

A Christian's Sorrow

Happy, Happy, Sad, Sad

We are starting the New Year with a quick series on the complexity of human emotions. Specifically, the emotions that should mark a Christian human. And we're using this odd time of year as a metaphor for the *complexity* of those emotions. Because the whole taking down the Christmas decorations, saying goodbye to friends and family, saying hello to a new year...well it can be a bit of an emotional roller coaster. Even the weather this time of year – especially in Texas – it's dark so early, the other night I thought it was bed time, it was 6:30! But then it's been 80 degrees...in January, so I don't know what to do. Happy, happy...sad...sad.

But we've said that's reflective of the emotional life of the Christian – we have sorrow and we have joy. Last week we looked at a famous NT passage to discover the nuances of Christian joy. Today we're going to turn back to the OT to explore a Christian's tears – to talk about sorrow. And I'm going to read you a short – but complete – Psalm this morning, Psalm 126. During the year of the pandemic lockdowns, we had a standing Wednesday morning Zoom prayer meeting in which we would read and discuss a different Psalm each week. And I discovered this one and found it very helpful. Not a

big hype verse – so probably not a big hype sermon – by quietly comforting. I think you'll agree.

So let's give her a read, shall we? **Psalm 126...**

*1 When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion,
we were like men who dreamed.*

*2 Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs of joy.*

*Then it was said among the nations,
"The LORD has done great things for them."*

*3 The LORD has done great things for us,
and we are filled with joy.*

*4 Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like streams in the Negev.*

*5 Those who sow in tears
will reap with songs of joy.*

*6 He who goes out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying the sheaves with him.*

I think in some ways, Psalm 126 is a perfect emotional map for a person who believes in God. It's a picture, an overview, of the emotional life that the walk of faith brings. Now, you know I'm big on context, but in this case, I think the setting doesn't really matter. We read this and say, "When did this happen? What is going on?" We really don't know.

Plenty of people have said, “Oh, verse 1, ‘When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion, we were like ones who dreamed, our mouths were filled with laughter...’” and they say, “Ah, that must be the time in which the Jews who had been exiled in Babylon came back.” Well it doesn’t say that. We don’t really know. There were a number of places where God gave some kind of great military victory to the Jews when they were overwhelmed and it looked like everything was lost. This could be a number of places. The important thing, therefore, is really not the setting. In some ways, we’re *glad* we don’t know when it was. That it doesn’t say when it was, and it really doesn’t matter. The point is, here’s a group of people who are *remembering* a time of deliverance.

See, in verses 1, 2, and 3, they were remembering a time of incredible joy. But they are *experiencing* a time of weeping and sorrow. And the question for us, then, is not “When did this happen?” and so on. The issue is, do we handle our times of weeping, do we *understand* our times of weeping and sorrow, the way they did?

Especially because of these great closing verses, **V.5-6**, “*Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying the sheaves with him.*” It’s a depiction of tears, of sorrow, as an *investment*. Not as a waste, not as a meaningless tragedy, but as an investment.

This is very much a theme of the whole Bible which this Psalm brings out perfectly. What are you *doing* with your tears? What are you *doing* with your sorrows? They need to be sown. They need to be invested. They need to be planted, in a sense, or they need to water. See, the beauty of this is tears are water and water brings life. And water can be channeled and used and deployed in such a way that it brings up fruit and flowers and beautiful things.

Are you wasting your tears? Or are you investing them? Are you using them? *How* are you crying? You’re *going* to weep. In this world, you will weep - you *will* weep. But *how* are you weeping? That’s the question. That’s several versions of the question, but that’s the essential question. Now as we look at the passage, we look at the psalm, and we ask ourselves, “What does this tell us about weeping? What does this tell us about how we’re supposed to address our griefs and our sorrows and so on?” Let me put it in terms of three principles.

Let’s look at the first principle: **The life of faith is a life of both rejoicing and weeping.** The first thing it teaches us - in some ways it’s the most obvious and the simplest, but we had better not rush by it. Let’s take a minute or two on it. The first thing we’re told here is that the life of faith is a life of *both* rejoicing and weeping. This may be obvious, but let’s stay here for a second. The life of faith is a life of *both* rejoicing and weeping.

