

Spirit-Produced Joy

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 16:16-24
Preached on: Sunday, June 7, 2015

As we come to the word of God this morning, I have a marvelous topic to share with you, one that emerges from Jesus' words to his disciples in his farewell discourse. We are in John 16, looking at verses 16 through 24 and here we will focus on "Spirit-Produced Joy," which will be much of the emphasis here. Follow along as I read our text this morning beginning in verse 16. Jesus says,

16 "A little while, and you will no longer behold Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me." 17 Some of His disciples therefore said to one another, "What is this thing He is telling us, 'A little while, and you will not behold Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?" 18 So they were saying, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is talking about." 19 Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, "Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, 'A little while, and you will not behold Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me'? 20 Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy. 21 Whenever a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she remembers the anguish no more for joy that a child has been born into the world. 22 Therefore you too now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you. 23 In that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything He will give it to you in My name. 24 Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full."

Since the stated goal of the Holy Spirit is to bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ through the transforming words of Scripture that he has written, words that will transform the lives of those who humble themselves before them, the goal of our worship services are always to glorify Christ. I hope you're here for that reason. Some will say, "Well, that's all fine and good but I'm struggling in my marriage, in my family," or "I need help with my rebellious teenager," or "I'm struggling with fear or depression, anxiety," or "I'm battling some kind of an addiction. Why don't you address those things?" Well, the answer is: at times we do and we will but those matters, frankly, are secondary considerations. Please hear this: the priority for private and public worship is the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You will recall John 15, Jesus tells us that we are "to abide in him so that we can bear much fruit." He says that "without me you can do nothing." So we must understand that

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our effectiveness and power and joy in Christian living will always be proportional to our fellowship with Christ. He simply must be the object of our desire, the object of our worship, the source of our greatest delight. All our pursuits in Christian living will operate in the flesh and fail miserably if he is not the center of our worship. In fact, I have discovered over the years that counseling believers who have a shallow grasp of Christ, who know very little of his glory, who really do not cultivate an intimate fellowship with him, it's basically a waste of time. It's like trying to build a house on a foundation of sand. But if we make ourselves students of Christ, if we commit ourselves to growing in his grace and knowledge and seek after him in intimate fellowship, then the Spirit of God unleashes his power within us to understand and obey the word of God and all of those other things in life begin to fall into place. In fact, the writer of Hebrews tells us "to lay aside every encumbrance of the sin which so easily entangles us and let us run with endurance the race that is before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith." And when we fix our eyes upon Jesus, when he is the primary object of our worship, then our worship is acceptable to God and true worship is the only thing that will ever produce true obedience and lasting joy. It's as simple as that.

Paul said that he counted "all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ." He went on to pray that he might "know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." At the close of that section in Philippians 3, he said that he "presses on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Frankly, I fear that if we're not careful, a steady diet of practical Christian living can actually be detrimental to Christian growth because it can distract us from the Spirit's goal in our life and that is understanding and glorifying and serving and worshiping the Lord Jesus Christ.

So as we come to our text this morning, we want to glorify Christ but in so doing we want to look at, first of all: the Spirit's ministry in his life. I want to digress a bit to help you understand this because it really sets the stage for what the Lord Jesus is saying to his disciples and ultimately to all of us. As I examine Jesus' words here in this passage in particular, I am once again struck with how he could be so selfless in his love. He's about to experience unimaginable torture and yet he is focusing on the well-being of the disciples and ultimately speaking to all of us. This is an amazing example, dear friends, of the Holy Spirit's power in his life. I wonder, have you ever thought about the Spirit's work in the life of Christ? Have you ever considered the work of the Comforter his life? The Helper who, like him, was sent to us? It's really a fascinating thing as you will see and I hope that you along with the Apostle Paul for the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, as he said in 2 Corinthians 13:14. You see, it's one thing to have a knowledge of the truth,

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it's another thing to have a knowledge of the power of the truth, understanding the work of the Spirit.

