

Sorrows and Triumphs

by John Nelson Darby

Jesus' sufferings and glory are the foundation of the Church's existence and purpose.

Scripture: Psalm 20:1-2, Psalm 21:1-2, Psalm 34:18, Matthew 11:28, John 13:31, John 16:33, Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 5:7

Topics: "Suffering", "Comfort in Christ"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes that Jesus has intimately entered into our sorrows, providing profound comfort through His incarnation. He explains that the depth of Christ's suffering allows us to understand the depth of His love, as He empathizes with our struggles and offers solace in our pain. The sermon highlights the significance of the Psalms in expressing the feelings of Jesus and how they resonate with our own experiences of sorrow. Darby also discusses the duality of suffering and glory, illustrating that while we endure hardships, we are also called to share in the joy of Christ's resurrection and glory. Ultimately, he reassures believers that Jesus is the source of comfort and understanding in a world filled with sorrow.

Transcript

There is no comfort like the thought that Jesus has entered into all our sorrows. This is the very way God has met the need, and want, and wretchedness of our nature. Supposing that Adam had never fallen, we could not speak of God with the comfort that we now can, since He has come in sympathy to us, through the means of the incarnation of our blessed Lord. The Lord Jesus having become a man is the source of all comfort. The Lord has entered into all the depths of sorrow, so as to give us all the depth of comfort, in order that we may know that God knows the very secret of our case. He lets us see the feeling of Jesus in entering into it, and in the expression of His thoughts and feelings whilst in this place; so we come to see how He entered into all our sorrows. And this is the channel for all His love to flow into our souls.

The book of Psalms brings before us Christ entering into the depth of our circumstances, and making them His own, saying, "Mine iniquities have taken such hold of me, that I am not able to look up." Some of His sorrows arose from His holiness. "Mine eyes gush out," etc. All the depth of sorrow was in Jesus. His putting Himself in this place makes us understand the depth of His love towards us. Jesus brings the capacity of God to feel in the circumstances of man that were to be felt about. His feelings were therefore those of holy sorrow. If we see any expression of sorrow in the saints, it is only the expression of the Spirit of Jesus in them.

We find some passages in the New Testament showing what was passing in the mind of our blessed Lord, such as His conflict in the garden of Gethsemane, and when upbraiding the cities in which His mighty works were done. We then see what the Lord felt, the outbreking of that which was pressing on our Lord's soul. But, ordinarily, in the Gospels, while glimpses often break through the veil, it is the grace and perfectness of Jesus in the midst of, and in spite of, His sufferings that is shown - the perfect grace of the Man; and all the scorn and sorrow which was heaped upon Him we see only made His love shine the brighter. But the Psalms bring out what was passing within. The individual soul often finds comfort in the Psalms, in a measure in having something of the same feeling; and God can look at these very expressions of sorrow with delight, even though they are often mixed with unbelief, though they may be groanings that cannot be uttered. He that searcheth the hearts knoweth the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to God; but we must look at them in Jesus to look at them aright, to get all the comfort of them. It is an evil thing to be always groaning, but it is a blessed thing to know that Jesus groaned. Those who are weary and heavy-laden in a world of misery are in circumstances to understand the blessedness of Jesus feeling with them.

The perception of Jesus being the Son of God in these sufferings is shown, in Matt. 11:25, to be, by the grace of God, revealing these things to our souls. Jesus having come into this world of sorrow, and having found no rest in it, says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." "If there were any rest here I should have found it; if there had been any spark of love to be found in man's heart. But there is not, therefore you must come and bow; but know the sympathy, too, of Him who bowed first." Jesus says - "I sought the Lord and he heard me," etc.; the Spirit takes it up - "This poor man cried," etc. God does not say, "Stay in sorrow till I bring you into a condition where there is no sorrow," by and bye, but comes down into the sorrow; but His love is found where the want of it is so much felt.

There was in Jerusalem the concentration of all wickedness - there was Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the one, so to speak, next to our blessed Lord - Judas, just the type of Antichrist. Amidst all the sin and sorrow of the world - sin, but sin when God had taken all the pains outwardly to bring man out of it, when "God looked down from heaven to see if there were any that would understand," etc. - where should He look if not to that nation whom He had chosen for His own? "a nation so great who hath God so nigh," etc. Where expect anything good but here?

But when He came there was no man - when He called there was none to answer. The place where the Lord Jesus was, as among these, was a place of special grief, for all the pains that God had taken with His special people only brought home to the Lord the perfectness of the enmity of His creatures towards Him. "What could I have done more to my vineyard that I have not done!" etc.

The Lord's name, too, was in Jerusalem, and the place where His name was He saw trodden down by the Gentiles, and He could not interfere in the matter; and why? Because God's people had departed from Him and His ways - they were become worse than the heathen, and therefore, by virtue of His own character, it was impossible for Him to deliver these, His own people, on the earth, because He would have been vindicating depravity. The feeling of holy indignation there must have been in our blessed Lord in seeing His Father's name so dishonoured, was shown when He made the scourge of small cords, anticipating the day of judgment, and drove the sellers of merchandise out of the temple, saying, "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." This was truly being angry and sinning not. Because of the iniquity which was defiling His Father's house, judgment must begin at the house of God.

