

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Sorrow Turned to Joy

Scripture: John 16:16-24

Code: 1561

We want to look in our continuing study of John's Gospel at verses 16 to 24 today, and I trust that God will really enrich your heart as he has mine. And I'm really learning some things about how God is working in my own life just from these verses.

To be sure the greatest word that could ever be given to a person in sorrow would be the promise that their sorrow is only temporary. To bring to a sorrowing person anything else kind of falls a little bit short, you know. And even since chapter 13 Jesus has been dealing with the sorrowing disciples; all of this taking place the night before his death, as you know and in all of this he is sort of alleviating their sorrow with promises and wonderful hopes and the gift of the Holy Spirit and I'll be with you, you know, and you'll do greater things than I've done and you can ask anything in my name and I'll do it and I'll give you the power to be victorious over the hating world and you'll witness to me and it's going to be a great thing when I go away.

But they're really not comforted, see. They're still sorrowing and so Jesus moves in these verses to give, what I think, is the greatest comfort possible and that is the promise to the sorrowing person that the problem is only temporary. It will all be over pretty soon. And that's a real comfort because you can look ahead to that and that's the hope that keeps joy where there could be nothing but sorrow.

You can imagine this, for example, in the case of the nobleman's son that we studied, how it must have you know the sorrow when he came to Jesus must have turned to joy when he told him by the time you get home it'll all be all right. Or you remember Girus who told him about his daughter and he said don't worry about it. When you get back everything will be set. And you can imagine him racing into the house and finding that his daughter was doing well. And so in each case Jesus Christ expressed to them the possibility that their sorrow would turn to joy. And that's exactly what he does right here with his eleven disciples. And this is sorrow's greatest relief. It has to be, because it's hope. And he's already told them that he values their sorrow and twice in chapter 14 he said let not your heart be troubled. And once in chapter 16, verse 6 he says I'm looking at you guys and I can see the sorrow that fills your heart.

And so he knows they're grieving about losing him. And they don't understand and they don't understand not only the theology of the thing, but they don't even understand what's involved in a physical sense. So the thought of Jesus is turned to them and he has endeavored for these chapters to give them comfort and finally he caps off the message of comfort with this which must be the most

comforting of all, the statement that soon their sorrow will be turned to joy because it's only temporary parting at best.

Frankly, if you want to really be honest about it, they should have been happy anyway, right? I mean they should have been overjoyed. He told them when I go away it's going to be better for you; you ought to really be happy because I'm leaving. You ought to be happy, number one, because of all the promises I've given to you. All through chapter 14. And because of the Holy Spirit who is going to live within you and activate all these promises. You ought to be happy just for what you're going to experience. But beyond that, he said, you ought to be happy for my sake. After all, do you realize what it means when I go to be with the Father? Do you know what kind of joy that's going to be for me? To be back where I was before I got into this cursed earth and went through all the hatred? Don't you know what it's going to mean to me? Couldn't you at least be happy for me if not for yourself? And in their selfishness and selfcenteredness, there's nothing but sorrow and they can only see it from their own perspective. And Jesus intended everything he'd been telling them for their joy. In chapter 15 remember what he said to them in verse 11? We studied it. He said, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full." I've been saying all this to take away the sorrow and turn it to joy. You guys ought to really be excited about all of this, hit instead they're still sorrowful.

So Jesus then turns to the only other option really left to him, and that is to tell them that it's only a temporary parting, anyway. And this of course, comes out as the greatest kind of comfort. So verses 16 to 24 of the message Jesus to his disciples that the parting is only temporary and very brief. And in this passage I want to pull out four things: The pledge, the perplexity, the parable and the promise. You have a little outline; you can follow along. In these four things, we'll see the unfolding of this tremendous promise that Jesus makes, and I'm sure you're going to be as excited about it as I am when we get done. And the thing that is so amazing about it, is to see Jesus, who has problems in his own mind as he anticipates the cross that are beyond our understanding at all, who could totally be preoccupied with himself and understandably so, but who is totally selfless. And whereas he's already anticipating everything about the cross and it's only a matter of hours away, yet he stops those thoughts, condescends to minister to the sorrow of those selfish disciples. But, that's like Jesus.

So he stoops to their weakness because he's gentle and because he loves them and he ministers to their anguished hearts first of all with the pledge. Number one, in verse 16. Here's his pledge to them. And this is very, very interesting; notice it. "A little while and ye shall not see me and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father." Now that's a very confusing statement. It's very confusing for somebody to say, a little while you won't see me and in a little while you will see me because I go. That doesn't make a lot of sense right off the bat, see. I mean, it's confusing. So we need to consider what it is that he is saying. Let's take it piece by piece.

First of all he's saying a little while and ye shall not see me. Now that we understand; right? It's about two hours or three hours, maybe, before his capture and the events that lead to the cross, so indeed, it is a little while and they will not see him any more. It's just a brief time and he'll be out of their midst. And then he adds, in a little while you will see me. And you see he's ministering in the most humble kind of fashion to their particular problem. I hope you can grasp what an insight this is into the person of Jesus Christ. I hope you get the picture of his selflessness.