So let's think for just a moment the work of the Spirit in the life of the Lord Jesus as a preface to what he is going to say to his bewildered and frightened disciples. We must understand that the Spirit's ministry to the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the new creation, was really the divine pattern for his work in every new creature in Christ. For example, we can look at Scripture and see the work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' conception. In Luke 1:35, we read what the angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Offspring shall be called the Son of God." How fascinating. Instantly at the moment of conception, the Holy Spirit sanctified Jesus' human nature. He separated him from sinners and bestowed upon him the fullness of divine grace that he might be, as the writer of Hebrews says, "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners." In this supernatural birth, we witness the new creation in which a human being was made holy by a sovereign act of God, something that had not happened since the first Adam. And think about it, what he did in Jesus he does in us. In John 3:6, Jesus says we are "born of the Spirit." In other words, according to his sovereign purposes, the Spirit causes us to be made new creatures in Christ, to be born again and eventually conformed into the likeness of Christ. It's for this reason that the Apostle Paul says that, "whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren." The preeminent one.

But beyond his conception, we can see the work of the Spirit in the life and the ministry of the Lord Jesus. In fact, Isaiah prophesied about the Spirit's ministry in the coming Messiah in Isaiah 11:2. There we read, "The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD." So we can see that the Almighty Spirit was the constant companion of the Lord Jesus Christ and it's for this reason that Luke says that "the child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom and the grace of God was upon him." He went on to say that "Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men."

We can witness the Spirit's presence in the baptism of the Lord Jesus. There Mark tells us that, "Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: 'Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased.'" Then something amazing happened. Mark says, "Immediately," instantly, "the spirit impelled Him to go into the wilderness and He was in the wilderness 40 days being tempted by Satan." Is this not the same pattern we see in the life of every believer? It's always the priority of the Spirit to advance the

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kingdom of God in us and through us as he did with Jesus and it's for this reason when we come to him, he immediately thrusts us into the wilderness of this world to engage the enemy and the powers of darkness as he did with his beloved Son. And what weapons did Jesus have at his disposal? The very ones that the Spirit of God describes in Ephesians 6. He had, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition praying at all times in the Spirit." In other words, he had at his disposal the word of God and the power of prayer through the Spirit. And what armor did he wear? Well, the same armor that the Spirit describes in Ephesians 6. Beloved, what a marvelous truth it is to know that our armor and our weaponry has been tested and proven in the heat of the most fierce battle imaginable against the most formidable of all foes. It's for this reason that we can have great confidence in the word of God and the power of prayer.

So again, the Spirit's work in the life and ministry of Christ is the paradigm for how he works in the life and the ministry of every believer. We can even see the work of the Spirit in Christ's atonement. We know that prior to the cross, the Spirit of God sustained the Lord Jesus. He protected him from succumbing to the sheer weight, being crushed by the weight of the torture that awaited him. The writer of Hebrews tells us in chapter 9, verse 14 that Christ who through the eternal Spirit was offered up without blemish to God, "Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God." So we see the Spirit at work even in the atonement.

Then we know that Jesus committed his Spirit to the hands of the Father. The Father placed angels as guards around the tomb. But we also know according to Scripture, that as Jesus' body lay in the tomb, it was preserved from decay by the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2:27. A great Scottish theologian, Sinclair Ferguson, stated this so well. He said, quote, "From first to last, the Spirit is the companion of Jesus' life and the support of his ministry. By his agency, the Holy One was conceived in the darkness of the virgin's womb. By his presence, the Holy One was preserved in the darkness of Joseph's tomb. From womb to tomb, the devotion of the eternal Spirit to the eternal Son in the flesh was abundantly evident."

So we see the work of the Spirit in Christ's conception, in his life, in his ministry, in his atoning work, even in the grave. Then finally, we see the work of the Spirit in his exaltation. In Romans 1:4, Paul tells us that Jesus "was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness." In 1 Timothy 3:16, we read that when Christ was raised from the dead, "He was vindicated by the Spirit." You see, his resurrection was the supreme demonstration and the most conclusive evidence that he was and is the Son of God. So what can we say about the Spirit's ministry in the life of Christ? We can see that in his incarnation as Ferguson says, "from the womb to the tomb," Jesus voluntarily submitted himself to do the will of the

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Father only through the direction and the agency and the power of the Holy Spirit and in his resurrection, the Spirit who made him holy also exalted him above every name.

