

A WONDERFUL TRANSFORMATION

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*"Your sorrow shall be turned into joy."
John 16:20.*

You all know that at that time, our Lord was speaking of His death which would cause the deepest grief to His own people, while the ungodly world would rejoice and laugh them to scorn. So He bade them look beyond the immediate present into the future and believe that, ultimately, the cause of their sorrow would become a fountain of perpetual joy to them. It is always well to look a little ahead. Instead of deploring the dark clouds, let us anticipate the fruits and the flowers that will follow the descent of the needed showers. We might be always wretched if we lived only in the present, for our brightest time is yet to come. We are now, as Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, only in the twilight of our day—the high noon shall come to us by-and-by.

But although our Savior's words, just then, related immediately to His death, He was such a wonderful speaker that everything He said had a wider meaning in it than one might at first imagine. Even the leaves of the Tree of Life are for the healing of the nations—and even those words of Christ which have a direct application to a special occasion have a further wondrous power about them—and may be used on other occasions as well as upon the one when they were first uttered. I think I may fairly say that our Lord did not merely mean that just when He died, His children would have sorrow, but that we may take His words as a prophecy that all who truly follow Him will have their seasons of darkness and gloom. Our Lord Jesus Christ has nowhere promised to His people immunity from trial. On the contrary, He said to His disciples, "In the world you shall have tribulation." I cannot imagine a better promise for the wheat than that it shall be threshed—and that is the promise that is made to us if we are the Lord's wheat—and not the enemy's tares, "You shall have the threshing which shall fit you for the heavenly garner." You need not mourn, Beloved, that it is to be so. If you do, it will make no difference, for your Lord has declared that "in the world you shall have tribulation." Rest quite sure of that. If you could ask those Believers who are now in Heaven, they would tell you that they came through great tribulation—many of them not only washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, but they sealed their faithfulness to Him with their own blood!

Our Lord meant His disciples to feel the sorrow that was to come upon them, for He said to them, "You shall weep and lament," and He did not express any blame upon them for doing so. I would not have any of you imagining that there is any virtue in stoicism. I once heard a woman who wished to show the wonders worked in her by the Grace of God, say that when her baby was taken from her, she was so resigned to the Divine will that she did not even shed a tear! But I do not believe that it ever was the Divine will that mothers should lose their babies without shedding tears over them. I thank God that I did not have a mother who could have acted like that. And I believe that as Jesus, Himself, wept, there can be no virtue in our saying that we do not weep. God means you to feel the rod, my Brother, my Sister. He intends you to sometimes weep and lament, as Peter says, "if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations." It is not merely the temptation or trial for which there is a necessity, but that we should be in heaviness is also a necessary part of our earthly discipline. Unfelt trial is no trial! Certainly it would be an unsanctified trial. Christ never meant Christians to be stoics. There is a wide and grave distinction between a gracious acquiescence in the Divine will and a callous steeling of your heart to bear anything that happens without any feeling whatever. "You shall be sorrowful," says our Lord to His disciples, and "you shall weep and lament." It is through the weeping and the lamenting, oftentimes, that the very kernel of the blessing comes to us!

Our Savior mentions one aggravation of our grief which some of us have often felt—"the world shall rejoice." That is the old story. David found his own trials all the harder to bear when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. He had been plagued all the day long and chastened every morning—he could have endured that if he had not seen that the ungodly had more than heart could wish! He found himself, sometimes, even troubled with the fear of death, but as for the wicked, he said, "There are no bonds in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." It makes our bitterness all the more bitter when the saints of God are afflicted and the enemies of God are made to dwell in ease. I daresay when you were a boy, you may have fallen and hurt yourself—and while you were smarting from your bruises, the other lads who were around you, were laughing at you! The pain was all the sharper because of their laughing. And the righteous are wounded to the quick when they see the ungodly prospering—prospering, apparently, by their ungodliness. And when these ungodly persons point the finger of scorn at them and ask, "Where is your God now? Is this the result of serving Him?" When this is your lot, remember that your Savior told His disciples that it would be so—and He has told you the same. While you are sorrowing, you shall hear their shouts of revelry. You shall be up in your own room weeping and you shall hear the sound of their merry feet in the dizzy dance. The very contrast between their circumstances and your own will make you feel your grief more. Well, if this is to be our lot, we must not count it a strange thing when it comes, but we may hear our Master say to us, "I told you that it would be so." When it happens to any of you, Beloved, you must say, "This is even as Jesus Christ said it would be."