What does the psalm tell us? The psalm tells us that these people had experienced a *tremendous* act of deliverance of God. The *nations* had heard about it. That's why we're a little curious; we wish we knew what it was. But God had so shown up, God had so come down, God had shown forth His power and His love for His people that all the nations, everyone said, "Boy, their god *is* God." Do you remember the classic ending of *The Ten Commandments* with Yul Brynner? [**10 Commandments :18**]

But you know, that's what the nations were saying. They were saying, "This god *is* God." So whatever it was that they experienced must have been great. And yet, as great as it is, they're in trouble again. See, verses 1–3 is *remembering* the past, and verses 4–6 *experiencing* the present. Verses 1–3 is something in the past, but now verse 4 is where he says, "Restore our fortunes."

Now what's the obvious? No matter how much God does for you in this life, it won't get rid of sorrow. No matter how much God has done for you, He doesn't give you unbroken joy. No matter how much you have laughed in the Lord, you will weep. You *will* weep. Remember we said this is almost like a perfect map of the emotional life of a Christian, the emotional life of a believer? Because look, verses 1–3 are all about joy, and verses 4–6 are all about

sorrow. In a certain sense, it's telling you if you are a believer, you're going to have - like everybody else - joy and sorrow. You're not going to have lots and lots and lots of joy, and just a little teeny bit of sorrow. No, that's not the way it works. You're going to have joy and sorrow. You're going to have a very even-handed life.

But what I really love about it is joy reigns in verses 1–3, right? And in verses 4–6 it's all about tears, and about weeping and about the fact that we need our fortunes restored. Yet in the end, joy has the final word. In other words, if you want to see the emotional map, *quantitatively*, the believer has equal weeping and rejoicing. But *qualitatively*, even through the weeping, in the end joy has the **final word** in your life.

If you're a new Christian, I want you to know your future. Quantitatively, you'll have as much joy as weeping, as much weeping as joy. Qualitatively, there will be a note of joy that can never be put out, a kind of pilot flame. Even when the burner is off, look down in there. It's still burning, so that when the gas does show up, there's a flame again. Look down in your heart. You're a Christian. Even in times of weeping, there's a pilot light of joy. In the end, the joy is always the final note.

But it doesn't mean, now that you're a Christian, now that you're a believer, now it's joy all the time. No. The first principle is the life of faith is a life of *both* rejoicing and weeping. Why? Because we *follow* one who was both a rejoicer and a weeper. We follow one who was both a mourner and a singer. We follow one who, when he decided to begin his ministry, his first miraculous sign, to tell us who he was, was to create massive jugs of premium wine to make a good party better.

Now when you kick off a campaign, you're showing people who you really are. If a candidate for mayor launches their campaign, not at city hall, but at a housing project on the East Side. That's making a statement, isn't it? A statement about their values and priorities. If they give the speech in front of an elementary school, it's meant to show they prioritize education. You know the drill. Well, Jesus is no different. He first comes out, and in his very first sign he's going to show us who he is and what he's about. What does he do? He doesn't raise the dead. He doesn't walk on water. He doesn't heal the sick. He throws a party. John 2, the wedding feast at Cana. Turning water into wine. He throws a party. What does that mean? He is saying, "I come to bring festival joy."

And yet... do a Bible word search sometime and look up words like "weeping", "groaning", "sighing". There's so much in the New Testament that describes Jesus' emotional life like that. Here's the one who is the great exalter, he's the great singer, he's the one who throws a party to show you what he's really about. And yet you read through his life, and he's a man of sorrows, he's acquainted with grief, and his own life is a mixture of this great joy and this tremendous sorrow. It tells us in **Hebrews 12:2** - why did Jesus go through the sorrow? "*Who for the joy set before him endured the cross...*" So that's the first thing. The life of faith is one of *both* weeping and rejoicing.

Now the next principle, the second principle, is not as obvious. It's a little more surprising. And that is **the life of faith is a life of greater rejoicing and greater weeping**. This passage indicates, and the Bible teaches, the life of faith is a life of *higher* joy and *deeper* sorrow than you had before. Let me put it in a nutshell. When you become a Christian, you do not become a happier person than you were before. I mean, you *are* that, but more than that. You become both happier *and* sadder than you were before. The life of faith is a life of *greater* rejoicing and weeping. For example, look right in the passage. Right here in the passage, you can see one of the reasons they're weeping so badly in verses 4–6 is *because* of what God's done before.

