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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on Sunday
morning 28.6.64

Hymns 297, 279, 482

Reading John 15

Text John 16.22

"And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again,
and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from
you."

There are two things of which it may be said they are a deep concern to us all, however much we may or may not feel it. The first relates to this mortal life here below. We must begin with this which concerns us in many different ways in our daily life and circumstances, our relationships in life and its changing conditions; those times of joy, times of sorrow, times of distress and grief, times of relief with things more according to our natural minds and wishes; and it would be sad to have a temperament that was unmoved by the things through which we pass in this life. They are a concern to us, they have been to everyone of us, and especially to younger friends in the earlier stages of life, our future, our success in life and our relationships and many things which concern us now; but the greater concern by far should be in connection with the life to come, the hereafter compared with which this present life is but as a passing moment. It is a great mercy if we really have a concern about our never-dying souls, about eternity and where we shall spend it, and how we shall spend it, and what it will eventually mean to us. Are we concerned about this? Are you concerned about it? Am I? Does it lie upon our heart, do we inwardly perceive the tremendous issues, does the case of our soul weigh with us as to what the Lord's purpose will be? What a mercy if, even if when young, we are brought to seek God, to wait on Him and to pray that we may be found eventually among His redeemed children.

These chapters, dear friends, relate to both conditions. They were spoken to those troubled disciples under distressing

circumstances when the Lord, whom they loved and whose company they had enjoyed, was about to leave them. This was a great perplexity to them. Their minds seem to have been confused about the meaning of the Lord's coming to this earth and assuming human flesh, although the Lord had many times told them. Here He speaks kind, gracious, tender, feeling words of comfort to them in view of the approaching events and the fact that He would for a time have to leave them. He speaks so tenderly to them saying, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me". He would quiet and console their minds, although He was Himself in trouble enough, fully realising what lay immediately before Him. I would like to think of this on the part of the dear Redeemer, although untold trouble and distress and pain and suffering immediately awaited Him, so that soon after He said, "Now is my soul troubled", yet to these poor disciples He said, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me". He comforted them by the promise made several times to them of the Holy Ghost that should come in due time and with which they would be very graciously endued and filled to qualify them for the work before them.

He refers to their present condition of sorrow and to a future condition of joy, "And ye now therefore have sorrow". It is quite easy to see why they were in sorrow; but He says, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice and your joy no man taketh from you." I would like as helped to bring forth these three points as they concern us each more or less. This present sorrow, and indication of future joy "your heart shall rejoice", and thirdly the nature of that joy, "Your joy no man taketh from you." The nature of this joy is a point to notice because it cannot be said of any earthly joy, sweet as that may be at the time, that no man can take it from us, because the time soon comes when that particular joy is taken from us, or things come to rob us of that enjoyment.

First of all then there is present sorrow, "And ye now

therefore have sorrow". As this was true with these disciples then, so on different occasions and at different times is it likewise true more or less with all the Lord's people. Mercifully it is not a life of uninterrupted sorrow, rather it is mingled with times of joy; yet what child of God is there, who has been some years in the pilgrimage to the heavenly city, who has not experienced certain seasons of sorrow? It is true more or less with every one of us. What is it that occasions sorrow? What is sorrow? It is a state of mind occasioned by certain prevailing conditions, or something we are brought into and we may have to pass through; it is grief of mind; and here it is to be noticed how tenderly the Scriptures speak to those in grief. In the Lamentations it is said, "Though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies". You see when things come upon us over which we have no control whatever, and naturally speaking would have prevented, when in the providence of God they are brought upon us they occasion grief of mind.

There is a natural mind; if we possess the faculties of nature we cannot be other than grieved by many things in these days in which we are living; the state of the nation, the prevailing wickedness, the Sabbath breaking, the contempt of God's Holy Word, and other such things occasion sorrow to a child of God; but there is a different kind of sorrow from this, there is a spiritual sorrow that is peculiar to a living vessel of mercy. Natural sorrow is with all folk at times, but with this difference and it is a very distinguished difference too, when natural sorrows come to the Lord's people those sorrows are tempered more or less with the Lord's consolations. So it is said, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory". Also the prophet prayed in the Psalms, "Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil." Things are balanced. No child of God is forbidden to sorrow under loss

or bereavement, or other distressing circumstances. How can it be otherwise? How can affectionate parents be other than sorrowful under the loss of a child, as has recently been in the sudden loss, of which we have heard, of a dear child of about two years, or if a husband should lose his wife or a wife her husband, or the children their parents, or the loss of a dear friend. These things cause sorrow but not despair. We are not forbidden to sorrow, but that sorrow is to be regulated. It would not be right for a person professing grace to be overcome with sorrow because it would evidence the lack of consolation in the case. The sorrow should be regulated as I believe it is; we may grieve but not rebel. This is the difference. There can be grief in the heart of a child of God without rebellion, without resentment against the will of God concerning the dispensation. There can be a right giving up, a subjection to the Lord's purpose under things very painful to flesh and blood and to our natural affections. It is a mercy to feel something of this.