You know, this reminds me of what Paul said this is kind of a footnote in Philippians 2:4, where he says, you know, I want you to be of one mind and of one accord and I want you to look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others; in fact, here's how to do it: Let this mind be in you which was also where? In Christ Jesus. What mind was it? The mind that thought it not something to hold onto all that he had as God, but stripped himself of everything and humble. It's a mind of humility. It's a mind that says, I don't care for me, I only care for you. See that's the nature of the real body life of the church when everybody cares for somebody else and not form themselves. And that was Jesus' mind. So Jesus doesn't care for himself; he doesn't worry about those things that must be ripping and tearing and shredding his pure heart to pieces; the anguish in anticipating the sin that he would bear and the hatred and all that is going to come in a matter of hours, and yet he stops that completely from his mind and entertains totally the sorrow and the care of his beloved disciples, who are selfish and in the simplest sense undeserving of any of it. And so he says to them, Men, I realize I'm going away, but it's temporary because a little while and I'll be back. This is his gift of hope and this is the greatest alleviation of sorrow that is possible. The fact that it's only brief.

Now we must consider the key phrase in this verse, which is a little while, and it appears twice, although we'll not understand the interpretation, and I'm going to take a little time to do that. Jesus has used the phrase a little while to refer to both weeks, days and hours. And I'll show you what I mean. Back in John 7:33, Jesus said to them, "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me." Now that refers to weeks there. Keep that in mind because it's going to become very important in an interpretation that I'll give you in a moment. But you see, there a little while is a reference to a period of weeks; it has not particular designation other than that. A little while later as you come over to chapter 12, verse 35 it's a matter of days. And he says in verse 35, "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you." So there it's a matter of days in exactly the same phrase, a little while. In chapter 13, verse 33 says it again. "Little children, yet a little while am I with you." And there it's a matter of a large amount of hours, but by the time you get over to chapter 16, it's a matter of maybe two hours and it's the same phrase. So, watch this interpretive principle of building a kind of a little hermeneutic heh, heh, that's one for me that means principles of interpretation, and we're building a little principle that the phrase little while can refer to anything from weeks to hours. And we use it the same way, don't we? Sure. All right. So, he says, a little while and you will not see me. Now, we know what that means. In a matter of hours, he will move into the garden; some interpreters think that in the chapter 16 that we are studying, he is actually en route to the garden now, he having left the upper room. Other's think he's still there. And

so at this point, it's only hours, maybe as few as two hours and he will be arrested in the garden and the disciples will not see him any more. In fact they will flee and they will be separated.

But then he adds this confusing statement. "A little while and you shall not see me and again a little while and you shall see me, because I go to the Father." So after the first little while, he has a second little while and says you'll see me again in a little while. Now what is this second little while? When are they going to see him again? Some writers feel that he's referring there to his second coming. And that what he is saying is that I'm going away but in a little while I will be back. And the reason they use that interpretation is because very frequently, now watch this one, very frequently in the Old Testament, the period of time prior to Messiah's coming to set up his kingdom, is called the birth pangs of the Messiah. And since in verse 21 he uses the illustration of birth, they feel that that is consistently interpreting the passage so that what he is saying is that I will come back for my kingdom and he illustrates it by saying like a woman bearing a child, there will be birth pangs, the tribulation and then the kingdom.

There's a problem with that, though. I don't think that's the correct interpretation, first of all, because it eliminates the rapture, doesn't it? It eliminates the rapture altogether. It's just like saying; you'll be here until I come back for the kingdom. That's not true. Seven years before the kingdom, we go; right? And he said that already in 14:1, 2, and 3 and all the way down the line. I go to prepare a place for you; I'll come and get you and take you where I am. So it eliminates the rapture. That's the problem. Not only that, it would be a little bit of a false comfort to say to the guys, look men, I realize in a couple of hours I'm leaving, but in 2000 years, I'll be back. So, you know, be comforted. Heh, Heh, that's really not the kind of warm comfort they're looking for. So, it's a little bit out of whack if you take a little while one place to mean two hours and a little while another place to mean 2000 years.

Now other people say we'll file that interpretation other people say in the round file other people say, well, it refers to the resurrection. What he's talking about is I'll be back in three days. Now that's possible. That sounds more like it, doesn't it? Three days is a little while. Jesus used it to refer to days, didn't he, in Bethany when he said, a little while is the light with you. And so perhaps this is it. What he's talking about here is his resurrection which is only in a matter of three days and that is consistent. But I believe there's even a problem with that. The problem with that would be this: When he comes back from his resurrection, he'll only be around a few weeks and then he'll go again. And he'd have to go through the whole thing again. It would be kind of a false comfort to say, men, don't fear because in a few hours I'm going away but in three days I'll be back. Of course, I'll go away again and you know. That's not permanent kind of comfort, either. And that leaves a lot to be desired.

What is it referring to then? Well, catch the statement at the end of the verse. "A little while and ye shall see me because I go to the Father." You will see me because I go don't really make a lot of sense. How in the world are they going to see him because he goes to the Father? Oh, you know, don't you? If you've been coming the last few weeks, you know. Because when he goes to the Father,

whom does he send? The Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of Christ: Romans 8:9. And so what is Christ saying? He's saying I'll be back, only this time it won't be in a physical body with you; it will be in the form of my Spirit where? In you. He is with you he shall be where? In you. Chapter 14. Sure. So what he's saying is, I'm going to go away and send the Spirit.

