

O blessed Lord, who promised Your disciples that through Your Easter victory their sorrow should be turned to joy, and their joy no man should take from them: Grant us, we pray You, so to know You in the power of Your resurrection, that we may be partakers of that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory; for Your holy name's sake. Amen. (Parish Prayers, ed. Frank Colquhoun, p. 88)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith--more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire--may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

In Christ Jesus, whom we have not seen and yet believe He lives body and soul awaiting our arrival home to heaven, dear fellow redeemed:

Peter, the inspired writer of our text, was in that group of twelve in the Gospel lesson walking from the upper room to the Garden of Gethsemane, the night of Peter's threefold denial, asking with the rest of the disciples: "What does [Jesus] mean by a little while? We do not know what He is talking about." But now, perhaps about thirty years after his restoration to his apostleship and with much experience as a leading Apostle, he writes: "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith ... may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

We do well to listen to our Lord and His Apostle so that we too recognize in our lives of following Him that **Our "Little Whiles" of Grief Are Filled with Inexpressible Joy.**

I

All people, even unbelievers "have been grieved by various trials" but there is no joy to be found in them by unbelievers, because they have no hope after this life. Sure, unbelievers can express some hopeful sentiments about an afterlife, but there is no certain hope

based on sure promises. They may even say they believe in God expecting Him to overlook their sin. This is merely a baseless wish.

We believers have a certain hope. As Peter begins our text: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” We have been born again to a living hope by the work of God and He also guards that faith given us through our regeneration until the day Jesus returns giving us the full inheritance He has won for us.

When trial upon trial, grief upon grief pile up in the lives of unbelievers, they are led to become bitter and curse, curse those around them, curse even God, whoever they think He might be. The unbeliever is without hope in this life. Eventually death may be viewed as a welcomed friend, imagining nothing could be worse than the present difficulties. But this ignorance of hell, does not make it disappear. It awaits all those who wish to deal with the Creator of all things in their sin without the Savior answering for their sin.

In contrast, we believers in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus have abundant reasons to rejoice. Now we do not rejoice in anticipation of experiencing trials – that would be miserably perverse. As Paul points out to the Corinthians: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ... If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.” But of course, Christ did rise after taking upon Himself all our sin and our death. Therefore we no longer remain in our sins and we have hope even now in the midst of this life looking ahead to the great day of resurrection and life.

Whether Job's wife was an unbeliever or not, we do not know. However she did give him advice after that horrific day of loss and then succumbing to a horrible disease personally, which reflected the hopelessness of unbelief. She said: “Curse God and die.” But Job responded in humble faith in a good and gracious God and said: “Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?”

II

When Jesus was on the cross “the chief priests, with the scribes and elders mocked Him, saying ‘... He trusts in God; let God deliver Him now, if He desires Him. For He said, “I am the Son of God.”” Our Lord was tempted by these religious leaders to curse God when He was under the curse of the Father for your sin. But He did not sin

with His lips or heart. He perfectly fulfilled the will of the Father during that little “*eternal*” while of our grief of sinful condemnation.

In truth, Jesus found inexpressible joy as He was made to suffer for you. The writer of Hebrews encourages us in the midst of our lives of grief to look to Jesus, “the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame.” His joy was found in those precious souls who would trust Him for salvation and join Him in the eternal inheritance of heaven, like the believing thief on the cross, with whom He promised to be in paradise before that day was over. On this special day of remembering our mothers, we heard Jesus in our Gospel reference the grief of labor preceding birth, but how joy is found in the birth.

This is then the source of your inexpressible joy in the midst of your little whiles of grief. For all the times that you not only were tempted to curse under the weight of your grief but actually succumbed with your lips or in your heart, Jesus paid the eternal price for such sins. What is more, Jesus’ perfect righteousness, which enabled Him to live perfectly also in this regard is credited to your account of righteousness. How can you put the joy you have for this full and complete gift of salvation in Christ into words? This is not to say we do not use words of praise, but as we consider these great things our hymns, prayers, creedal expressions reflect our ongoing joy, begun here and continuing into the courts of heaven forever.

Our little whiles of grief can seem like an eternity at times when we are deeply sunk in them in this life. We can look about us and see others virtually oblivious to what we are experiencing. Or worse yet, they can be some of the closest to us who even like Job’s wife who give advice from the perspective of unbelief, from the foreboding pit of defeatism or fatalism. Such voices of temptation to embittered despair can come from our own blood relatives, but also our brothers and sisters in Christ, just as it did for Job.

Just as our Lord calls us to do to others as we would have them do to us, so consider those around you my fellow redeemed. Be aware of their little whiles of grief. Pray and act in their behalf to encourage and uphold. As Paul writes to the Roman Christians: “Love one another with brotherly affection. ... Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. ... Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.” But this not only applies to those select believers you personally like. It is also to be applied to those with whom you personally do not have a close relationship. In truth our Lord even calls us to such lives of love for those who are considered enemies and who may even be unbelievers.

Your joy in Christ Jesus, your Lord, knows no bounds. His blood covers all your sins. His righteousness covers all your unrighteousness. Your little whiles of grief in this life and your neighbors' little whiles of grief have the same antidote of relief and source of unending joy, namely Christ Jesus. He bore all these little "eternal" whiles in full measure when nailed to the cross. Bursting forth from the grave, He now lives to give you this everlasting joy, even though in the meantime you suffer your little whiles of grief. Blessed be the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.