

The Sorrow And The Joy Of A Christian.

Text: John 16:16-23

1) The Christian's Sorrow

Suggested Hymns:

2) The Christian's Joy

386, 443, 211 ALHB, 288, 203

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 16:16–23, ¹⁶ *“A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father.”*

¹⁷ *Then some of His disciples said among themselves, “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 go to the Father?’”* ¹⁸ *They said therefore, “What is this that He says, ‘A little while’? We do not know what He is saying.”*

¹⁹ *Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, “Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’?”* ²⁰ *Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.*

²¹ *A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.*

²² *Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.* ²³ *“And in that day you will ask Me nothing.”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The Lord Jesus spoke these words in the night in which He was betrayed. He had already told His disciples in plain words that He must suffer and die. Only a few days before He said to them, *“Behold, we are*

going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. ³² For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. ³³ They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”¹

And now Jesus seeks to impress on their minds that the time is at hand. He says in our text, *“A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father.”* But the disciples did not comprehend this matter.

Why? Because there was a fixed notion in their minds that, as the Messiah, Jesus must do what the children of Israel expected of their Messiah, that He must establish a glorious worldly kingdom and be the temporal ruler of God’s people.

The words, *“A little while,”* were especially offensive to them. How was it that Jesus would remain with them only for a little while and then go to the Father? They expected Him to remain with them a great while longer.

They had escorted Him into the city of Jerusalem amid the shouts and hosannas of the multitude and had come to stay, to see their beloved Master seated upon the throne of David and Solomon, to share His glory, and to be made judges ruling the twelve tribes of Israel, and, in general, to enter upon an era of happiness and prosperity for the whole nation.

And was Jesus now about to leave them in a little while? It could not be. *They said therefore, “What is this that He says, ‘A little while’? We do not know what He is saying.”* But Christ does not make an attempt to explain to them the expression, *“A little while.”* He knows, it would be of no avail in their present state.

He simply tells them what will be the effect of His withdrawal and reappearance, saying to them, *²⁰ Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.*

Sorrow and joy was in store for them: sorrow, when their beloved Lord and Master would leave them and sink into the grave, and joy, exceeding joy, when they would again see Him in the body of His glorious resurrection.

This was not only said for the disciples of Christ at that time. Until the end of the world Christians must expect both sorrow and joy. Let us consider with the help of God's Holy Spirit, *The Sorrow And The Joy Of A Christian*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Christian's Sorrow

Many people hold that Christians should not be burdened with sorrows. They enter the Christian ranks and profess the Christian faith, and now they expect that God should rule and govern things so that their lives glide along like a smooth stream, without any trouble or hindrance. They expect that God must keep every calamity away from them.

When some smaller evil comes upon them, they may reconcile themselves to that, and get over it, thinking that it is something which, after all, they deserve for their sins. But when they are made the victims of some great misfortune, when some great calamity has befallen them, causing immense sorrow and grief, they murmur against their divine Maker.

They say, '*How can a gracious and merciful God send down upon us such misfortunes while we are trusting in Him? No; there is no Father in heaven, no divine Ruler of the universe, for if there was, we would not be in sorrow and mourning.*'

The fault with such people is that they expect of God something which He never promised to those who trust in Him. When and where did God promise that Christians would never be burdened with sorrows in this world? He promises you His divine protection. He promises to care for you, to provide for you, to give His holy angels charge over you, and not to tempt you above what you are able to bear.

But nowhere does God promise to withhold from you all sorrows. On the contrary, Jesus says to His disciples in our text, "***Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament.***" Can you rightly expect greater favours from the Lord than His disciples? Can you say that they deserved more punishment than you?

Does not St. Paul say distinctly in 2 Timothy 3:12 that ***all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution?*** Does he not say of himself and of

all Christians, *“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God?”*²

And look at the example of our Lord’s dear children in the Holy Scriptures. Look at men like Job, and the prophets, and the apostles. What afflictions, what griefs, what sorrows fell to their lot! No; Christians are not exempt from the common ills of mankind. They are subject to the same ailments, and diseases, and misfortunes, and calamities that the rest of the children of men must bear in this life.

As a rule, they must bear even more than the unbelieving children of this world. They are the cross-bearers. They must endure the reproach of the unbelieving world. They must suffer for the very reason that they are Christians. Christ says to them, *“In the world you will have tribulation.”*³

But these are not the greatest sorrows of Christians; for they are sorrows concerning only temporal things and the mortal body. The greatest sorrow of a Christian is when he is troubled about the welfare of his immortal soul. Christians must sometimes meet with the same experiences as did the disciples of Christ during the three days when Christ was taken from them, while He was lying in the grave.