The spirit of Jesus was bowed down under the universal depravity - "the wickedness of His own people," etc. - and He could not, in one sense, deliver His own people but by giving His back to the smiters. He found His spirit pent up - entirely shut up in Himself. There was nothing to meet or answer it - none in whom He could find an answer, even His holy feelings of love none could enter into, which really is sorrow; and they found vent only in prayers and supplication to God. And all this wretchedness and sorrow was felt according to the purity and love of Himself.

In the Gospels we see the unfailing exhibition of grace toward man. In the Psalms we get the expression of His pent-up feelings of love and holiness and righteousness to Jehovah, when for His love He only received hatred. When the spirit of Christ is in us we enter into all this, though feebly, perhaps. The heart that felt this is just the same. Our hearts may spend themselves in feeling, God's never can; we are only the stream - God the source, unexhausted, inexhaustible. His love is ever fresh. When we get to the Lord we find one who now enters into our feelings of sorrows because He knows and understands them quite well. According as we know Jesus, daily we find sympathy. He is the pillow on which to rest the aching head. But it does not end here. Jesus was still looking out for the great result of all these sufferings "for the joy that was set before Him he endured the cross, despising the shame." Our proper portion is joy, but as in a world of sin and Satan we also find sorrow.

These two Psalms are the expression in two different ways of the interest that the soul of man could take in Christ and His deliverance (Ps. 21) The spirit of Christ, the remnant of the Jew hereafter looking to Christ in sorrow and suffering, see Him through the resurrection in joy and glory (Ps. 21) and look to him as coming back again in glory - we identified with Him. This shows the place we are in - the Church begins after the resurrection of the Lord. The Jews looked in amazement that Messiah should suffer. The thing that met all this was Jesus being received up into heaven. The Holy Ghost then comes down from heaven to form the Church, witnessing that the atonement has been made, that, "having by Himself purged our sins," etc., the place of the Church, begins in the joy and glory of Christ.

Of this Paul was the type - he had been no companion with Jesus in His sorrows, but the first thing that was shown him was the glory, to show the riches of grace, called in his sins to be an apostle. The Church is one with Christ in glory; like Paul it begins by the revelation of glory, and then it is taught that it is to be a partaker of His sufferings. Ananias had to show Paul (after he had seen the glory), how great things he must suffer for Jesus' name's sake. He was able to testify that his calling was all of grace - This Jesus whom I have been persecuting and killing in His members has taken me and made me an apostle - this must be of grace. Here (Ps. 20:1,) the remnant of the Jews are looking at the Lord in trouble, and they say (ver. 2), "The Lord hear thee out of Zion." Zion had been the place where they had been accustomed to look to for help, as God's being there; but all there was very dark - he found only trouble. Zion was the place where the heart's core was shown to be enmity against God. The council-chamber of Jerusalem was the place where counsel was taken against God and His Anointed. Then in the next Psalm we have "Thou hast given Him His heart's desire." The desire must have been in Christ's heart, or there would never have been any desire in our hearts towards Him. "Grant Thee according to Thine own heart." This could be said of none but Christ, "We will rejoice in Thy salvation." In our hearts there is too much evil. They could ask this, but knew not what His counsels were. The resurrection begun to be understood. They look now at the resurrection as the sign of the exercise of power on His behalf, and say, "Now know I that the Lord saveth His Anointed; " from thence He will hear, though not from His earthly Zion. "Save, Lord," etc. And then we have all the expression of the joy of the Jewish remnant in the discovery of the manner of their deliverance by the resurrection of their king.

The Church begins with the knowledge of this deliverance and salvation. Having the testimony that Jesus is on the right hand of God, we can tell what His counsel is - that He came to give Himself as a ransom for us, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. What the remnant will be looking for, the Church has - knowing Jesus as ascended gives the Church its peculiar character, "as He is, so are we in this world." This makes them know the glory to be theirs, and makes them willing to suffer now. The Church stands as the representative of Christ on earth (and it should be so practically), and bearing His reproach as united to Him in glory, as Jesus bore His Father's reproach, as united to Him in the glory. The remnant see Him coming back as King, we by faith see Him now. We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour at the right hand of God. The Jews shall see Him then. Thomas is a type of the Jews; "Blessed," etc. - the Church. God's mind and thought is to set out Jesus in this blessed glory, and the thoughts and counsel of His heart shall be fulfilled. "His glory is great in thy salvation, honour and majesty hast thou laid upon Him." But ver. 8 will be in righteousness on those who have rejected all His love. It is not till men become adversaries that the fire of the Lord destroys them (ver 9.) We were once the children of wrath, even as Thy grace only makes us to differ. (ver. 10.) Judgment of the quick specially. Now is the time between those two psalms, that, as regards us, the glory is ready and the Lord not slack; He waits - "long suffering," etc., "not willing that," etc., "now is the accepted time," etc. It is hard for the saint to say whether he delights most in the cross or in the glory, in the sufferings of Jesus or the glory. He looks at the suffering, and can say, "It was for us" - this shame and grief of heart to see His suffering, and the saint looks at the glory. Still it is (John 13:31), and he can say "it is for us."

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