See, there's a cynical approach to pain and suffering. What if they really didn't know there was a God? I just read a book by the great Polish Nobel laureate, Czesław Miłosz, in which he talks about surviving as a dissident writer under both Nazi and Communist fascism. And he tells the true stories of his colleagues who didn't make it, he gives them alias' like "Beta" who turned to nihilism as a coping mechanism. "Beta is a nihilist in his stories, but by that I do not mean that he is amoral. On the contrary, his nihilism results from an ethical passion, from disappointed love of the world and of humanity. He wants to go to the limit in describing what he saw; he wants to depict with complete accuracy, a world in which there is no longer any place for indignation." (The Captive Mind, 12)

We probably know people like this now. The experience of suffering has caused them to believe that basically life stinks. And as a result, in cynicism, you wouldn't be weeping; you'd say, "Suck it up. That's just life. Don't cry over spilt milk." But that's not what the subjects of this Psalm do. *They* know. God *has* come through for them in the past.

And it's the experience of salvation that makes their weeping a lot greater. If you read the Scripture, you will see over and over, the Bible says that when you become a Christian you don't only become happier but also sadder, and pretty much at the same time. That's how you know the difference between your emotional life before and after belief, before and after conversion.

Now let me leave the joy part behind. We should know that. That's obvious. If you are a Christian, when you become a Christian, you now know something you didn't know before: God is your God, and God is in your life, and God loves you, and God accepts you, and all that. See, that's obvious. But you're saying, "Now wait a minute. What do you mean by saying the gospel and faith actually make you *sadder*?"

Well, in the Old Testament and the New Testament there's an extremely interesting theme. It comes up several times. Let me just quote you one place where it shows up. In **Ezekiel 11:19**, God says, "...*I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a new heart of flesh.*" He says that also in Ezekiel 36. Paul talks about it. He talks about the fact that when the Spirit comes in, it writes the law of God not on the stone but on the tablets of your heart. It takes away your heart of stone and turns it into a heart of flesh.

Now what does that mean? It means a lot, but here's one of the things it means. It means that salvation does not just make your heart a happier heart - it does, but that's not all. Salvation will make your heart *more of a heart.* It will not just make it feel happier; it will make it *feel*. It will make it feel more deeply. It will make you feel, and *able* to feel. It melts your heart. It melts your heart from the ice...from the stone.

It makes you sensitive. It makes your heart more of a heart. It's not a heart of stone. The heart before you experience the love of God *compared* to the heart after, that's the idea - compared to the heart after, your heart before was rock hard. It was less feeling. It was more callous. It was filled with defense mechanisms. It was filled with all sorts of ways in which you kept out things that should make and did make the only perfect human heart in the history of the world weep.

Why was Jesus always weeping? Why do you think he was always crying? Because he was perfect. Because he was more loving than us. Because he was more compassionate than us. Because he was more sensitive to God's heart than us. Because he had higher aspirations for people than we do. And the more perfect you get, the more you're going to weep. It's only natural. Do you see that?

For example, before you were a Christian, you had moral standards. Of course you did. And when you broke your moral standard, you felt bad. And when you break your moral standards now – and as a Christian, you still will from time to time – you also feel bad. But here's the difference. Before, when you blew it, when you broke a law, when you told a lie, when you did something like that, you would kick yourself, you'd be mad at yourself, because you broke a rule.

After you become a Christian, if you understand the gospel, if you understand now that your relationship with God is not merely, "I'm the subject; He's the king," or "I'm the employee; He's the boss," but "I'm the child, and He's the Father, and through my great brother Jesus Christ, at infinite cost, He has brought me into His family, and He loves me with an everlasting love. God sent His son and paid an incredible cost to make me holy," now when you lie, you haven't just broken a rule; you've broken a heart. You've broken *the* heart. You're going to weep. You're not just going to kick yourself. Your heart is melted now. See?

Or when you look at people around you, before you were a Christian, you had no idea really what people could be. You had no idea what joy they could experience. You had no idea. But because now you've experienced it, you'll never look at people again the same way. You *know* what they could be. You know when you see hurting people, what they could be experiencing. So like Jesus, you'll be weeping over them in ways you weren't before.

Years ago I read a life-altering book on the nature of sin by Cornelius Plantinga. He titled it “*Not the Way it’s Supposed to Be*” – I think about that often. Maybe you think that’s pretty obvious, but you know when you become a Christian, instead of looking around and saying, “That’s life. You know, that’s people. That’s the way things are.” Do you know what that is? That’s the way of the cynic. That’s a way of hardening your heart so you don’t care.