Backing up for minute to verse 7 of the same chapter you see it there. "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." You see, he couldn't send his Spirit because the Spirit watch this one was a reward to him from the Father for the accomplished work. Remember that one? And so when he went to heaven and he accomplished the work the Father gave him the Spirit whom he sent in his place. And so he's saying, you will see me again; when I go to the Father I will come back to dwell in you in the form of the spirit. And my friends, there's no distinction between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Remember that. Christ said I'm going to send you another Comforter and he used the word, two words: heteraus and allaus. Heteraus, another of a different kind. Allaus, another of the same kind. And he used allaus. The same essence as me. He sends back his own Spirit. And so Jesus says I'm coming again in the Spirit.

Now he said this once earlier and I want you to note it. Chapter 14, verse 17. This will kind of clear this interpretation. Chapter 14:17 says this: "Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it seeth him not," this is who he is going to send, "neither knoweth him, but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you." Now watch this: "I will not leave you," rphans orphans, "I will come to you." "I will come to you." In the verse before he says the Spirit will come and in this verse he says I will come. Same thing. That's why the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ. Verse 19. "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me." See. I'll be back in the Spirit. You say, you mean not only does the Holy Spirit dwell within us but Christ? That's right. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. Christ in you, the hope of glory, see. It's a resident Spirit. And so his promise is thrilling. It's a permanent promise. It not I'll be back and I'm going again; it's not I'll be back in 2000 years; it's I'm going and I'll be back and when I come back I'll be there as long as you live and throughout eternity you'll never be without my presence. Lo, I'm with you always, even until the end of the age. I will never leave you or forsake you. And you know what happened on the day of Pentecost, don't you? The Spirit came and dwelt within us. The Spirit of Christ. And he began to teach them Jesus Christ. And here you see in our context, for when he says I go to my Father, it's the same thing. Backing up, for example, to verses 13, 14 and 15, he is detailing the work of the Spirit. And now in verse 16, he says, when I go to the Father this work will begin. I'll send my Spirit.

So, it's a simple interpretation. The disciples can't figure it out, but then, they never figured out anything, anyway. So what he's saying to them is, I'm going to go away and because I go to the Father, I'll come to you, you see, in the form of my Spirit, to dwell within you. That's the wonderful promise that every believer has. There's no such thing as a Christian who doesn't possess the indwelling Christ. No such thing. Yet, people will be running around trying to find the Holy Spirit, like

he's lost. The Holy Spirit lives within the believer. Paul said to the cruddy Corinthians, who had problems all over the place. He said to them, "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? What you have of God?" See. Don't you know that? I mean everybody ought to know that. That's basic stuff. Christ in you the hope of glory. And so he makes this pledge. What a fantastic pledge it is. He says, don't worry, I'll be back. It's temporary, and this time it will be better. It won't be just physically me, and I can only be in one place. I'll be in every one of you all the time. What a pledge; what a promise.

Then a few weeks later it happened, didn't it? And you see now we can take that phrase little while and apply it to weeks, can't we, because Jesus himself applied it to weeks in chapter 7, so it fits. The first time little while means hours, the second time it means weeks. All right. So Jesus went away and he sent the Spirit. What he's promising them is a great truth. He's promising them the dispensation of his indwelling presence and we live in that age now, don't we? This is the dispensation of the Spirit. This is the age in which the Spirit lives within the believer. And that was his promise to them; that the Spirit would live within them. And during this age -- mark it now what is it that the Spirit wants to do? What is that the Spirit does in this world? What is it that the Spirit does within you? It is that he manifests Jesus Christ. Isn't that right? Sure it is. Look at verse 14. "He shall glorify me." See. He shall take of mine and show it to you. The ministry of the Spirit pure and simple is to manifest Christ. And so Jesus says, you see, I'm going to go away and send back my Spirit who will manifest me within you. What a pledge. And by the perceptive eye of faith we know it. Do you know the Spirit dwells within you? Have you ever seen the Holy Spirit? I've never seen him. But I know he's there. I perceive him with the eye of faith. Don't you? I see him through the eye of faith, operating and working in my life. I sense his presence. And that's just what happened on Pentecost; he came.

So Jesus is including in this the day of Pentecost. Now let me say this: I think he's also thinking in reference to the resurrection. Because the cross, the resurrection, the ascension and the coming of the Spirit are all one climax to Christ's ministry that begin the age of the Spirit. So when he says I'll be back a little while, he means resurrected, ascended and in his Spirit. It's kind of encompassing. In fact, in II Corinthians 5:16 Paul gives us a little insight into this with a great statement that he makes there. II Corinthians 5:16, "Wherefore, henceforth, know we no man after the flesh, yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." Paul says in this passage, I know Christ, but he says I don't know him after the flesh any more. See. It's not a physical relationship with Christ. It's not that he's here in the body like he used to be. We used to know him like that, but now we know him in the Spirit. We know him in the Spirit. What a comfort this is. What a comfort.