His first disciples, if they ventured out into the streets of Jerusalem after their Savior's crucifixion, and while He was lying in the tomb of Joseph, must have found it very trying to hear the jests and jeers of those who had put the Nazarene to death. "There is an end of Him now," they said. "His imposture is exposed and His disciples—poor, foolish fanatics—will soon come to their senses and the whole thing will collapse." Just so. That was what Jesus said would happen, "you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice."

Now, what was the Savior's cure for all this? It was the fact that this trial was to last only for a little while—for a very little while. In the case of His first disciples, it was only to last for a few days and then it would be over, for they would hear the joyful announcement, "The Lord is risen, indeed, and has appeared to Simon." So is it to be with you and with me, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Our sorrows are all, like ourselves, mortal. There are no immortal sorrows for immortal saints! They come, but, blessed be God, they also go like birds of the air—they fly over our heads but they cannot make their abode in our souls. We suffer today, but we shall rejoice tomorrow! "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." But as for yonder laughing sinner, what weeping and wailing will be his portion unless he repents and weeps in penitence over his many sins! The prosperity of the wicked is like a thin layer of ice on which they always stand in peril. In a moment they may be brought down to destruction! And the place that knew them will know them no more forever. Our weeping is soon to end, but their weeping will never end. Our joy will be forever, but their joy will speedily come to an end. Look a little ahead, Christian pilgrims, for you will soon have passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death and have come into the land where even the shadow of death shall never fall across your pathway again!

In speaking those comforting words to His disciples, our Savior made use of this memorable sentence, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." As I read the whole passage, I pondered over those words and tried to find out their meaning. Perhaps you think, as you glance at them, that they mean that the man who was sorrowful would be joyous. That is part of their meaning, but they mean a great deal more than that. They mean, literally and actually, your sorrow, itself, shall be *turned into joy*—not the sorrow to be taken away and joy to be put in its place—but the very sorrow which now grieves you, shall be turned into joy! This is a very wonderful transformation and only the God who works great marvels could possibly accomplish it—could, somehow, not only take away the bitterness and give sweetness in its place, but turn the bitterness, itself, into sweetness!

That is to be the subject of our present meditation and I am glad to have, in the communion at which many of us will presently unite in the highest act of Christian fellowship, an apt illustration of my theme. You know that the Supper of the Lord is not at all a funereal gathering, but it is a sacred festival at which we sit at our ease, restfully enjoying ourselves as at a banquet. But what are the provisions for this feast and what do they represent? That bread, that wine—what do they mean? They represent, my dear Friends, sorrow—sorrow even unto death! The bread, separate from the

wine, represents the flesh of Christ separate from His blood, and so they set forth death. The broken bread represents the flesh of Christ bruised, marred, suffering, full of anguish. The wine represents Christ's blood poured out upon the Cross amidst agony which only ended with His death. Yet these emblems of sorrow and suffering furnish us with our great feast of love! This is, indeed, joy arising out of sorrow! The festival is itself the ordained memorial of the greatest grief that was ever endured on earth. Here, then, as you gather around this Table, you shall see, in the outward signs and emblems, that sorrow is turned into joy!

I. If you will keep that picture in your mind's eye, it will help me to bring out the meaning of the text. And our first point will be this—OUR SORROW AS TO OUR BLESSED LORD IS NOW TURNED INTO JOY. The very things that make us grieve concerning Him are the things which make us rejoice concerning Him!