There is then sorrow under losses, afflictions, bereavements, changes and almost innumerable things; but still there is a sorrow peculiar to a child of God. What is that? It is a sorrow occasioned by sin. Not sin generally speaking, but by a sense of sin that is felt in his own heart by divine teaching, as being guilty in the sight of a holy God. That religion is a poor religion, and that profession a poor profession, where there is an absence of sorrow and grief for sin. Why so? Not so much because of the possible consequences of sin, but because sin was the cause of such grief to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Our sins were the occasion of greater grief to Him than ever they can be to us, if we can believe that. In the prophecy we read of Him, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow". What was the sorrow of the precious Redeemer? The burden of the sin of His dear people for whom He stood substitute.

This occasioned Him grief and sorrow so that He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and it is a mercy to have a religion with this ingredient in it.

Have we got this? Do we really grieve on account of sin because this grief is of a godly sort. This is not a natural sorrow arising from loss of some kind but it is godly sorrow arising from grace, from the Holy Spirit's divine awakening, from His gracious teaching when we are shown what guilty, wretched sinners we are in the sight of a just and holy God. When we are brought down before Him to confess our sins in His sight, to plead for mercy through the Lamb's redeeming precious blood. Do we know anything of this sorrow? I have to say I do not know the affliction of this sorrow that I should do as a minister. It is a very real sorrow, and I have known what it is to be grieved on account of my sins. When was this? More particularly when I saw by faith those sins laid on Him and when I saw that great work of redemption finished for me. Then I was grieved on account of my sins. It is a mercy to have a little godly sorrow; this godly sorrow works repentance; this is an important point to notice. It is this which proves it to be godly sorrow. If it is not godly sorrow in your heart it will never work repentance; but godly sorrow brings the soul into the sacred experience of repentance, that repentance that is sweet to feel though so closely attended with grief and sorrow on account of our sins. As we feel sorrow on account of sin so shall we feel joy on account of forgiveness.

There are many things that cause sorrow. The Lord's absence causes sorrow if we are exercised; darkness and uncertainty about our case, the hiding of His face and other things of this kind cause sorrow to exercised people. Does this cause any sorrow to you? Are you and I exercised rightly with regard to this, and do we know anything of this godly sorrow, this sorrow for sin, this repentance that needeth not to be repented of;

that is to say we shall never need to repent of the repentance we have toward God, never. We may sometimes feel sorrow in that we know so little of what this repentance is; here is matter of sorrow.

"Ye now therefore have sorrow". This sorrow with these disciples was because they could not visualise or foresee the necessity of the Lord's departure from them, or that He would be seen again by them, and what would result and issue from His sufferings and death. It was a sorrow occasioned by a darkness that was upon their minds at that time. Does not this come into personal experience? There may be sorrow now with some of us because we may not be able to foresee or visualise the design purpose or ultimate issue of certain things that we may now be passing through. "Ye now therefore have sorrow". This is the first point and if we have grace in our souls we shall not want to skip over this, or conclude that there is no necessity for this sorrow, because godly sorrow is one of the most wholesome experiences a child of God can have here below. It is so sanctifying in its nature, and humbling in its effects. It brings us down, it brings us into sensible fellowship with a suffering Christ, it gives us to perceive the necessity and ultimate issue of His own sufferings. We shall have sorrow, we shall have it in our lives, we shall have it in the nation, we shall have it in our souls. You may have it in a number of different ways beside these, so that sometimes you may heave many a sigh secretly. "Ye now therefore have sorrow".