Now, they didn't understand how much comfort it is. And so we see secondly their perplexity. They always responded with the same attitude. What does this mean? It was always their response. And so we see their perplexity. And it's interesting because we see here in chapter 16, verse 17 their silence is broken and it hasn't been broken since chapter 14:22. They haven't said anything. At least

anything the Holy Spirit felt worthy of including in the text, but since then there's not been anything said. But now, the question has gotten to them and they don't understand what he means about this little while idea. You know, I think they'd half committed themselves to the fact that he was going to leave; right? He was going to die. I think they were kind of getting that and then all of a sudden he says this and they say, oh, how do you die for a little while, see. That didn't make a lot of maybe they were thinking, well, I mean, Lazarus, he died for a little while. But anyway, they were confused. Verse 17. "Then said some of his disciples among themselves." You see they didn't have the courage to ask Jesus, so they just started talking between themselves. "What is this that he saith unto us, A little while and ye shall not see me, and again, a little while and ye shall see me and, because I go to the Father?" I mean that's the capper. That's what makes it so confusing. What is he talking about? And they're mumbling back and forth. And the problem of the confusion is little while and also the fact that he's coming because he's going, see. And it's very, very confusing. Don't be too hard on them. You wouldn't have understood it either on that side of the cross. They didn't get it. How can Messiah leave in the first place if he's going to set up his kingdom? They had really been battling with that one for a long time. Now that they had figured out that maybe he was going to leave, what is this about his coming back again? And so the statement became very confusing and in muffled tones and low voices they were confused, and they begin to talk about it.

In Mark, chapter 9 we get another insight into their confusion. They were indeed spiritual babes. Mark 9:30: This is a different occasion. "They departed from and passed through Galilee and he would not that any man should know it. For he taught his disciples and said unto them, "The son of man is delivered into the hands of men and they shall kill him and after he is killed, he shall rise the third day." Now that's pretty simple, wouldn't you say? You can read that and you can say oh yeah, he'll be killed and he'll rise the third day. Next verse. "But they understood not that saying and were afraid to ask him." They didn't understand that. That did not fit in with their Messianic hoax at that point and now at this point when they finally realize that maybe he means it that he's going to die, they can't figure out what it means that he's going to come back. And they are really confused. Verse 18, "They said therefore, What is this that he said, a little while?" What's that mean? "We cannot tell what he saith." They were confused to say the least. And so rather than be rebuked, they are silent.

You know it's a sad, thing, but you know, there's been a lot of things lost by people who were afraid to ask questions. How many times in John have we kind of just thought about the possibilities of little sections that would have been in here if somebody had opened his mouth and asked the question. But evidently they didn't want to reveal their ignorance or else they didn't want to suffer gentle rebuke at his lips and so they just would rather stay ignorant. That's a shame, really, you know. I mean many people are like that. You teach a class or a Bible class or a class wherever it may be and some people will sit there and they're not getting it but they won't ask the question because they're afraid they'll appear ignorant. Where the wonder of the thing is if they ask the question, they would probably find that in many cases the teacher is just as ignorant as they are and they could kind of fellowship in their ignorance. See. And together be stimulated. See, when we find ourselves ignorant, we are

stimulated to go find the answer. Enjoy your ignorance. It's the foundation of your understanding. It's the foundation of your learning. I mean look for those areas in your life diligently where you're ignorant. Then you can find out something to fill that hole. Learn the truth that applies at the point of your ignorance. But they didn't know the truth and they never bothered to ask about it. And so they just sat there blindly in their ignorance, afraid to ask.

Yet, Jesus wants to tell them. He really wants to tell them. I love this, you know, because I think that Jesus was so human that he needed to unbear his heart. He really did. I mean the anguish of the cross, I think if one of them would have said, Lord, just tell us all about it, will you? We want to feel this with you. We want to pray along with you. We want to care, you know, and just kind of share what this means to you. What a volume of fantastic things he could have shared with them. But in their selfishness they couldn't see past their own nose. And he needs to tell them; he needs to open his heart to them. He doesn't like to look at the cross. He needs to look beyond the cross with them and see the joy that's going to be his. That's the reason he went to the cross, you know the Bible says, for the joy that was set before him. The joy wasn't necessarily in the cross; it was after the cross and what it accomplished. And so rather than caring about himself and accepting their indifference toward him, he just decides well, I'll just comfort them; bring them joy. And I think in his own heart he wanted to do it because I think it helped him look past the nails and past the thorns and past the spear and past the cross and see the victory coming to them in the Spirit. I think he looked past Calvary as much as he possibly could because it was anguish.

You know that, don't you? You know he sweated great drops of blood when he contemplated Calvary. And so he faces their question and he's not so concerned with their ignorance; he's only concerned with their sorrow, and I want you to notice that. Very important. He doesn't try to deal with them theologically; he tries to deal with them in love and comfort. That's a beautiful thought. He could wait three days to let their ignorance be taken care of, but he couldn't wait three days to take care of their sorrow, you see. Three days later their ignorance was over; they understood; right? He died and rose again. That was clear. Three days later their sorrow was gone. Because they saw him again. He could wait the three days for their theological education, but he couldn't wait three days for their comfort. Isn't that a beautiful insight into how much he loved them? He had to comfort them right then. That's the essence of his care and his love and that's how he deals with us. I believe that. I believe the comfort that Jesus gives in our lives is his concern. Even before our theological education. Even before all of our knowledge comes his care of our lives and that we know joy and peace and comfort. And so rather than worry about the theology of it, he just files it and figures well, in three days these guys will be theologians without parallel and in 40 days after that, you know, I'll send and 10 days later Pentecost will come and they'll be walking scholars, theologically. And I can wait for that; they'll get that all in time, but I'll deal with their sorrow right now. Now that is a loving Savior. That is not an indifferent God. So many people portray God as indifferent and uncaring. God is not. He is loving. He is all caring and all concerned with the comfort and the tender care of his beloved children. And so he moves then not to eliminate ignorance but to eliminate sorrow. And he reads their minds like a

billboard.