And, first, *this comes to pass when we look upon Him as tempted, tried and tested in a thousand ways.* We see Him no sooner rising from the waters of Baptism than He is led into the desert to be tempted by the devil. And we grieve to think that, for our sakes, it was necessary that He should there bear the brunt of a fierce duel with the Prince of Darkness. We see Him afterwards, all His life, tempted, tried and tested this way and that—sometimes by a scribe or a Pharisee, sometimes by a Sadducee. All sorts of temptations were brought to bear upon Him, for He “was in all points tempted like as we are.” But, oh, how thankful we are to know that He was thus tempted, for those very temptations helped to prove the sinlessness of His Character! How could we know what there was in a man who was never tested and tried? But our Lord was tested at every point—and at no point did He fall. It is established, beyond all question, that He is the Lamb of God without blemish and without spot. You cannot tell what a man's strength of character is unless he is tried. There must be something to develop the excellence that lies hidden in his nature. And we ought to rejoice and bless God that our Savior was passed, like silver, through the furnace seven times and, like gold, was tried again and again in the crucible in the hottest part of the furnace yet there was found no dross in Him, but only the pure, precious metal without a particle of alloy! Therein do we greatly rejoice! He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” He was tempted by Satan and contradicted by sinners, yet He was found faultless to the end and, thus, our joy arises out of that which otherwise would have made us mourn!

Further, dear Brothers and Sisters, remember that the griefs and trials of our Lord not only manifested His sinless Character, but *they made Him fit for that priestly office which He has undertaken on our behalf.* The Captain of our salvation was made “perfect through sufferings.” It was necessary that He who would really be a Benefactor to men should know them thoroughly and understand them. How can He sympathize with them in their sorrows unless He has, at least to some extent, felt as they do? So, our merciful and faithful High Priest is one who can be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” seeing that He was tempted and tried even as we are. I think that had I been alive at the time, I would have spared my Lord many of His griefs had it been in my power—and many of you will say the same. He would never have needed to say, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head,” for you would gladly have given Him the best room in your house! Ah, but then the poor would have missed that gracious Word of God which, I have no doubt, has often comforted them when they have been houseless and forlorn! You would not have allowed Him, if you could have helped it, to be weary, and worn, and hungry, and thirsty. You would have liberally supplied all His needs to the utmost of your power. But then He would not have been so fully in sympathy as He now is with those who have to endure the direst straits of poverty, seeing that He has passed through a similar experience to theirs. What joy it is to a sorrowing soul to know that Jesus has gone that way long before!

I had a great grief that struck me down to the very dust, but I looked up and saw that face that was marred more than any other. And I rose to my feet in hope and joyful confidence and I said, “Are You, my Lord, here where I am? Have you suffered thus, and did you endure far more than I can ever know of grief and brokenness of heart? Then, Savior, I rejoice and bless Your holy name!” I know that you, Beloved, must often have grieved over your Savior's suffering, though you have been, at the same time, glad to remember that He passed through it all—because He thus became such a matchless Comforter, “who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way” because of the very experience through which He passed—“for in that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.”

The meaning of the text comes out even more clearly when we think of *the sorrows to which our Lord had been referring, which ended in His death.* Oh, the griefs of Jesus when He laid down His life for His sheep! Have you not

sometimes said, or at least thought, that the ransom price was too costly for such insignificant creatures as we are? Think of the agony and bloody sweat, the scourging, the spitting, the shame, the hounding through the streets, the piercing of the hands and feet, the mockery, the vinegar, the gall, the “Eloi Eloi, lama Sabachthani?” and all the other horrors and terrors that gathered around the Cross! We wish that this might never have happened and yet the fact that they *did* happen brings to us unspeakable bliss! It is our greatest joy to know that Jesus bled and died upon the tree! How else could our sins be put away? How else could we, who are God’s enemies, be reconciled and brought near to Him? How else could Heaven be made secure for us? We might, from one aspect of Christ’s sufferings, chant a mournful *miserere* at the foot of the Cross, but before we have done more than just commence the sad strain, we perceive the blessed results that come to the children of men through Christ’s death—so we lay down our instruments of mourning and take up the harp and the trumpet—and sound forth glad notes of rejoicing and thanksgiving!