There is a second point, "But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." Here you see the Lord refers to the fact that though for a season He would be taken from them, and would be put to death, yet He would rise again from the dead and they should see Him again after His resurrection from the dead and that would bring them joy, take away the sorrow they felt by reason of His being taken from them for a time. So it came to pass, as we know in the latter part of this Gospel, and the other Gospels, where it is said that the Lord appeared to them,

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord". This was a joy to them, it was the same Jesus that had been taken from them, that was nailed to the cursed tree, that had poured out His soul unto death, and evidenced the height of divine love towards them by His substitution and death. It was the same Jesus that appeared to them there when they were assembled together and demonstrated His identity by showing them His wounds in His sacred body occasioned by nailing Him to the cross, and the wound in His holy side occasioned by the spear of the soldier. "He shewed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

"I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." Though we have not been favoured like this, have not that joy in a literal sense which they had to see Him after His resurrection, there is joy, a particular joy that pertains to the Lord's dear people, that arises from the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and His appearing to them as a risen and exalted Saviour in the exercise of their faith. So Peter says, "Whom having not seen ye love", - that is these poor scattered converts - "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not; yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory". The joy here to a believer is the joy of faith when the Lord appears to him, it is the joy of His presence. He sees us again after a season of darkness and trouble and conflict and fear and absence. He comes again; this "seeing" means coming to us in a spiritual way. As His absence causes sorrow so His presence causes joy. This I believe follows with every living child of God; His sweetest joy is the Lord's presence with him in his soul's feelings, even if that be but for a few moments. It is the joy of heaven, it is the sweet joy he feels because he can

say, The Lord is my God. Thomas said, "My Lord and my God", and when he said that he was unquestionably filled with joy. So it is with the Lord's redeemed family. He shows Himself through the lattice, He standeth behind our wall showing Himself through the lattice of His Word, Gospel and ordinances, and His waiting people get a glimpse of Him again, He comes to them, He removes the cloud between and they get a fresh glimpse and it is as sweet as it was before.

"I will see you again". This can have another point; it may be a time of darkness and absence and bondage now, and the Lord knows whether this is so; His omniscient eye is always upon His people; He sees them under every condition and in every distress.

"I will see you again". This can be a confirming promise to those who may at this present time be attacked by the enemy.

"I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." Faith may lay hold of this promise under present conditions of sorrow; the promise has a strength in it, it is the strength of an unfailing Jesus, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." What is this joy? As I have hinted it is the joy of His presence. It is the joy of the Gospel that is brought into the heart, it is the joyful sound of the everlasting Gospel that is heard in the heart of a poor sinner who has been mourning over his sins before the Lord. What can bring greater joy into the heart of a poor sin-sick soul who may have feared that hell would be his portion, and had every reason to fear so too as far as his own condition is concerned? But says the Lord "Your heart shall rejoice"; so it will when He comes again.

This joy incorporates all the precious blessings of the everlasting Gospel, they flow into your heart poor sinner when the Lord comes again. He brings all these good things with Him, like a friend coming to your house with a basket of good things, just those very things you may need, so does the Lord come with His hands full of the blessings of redeeming grace to these poor sorrowing ones. "Your heart shall rejoice." He causes the

heart to sing for joy when He comes, joy unspeakable; a sweet joy this. It is the joy of liberty, the joy of interest in His love and grace, the joy of pardon in His precious blood, the joy of being justified through His obedience to the law on our behalf. More than all, it is the joy of Himself. He Himself is the joy, He comes into your heart and fills you with Himself, "I will see you again." I can almost hear some say, I wish He would come again, and perhaps I can hear some say I do not feel He has ever come. This same truth applies, "I will come to you". In an earlier chapter He says "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you", and if He has come to you and then departed, He says "I will see you again", and this to be a comfort and support to us in the trial of faith and waiting for His appearing. So "Your heart shall rejoice".

Thirdly, "Your joy no man taketh from you." Why is it a joy that no man can take from us? Because it is the joy of heaven, for it is a heavenly joy. That is the reason why. It is the joy of the Gospel. In the first chapter in the Epistle to Peter, Peter says, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." Yet still they were rejoicing greatly, not on account of these temptations, but on account of what the Apostle had referred to, that there was an inheritance laid up for them in heaven through faith unto salvation. No man can rob us or destroy this joy. This is the joy of hope sometimes felt in the heart in sweet anticipation, it is the joy of love, of prospect, and no man can take that away however much they may persecute and oppose and indeed may be a cause of much natural trouble and distress; they cannot take away that which the Lord has put into your heart, it is a spiritual, heavenly joy, a joy to be known in its fulness one day when we have finished with earth and everything here below. With a child of God that will be to enter into that joy and no man will take that away from him then; no man can take it away

now. They cannot take the consolation away.

It is true that we do not always feel this joy; many things come to interrupt it. We may have to say we have known very little of it; but no man can take it away because it is the Lord's gift, it is a heavenly gift, it is the joy of one day being with Him, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." No man can take that away. To take that away they would have to take your heaven away and no man can take your heaven away if the Lord has opened one for you. Here is a sweet word of consolation to the Lord's poor people in this valley of tears and losses and sorrows. "Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you". Amen.