We learned that back in chapter 2 of John how he could read what was in the heart of a man. It's a fantastic thought to know that he reads our minds. It's both a positive and a negative. Sometimes I'm glad that he can read my mind. Remember that? Remember what Peter said, Lord you know that I love you. Aren't you glad sometimes that the Lord can read your mind and know that you love him because you don't act like it? But other times I'm not too sure I like the fact that he can read my mind and I'm not going to illustrate those. But anyway, he reads their minds and he knows that they've got this question that they're fighting and they're struggling with, see. And he's concerned with their comfort, so in verse 19, I love this statement. What a wealth of knowledge. "Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him" So what does he do? He puts this question in their lips. Fantastic. He knew that they were puzzled. He knew that they couldn't figure out the little while; they couldn't figure out what was going on, so he moves to comfort them. Watch what he says in verse 19. "Do you inquire among yourselves of that I said, a little while and ye shall not see me and again a little while and ye shall see me?" He says is this what's confusing you fellows? They're all murmuring and buzzing back and forth. And you can imagine how quick they jumped up. He's read their minds. Is this what's bothering you men? You know, it's a fantastic thing. The Lord knows our problems before we ever articulate them, doesn't he? He knows exactly where to meet us before we say a word. Don't you love Isaiah 65:24 where he says, "Before they call I will answer." Isn't that good? Before they call I will answer. And he also says, "While they are speaking, I will hear." And the hearing there is the act of hearing. Before you call he'll answer. That's fantastic. And so they haven't even formed the question yet and he's got the answer for them and so he moves to comfort them. There they are in their perplexity.

Now in order to comfort them he uses an illustration and I call it the parable. So we see the first the great promise or the pledge, then the perplexity and then the parable. And in this parable he shows them a tremendous spiritual principle and I want to share it with you this morning because it's just fantastic. So applicable to us.

Now here comes this parable and it begins in verse 20. The parable itself is in verse 21; the lead in is verse 20. "Truly, truly," Amen, Amen, you know the double Aramaic here is very important, because it makes this a critical, solemn, strategic statement. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice, and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Now that's a great promise to a sorrowful person, isn't it? Hey your sorrow is going to turn into joy, see. That's the greatest kind of promise. So he moves to comfort them and he predicts that their sorrow will be turned to joy. Notice he kind of paints their sorrow a little bit. He says, you'll weep and lament. Mark chapter 16, verse 10, in that particular verse he talks about the women, Mark talks about the sorrow and how they were all crying and weeping and so forth and so on and the women were crying along with them, you know. Kind of a sad deal. They were all crying and weeping and lamenting and sorrowful. The world, of course, was just really living it up because they finally had

gotten rid of Jesus; that's the evil system. The evil system was glad to have done in the Son of God and so the world rejoiced but they were sorrowing and Christ was a bloody corpse, wrapped up and stuck in the tomb of Joseph. That was it. The murderous world was out there laughing in its unholy glee and they were cut to the heart; they were ripped open. Their blessed, beloved Christ was dead and their hearts were broken. And so Jesus paints the picture of their sorrow in order that their joy might look all the more beautiful. He puts a black backdrop and then he fires in the joy at the end of verse 20: "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

Now there's a principle in that you could miss so easily, so I want you to hang in there and get this principle. It's tremendous. Notice this. He is saying the very event now watch it the very event that caused your grief will be the very event that causes your joy. He doesn't say I will take certain events that made you sorry and replace them with certain events to make you happy. He says your sorrow over something shall be turned into joy over the same something. Did you know that that's what God wants to do in our lives? It's not a matter of, well, that's a bad, that's a grief; I'll put it in that grief box. That's a happy, that's a good; I'll put in the good happy box. And everything has its own thing. Not at all. It's the idea that he takes the sorrow and turns it into joy the same event that causes grief causes happiness. That's the structure of the Greek. His sorrow shall be turned into joy. Sorrow becoming something. He doesn't say your sorrow will be replaced by joy. No. It will become joy. Now that's fantastic. The thing that plunges you into grief will lift you into joy. And it happened. You say what was the thing? Well, it was the cross. Was the cross the cause of their sorrow? Sure it was. And after the sorrow was all over, what was the cross. The cause of their joy. Paul says, God forbid that I should glory in anything save the cross. That's their joy. And they went on happily praising God, rejoicing all over the book of Acts, preaching the cross.

Somebody might say well, how can you be so happy about the crucifixion of your leader? You know, outside Christianity. How can you? They don't understand. What looked like sorrow on that end became joy on this end. It just had to get past the cross and it turned into joy and this is how God wants to work. Mark it. This is how he wants to work. He takes the sad things and makes them happy. It's not a matter of here's a lot of sads and here's a lot of happys. That's what Paul meant when he said, "All things work together for good to them that love God and called according to his purpose." He a way of turning the bad into the good. See, turning the sorrow into the joy. It's like when he made the wine out of the water. He didn't replace water for wine, did he? He turned water into wine and that's how he does in our life. He takes the sorrows and turns them into joy. And oh did this happen to them. In the light of Easter, in the light of Pentecost when the Spirit came, the source of their grief, which was the cross, became the source of their greatest undying joy, didn't it. And it's ours, too. You know what the source of our joy is? The cross. Don't ever forget it. The cross is the source of our joy. Not circumstances. No. Circumstances are not the source of our joy at all. The cross is and nothing can ever violate that. That's the basis of our joy. If you just worry about your circumstances, you're going to find problems. Now we'll talk more about that in a minute. But anyway, the basic idea is the cross was the foundation of their joy and it is of ours.