Our sorrow about Christ’s death is also turned into joy because not only do we derive the greatest possible benefit from it, but *Jesus Himself, by His death, achieved such wonders*. That precious body of His, that fair lily all stained with crimson lines where flowed His heart’s blood must have been a piteous sight for anyone to see. I wonder how any artist could ever paint the taking down of Christ from the Cross, or the robing Him for the sepulcher? They were sorrowful sights for art to spend itself upon. Jesus, the final Conqueror, lies in the grave! The cerements of the tomb are wrapped about Him who once wore the purple of the universe! But we have scarcely time to sorrow over these facts before we recollect that the death of Christ was the death of sin! The death of Christ was the overthrow of Satan! The death of Christ was the death of death! And out of His very tomb we hear that pealing trumpet note, “O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I am glad that He fought with Satan in the Garden and vanquished Him. I am glad that He fought with sin upon the Cross and destroyed it. I am glad that He fought with grim death in that dark hour and that He seized him by the throat and held him captive. I am glad that He ever entered the gloomy sepulcher, for He rifled it of all its terrors for all His loved ones, tore its iron bars away and set His people free! So you see, it is all gladness, even as He said to His disciples, “Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”

And whatever else there may be of sorrow that came out of Christ’s Cross, we may all be glad of it, for *now Christ Himself is the more glorious because of it*. It is true that nothing could add to His Glory as God, but seeing that He assumed our Nature and became Man as well as God, He added to His Glory by all the shame He bore! There is not a reproach that pierced His heart which did not make Him more beautiful! There is not a line of sorrow that furrowed His face which did not make Him more lovely—that marred Countenance is more to be admired by us than all the comeliness of earthly beauty! He was always superlatively beautiful. His beauty was such as might well hold the angels spellbound as they looked upon Him! The sun and moon and stars were dim compared with the brightness of His eyes. Heaven and earth could not find His equal and if all Heaven had been sold, it could not have purchased this precious Pearl! Yet the setting of the pearl has made Christ appear even brighter than before—the setting of His Humanity, the setting of His sufferings, His pangs, His shameful death has made His beauty shine out the more resplendent! The plant that sprang from Jesse’s root is now the plant of renown! He who was despised at Nazareth is glorified in Paradise and the more glorified because, between Nazareth and Paradise, He was “despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Blessed Savior, we rejoice that You have gained by all Your sorrows, for therefore has God highly exalted You, and given You a name which is above every name!

II. But, now, secondly, and very briefly, I want to remind you that THE SORROW OF THE WHOLE CHURCH HAS ALSO BEEN TURNED INTO JOY.

In speaking of the *sorrows of the persecuted Church of Christ*, I will not compare them to the sorrows of her Lord. But if anything could have been comparable to the suffering of the Bridegroom, it would have been the suffering of the bride. Think of the early ages of the Church of God under the Roman persecutions. Think of the Church of Christ among the Vaudois of the Alps, or in England during the Marian persecution. Our blood runs cold as we read of what the saints of God have suffered! I have often put up Foxe’s Book of Martyrs upon the shelf and thought that I could not read it any more—it is such a terribly true account of what human nature can bear when faith in Christ sustains it. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, we are not sorry that the martyrs suffered as they did. Or if we are, that very sorrow is turned into joy at the remembrance of how Christ has been glorified through the sufferings of His saints! Even our poor humanity looks more

comely when we recall what it endured for Christ's sake. When I think of the honor of being a martyr for the Truth of God, I confess that I would sooner be a martyr than be the angel Gabriel, for I think it would be far better to have gone to Heaven from one of Smithfield's stakes than to have been always in Heaven. What honor it has brought to Christ that poor, feeble men could love Him so that they could bleed and die for Him! Yes, and women, too, like that brave Anne Askew, who, after they had racked her till they had put every bone out of joint, was still courageous enough to argue on behalf of her dear Lord! When they thought that her womanly weakness would make her give way, she seemed stronger than any man might have been as she said to her persecutors—

*“I am not she that lyst
My anker to let fall
For every dryslynge myst;
My shippe's substancyal”—*

and so defied them to do their worst! The Church of God may well rejoice as she thinks of the noble army of martyrs who praise the Lord on high for, among the sweetest notes that ascend even in Heaven, are the songs that come from the white-robed throng who shed their blood rather than deny their Lord!

