

**Articles and Sermons :: Christ Our Joy by Octavius Winslow****Christ Our Joy by Octavius Winslow - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/1/27 20:36**Christ Our Joy
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You have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy—John 16:22.

In a preceding chapter of this work we adverted to the removal of Christ from His disciples as constituting a cause of deepest sorrow. We purpose, in the present chapter, to speak more fully of the joy with which our blessed Lord sought to counterbalance that grief. It is couched in the promise, "I will see you again." And yet, in the first gush of their sorrow, how entirely they overlooked the blessings enshrouded in this dark cloud! On His return to the Father His whole priesthood, as an Intercessor, depended. His great work of advocacy, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and all the untold blessings which should accrue to the Church from the abiding indwelling of the Holy Spirit, were suspended upon this one fact in our Lord's history—His retirement from His Church on earth, and His reunion with the Church in heaven.

Thus, dear reader, is it with us. The cloud which shades us, the event which seems the most painful, is often that which, in its issue, is productive of the greatest blessing. But observe how our Lord sought to adapt Himself to the circumstances of His Church: "You have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy." Let us take each particular as it lies before us.

It was no ordinary sorrow which now pressed upon their hearts. Filled as the world was with sorrow at that moment—many eyes weeping, many spirits crushed to the earth—no sorrow could be compared with that which now bowed the hearts of this little band of disciples. What a poor, desolate wilderness did the world now appear to them. Their sun was retiring, and their hearts, like flowers which close when the light withdraws, were draped in shadows. Thus is it with saints of God who are in the habit to sun themselves with the presence of Jesus, and to have their hearts filled with that joy and gladness which flows only and entirely from Him.

When Jesus retires, the heart is closed, and no other joy can inspire and open it. Beloved, this is not unusual. What is Jesus to a spiritually enlightened, believing sinner? He is all in all. Earth would be nothing to him but for Jesus. And what would heaven be without Jesus? Christ is the sun of heaven, the glory of heaven, the bliss of heaven, the heaven of heaven. Oh, could we now part the veil—it will soon rise—what a spectacle would burst upon our view! One object, glorious and exalted, alone fixes the gaze, and myriads of happy spirits encircle Him, as satellites clustering around the sun. Every eye is fixed upon Him—every heart loves Him, and He is the theme of every song that floats from their lips. Is Jesus less dear, less precious to the saints of God on earth? Oh no! He stands to us in the relation of the Consolation of Israel, the Brother, the Friend, the Redeemer, the Intercessor. We cannot dispense with a single office that Jesus fills. We cannot part with one view the Holy Spirit gives us of His fitness and excellence. Jesus is all that we want.

Is it, then, unusual that, when Christ's absence is felt, there should be sorrow? Dear saints of God, this is a test of your Christianity. There are many who can talk well of Christ, and who can repeat Scripture fluently; and yet with all this they may pass days, weeks, months, and years, and know nothing of what that sorrow is which flows from the conscious absence of Jesus. Do you ask why? Simply because they do not know what the presence of Jesus is. Satisfied with an enlightened understanding, with an external ordinance, with an orthodox creed, and knowing not what it was to hold communion and fellowship with Christ, they do not know what that sorrow is that springs from His absence. Consequently, time rolls on and they are utter strangers to this joy of the Lord.

There is one feature we must not overlook—our Lord's notice of their sorrow. Was He indifferent to it? Did He close His heart to it? When did He ever do so? Dear saints of God, the Man of sorrows cannot be indifferent to the sorrows of

man. The Prince of sufferers cannot turn away from the sufferings of His people. Jesus knows His people's sorrow. He is acquainted with their grief. He has, so to speak, a bottle for their tears, and a book for their sighs. What! does He preserve them? So precious are they, that they cannot be lost, so dear are they, that they cannot be unobserved. Ah, beloved! Jesus knows our sorrow. Do you think that He is indifferent to you, you weepers at the tomb of an absent Savior—you earnest seekers after Christ, who watch for Him more eagerly and ardently than the weary sufferer watches through the slow hours of his sleepless night for the first break of day?