Think of the parallel in the Christian life. Similarly in the life of every believer that is united to Christ, we seek to do the will of the Father and by the power of the Spirit, one day he will exalt us, all those who are in Christ and because of Christ. You will recall in John 14:17, Jesus prophesied concerning "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive." He went on to say, "but you know Him, because He abides with you," in other words, by his presence in Christ who is with them, "and He will be in you," speaking of his coming at Pentecost. Then as promised, Jesus gave his Spirit to his own at Pentecost and we read in verse 18, he says, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." In so doing, the Holy Spirit reproduces in us the life of Christ. Christ being, shall we say, the prototype of a holy humanity. Again, the firstborn of many brethren. Now the same Spirit who was on and in our precious Savior is on and in all who are united to him. An amazing thought. As a result, we give eternal glory to Christ as does the Spirit whom the Father and the Son sent for this very purpose.

So beloved, I stand before you every Sunday morning with one primary goal in my heart and that is to somehow help you in my weakness but hopefully by the power of the Spirit, to become lost in the wonder of the Lord Jesus Christ and to seek after all that he desires in humble dependence upon him to meet all of your needs. When this happens, he is glorified and you are blessed. These are the truths that Jesus is ultimately emphasizing here in his farewell discourse in John 16.

Now, with this introduction, I wish to take you into Jesus' very words and I believe in this section we can entitle it, "A Spirit-Produced Joy," because this is the same joy that the Spirit produced in Jesus that he speaks of. You will remember in Hebrews 12:2 we read, "for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Now, I believe there are 3 magnificent themes pertaining to hope and comfort that emerge from this text, the things that the disciples needed to hear, that which we all need to hear. He speaks, first of all, of his permanent presence in their life. Secondly, he speaks of the Spirit as the source of their perpetual joy. Then finally, he's going to give them a promise of answered prayer. Of course, all 3 of these apply to each one of us that should animate us with an exhilarating sense of hope and comfort.

So let's look, first of all, at this issue of his permanent presence in their life that I believe emerges from verse 16. There he says, "A little while, and you will no longer see Me," of course, that's a reference to his death. "And again a little while, and you will see Me."

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Now, this second "little while" must be in reference to a future time when the disciples were going to be filled with grief that will be turned into joy, according to verse 20. So we know that this is precisely what happened after the resurrection when they saw the resurrected Christ. However, I believe there is more to it than that. Since the context of Jesus' words, since chapter 14 has been the coming Holy Spirit, it seems best to view this second "little while and you will see Me" to include a reference not only of the exhilarating joy that they experienced when they saw the resurrected Christ but also that joy that they would experience in the dispensation of the coming Spirit.

You will recall the Spirit's coming was set into motion as a direct result of Jesus going to the Father. Remember that he said that unless this happens, he can't come so he ascends to the right hand of the Father and ultimately this is going to turn their grief into great joy. Having seen the risen Christ and watched him ascend into glory, Luke tells us that "the disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple praising God." Then we know historically, biblically, that 10 days later, in other words 50 days after the Passover when the final sacrifice was made by the Lamb of God, the Spirit came at Pentecost and through his ministry now, the disciples would be able to see and experience Christ's presence in their life permanently as we do. Indeed, Paul tells us in Romans 8:9, that he is "the Spirit of Christ." So through the Holy Spirit, we see our beloved Savior and through the Spirit, the Lord makes good his promise when he said in Matthew 28, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

I'm sure you're like me, I long to see my Savior face-to-face. One of the things I enjoy doing late at night is going for a walk. We live out in the country as most of you know. I especially love to look up at the stars and pray out loud, just talk with the Lord, and there are probably very few times that I don't tell him how I long to see him face-to-face and I know that day is coming but I'm also thankful that I can have at least a glimpse of him through the eyes of faith that the Spirit has given me through the word because in his word we see Christ. This is the role of the Spirit. It's an amazing thing.