The Church of Christ has also passed through a fierce fire of opposition, as well as of persecution. Heresy after heresy has raged. Men have arisen who have denied this, and that, and the other Doctrines taught in the Scriptures. And every time these oppositions have come, certain feeble folk in the Church have been greatly alarmed but, in looking back upon them all up to the present, I think that they are causes for joy rather than sorrow! Whenever what is supposed to be a new heresy comes up, I say to myself, “Ah, I know you! I remember reading about you. There was an old pair of shoes, worn by heresy many hundreds of years ago which were thrown on a dunghill—and you have picked them up and refurbished them a little, and brought them forth as if they had been new.” I bless the Lord that at this moment there scarcely remains *any* Doctrine to be defended for the first time, for they have all been fought over so fiercely in years gone by that there is hardly any point that our noble forefathers did not defend! And they did their work so well that we can frequently use their weapons for the defense of the Truth today. Who would wish to have kept the Word of God from going through this furnace of opposition? It is like silver seven times purified in a furnace of earth. Philosophers have tried you, O precious Book, but you were not found wanting! Atheists have tried you! Sneering skeptics have tried you! They have all passed you through the fire, but not even the smell of fire is upon you to this day! And therein do we rejoice, yes, and will rejoice! And the day will come when the present errors and opposition will only be recorded on the pages of history as things for our successors to rejoice over just as we now rejoice over the past victories of the Truth of God!

And once again, dear Friends, not only is it so with the persecutions and oppositions of the Church of Christ, but the *Church's difficulties have also become themes of rejoicing*. As I look abroad upon the world at the present time, it does seem an impossible thing that the nations of the earth should ever be converted to Christ. It is impossible so far as man alone is concerned, yet God has commanded the Christian Church to evangelize the world! Someone complains that the Church is too feeble and its adherents too few to accomplish such a task as this. The fewer the fighters, the greater their share of glory when the victory is won! In order to overcome indifference, idolatry, atheism, Mohammedanism and Popery, the battle must be a very stern one, but who wants Christ's followers to fight only little battles? My Brothers and Sisters, let us thank God that our foes are so numerous! It matters not how many there may be of them—there are only the more to be destroyed! What said David concerning his adversaries? “They compassed me about; yes, they compassed me about; but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.” When the Last Great Day shall come and Jehovah's banner shall be finally furled because the Book of the Wars of the Lord shall have reached its last page, it will be a grand thing to tell the story of the whole campaign! Then it will be known to all that the fight for the faith was not a mere skirmish against a few feeble folk, nor was it a brief battle which began and ended in an hour—but it was a tremendous conflict “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” They gather, they gather, my Brothers and Sisters, thick as the clouds in the day of tempest, but, out of Heaven Jehovah, Himself, will thunder and give battle and scatter them—and they shall fly before Him like the chaff before the wind!

III. Now, lastly, to come down from those high themes to minor matters, OUR OWN PERSONAL SORROW SHALL BE TURNED INTO JOY.

When I think of the sorrows of Christ and the sorrows of His Church as a whole, I say to myself, “What pin pricks are our griefs compared with the great gash in the Savior’s side, and the many scars that adorn His Church today!” But, dear Friends, whatever our sorrows may be, they will be turned into joy. Sometimes we witness this wonderful transformation. Poor old Jacob sorrowed greatly when he thought that he had lost his favorite son, Joseph. “An evil beast has devoured him,” he said. “Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces.” And he wrung his hands and wept bitterly for many a day over his lost Joseph. Then came the famine and the poor old man was dreadfully alarmed concerning his large family. He must send some of his sons into Egypt to buy corn, and when he sends them there, they do not all come back, for Simeon is detained as a hostage—and the lord of the land says that they shall not see his face again unless they bring Benjamin with them—Benjamin, the dear and only remaining child of the beloved Rachel! Jacob cannot bear the thought of parting with him, so he says to his sons, “You have bereaved me of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.” Poor old soul, what a mistake he made! Why, everything was as much for him as it could possibly be! There was his dear Joseph, down in Egypt, next to Pharaoh on the throne and ready to provide for his poor old father and all the family during the time of famine! Then there was the famine to make him send down to Egypt and find out where Joseph was, so that he might go and see his face again, and confess that the Lord had dealt graciously with him. You dear children of God who get to fretting and are troubled should carry out Cowper’s good advice—