But now you know what God sees, and what God wants. And you know what people *could* be, and you know what the world *should* be. And you’re going to weep. So the second principle, and it’s a very, very important principle, is that not only is the life of faith a life of *both* rejoicing and of sorrow, of tears, it’s a life of *greater* rejoicing...and it’s a life of greater tears. Do you have a heart like that? Think about that. Is that happening to you? Do you weep more?

By the way, guys in particular, you know, we’re taught not to weep. My earthly father used to say to me, “Keep it up and I’ll *give* you something to cry about.” My Heavenly Father says, “Keep it up. Look how much I’ve given you to cry about.” How long have you been a Christian? Do you weep more? That’s one good sign that you’re really a Christian. Have you gotten over the defense mechanisms? Have you gotten over the hardness of heart?

Now I’m not trying to leave women out here, but I’m just saying guys in particular, it’s very noticeable. In some ways, I would say women, when you become a Christian, you weep new kinds of tears. It’s not self-pity tears. It’s tears of repentance, tears of aspirations for people, tears of service, all the tears of Jesus. But for us guys, in some cases, we’re going to start weeping for the first time, *period*. It’s a good sign. Are you weeping? Is there more sorrow?

That’s the second principle. But the third principle is the weirdest of all. And it’s here. In fact, in some ways it may be the *only* place in the Old Testament that it’s here. It points to the New. The first principle we said was the life of faith is a life of *both* rejoicing and weeping. And secondly, we said the life of faith is a life of *greater* rejoicing and greater weeping. But the third principle is...

The life of faith is a life of *interdependent* rejoicing and weeping. In other words, the joy *produces* the tears, and the tears *produce* the joy. Derek Kidner wrote a great commentary on Psalms that I have been using for decades. And he talks about this great insight that you find several places in the Psalms. For instance, in **Psalm 30:5**, you have this very famous phrase: “*Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.*”

And Kidner says you see that many times in the Old Testament, that if you're a believer, what this is saying is sorrow gives way to joy. You may have sorrow, but if you believe in God, in the end you'll have joy. Sorrow is temporary; joy is permanent. Sorrow gives way to joy. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning. He says you're going to find that in many places in the OT.

But, he says, the New Testament gives us something more amazing, more profound, more shocking. He says the New Testament goes beyond the Old Testament, because the New Testament does not just say, for a believer, that sorrow gives way to joy. The New Testament goes so far as to say the most odd and most radical thing, and that is sorrow produces joy for the Christian. In the gospel, through the gospel, through Jesus Christ, sorrow *produces* joy.

Now the classic place where that's mentioned (though there are many places) is **2 Corinthians 4:17**, where Paul says, "*For our light and momentary troubles are **achieving** for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*" That's the NIV. The old KJV said "produces". It's the same thing. It doesn't just say sorrows will give way to joy; the sorrows are *producing* the joy. They're *creating* the joy. They're *achieving* the joy. This is amazing! Now how could it be?

And of course, Kidner says there would be no way anybody in any philosophy, in any religion, in the Old Testament, nobody would know that until you see Jesus, because when you look at Jesus Christ, he was the man of incredible sorrows. He was in pain. He was rejected. He was tortured. He was killed. He sorrowed like no one has ever sorrowed. The cross is the pinnacle of human suffering.

But his sorrows didn't just *give way* to joy; his sorrows *produced* the joy. His sorrows produced the glory. His sorrows *were* the redeeming way that opened the door for the joy and the glory. His, not slight and momentary, but his *eternal* afflictions produced an eternal weight of glory for us.

And if that's true, then there must be some way in which the pattern remains with us. That if you know and understand these things, and if you're careful with your sorrow, your sorrow doesn't just give way to joy; it will produce joy. It will achieve it. Now Kidner says the only place in the Old Testament he knows where this is brought out is here. The only place in the Old Testament that points to the New Testament is our text this morning.

Because Psalm 126 doesn't just say, "Don't worry, weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning." What does it say? It says, (v.5) "*Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.*" The tears are watering something. The tears are producing something. The tears are not just giving way to joy. The tears are producing joy.

And what's so incredible is the little word "will". Now there is almost no way for me to address all the ways in which it works, but what I really want you to understand is that it does. Twice he says, "Those who sow in tears *will* reap with songs of joy." "He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, *will* return..."

There is no doubt, even though the psalmist grants that there are variations in how God works this out, because you see in **verse 4** it says, "*Restore our fortunes, LORD, like streams in the Negev.*" Do you know what streams in the Negev are? The Negev was a terrible, terrible desert. And there are all sorts of riverbeds.