O how must the disciples have felt then! Their hearts must have been filled with sorrow to overflowing. They still clung to Christ; they loved Him; but they felt as if all their hopes and fondest expectations were blasted. They had hoped that it was Jesus who would redeem Israel, but what could they hope for now? Death glared from the eyes that had looked upon them so lovingly.

The lips were silenced that had spoken to them words of eternal life. The tomb had received Him whom they had followed, and for whom they had left everything. They could see Him no more, and in their minds He was no longer the great wonder-worker, but a mangled corpse. All their comfort in life and in death was now gone.

Such profound sorrow they had never tasted before. And to this day the greatest sorrow of Christians is when they are made to feel as if they had no Saviour, when Jesus hides from them, as it were. They feel no joy. They cannot rejoice in their salvation. It seems to them that they are not Christians, that they

have no faith and that they have no right to appropriate to themselves the promises of eternal life.

It seems to them that Jesus is dead for them, that He can do nothing for them, and that they have been trusting in Him in vain. They take their Bible and read it, and even the divine Word does not impress their soul. They seek relief in prayer, and God does not seem to hear them. Their soul is shrouded in darkness. They feel as if they were fast sinking into hell.

They say with Job, ***“I cry out to You, but You do not answer me; I stand up, and You regard me not. ²¹ But You have become cruel to me; With the strength of Your hand You oppose me.”⁴***

And with David, ***“I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.”⁵***

But the comforting promise given to Christians is, that their sorrow will not endure for long. How long did the disciples mourn the loss of their Master? Only a little while, only three days.

And to this day God will not put heavier burdens upon His dear children than they are able to bear, and will deliver them shortly. All their troubles and sorrows must come to an end; and only for a little while they must suffer in the furnace of tribulation, that their faith may be tried, and that they may be made strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Then their sorrow is turned into joy.

2. The Christian's Joy.

What is the joy of Christians? Some people hold that to be a Christian is to be always sad and gloomy, to find fault with almost everything that is going on in the world, to find no joy whatever in earthly things, but to spend their lives in sadness and sorrow.

But does not God say distinctly to the Christians, ***“¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice”?*⁶** Yes, more than this, the apostle says in Philippians 4:4, ***⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*** The joy of the world is, at best, but an imperfect and fleeting thing.

Man's desire for happiness can never be perfectly satisfied by the joys of this life. He will always find, something lacking to make his joy complete; and

generally he will find a few drops of gall in the cup of pleasure. And what do worldlings say who have been tasting of nearly all the pleasures under the sun? They tell us that in the midst of their pleasures they can find no real and lasting enjoyment. All the joys of this life pass away. He who is laughing today may be weeping tomorrow. Finally, death comes and ends all pleasures.

A Christian, therefore, does not seek his happiness in the things of this life. For the true joy of a Christian is of a higher order. The Christian's joy is described in the words of Jesus, *I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.* The Christian's greatest joy is the possession and enjoyment of Jesus.

He can say with the hymnist,⁷

Jesus, Thou art mine forever,
Dearer far than earth to me;
Neither life nor death shall sever
Those sweet ties which bind to Thee.

All the joys of life are as nothing compared to this joy in Jesus the Saviour. He alone is truly happy who is made sure that his sins are forgiven, that God is his dear Father, and that he is God's beloved child, and that heaven is his home.

And of these things every one is made sure who truly believes in the Saviour Jesus. Joyfully the Christian can lift up his head, even in the midst of afflictions and tribulations, and say to his heavenly Father, *You love me, You love me even now, and I know that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*⁸

Joyfully the Christian can face the dark future before him. He knows that the future will be bright in the end, and that for him the day will come of which Jesus says,²³ *"And in that day you will ask Me nothing,"* an eternal day of joy and glory.

May the Lord, then, fill our hearts with this joy which surpasses all human thought and understanding, and may we all say to our beloved Saviour Jesus,

Thou alone art all my Treasure,
Who hast died that I may live;
Thou conferrest noblest pleasure,

Who dost all my sins forgive. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Luke 18:31–33

² Acts 14:22

³ John 16:33

⁴ Job 30:20–21

⁵ Psalm 38:6

⁶ Romans 12:15

⁷ 211 ALHB

⁸ Romans 8:18