

True sorrow is sorrow that God turns into joy. When a child feels sorry for himself because his parents took away his video games for being disrespectful, his sorrow will not turn into joy. But if the child feels sorrow that he disrespected his parents, then his sorrow will be turned to joy when he finds that his parents are not angry at him anymore. A man who is sorry his wife caught him looking at nasty pictures will not have his sorrow turned to joy. But if he is sorry that he was unfaithful to her in his heart then his sorrow will be turned to joy when she forgives him.

Jesus tells his disciples that they will be sorrowful. He is referring to what was about to take place. He was going to be betrayed and arrested, tortured, and crucified. During this time his disciples would be sorrowful. They would be sorrowful because they would all abandon their Lord, leaving him to suffer at the hands of pagans. But Jesus also promised them that their sorrow would be turned to joy.

It was displeasing to God that Peter denied Jesus. But it was God's will that Peter would grieve over this sin. After denying his Lord, Peter remembered Christ's warning that he would deny him three times, and he went out and wept bitterly. This weeping was not in vain. It certainly was a pathetic sight. But it would be turned to joy. Christ would rise from the dead, and the disciples would greatly rejoice upon seeing him. Though they were sorry that they had denied their Lord, they rejoiced in the peace, which the risen Christ proclaimed to them. Their God was not angry with them. Their sorrow was therefore turned to joy.

This is the kind of sorrow Jesus teaches his disciples about. It is true Christian sorrow. It is the sorrow that turns into joy. If the sorrow doesn't turn to joy, then the sorrow is in vain; it is the sorrow of despair. If a child continues to feel sorry for himself when his parents punish him, then he will grow to resent them and ultimately despair of their love. A man who does not seek release from his perverse addiction will only fall deeper into it, and his sorrow will never end. But Christian sorrow is that which knows its end. A Christian who struggles against his sins, mourning over his sinful condition, does not struggle or sorrow in vain when he clings in faith to the promise of Christ: "Your sorrow will be turned to joy." His tears are not in vain when he finds a clear conscience in Christ who forgives all his sins.

When we learn what true Christian sorrow is then we know what all true Christian suffering is. True Christian suffering is done with a good conscience toward God. St. Peter says, "It is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully." This grief may come from the attacks of world, as St. Peter describes, or it might come from our own sinful desires and failures, as St. Peter certainly experienced. Either way, it is commendable grief when one bears it because of a good conscience toward God. Having a good conscience before God means that you trust in him and you therefore care about what is pleasing to him. It is in our baptism that St. Peter says that we are given this good conscience. The blood of Christ cleanses our consciences from dead works to confidence before God. So grieving your sin with a good conscience means not that you are sorry you got caught; it means that you are sorry that it offends God. This is the grief King David expresses when he says to God, "Against You, You only have I sinned." It means that you also trust in God to forgive you. This is not simply that you would be let off the hook, but that you would be freed from the sin over which you lament.

It is therefore commendable and pleasing to God if you grieve over your sins because of a good conscience. So at the same time, it is pleasing to God if you grieve over the world's attacks because of a good conscience. Your grief is not so much that *you* are being mocked, but that *God* is being mocked. If you are grieving over the world's mockery simply because you want to get along with the world, and you

just wish that the world would think you were cool and hip, then this is not true Christian grief. This is not true Christian suffering.

When I was in sixth grade I remember kind of liking this girl in my class. Then one day I saw her mocking me for being a Christian, making fun of me for praying. My first reaction was, “Ah man, I wish she liked me.” But God teaches us not to grieve over the world hating us. He teaches us to grieve over the world hating him. As Jesus says, “If the world hates you remember that it hated me first.” Christian suffering is not dwelling on our own suffering. Rather, true Christian suffering is concerned about God and his Word. True Christian suffering is done through faith in the suffering and death of Christ, who endured the shame in order to give us a good conscience toward God in whom we rejoice even in the midst of grief.

Jesus says, “you will weep, but the world will rejoice.” While the world thought they were doing good by crucifying Jesus, the disciples mourned over their own sinful and cowardly hearts. We are not to weep and lament because we wish that we were rejoicing with the world. The world isn’t some exclusive club that we wish we could be a part of, and so we feel sorry for ourselves, like a girl who didn’t get asked to go to the dance. The disciples weren’t sorrowful because they wished that they would have been able to help the Jewish leaders crucify Jesus. They were sorrowful precisely because they knew that their own unbelief was what paved Christ’s road to the cross.

Though the Christian stands righteous before God through faith in Christ, his flesh remains altogether sinful. Though he believes with his spirit by the power of the Holy Spirit, his sinful flesh remains altogether unbelieving. But here is the difference. The world *rejoices* in its unbelief. The Christian *grieves* over his unbelief. Jesus describes not just how it was between Maundy Thursday and Easter morning, but also how it is for you between your baptism and your grave. While God teaches us to be thankful for good weather, good health, good friends, and pleasant memories, he also teaches us to grieve over that which brings grief to him. So while we lament the injustice of the world, the attack on the family, the mass genocides, the lives destroyed by addiction, the churches led astray by false teaching, we suffer such lamentation for the Lord’s sake. We grieve not because these things go against our own personal, moral, and religious values. No, we grieve over these things because they are an offense to God. So while the world rejoices over its own sin, its own freedom from rules, its own independence, Jesus teaches us to mourn with repentant hearts.

When you rejoice in Christ and his Word, then it follows that you will be sorrowful over all things that are contrary to his Word, whether those things come from the world or from your own sin-stained heart. And yet, while we lament the sin of the world and our own passions, we have every reason to rejoice in God’s Word. Even while we endure the corruption of authorities, we may rejoice in Christ to whom has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. He, who is above all the angels, submitted to his parents and even to the corrupt authorities of the Jews and the Romans. And he did this all to save us from eternal sorrow. He did this so that when we must submit to our earthly authorities, even to the harsh and cruel ones, we may have the joy that is hidden under his own death in our place. This is the joy that our home is not with this world, but with our heavenly Father through the merits of Christ.

While we live in this world, we are reminded by St. Peter that we are sojourners. And yet, while we live as sojourners, while we bear any contempt, we may rejoice in the good gifts of God. So if your husband doesn’t treat you as Christ would have him treat you, then pray for him and continue to respect him as

the husband God gave you. If your wife doesn't believe, continue to love her as the wife God gave you. If your parents are failing in their duties, continue to honor them as the parents God gave you. And if your government is corrupt, then continue to honor it as the government God gave you. If the sin of this world gets you down, then continue to live in it as the world God created. If your own sins get you down, then continue to rejoice in Christ who died for your sins.

Even though the good things God created have been tainted with sin, our lamenting turns to joy when we consider Christ who has made all things new. Even while we mourn our sins, which offend God, Jesus has gone to the Father, rendering his own perfect obedience and death in our place. So as we find that death surrounds us and even seems to overcome us, we may rejoice in the risen Christ who pleads before the Father even as he gives us his own body and blood. In this way our consciences are cleansed, and our sorrow is turned to joy. And with such joy we proclaim: Alleluia! He is risen! *He is risen indeed! Alleluia!* Let us pray:

Teach me, O Lord, to grieve
O'er what brings You displeasure,
Be they my sins which cleave
To vain and worldly treasure,
Or be they words that lie
And many hearts deceive.
When woes as these come nigh
Lord, teach me how to grieve.

Teach me, Lord, to rejoice
O'er what bring You great pleasure,
That I should hear Your voice,
Which speaks in fullest measure
That all my sins You bore
By Your eternal choice.
You open heaven's door
And bid me to rejoice. Amen.