Now we have joy in all other things, as God turns them from grief to joy, as he turns them from grief to joy, which he constantly does, but the basis of all of it is the cross. And this was true over in chapter 20; in John in verse 20 it says after Christ rose and met with them they were glad. They were happy. They were blessed. And those guys who were on the road in Luke 24, Jesus started talking to them and they got so happy. Their hearts were burning within them, to be with their resurrected Christ. And so their sorrow did turn to joy. And that early church; boy, were they a happy bunch. That early church was so happy and so blessed that the world couldn't believe it. They were happy over the cross. The event of sorrow became the cause for joy. That's a tremendous truth. God wants to take the sorrow in your life and turn it to joy. If you've never had any sorrow in your life, and you had nothing but joy, joy would be neutral. And so he takes the sorrows that you have and he turns them into joy, if you can wait long enough. And trust him. Let me give you an idea of how this works.

I think there are two things; sorrow comes into your life maybe, for two main reasons. Number one, testing, right? And if it tests you and you come out strong, there's cause for joy, isn't it? Secondly, chastisement. And if you're being punished by God, you're being punished so you'll know not to do it again and that's cause for joy, see. In everything that comes into your life, try to find that glimmer of joy that's beginning to break and accept it as joy. You know, I've seen so many times when somebody has died and the family has been very grieved and very, very concerned, and everybody is weeping and crying, and sometimes you'll talk to the people three or four months later and they'll say, you know, we can see now all the wonder of God's grace in this thing and how he's done this and how he's done that and the death of this person has brought about the salvation of this person and this happened and that happened and the other. And isn't it wonderful? And all of a sudden you say, yeah, your sorrow turned to joy, see. You just have to believe God for this. You have to believe God for that. Oh, you say, in my situation I got a real disaster going. I believe God can take your real disaster and turn it into joy, if you believe him for it. I like what Paul said, II Corinthians 6:10 he said this. This is good. He said, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Isn't that good? He says I got problems. I've got a lot of them. In fact he says I have continual heaviness of heart. That's when he also said rejoice and again I say what? Rejoice.

You say well, how could you be as sorrowful and always rejoicing? Because you see, you can always rejoice, number one, the cross; right? Always. Always. Always. Always. Secondly, you can rejoice because you believe God that in every sorrow, there's the water out of which he makes the wine of rejoicing. Do you see? And so you just believe him. And in chapter 15, you know, in verse 11, didn't Jesus say that? Everything I've told you, I've told you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full? I'm just telling you this to make you happy. Your sorrow will turn to joy and there it did. They were the happiest bunch that ever walked on the earth after that Pentecost and the Spirit came. Tremendous truths.

So then having given them this little concept that sorrow turns into joy, not replaced by, he illustrates it with a parable in verse 21. This is good. "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow." Travail means childbirth. Has sorrow. You know that's part of the Edenic curse when Eve sinned. She brought upon women the pain of childbirth. Read it in Genesis 3. That's why women have pain in childbirth. It's a part of what happened in the garden. All right. "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow because her hour is come." It's time to have her baby and the pains start coming and all these things start happening, I hear, and all this goes on. You know, my wife always says I hope you understand what I go through for this. I say oh, I understand as best as I can I don't know But anyway, I know it's a lot of pain and all this and the woman goes through this pain, "but as soon as she is delivered of the child," and the event happens, it says, "she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." I mean it's not even bad when a girl is born, but when a man is born into the world. I mean the joy that comes. You see, here's a perfect illustration. It's not that the event of sorrow is replaced by an event of joy; it is the same event which starts out in grief and ends up in joy. Do you see what he's saying there? It's the same principle again and he's illustrating it graphically by childbirth. The sorrow and the anguish and the pain is just completely washed out when that baby comes to life and you see that precious life God has given and the joy that is in that thing and the anguish just you don't really remember that any more. It's that life that means everything. And you see, that's Jesus' illustration. He is saying when the death comes to me and I'm taken from you and you don't see me, it's going to be hard; it's going to hurt; it's going to be lonely and it's going to be sorrow. But he says, will you believe me that out of that sorrow will come the greatest joy. The greatest possible joy. And you can usually ask any woman and she'll tell you that the greatest joy is in childbirth; to have that precious life. Of being a woman, that has to be the climax. And so he uses the greatest illustration of human joy to illustrate how great the joy is when we believe God that out of sorrow can come joy.