If you're a newcomer to the Negev desert, you go through and you say, "What a terrible place! How barren! How fruitless this place is!" And you see all these riverbeds, and you think these must be ancient riverbeds; once they were great rivers. No, no. Because once in a while, there will be storms in the

mountains. And everything can change. And almost overnight the desert is turned into a garden. There's greenery, and flowers can spring up overnight.

And the psalmist is saying, "This is how we want you to work. With all due respect, we ask that our grief will go away, that our problems will go away, that our difficulties will go away. We pray that you will come down in some great way, the way you did once. Everybody will see the salvation of God. We ask you would wipe everything away."

But in verses 5 and 6 it says, "However, this is what we do know: that if you keep us in times of weeping, there *will* be joy. It may be the fast kind. It may be the slow kind. It may be a sudden waterworks in the desert, or it may be that all we're going to do is painstakingly and slowly be irrigating the land with our tears. But we will have sheaves. There will be a harvest."

This is a remarkable thing. See I know some of you have had very hard lives for a very long time, and you say, "What's going on? I've seen other people who have been real messed up, and they've come to God and there have been streams in the Negev for them. I mean, things have just happened, and they've found this and they've found that, and their lives have turned around. What's going on with me?"

But you see, the Bible is so realistic. The Bible says, “You *will* rejoice. There *will* be sheaves. It may be fast. It may be slow. But don’t waste your sorrows. If you sow your tears, you will reap. It *will* happen. Joy will be the final note in your life. It will be the final word in your life.” Well, the question is, *how*? How could that be? How is it possible? How is it possible that, as I tried to say, the joy and sorrow are interdependent? Gospel joy produces deeper sorrow, but gospel sorrow produces deeper joy. Let me just give you a few ideas.

First of all, how does gospel joy produce sorrow? Now I already said that before. I said the gospel produces sorrow. Let me briefly show you what I mean. First of all, gospel joy means you will be **repenting more often**. There will be more tears of repentance. And here’s why. Before you become a Christian, you will believe - you *must* believe - “Basically, the reason my friends love me, the reason my family loves me, and the reason God will love me is that I’m a good person.” And therefore, there’s a psychological limit to what you can admit about your own flaws.

Very, very, quickly, you screen out, you deny, you completely minimize just how selfish you are, how cowardly you are, how angry you are. You can’t admit it. It’s psychological *death* to admit it, because

you just don’t have the framework for it. You don’t have the ability for it. You couldn’t *possibly* admit that. You would just as soon throw yourself off a bridge if you were really as bad as that.

But if you’re a Christian, if you understand the gospel - and the gospel is *not* that Jesus Christ came to show us how to live and die for God, though he did, but that’s not the primary thing - Jesus came to live the life we should have lived and die the death we should have died - as our Substitute, as our Mediator, as our Savior - so that when we believe in him, all of that is transferred to us and we are completely loved.

And therefore, after you become a Christian, no discovery of your flaws now can undermine your self-worth. You have such assurance of love in the gospel that you can admit many things that before you never could have admitted, and as a result, gospel joy enables you to repent in ways you didn’t repent. And if you understand the gospel, you will be repenting much more quickly than you were before, and it won’t be bitter, it won’t be horrible. Before, repentance is like having the breathe knocked out of you, and after Christianity comes and the gospel comes, repentance is like breathing deeply.

If you have enough joy, you'll be repenting all the time. When you get into a fight, the first thing you'll do is say, "What's wrong with me? Where's my self-centeredness? Where's my selfishness? Where are my flaws? What am I doing here?" When there's a problem, instead of blaming other people and pushing everywhere else, if you have that deep assurance, you will be weeping in repentance much, much more than you were before. Joy produces sorrow.

But then - think about this - it's the sorrow of repentance that produces a joy you've never had before. Every time you repent, you get free. If you come to SWFF, one thing you're hearing all the time is that Christianity frees you from idols. Isn't that right? If you've been coming here for any length of time, you've heard me say that in various ways.

The gospel is that before you really rested in Christ as Savior, you looked to other things to save you. You looked to relationships, or you looked to achievement, or you looked to status, or you looked to approval, you looked to power, you looked to control, you looked to comfort. You looked to *something*.

Ah, but when you made Christ your salvation, you're *free* from those things. *His* approval frees you from needing other approval. *His* wealth frees you from needing to work too much and make money. Putting Jesus at the center frees you from having any other idols there. You say, "Well yeah, theoretically."