So, this illuminating light of the Spirit reveals Christ to us through the word of God, also through the church and through his indwelling presence. Now, it's important for you to bear in mind what is going on here with the disciples. They had absolutely no place in their theology for a Messiah who is going to come to establish the kingdom and says so and then says, "But I'm going to die and I'm going to depart. I'm going to go back to the Father and I'm going to send somebody else to come along as your Comforter to take my place. Then I'm going to come again." They didn't get any of that. We would not have understood any of that either had we been there. Later on, the Spirit is going to make it very understandable to them.

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So with this, we understand what is going on in verse 17, "Some of His disciples then said to one another, 'What is this thing He is telling us, "A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me"; and, "because I go to the Father"?' " John says, "So they were saying, 'What is this that He says, "A little while"? We do not know what He is talking about.'" Now, it's interesting even though they are confused, it appears that they refrain from asking the Lord to explain himself. Perhaps they feared his rebuke because in the past he has nailed them, exposed them for their rather self-centered and therefore willful ignorance that fueled much of their confusion. Or perhaps they are merely waiting for Jesus to explain himself because earlier he had remarked that he had many more things to tell them but they couldn't bear it now and so forth.

But in verse 19 we read, "Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, 'Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, "A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me"? Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament,'" referring to his murder, his death, "'but the world will rejoice,'" and they continue to rejoice thinking that Jesus is gone. But then he says, "'You will grieve but your grief will be turned into joy.'" And we know that that occurred when they saw the resurrected Savior and their King. In John 20:20, Jesus says, "The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord." Then it's fascinating, in verse 22 we read, "He then breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" Now, they didn't receive him right then but he was speaking of a pledge that the Holy Spirit would soon come upon them.

So in light of all of this, Jesus' words at the end of verse 19 and following when he says again, "in a little while and you will see Me," is referring to not only the joy that they would experience when they saw him after the resurrection but the joy that would be theirs in the new dispensation of the Holy Spirit who would come upon them and give them permanent sight of the Lord Jesus. Seeing, by the way, denotes more than just seeing something with the eyes. When a loved one comes to your door and you say, "My, but it's good to see you," you mean far more than, "It's good to merely set my eyes on you." We mean, "It's so good to be in your presence. It's good to enjoy sweet fellowship with you." That's the idea here. This is what Jesus wants. This is what the Spirit is going to provide. So when he says, "and again a little while and you will see Me," that's what he has in mind. And in verse 20 he says, "your grief will be turned into joy," not because they just saw Jesus but because they could enter into this permanent fellowship with him as a result of the Spirit. So seeing carries the idea of beholding the glorified Christ, of experiencing his presence and power in their life. As Paul put it in Galatians 4:9, "that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God," and certainly this is the goal of the Spirit in your life, for you to know him, for him to know you. I hope that is

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happening in your life. If it is not, there is something wrong. Somehow, some way, you are grieving the Spirit with your sin.

Now, according to Hebrews 2:9, we know that it was by the Spirit that they were able to "see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus." Now, remember it was his glorious exaltation to the right hand of the Father that afforded the means for him to now reveal himself to all believers spiritually and through the Spirit, we come to know God and we are known by God. And isn't it wonderful that one day, we are told, that we will see him as he is. I can't wait for that. Not only that, we shall be like him. I can't wait for that either. By the way, the fact that we even long for that and even understand that, is a work of the Spirit.

So, to paraphrase Jesus' statement to them and this is a very loose paraphrase so bear with me, he's saying, "Guys, I know you are confused but in a little while, in fact, just a few hours, I'm going to physically disappear from your sight in my death and burial and you're not going to see me anymore. But I'm not going to leave you as orphans. I'm going to rise from the grave and usher in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, another Helper who is like me, who will come to you and through his mighty ministry in you and upon the earth, you will see me permanently." Folks, this is a promise, isn't it? A promise of the permanent presence in our life of the Holy Spirit and what a remarkable thing it is to have the indwelling Spirit of God make available to us this revelation of the unsearchable riches of Christ every moment of the day and what fools we would be to not take advantage of that.