Then he kind of interprets the parable in a limited way in verse 22. "And ye now therefore have sorrow." He says, you guys are going through the birth pain, see. And it hurts, because you anticipate your loneliness and you know I'm not going to be around, "but I will see you again," he says. You can imagine how thrilled they were just to hear this, you know. "And your heart shall rejoice." Isn't that good? Then he says this. Here's a great statement. "And your joy no man taketh from you." You get that? Listen friends, the joy that is ours because of the cross, is eternal. Did you get that? You know your life may fall apart, and you may lose the joy of circumstances, and you may not be able to believe God that out of sadness he can bring joy, but I'll tell you one thing, the cross, the cross can be constant joy, because no man can ever undo the work of grace that God did in your life through the cross, can he? Can never violate the cross. Somebody may mess up your circumstances; somebody may hassle your life pattern; somebody may bring grief; you may bring it on yourself, and it may be no cause for joy and you may not believe God that out of it can come joy, but I'll tell you one thing, even though everything else gets messed up, nobody will ever be able to violate the perfect work done on the cross, in your behalf. And he says, joy based, men, on what you're going to see at Calvary, no man will ever take from you and that is what is known in theological terms as the absolute

security of the believer. It is irreversible. The cross cannot be reversed. No man can violate the cross. It is done; it is finished. And this is permanent joy. And again, I feel this verse is one good reason why this can't just refer to the resurrection, see. It has to be more permanent than that. It's a forever joy. And so he is saying to them, this is a kind of a joy that will never pass away. Never pass away. And this is what causes Paul in all the midst of the hurts of his life to say rejoice always and again I say, rejoice. Not because he always could see maybe through every circumstance. He had a way of seeing the joy coming out of the circumstances He believed God for that. He didn't care that he was all beaten up and he was staying in jail. You know, he was mature in Christ enough to see the joy coming out of the grief. But that wasn't always true. There were times in Paul's life, I'm sure, when he didn't see that and he was discouraged, but one place where there was joy that never could be violated was at the cross. For no man could ever take that cross and undo what it had done in his life. That's always our source of joy; the cross. And that's so basic.

So we've seen then the pledge that Christ gave them; their perplexity and then Jesus' parable to teach them what he meant. Now I want to close by giving you the promise. And this is a very beautiful thing in the last two verses. Verse 23, just the start: " And in that day ye shall ask me nothing." What day? That day? We're back to verse 22. The day when the Spirit comes. The day when your sorrow turns to joy. The day when I come back to be within you. See, that day. The word day can very often be used to refer to an era. For example, the day of Christ. The day of the Lord, which means a period of time. We talk about a day in the sense of an era. This is the day of science or the age of science. Whatever you want to call it. The word day can be very broad. And here it is. In that day beginning at Pentecost, when the Spirit comes and from then on out, men, you'll ask me nothing. It's a great statement. What a promise. You'll ask me nothing.

What you mean we won't ask you anything? Two reasons: Number one, I won't be here. Physically you won't be able to come to me to give me your questions. Number two: When the Spirit comes, he shall teach you what? All things. Bring all things to remembrance whatsoever I have told you. Lead you into all truth. Guys, when he comes, you're going to be scholars. And they were. We talked about Peter how he must have been preaching those sermons and trying to figure out where all that information was coming from. Because he was on a direct line from God, see. He's saying I won't be around to answer your questions and you won't need me for the basics, because the Spirit will be your teacher. The Spirit will be your teacher. But then he realizes they'll still have needs. He doesn't want to just say that. You'll ask me nothing zap close it off and sign off chapter 16. No. In his mind he says, I'll know they'll have needs. And they won't know everything. They'll know the basics. The Spirit will teach them.

Then he says this. Look at it, verse 23. It's really beautiful. "Verily, verily I say unto you," this is important, men. "Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you." Isn't that beautiful? He says, it's going to be a new age, you guys. No more am I going to be here physically for you to ask all your questions to. In the new age you'll just have to ask the Father in my name and he'll

what? He'll give it to you. This is the character of prayer in the new age. This is a great dispensational statement. In the Old Testament they didn't pray to God in Jesus' name, but they do now. This is God's new age. We go to the Father in the name of Jesus. That's a tremendous thing. They had always sought all their knowledge and all their needs by asking Jesus physically. But he says, guys, I'm not going to be around. In the dispensation of grace, the age of the church, the age of the Spirit, there's going to be a new thing: You're going to ask the Father in my name. Now isn't that what he's been saying all along, clear back in chapter 14, verse 13? Whatever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the son. If you ask anything in my name, I'll do it. Chapter 15, verse 16: at the end he says, "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it to you." And here he's said it for the third fourth time, really. And so here's the principle of communion with the Father. Whatever we ask in the name of Jesus, he gives.

Now, what does it mean to ask in Jesus' name? We've talked about this. Does it mean you just say I want this and I want that in Jesus' name, Amen. That guarantees it? No, no. To ask in Jesus' name means you're asking in behalf of Christ. You're asking for his sake. You're saying Father; I want this because Christ wants this. Boy that will clean up your prayers, won't it? That's how to pray in his name. I want this because this is what Jesus would want. That's the way we ought to pray. You know, there's not a lot in the Bible that tells us to pray for ourselves. We don't need to pray for ourselves, very much. There are times when we ask God to give us wisdom and so forth. But we really don't need to ask him for a lot of things. You know, people spend all their time asking God to guide them and he's up there saying I'm trying to guide you, why don't you follow. We need to pray the things that we know would be Jesus' will. Lord, I need wisdom. Lord, I need to know your word better. Teach me by the Spirit. Do you think that's Christ's will for you? I do. And I think God will answer that prayer. There are many things that are Christ's will. If you can ask the Father in the behalf of Christ for the salvation of a soul I believe the Bible says he's not willing that any should perish. I believe we can pray that God will move and I believe God will answer. And so we pray in Jesus, name. What a promise.