There is yet another feature exceedingly sweet. Jesus speaks of their sorrow as being a present sorrow. "You now have sorrow." Oh yes! the sorrow of the saint of God, be it what it may, is but a present sorrow. It will soon pass away. Everything here is present. The world is a present evil world—mutability is written upon it all. Its fashions change, its pleasures change, the lusts of the world pass away, its glory fades; yes, and the sorrow of the tried believer is but a present sorrow, and will soon dissolve into happiness and glory forever.

Now, observe the blessed truth by which our Lord promises them a return of joy. "I will see you again." There is a sense in which Jesus never loses sight of His people. We have lost sight of Him times without number; but we have never been out of His eye—no, not a moment: "He withdraws not His eye from the righteous." And in speaking of His vineyard, the Church, it is said, His eye is upon it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

But here is a reference to the restored presence of Jesus in order to the restored joy of His disciples. How truly did our Lord fulfil this promise in His resurrection, "I will see you again!" He did see them again after His resurrection, and was with them forty days. What a joyous period was that! "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." Can we possibly conceive what the joy of the disciples was when they saw their Lord return back from the grave? For three days their joy was entombed, but it was buried only to rise again with increased intensity. Has the Lord ever taken a blessing that He has not more than restored? When the disciples saw His mangled and lifeless body lowered into that tomb, and the stone rolled upon it, they might have thought that in that tomb was buried all their joy forever. But when Jesus rose again, their joy rose with Him; and that joy was a richer, deeper joy than they ever knew before.

O beloved! have we not experienced a joy kindred to this when our absent Savior has drawn near, and once more manifested Himself to us? Oh, how the lost joy has come back again, richer, deeper, and sweeter than before! The very absence of the Savior has but made His presence all the sweeter. Yes, "I will see you again" is still the watchword of the Lord's people. "For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer." "Thus says the Lord, I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies." Oh, what a truth! I am returned to Jerusalem—with what? with vengeance, because Jerusalem rejected Me, and crucified Me? Oh no! "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies." Lift up your head, poor mourner, sorrowing bitterly that you have so grieved your Lord that He has suspended His presence. Look up with this precious promise, "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies."

But this promise of our Lord is yet to receive a fuller and sublimer fulfilment. We look for His Second Coming. The words, "I will see you again," include His glorious Epiphany, when this same Jesus will personally appear in the clouds of heaven, accompanied by the saints who are dead, and to translate the saints who are living. Thus is this glorious truth stated: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."

O animating, O holy, O precious truth! O bright and cheering prospect of the coming of our blessed Lord and Savior to see us! Then, indeed, our heart shall rejoice. If the present imperfect view of Jesus fills us with such joy and gladness, oh, what will be the ecstasy of joy when we shall see Him in the clouds of heaven, and exclaim, "Lo, this is my Redeemer: I have waited for Him; I will be glad and rejoice in Him!"

Now observe the permanence of this joy. “And your joy no man takes from you.” How transient was the joy of the chief priests and scribes, who vainly thought that when they had slain the Prince of Life they had completely triumphed over the young religion! But oh, how short lived was their exultation! Jesus came back to life, and, by His resurrection, confirmed and established the faith of His disciples, and no man could take their joy from them.

Our Lord seems to suppose here that the joy of His people would be imperilled; and so it is. Satan would rob us of it if he could. Perpetually is the devil suggesting such thoughts of Christ, of God, and of His word, as would greatly dampen, if not entirely destroy our joy. So would evil men. But so real and permanent is the joy the Lord gives the believer, that neither Satanic suggestion, nor the persecutions of evil men, can possibly take it away. If it were possible to separate us from Christ—for He is our Joy—then were it possible to rob us of this spiritual blessing. But who shall separate the believer from the love of Christ? Your joy “no man takes from you.”

But have you lost the sensible experience of the joy of the Lord through the prevalence of unbelief, or unevenness of walk? Return to Jesus with David’s prayer, “Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation.” What does Jesus say? “I will see you again.” And you shall see Jesus again with a freshly anointed eye of faith; and, looking off from yourself to Him, your joy shall be full, and that joy no power shall take from you.