I might add as a footnote: the Holy Spirit's ministry in a church or in an individual believer's life will always be marked by a focus on Christ. A true Spirit filled ministry will be Christ centered. That's why he came, right? "He shall glorify Me," that's his purpose. And I might also add in that sense, the Holy Spirit is self-effacing. He's always pointing people to Christ. He's not trying to put himself on display. So when you see churches or people putting the Holy Spirit on display and basically ignoring Christ, there is something dreadfully wrong with that. Therefore, the true test of the work of the Spirit in any religious endeavor is simply this: does that ministry or does that person's life bring glory to Christ? Is the emphasis placed on him? And does it manifest the illumination of the Spirit so through that ministry and through that life, people might understand the word of God which will result in the Spirit's work of transformation where the world can witness a measurable progress toward Christ likeness in that individual or in that ministry? If you don't see these things, all you have is really the mere trappings of religion, not the substance of genuine Christianity. We really want to guard our lives and our church against this type of thing because we can all fall into this. We can all become

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nothing more than a beautiful religious edifice, like an ornate tomb that is filled with rotting flesh.

So, first Jesus brings comfort and hope to them by addressing the coming reality of his permanent presence in their life through the Spirit but then notice secondly how the Spirit is going to be the source of their perpetual joy as well as ours. Verse 20, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy." Now, notice this closely, that last phrase, "your grief will be turned into joy." He's not saying it's going to be replaced by joy but it's going to be turned into joy. In other words, what was sorrowful will become the very source of your joy. The cause of your grieving, my death is going to become the basis or the theme of your joy. This is why Paul would say in Galatians 6:14, "May it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Isn't this true in our lives as believers? To be sure, the dreadful sorrow of our Savior's death is the source of our greatest joy. Why? Because it brings such glory to Christ, not to mention, redemption to sinners.

But folks, the joy we experience now is going to pale in comparison to the joy we will experience when our Savior comes to take his bride unto himself. And who has brought all this about? The Holy Spirit, the source of our perpetual joy, and he is the one who will bring to fruition all the eternal blessings that will result from the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, you see, the joy is much more than just in his resurrection as magnificent as that is but it's in all that that means, especially with respect to the coming of the Holy Spirit. In fact, in the resurrection, we have the dawning of a new eschatological age that will culminate in the eternal state, in the consummation of all things, when all things are subjected to Christ as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15.

Now notice how Jesus uses a familiar example of how sorrow can become the source of great joy in verse 21 and all of you mothers can identify with this, "Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world." Now, I have seen firsthand the grimace of pain on a mother's face while she struggles in labor. I remember it specifically when I saw all 3 of my children born. I remember that look on Nancy's face and I agonized with her but oh, the change when she first set her eyes upon that little infant. And I've seen that with other mothers as well. You come into the room and you don't see them in agony anymore. They are celebrating what has happened. How instantly they forget what once brought such misery and how quickly they are able to say, "Ah, it was worth it all." Well, in the same way, Jesus says to his disciples in verse 22, "Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you." It's interesting, that

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phrase that the Lord uses, "your heart will rejoice," is one that he took from the Spirit's words in Isaiah 66:14 and the context of that passage has to do with the description of the millennial kingdom.

So the heartfelt joy that no one can take away speaks of a joy that extends beyond the exhilaration that they would experience when they saw the resurrected Christ. It would even extend beyond the thrill of the Spirit coming upon them to give them perpetual eyes and fellowship to enjoy Jesus. Folks, this is a joy that reaches all the way into eternity, a joy that will remain there forever. John MacArthur said it well, quote, "The dark shadows of sorrow and grief cast by the cross fled before the brilliant glorious light of the resurrection and the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. That light also caused the disciples to view the cross in its proper perspective, making it an unending source of joy for them." Once again, folks, this was a work of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who gives spiritual life to the spiritually dead and then gradually transforms that new creation into the likeness of Christ through his ongoing work of sanctification.

Notice the phrase in verse 22, "your heart will rejoice and no one will take your joy from you." Here again, folks, we see the Spirit as the source of their perpetual joy because that joy is ultimately secured by his work. Peter understood this. He said in 1 Peter 1, beginning in verse 3, we have been "born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you," catch this, "who are protected by the power of God." There again, the work of the Spirit. "Protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice," he says, "even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials." Of course, Peter could speak about this from first-hand experience.

