment that God will use in judging you and your accountability. Now I don't mean to paint a grim picture, but we want to deal with this realistically.

There are two aspects or problems relating to this. The first one is the absence of the direct law of cause and effect. We tend to become less sensitive to sin rather than more sensitive after we have been a Christian for a while. Part of the reason is the absence of the law of cause and effect. When you have a toddler growing up, you can tell them, “Johnny if you touch the stove I will spank you.” They touch the stove and wham!, they get spanked.

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“Johnny, if you pull the window shade, I will send you to bed.” They pull the window shade and are off to bed. Before long, the law of cause and effect comes in to play and they understand basically what they can get by with and what they can’t.

If God acted that way towards us, we would perhaps have less problem obeying because of simple fear. If we knew that when we disobeyed, that God would spank us right then, we would be likely to behave, because none of us like to be spanked. But God doesn’t operate that way. As we grow older, our parents aren’t always present. They don’t always want us to obey through fear, so they give us principles to go by. They want us to obey because we love them. They lay down certain objectives and sometimes we disobey. But the things that we sow now, we may not reap for years.

That is the way it is in our spiritual life. God has chosen not to treat us like two year olds. Sometimes there is specific cause and effect, but most of the time there isn’t. You can get by with thought patterns. You can get by with wrong attitudes. You can get by with deceit and many other things for many years. We will miss blessings of glory in heaven. Sometimes eventually, these sins find us out on earth.

The truth is we are not the participants of that divine direct law of cause and effect most of the time. Because of this, Satan comes into the picture and says, “Look, you got by with it yesterday. Nothing happened. It is a new day. Try again. So you lost your temper. So you thought impure thoughts. So you lied a little bit. Nobody is perfect. Why get all wrapped up in being grieved over the little things. Just relax. Set a new standard for yourself. Obviously God doesn’t have you under the law. If He had you under the law you would be stoned to death. So just relax and let God be God.” We listen and it sounds good to us. So we begin to enjoy these little areas of besetting sins. We begin to relax and say, “So what, no cause and effect here. Everybody does it.” Before long we have compromised the basic premise of our spiritual walk, total obedience.

The second problem comes from thinking that God ought to balance the ledger of our sins with our spiritual works. This sounds childish to bring it up, but as you examine your own thought processes, no matter how childish it sounds, most of us still subtly justify ourselves in this way. It is a process of spiritual

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legalism. It says, “You know, I had a quiet time 3 days this week. I spent time with God then. I have been memorizing two verses a week. I’ve been teaching a little Sunday school class. God has got to be proud of me. Oh, I did slip in just this little area. I did kind of slip in that other area too, but God needs me.”

That is a lie. Just as there is no direct law of cause and effect to harness us, in the same way, Satan wants us to come to believe that because we are being spiritual, we are receiving spiritual brownie points which will offset some of these sins that we don’t want to talk about. Let me remind you that there is nothing you can do that will atone for sin. Nothing. Only Jesus can atone for sin. So those brownie points that we are working up to compensate for the disobedience in our lives don’t really exist. If anything, they ought to make us more accountable to obey.

So much for The Principle, let’s study The Portrait. Let’s look at a man of God who wept and find out how it all came about. We are going to learn some new Peter Principles. All of you have heard of the Peter Principle. We are going to learn some new Peter Principles by turning to Luke 22. We find this same story also, in Mark 14 and Matthew 26. Here we will look at the steps that lead to a sobbing saint. The setting for the story is the Lord’s supper. It is the most tender time in Jesus’ life. He had just washed the disciples’ feet. He had just promised them a commission in heaven. We take up the story as Jesus turns to Simon Peter.

And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.

But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”

But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.”

Then He said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.”

(Luke 22:31-34 NKJV)

We pick up this story again in verse 54,

Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest’s house. But Peter followed at a distance.

Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them.

And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, “This man was also with Him.”

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But he denied Him, saying, “Woman, I do not know Him.”

And after a little while another saw him and said, “You also are of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!”

Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, “Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.”

But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are saying!”

Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”

So Peter went out and wept bitterly. (Luke 22:54-62 NKJV)

Now we want to find out what led up to Peter’s experience.

Peter Principle 1- God uses Satan’s desires to the maximum.

It is found in verse 31. Jesus knew what was happening to Peter when He said, “Peter, Satan wants to sift you to make you unusable. I plan to break you to make you usable. Peter, you don’t know how to cry. Peter, you need to learn who you are, a sinner, so that you can do what is necessary, weep over your sins, so God can do what He needs to do, use you to teach other people.” Satan’s desire was to sift Peter, to tempt him and cause him to fall and make him unusable. God allowed it because He wanted to break Him to make Him usable. We need to understand that principle.

Peter Principle 2- The perfect prayer lets the Father dictate the circumstances and the timing. It is found in verse 32.

But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail;
(Luke 22:34 NKJV)

I found this to be an interesting passage because we know that Jesus never had an unanswered prayer. Jesus always prayed according to the will of the Father and, therefore, His prayers were always answered. Here we find that Jesus said, “Peter, I prayed for you that your faith does not fail.” Now did Peter’s faith fail? It is interesting here that Jesus did not dictate to God how the Father was going to bring about this change in Peter’s life. He prayed for character to come as a result of the test. We would pray, “Lord, stop this. Don’t let him fail.” Jesus prayed, “Father, teach him and let him learn from his failure.” We don’t like to pray like that. We don’t like others to pray like that for us.

Peter Principle 3- Don’t tell God, “You can count on me.” The

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only one God can count on is Jesus Christ. It is found in verse 33. Peter looked Him straight in the eye and said,

Lord, I am ready. I will go with you to prison. I will go with you to death. (Luke 22:33 paraphrased)

He didn't even make it to the courtyard. He is no different than we are. It is that insidious pride that existed in Peter's life that required this test to break him so that God could make him a weeping saint. He looked at God and said, "God, there is one you can count on and that is Simon Peter."

Elijah did the same thing. He dialed God's number and said, "God, I feel so sorry for you. I'm the only one you've got left. There is a woman coming after me. What could be worse than that?" God looked at Elijah and said, "I think you misread the census. I have thousands of people on my team. Maybe they don't have general's bars on their shoulders like you do. That may your problem Elijah. I have some corporals and privates who know that they are corporals and privates all over this universe, and I can use them whenever I please. I don't have any problems, Elijah. You are the one who has the problem." Peter said the same thing, "Lord, I will go with you no matter what these guys do. You can count on me."

Peter Principle 4- God isn't surprised when you blow it. Jesus said, "After you have repented, I want you to strengthen your brothers. I know what you are going to do. I know what is going to happen, but I love you just the same. When it is all over, I want you to turn around and start walking straight again." We always think we catch God off-guard when we blow it and fail.

Peter Principle 5- When you begin to follow afar off, check out your spiritual condition. When you try skiing down a slope and get about halfway down you are liable to lose perspective because you don't know how fast you are going. You look around and there are slight changes in the blurs around you but you don't really know where you are for sure because you are going downhill so fast. You and I are the same way. When we begin to follow afar off, it is time to stop and take inventory because we don't often realize how far off we are.

Peter Principle 6- Remember that Jesus is always looking for you and looking at you. He is waiting, loving. Verse 61 is the most beautiful part of this whole passage. It says,

And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. (Luke 22:61)

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Examine in your own mind to see what kind of look Jesus gave to Peter. Close your eyes and imagine that you are in Peter's shoes. You have denied the Lord three times, just as He said you would, and suddenly you turn around and you see that Jesus is standing right in front of you. He then turns and looks straight at you. The kind of look you think Jesus would give you tells you a lot about your concept of God. Personally, I don't think that Jesus looked at Peter with a look of condemnation. Perhaps it was a look of hurt or grief, but I believe He also looked at him with eyes of love. He knew that this was going to happen. Jesus was praying for Peter. He looked at Peter, I believe, with eyes of deep, compassionate love.