I mean, if we made a mixer question, "Find three people and tell them the biggest potential idols in your life." If you've been around the faith long - and you've done even a bare minimum of self-introspection - you could probably do it.

But are you free? See, it's pretty much theoretical...until you weep. When you're weeping, and *only* when you're weeping - because something has gone wrong in your life - you can say, "Why am I weeping?" You say, "One of the reasons I'm weeping is I value Jesus so little. Jesus' love is not that much of a consolation to me. Jesus' honor is not that much of a consolation to me."

And when you start to repent for loving Jesus too little, what happens is his love comes in and there's a new joy, a new joy of freedom. The more *dependent* you are on Jesus, the more *independent* you will be of everything else in the world. You'll be independent of what other people think. You'll be independent of what other people say. You'll be independent of circumstances.

This is why I try to make sure every sermon comes back around to Jesus. Because the more completely dependent you are on him, the more independent and free you will be. And the only way that comes is through the tears of repentance and the tears of, when you suffer, turning and repenting of lack of love for him. Every time you're disappointed, every time you're upset, *every time*...it's the sorrow that produces the joy. You're sowing, and up will come fruit. You see?

Or one more. When, because of the gospel, you have this tremendous assurance of God's love. You're going to stick your neck out, and you're going to talk to people about things they don't want to hear. This is another reason joy produces the sorrow, but then the sorrow produces the joy. Joy produces sorrow in that the gospel assurance will, for the first time, make you willing to stick your neck out and get involved in people's lives even though it's messy.

Do you know how many times Paul says, "I admonish you with tears; I warn you with tears; I speak to you with tears"? Why is Paul crying? I'll tell you why he's crying. Because it's very hard to go to people you love and tell them things they're not going to like. It's extremely hard to see them growl at you. It's extremely hard to have them argue with you. It's extremely hard to see that they're not happy with what you're saying.

Paul is a pastor. And every pastor – at least every *good* pastor – knows the pain of speaking a hard truth and having people you love leave the church over it. So of course that's the reason he's crying. But the question is, why is he doing it? Why not just go along and get along. Why rock the boat? Why not just avoid controversial topics and preach on happy, innocuous platitudes?

And the answer is, because Paul no longer is a slave to what the people think. The gospel pushes him out so that he's always crying, because he's in the ministry. Look, the joy of the gospel *produces* repentance you didn't have before, yet the repentance produces greater joy. See? The joy of the gospel produces ministry involvement, which produces all sorts of tears. But the tears will bring incredible joy. There is nothing better than seeing God work in somebody else's life through you.

Don't you see? "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy." These people are weeping more than they would have. They're weeping because of the joy of verses 1–3, but there's going to be incredible joy because of the weeping. Therefore, the third principle is the life of faith is a life not just *both* of rejoicing and weeping, and of *greater* rejoicing and weeping, but *interdependent* rejoicing and weeping. It's gospel joy that produces gospel tears, and then gospel tears produce deeper gospel joy. And that's what it means to live a Christian life...because of the Lord.

When we suffer, and when we're in trouble, we tend to say, "Why me? Why me, Lord?" Now after you become a Christian, you spend some time looking at Jesus on the cross, and you realize when Jesus was on the cross, he asked, "Why me?" But you know, when *you* ask, "Why me? Why did I break my leg? Why did I lose that job? Why did this bad thing happen to me? Why have I lost my friend? Why did my loved one die?" You ask "Why me?" and there's no answer. But Jesus Christ one day called out into the heaven, "Why me? Why have you forsaken me?"

We know the answer. For *you*. He suffered an unjust death so that you could be redeemed. And when you've seen the answer to Jesus' "Why me?" you'll never ask "Why me?" in quite the same way, because you'll say, "I have no idea why I'm going through this, but *if* the Person who runs the universe was willing to die for me, then I know there's some way in which my tears, if I weep them looking at him, repenting, if I weep looking to him on the cross, knowing what he did for me, then my tears will be sowing."

You'll say, "They're seed, in a sense. My tears are like the tiny acorn that contains the whole tree. If I shed them faithfully, and if I weep looking at Jesus and repenting and loving him and grabbing hold of him...greatness, joy, *will* come. I *will* come back with those sheaves."

This is a warning. This is comforting. This is it. You notice I hardly ever raised my voice. This isn't the kind of psalm that makes you raise your voice. It's the kind of psalm that makes you think, makes you reflect, makes you say, "Teach me to weep, Jesus, like you have wept, so that I can rejoice like you have rejoiced."

Let's pray...