Now again, Jesus' words, I believe, reach beyond the immediate context into the new birth and life of every believer. If I can put it this way: think of the travail that every new believer endures when they first come to Christ when they experience the new birth. The birth pangs of conviction that are brought about by the Spirit's work in our life. The deep sorrow over sin that does battle with the flesh that loves the sin. Then the agony of squeezing through the narrow gate of genuine repentance and brokenness. Then, the exhilarating joy of sins forgiven. The sheer delight of imputed and imparted righteousness that reconciles us to a holy God. The thrill of the new birth. The ineffable bliss of the blessed hope. That soul satisfying happiness that we experience when we begin to make our journey towards heaven. Even when we pass through the valley of the shadow of death, the psalmist says, we will fear no evil. Why? For God is with us. How could that be? Again, this is part of the work of the Spirit.

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Then after the new birth, we live in this fallen world and it is difficult. Often our joy is hidden behind tears as we endure the sorrows of life, especially when we endeavor to live for Christ. You remember Paul says that "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." And Jesus has already warned in John 14 that, "The world is going to hate you because it has already hated Me. Moreover, it's going to hate you because you are not of the world. You have been chosen out of the world." Folks, think about it: we are united by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ who was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Why would we expect anything different?

In my life and probably in your life if you are honest, you get a whole lot more bad news than you get good news. There are seasons of good times in your life but they are just seasons and the good times never last. There is always something difficult that will come along. And for many believers around the world, they live in a constant struggle to just survive, many facing mounting hostility. We are even seeing that here in our country as the enemy of our souls continues to deceive the world into thinking that good is evil and evil is good and so forth. So like the disciples, we grieve, we lament, we weep, but with the promise that our grief is someday going to be turned into joy.

Beloved, please hear this: serving Christ and suffering for him is not only the source of our greatest joy this side of heaven, it is also the basis of our eternal reward. It's for this reason that the Apostle Paul could say in 2 Corinthians 4:17 that, "momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison." And when you look at his affliction and to think he called it "light affliction," I haven't experienced anything that remotely could compare to all that he went through but ah, he had a glimpse of heaven, didn't he? He had a glimpse of Christ so it was worth it all. But for the world in rebellion to God, a world that lives as if Christ doesn't exist, mocking his death, his resurrection, his Ascension and certainly his second coming, it's not going to be the same for them. They have no fear of God. They have no hope. They suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Paul says "they worship the creature, not the Creator." For this reason Jesus says in Luke 6:25, "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep." Isn't it interesting the contrast? Today the world laughs and rejoices and we grieve and we weep, but some day it's going to be turned around. Folks, practically speaking in good times and especially in bad, we need to rejoice because we know what awaits us. We need to live in light of that. Paul had our temporary groaning in mind when he said in Romans 8:23, that we, "having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body." It is for this reason, with this kind of hope, he could say in verse 18 that he considered "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

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Spirit-Produced Joy

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 16:16-24
Preached on: Sunday, June 7, 2015

So, we can take comfort in the hope that is ours in Christ and in the words that he gives to his disciples that there is joy that is coming. In fact, we can echo the words of King David who said in Psalm 30:5, "Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning." I'm waiting for that shout, aren't you? But it's coming, folks. It's coming.

So, the Lord speaks to them of his permanent presence in their life through the Spirit and the Spirit being the source of their perpetual joy and then finally he gives them a promise of answered prayer. Notice in verse 23, he says, "In that day," in other words, in that day when you see me and your joy is turned to sorrow, in that period of time after the resurrection when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and illumines your mind to understand all of these things, to understand all that was happening in my atoning work and all that's going to happen in the kingdom, the millennial kingdom which will be that consummating bridge between human history and the eternal state, the very things, by the way, that Jesus taught them that 40 days after his resurrection, in that day, "you will not question Me about anything." Why is that? Because he's not going to be there. He's going to be gone. But the Holy Spirit of truth is going to reside in them and he is going to guide them into all truth, Jesus tells us. He is going to speak what the Lord discloses and what is to come, according to verse 13.