*“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His Grace—
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face!”*

You have quite enough to cry over without fretting concerning things that, some day, you will rejoice over! The Lord will put your tears into His bottle and when He shows them to you, by-and-by, I think you will say, “How foolish I was ever to shed them, because the very thing I wept over was really a cause for rejoicing if I could but have seen a little way ahead.” It is so sometimes, in Providence, as you will find over and over again between here and Heaven!

Our sorrows, dear Friends, are turned into joy in many different ways. For instance, there are some of us who are such naughty children *that we never seem to come close to our Heavenly Father unless some sorrow drives us to Him*. We ought to be more with Him in days of sunshine, if it were possible, than in days of storm, but it is not always so. It is said that there are some dogs which, the more you whip them, the more they love you. I should not like to try that plan even on a dog, but I fear that some of us are very much like dogs in that respect, if the saying is true. When we have a great trouble, or get a sharp cut, we seem to wake up and say, “Lord, we forgot You when all was going smoothly. We wandered from You, then, but now we must come back to You.” And there is a special softness of heart and mellowness of spirit which we often get through being tried and troubled. And when that is the case, you and I have great cause to rejoice in our sorrows, if they draw us nearer to God and bring us to a clear and more careful walk with Him. If they draw us away from worldliness, self-sufficiency and self-complacency, our sorrows, if we are wise men and women, will be immediately turned into joy!

Again, there is no doubt that, to many, *sorrow is a great means of opening the eyes to the preciousness of the promises of God*. I believe that there are some of God’s promises of which we shall never get to know the meaning until we have been placed in the circumstances for which those promises were written. Certain objects in Nature can only be seen from certain points of view. And there are precious things in the Covenant of Grace that can only be perceived from the deep places of trouble. Well, then, if your trouble brings you into a position where you can understand more of the loving kindness of the Lord, you may be very thankful that you were ever put there and may thus find your sorrow turned into joy.

Again, *sorrow often gives us further fellowship with Christ*. There are times when we can say, “Now, Lord, we can sympathize with You better than we ever did before, for we have felt somewhat as You did in Your agony here below.” We have sometimes felt as though that prophecy had been fulfilled to us, “You shall indeed drink of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with.” For instance, if friends forsake you—if he that eats bread with you lifts up his heel against you, you can say, “Now, Lord, I know a little better what Your feeling was when Judas so basely

betrayed You.” You cannot so fully comprehend the griefs of Christ unless, in your humble measure, you have to pass through a somewhat similar experience. But when you perceive that you can sympathize more with Christ because of your own sorrow, then, for certain, your sorrow is turned into joy.

Sorrow also gives us fellowship with our Lord in another way—*when we feel as if Christ and we had become partners in one trouble*. Here is a cross and I have to carry one end of it. But I look around and see that my Lord is carrying the heavier end of it—and then it is a very sweet sorrow to carry the cross in partnership with Christ! Rutherford says, in one of his letters, “When Christ’s dear child is carrying a burden, it often happens that Christ says, ‘Halves, My love,’ and carries half of it for him.” It is indeed sweet when it is so. If there is a ring of fire on your finger and that ring means that you are married to Christ, you may well be willing to wear it, whatever suffering it may cause you. Those were blessed bolts that fastened you to the Cross even though they were bolts of iron that went right through your flesh, for they kept you the more closely to your Lord! Our motto must be, “Anywhere with Jesus, nowhere without Jesus.” Anywhere with Jesus! Yes, even in Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace! When we have the Son of God with us, the glowing coals cannot hurt us—they become a bed of roses to us when He is there! Where Jesus is, our sorrow is turned into joy.

