

## Sorrow Turned to Joy

Here at the end of the Upper Room Discourse—a private conversation with the Eleven—Jesus strengthens His disciples by refuting two lies that often paralyze believers. The first lie is that Christians will have no sorrows. The second lie is worse: that we shall have no joy.

### I. Followers of Jesus will have many sorrows. (16-20a)

Every human being has sorrows. Life is full of them. But there are even additional sorrows for the believer. Jesus mentions three of them:

#### A. Jesus physically departs from us (16)

"A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me."

#### B. We are often confused. (17-19)

**17** So some of his disciples said to one another, "What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'; and, 'because I am going to the Father'?" **18** So they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about." **19** Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'?"

#### C. The world laughs at us. (20a)

**20** Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice.

### II. Our sorrow will one day turn into joy. (20b-22)

#### A. The crucible of our joy is our suffering. (20b-21)

**20b** You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. **21** When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.

Notice that our joy will come not in spite of sufferings, or even in the place of our sufferings, but rather our joy will come through our sufferings. Jesus uses the vivid illustration of childbirth to make his point—the labor pains are extraordinary, but they produce something absolutely beautiful: a new human life. Our suffering will one day produce glory!

Malcolm Muggeridge once put it this way: "Contrary to what might be expected, I look back on experiences that at that time seemed especially desolating and painful. I now look back upon them with particular satisfaction. Indeed, I can say with complete truthfulness that everything I have learned in my seventy-five years in this world, everything that has truly enhanced and enlightened my existence has been through affliction and not through happiness whether pursued or attained. In other words, I say this, if it were possible to eliminate affliction from our earthly existence by means of some drug or other medical mumbo-jumbo, the results would not be to make life delectable, but to make it too banal and trivial to be endurable. This, of course, is what the cross signifies and it is the cross, more than anything else, that has called me inexorably to Christ."

#### B. The source of our joy is seeing Christ. (22a)

**22a** So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice

Notice that the joy comes from seeing Him. Seeing is very important to the disciples (1 Jn. 1:1,3; 3:2,6; 4:1,12,14,20; 5:16; 3 John 1:11). Blessed are we who believe but do not see.

(John 20:28)

One day we shall see Him face to face. See I John 3:2

Tim Keller said, "The most rapturous delights you have ever had — in the beauty of a landscape, or in the pleasure of food, or in the fulfillment of a loving embrace — are like dewdrops compared to the bottomless ocean of joy that it will be to see God face-to-face (1 John 3:1–3)"

### **C. The duration of our joy is unending. (22b)**

**22b** and no one will take your joy from you.

Read Romans 8:35-39.

Having shown that our joy will be full and will be certain, Jesus now presses the issue of joy one step further:

### **III. Our sorrow is already turning into joy. (23-33)**

Our greatest joy will come when Jesus returns in all His glory, but we have joy now. Joy is an unmistakable mark of the true believer. Jesus gives us three reasons for our current joy:

#### **A. By Christ's Ascension we have access to the Father (23-28)**

**23** In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. **24** Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. **25** "I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. **26** In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; **27** for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. **28** I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father."

Because of Jesus, the Father loves us like He loves Him! We can ask anything in the name of Jesus—anything that advances His Kingdom—and the Father will grant it.

#### **B. By Christ's crucifixion our sins are forgiven (29-32)**

**29** His disciples said, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! **30** Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God." **31** Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? **32** Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.

The disciples claim to understand Jesus. He knows better, as He predicts their cowardly abandonment of Him when He faces Calvary. But He makes it clear that our sins will not thwart His great plan to save us. The Father is with Him and will enable Him to complete His sacrificial mission.

#### **C. By Christ's Resurrection we triumph over the world (33)**

**33** I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

We have peace, not because we have no enemies, but because we have One greater than our enemies fighting on our behalf. And this peace is comprehensive. In Christ we are whole, complete, well, satisfied.

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We can now be courageous, because He courageously destroyed our enemies.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Why are the sorrows of a Christian actually greater than the sorrows of the non-Christian?
2. Describe the joy that will eventually come to us when Jesus returns. Why is it necessary for believers to know this?
3. Describe the joy that believers have now. Why is it impossible for the Christian to be joyless?
4. How can the Christian cultivate deeper joy in his/her life?
5. Describe the peace that Jesus promises in 16:33. How does the peace He gives differ from the other forms of peace offered in this world?

**Going Deeper**

1. What keeps you from experiencing the fullness of Christ's joy? What can you do about it?
2. How can you be a better agent of the peace Jesus offers to this world?