Then Jesus makes one final and most important promise. In fact, it's one that he has made 2 times before that very evening. He says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you." When we pray in Jesus' name, we are not tacking on some magical formula. To pray in his name really means to pray consistent with his will, in harmony with what will bring him glory and therefore glorify the Father. And when we pray in that way, Jesus says, the Father will give it to you. A wonderful promise. And who is it that aligns our prayers to help us know how to pray as we should? Who is it that Paul says in Romans 8:26, "helps our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we should"? He tells us it's the "Holy Spirit Himself who intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is." In other words the Father can read the mind of the Spirit and vice versa, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Of course, this is inner Trinitarian communication that is beyond our ability to fathom but yet, beloved, this is part of God's redemptive purposes in our life. An amazing thought. Later the disciples would understand that even that work of the Holy Spirit would parallel the Lord Jesus' high priestly work of intercession on our behalf. And because the Father understands and agrees with what the Spirit thinks as the Spirit somehow conforms our prayers in such a way as to be a part of the will of God, then he answers our prayers accordingly.

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Then finally Jesus says, "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name." Of course, there was a reason for that. There was no need to do that when he was present with them and they could ask him directly or they could pray to the Father. Then he says, "ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full."

As we close this morning, I want you to focus on something with me: isn't this absolutely amazing? He's about to suffer and die in our stead and yet his ardent desire is that our joy may be made full. Unbelievable. Folks, I ask you this morning in closing: is your heart filled with joy as a believer? Now, if you don't know Christ, I know the answer to that. It is not filled with joy. But as a believer, is your heart filled with joy or is it filled with bitterness, maybe jealousy, anger, discontentment, which will fuel materialism, the worship of the body and all these crazy things? Do you come to church and are there people that you look at and say, "I don't like that person. I don't even want to talk to them"? Is that what's going on for you because if it is, your heart is not filled with joy. There is something bad wrong and sadly I see this all too often in believers and I fear many times we're not even aware of the dominant attitudes of our heart because we are so distracted by all of the fleeting pleasures of this world and therefore we don't have any time for Christ. We don't really cultivate our relationship with him.

Isn't it interesting that we live in this media culture where 24/7 you can get on some device, internet, television, whatever it is and be entertained. We have this culture of Facebook, twitter and what are those things, selfies? The epitome of narcissism. People have no time for the one who wants their joy to be made full. I recently talked with a woman who was addicted to all the things I just mentioned and she tearfully admitted that she hated to get quiet and be alone. She said, "Because down deep in my heart I'm so filled with sadness over virtually everything in my life." I remember saying to her, "How can this be when you claim Christ as your Savior?" Of course, the reason is she was not living the way she should in light of all that Christ is. So if this is you, may I challenge you to examine your heart?

All along in his farewell discourse to his disciples, Jesus has, shall we say, marked out the root to this Spirit-produced joy so that we know how to get there. He tells us that, "You need to be obedient to my commandments. You need to abide in me. In other words, you need to know me. You need to cultivate a relationship with me. You need to cultivate fellowship with me. You need to have a heart that longs to spend time with me in fervent prayer to understand my word and to live out. As a result, the Spirit of God will come upon you in such a way as to help you bear fruit for the glory of the Father and this will bring great joy to you." Beloved, this is the secret to experiencing Spirit-produced, soul-satisfying joy that cannot be taken away from you. So I pray that you will examine these truths in light of your own life and wherever the Spirit brings conviction, won't you deal

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with that because I want all of you to experience what the Lord so desperately wants you to experience and that is that his joy will be made full in you.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these magnificent truths that speak so directly to each of our hearts. I pray that by the power of the Spirit, you will bring conviction to every person that is here today, especially, Lord, if there be one that does not know Christ as Savior. Won't you cause that person to see their sin as it is and to run to the cross and to plead for that forgiveness that will be given so freely? Lord, for all of us who know and love you, may we know and love you all the more, that we might experience that soul-satisfying joy of the living Christ within our souls. We ask all of this in Jesus' name and for his glorious sake. Amen.

We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.

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