I must not fail to remind you that there is a time coming when “the sorrows of death” will get hold upon us and I want you, Brothers and Sisters, to understand that unless the Lord shall come first, *we shall not escape the sorrow of dying, but it will be turned into joy*. It has been my great joy to see many Christians in their last moments an earth and I am sure that the merriest people I have ever seen have been dying saints! I have been to wedding feasts. I have seen the joy of young people in their youth. I have seen the joy of the merchant when he has made a prosperous venture and I have, myself, experienced joys of various kinds, but I have never seen any joy that I have so envied as that which has sparkled in the eyes of departing Believers! There rises up before me now a vision of the two eyes of a poor consumptive girl—oh, how bright they were! I heard that she must soon die, so I went to try to comfort her. To comfort her? Oh, dear, she needed no comforting from me! Every now and then she would burst forth into a verse of sacred song and when she stopped, she would tell me how precious Jesus was to her, what love visits He had already paid her, and how soon she expected to be with Him forever! There was not, in all the palaces of Europe, or in all the mansions of the wealthy, or in all the ballrooms of the happy, such a merry and joyous spirit as I saw shining through the bright eyes of that poor consumptive girl who had very little here below, but who had so much laid up for her in Heaven that it did not matter what she had here!

Yes, Beloved, your sorrow will be turned into joy! Many of you will not even know that you are dying—you will shut your eyes on earth and open them in Heaven! Some of you may be dreading death, for there is still a measure of unbelief remaining in you, but also in your case, death will be swallowed up in victory! Just as when some people have to take medicine which is very bitter, it is put into some sweet liquid and they drink it down without tasting the bitterness, so will it be with all of us who are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ when we have to drink our last potion. In a few more days, or weeks, or months, or years—it does not matter which, for it will be a very short time at the longest—all of us who love the Lord will be with Him where He is—to behold His Glory and to share it with Him forever! Have any of you any sorrows that you still wish to talk about? Some of you are very poor and others of you are very much tried and troubled in many ways, but, my dear Friends, when you and I get up there—and we shall do so before long—I think you will have the best of it! If there is any truth in that line—

“The deeper their sorrows, the louder they’ll sing”—

the more sorrows you have had, the more will you sing! Nobody enjoys wealth like a man who has been poor. Nobody enjoys health like a man who has been sick. I think that the most pleasant days I ever spend are they that follow a long illness when I, at last, begin to creep outside and drink in the sweet fresh air again. And, oh, what joy it will be to you poor ones and you sick ones and you tried ones to get into the land where all is plentiful, where all is peaceful, where all is gladsome, where all is holy! You will be there soon—some of you will be there very soon. Dr. Watts says that—

*“There, on a green and flowery mount,
Our weary souls shall sit.
And with transporting joys recount
The labors of our feet.”*

That is to say, the very sorrows that we pass through in our earthly pilgrimage will constitute topics for joyful conversations in Heaven. I do not doubt that it will be so.

In Heaven we shall be as glad of our troubles as of our mercies! Perhaps it will appear to us, then, that God never loved us so much as when He chastened and tried us. When we get home to Glory, we shall be like children who have grown up, who, sometimes say to a wise parent, “Father, I have forgotten about the holidays you gave me. I have forgotten about the pocket money you gave me. I have forgotten about a great many sweet things that I very much liked when I was a child, but I have never forgotten that whipping which you gave me when I did wrong, for it saved me from turning altogether aside. Dear Father, I know you did not like to do it, but I am very grateful to you for it now—more grateful for that whipping than for all the sponge cakes and sweetmeats that you gave me.” And, in like manner, when we get home to Heaven, I have no doubt that we shall feel and perhaps say, “Lord, we are grateful to You for everything, but most of all for our sorrows. We see that had You left us unchastised, we would never have been what we now are and, thus, our sorrows are turned into joy.”

As for you who are not Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, I want you to ponder most solemnly these few words and carry them home with you. *If you remain as you are, your joys will be turned into sorrows. God grant that they may not be, for Jesus Christ’s sake!* Amen.

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