I believe it is important to consider at this point that there are some of us who, really, on a day to day basis, are following afar off. Our spiritual sensitivity is not what it once was. We are playing games with God. We are pretending that we are something we are not. We are harboring in our hearts and lives things, that if they were flashed on the screen, would cause us to cringe and mourn. Some of us simply need to recognize that Jesus has never once left our side no matter how we have denied Him. The moment we look up to see Him, He is looking at us with penetrating eyes of love and He reaches out and says, "I love you. Let's start over." That may be you right now.

Peter Principle 7- When Jesus looks at you and you realize what you have done, don't be afraid to weep over your sins. It is found in verse 62. Peter was every inch a man, but in verse 62 Peter was becoming a man of God. He looked at Jesus, realized what he had done, and began to cry.

In our next look at the Beatitudes, we will seek to find how we can learn practically to be more sensitive to the sin that breaks the heart of God. God has told us that as His children we need to learn to mourn. We need to mourn over the hurts of others. We need to mourn over the lost, over the mess sin has made out of the world and over finding and doing the will of God. But even more important, perhaps, we need to mourn over our own sins and what those sins have cost God. We have studied The Principle and we have seen The Portrait. What we need to do is to ask the Spirit of God to do a work of grace in our hearts and take us back to where we began to ski down the slopes. We need to re-sensitize our emotions so that the little things we do that offend others and offend God will once again break our hearts. We need

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to confess them and be filled with the joy that follows. We need to remember that weeping endures for the night, but joy always follows weeping.

Isn't it good to know a God who loves us so much that even though it hurts at the time, He knows we need to learn how to cry? He lovingly, quietly, therefore, lets us come to the end of ourselves until the tears begin to flow. Then, He graciously lets us know that once we learn to cry, His desire for us is that He, the God of all Comfort, wants to comfort us. Until we are grieved enough to weep, though, how can we be comforted?

So He waits. Often, He watches us walk down the dark corridors of life, knowing that until we reach the depths, we will not weep. Until we weep, we simply will not learn the marvel of His comforting mercy.

Like the children of Israel, we tend to blame God or others until somehow, somewhere, God's Spirit says to us, "Thou art the man." At last, the finger of God's hand touches the sensitive strings of our conscience, and like Adam, and David, and Peter, we see that we are, indeed, without excuse, and we are, indeed, running from a loving Father who is waiting to forgive.

That is our moment of truth. Two choices await us. We can continue to run and continue to deceive ourselves, or we can face the music. We can make excuses or we can look God in the eye. Only then will we see our sin as God does. And only then will we have one more reason, one very real reason...to cry.

For Further Study and Application

1- Review the questions on pages 2-4 of the transcript. Ask God to reveal where you really stand in these areas. Search for Scriptures that confirm what God wants of us in these areas. Meditate on those passages this week.

2- If the reason we are blessed by mourning is so that we can be comforted, how should that change our attitude towards the things that require us to need God's comforting hand?

3- Re-read James 4:1-10. What can you learn about your prayer life from this passage?

4- Meditate on Luke 12:48. Looking at your own life in the

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light of that passage, how responsible are you to be obedient? When you hear passages that are already familiar to you, or hear teaching on subjects you have heard before, do you feel a greater sense of responsibility or do you tend to be distracted because it is familiar?

5- Meditate on James 4:17. How should this principle affect your obedience to the things you already know? What tricks does Satan use to sidetrack us in this area? What can we do to recognize those tricks and have victory?

6- Do you think it is true that spiritual leadership carries a higher standard of responsibility and accountability? What passages can you find that confirm that? What can we do to see that we protect those who teach us and lead us so that they will remain faithful?

7- Read Luke 22:31-62 again. What do you think was Peter's major problem? Can you relate? Peter had become the "leader" of the team, the spokesman for the group. What effect had this had on his attitude?

8- How do you think Jesus looked at Peter? How do you think Peter responded? Why did Peter weep? Can you place yourself in this picture? In what ways do we deny our Lord without even realizing it? Memorize Luke 22:61-62.

Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly "hear" his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It's been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that's a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you "hear" as you read.

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