That's the new age. New age. And he shows us it's the new age by verse 24. "Hitherto," prior to this, guys, "have ye asked nothing in my name." This is something new. He's not bawling them out. Some commentators say, see, he's really ripping them up. You guys haven't been asking anything in my name. Wait a minute. This is something new. We don't even know about this. It's a whole new thing. He's not bawling them out. He's giving them the character of the new age. Hitherto you've asked nothing in my name. Now, keep on asking -- linear verb and ye shall keep on receiving, that your joy may be full.

Now there's three things in the Christian life: no joy, joy and full joy. And some Christians live no joy and that's really kind of sick. Others have joy and they can kind of glory in the cross and that's it. Others have full joy. You say how do you get full joy? I'd like to have full joy. I'll tell you. It's very important. Full joy is connected with a couple of things but I want you to see one primary key to full

joy. Verse 24, listen to it. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name, ask, and ye shall receive that your joy may be full." How do you know full joy? Asking God for things and receiving them. Prayer. Prayer. It is answered prayer. That brings full joy. Do you ever get excited when God answers your prayer? Oh, that's exciting, isn't it? This is also in Scripture. I Thessalonians 5:16. Listen to this. "Rejoice evermore." Short verse. Somebody says how? Next verse. "Pray without what? ceasing." See, this is connected right up there. Beautiful. In Philippians, same thing. 4:4. "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, rejoice." How, Paul? Simple. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God." Full joy comes from prayer.

I mean when you really tap God's resources and you see God move in your life, that's cause for joy. And the Christians that go around kind of mealy mouth, down in the mouth, grippy, bitter, cynical, they are that way because they haven't ever activated the power of God in their behalf and are not basking in it in a prayingwithoutceasing kind of life where God is moving and doing miracles that are bringing joy. If you want joy you find it on your knees; that's where you find it. Deep communion with God. Just to pray to him. Just to talk to him. Boy, what joy. Just to be in his presence. That's joy. Your cup of joy will overflow in prayer as you see God answer and you behold his grace and you behold his love and you're overflowing with joy. And so what Jesus is driving at in this passage isn't theology; it's joy. He's saying, guys, you know, you're going to have joy. You're just going to have joy because you're just going to see the cross. But you can have watch this one full joy by constant communion with the Father. Now we can all have joy, a measure of joy, can't we? By the cross. And maybe we can even see the circumstances turning into joy, but there's that full joy when we pray without ceasing. When in everything with prayer and supplication we let our requests be made known to God.

Well, I tell you, he's sure given them an awful lot to make them glad, hasn't he? And us, too. He said separation will be brief, men. Secondly, he said your sorrow is going to turn to joy on the other side of the cross. Then he said the joy that you get is going to be forever. Nobody will ever take it. And then he said you can even make the joy more full if you'll just stay in a constant communion asking, asking, asking, receiving, receiving, receiving, all in my name. So we see their sorrow turned to joy. And again, I think we see the beauty and the magnificence of the person of Jesus Christ. What a Savior. I couldn't help but think of it, you know. He knew the cross was coming. Already he could see with his mind's eye the nails tearing their places in his hands. He undoubtedly could feel the thorns puncturing his brow, the spear driven into his eternal organs; he could hear the jeers and taunts of the mocking people; he could feel the spit and the hellish laughter of his killers was probably already ringing in his ears. He could feel the unbelievable loneliness of being separated from God and the hell of bearing every sin of every man and in all of that kind of anticipation, he says, you know what I wantmost? You know what I want most? Most, I want you guys to be happy. Really, really happy. You know what that tells me about Jesus? That tells me that he cares about me. In the midst of all of the things that he must be doing to uphold the universe, most of all, he cares that I have joy and he's given me every cause. And I say to you dear Christians, Jesus did everything right up to his death to assure us full joy. He provided a glorious prayer fellowship with the Father; he sent his Holy Spirit to

live within us, to activate all the promises that held given us, just because he wanted us to be joyful. And I say it must break his heart. It must break his heart to see Christians who are bitter or cynical who do not use that joy that is there. It must grieve his heart, for all that he's provided is to give us joy. God forgive us if we are not overwhelmed with that sweet joy that is ours because of the cross and because we actually do believe that he can turn sorrow into joy. Let's pray.

God, we thank you that you're a miracleworking God. We thank you that you can take the sorrow of life and make it joy. This morning we rejoice on the cross. God we confess to you that so many times we're sorrowful; so many times we get selfcentered which is always the cause of sorrow. There's nothing to sorrow about in terms of you. But Father, sometimes even our sorrow is over others who don't know Christ and that's certainly legitimate, but Father, in the midst of all this, like Paul, may we constantly be rejoicing because we see the cross and that joy which can never be taken from us. Because also we believe in every sorrowful circumstance we can turn it into joy as you turned the water into wine, and because we have an unceasing prayer fellowship of communion with you and we see you move and act and are filled with that full joy. And may we remember that Jesus said these things have I written unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full. Father, may we realize that anything less than full joy in our Christian lives is grief to the Spirit. It grieves the Spirit. For Jesus did everything to give us that full joy. Reach into our hearts and whatever bitterness, whatever cause for sorrow is there, remove it or give us the strength to believe there can become joy. Make us joyful people, praising you in everything and may we do as Paul said, rejoice always. Always, always, in the Lord. We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

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