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# “Weeping Over Sorrow”

*“And following Him was a large crowd of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him. But Jesus turning to them said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children’” (Luke 23:27, 28).*

Three prisoners—two thieves and Jesus—were going out to die early on a Friday morning. They walked in a kind of procession to the place of execution. A crowd made up of Passover visitors and Jerusalem residents gathered to watch the accused and the Roman soldiers pass by. Many followed behind them to watch the crucifixion at Golgotha.

This procession must have been a pitiable sight. The bravest and strongest who watched it go by must have cringed at the thought of what was about to happen to the accused ones when they arrived at their destination. The procession was made up of three prisoners who were surrounded by four soldiers. Two of the criminals trudged the entire distance with crossbeams on their shoulders. The rough beams that they carried would eventually be their deathbeds. The third man, the Son of God, weak and beleaguered, staggered along in front of the man who had been pressed into the duty of carrying His cross. Jesus, unable to continue, had been relieved of His cross as the group approached or passed through the gate of the city. A man named Simon, who must have been visiting from Cyrene, had been compelled to carry His cross for Him.

Shortly after Simon began the task of helping Jesus with His cross, a group of women from Jerusalem began to follow along behind them, weeping and lamenting for Jesus. Perhaps there was also mourning for the others who were to die. For a moment, Jesus stopped. He looked at them and told them not to weep for Him. His suffering would be excruciating, but

He spoke of another time of suffering—a time in the future—that would call forth more of their tears. In tones of disaster and judgment, He told them to weep for themselves and for their city, which had rejected the message of salvation. This city that had been chosen by God would become the focal point of the greatest tragedy of all. It was going to be rejected by God and would face total destruction.

In the actions of these women and in Jesus’ words to them, we see three different types of weeping over sorrow. All three are types of weeping that citizens of this world must know and endure.

*First, we see a weeping over sorrow that arises out of sympathy.* The women wept out of sorrow for what was about to happen to Jesus and the other two men who were on their way to be crucified.

They knew what crucifixion was like. They could envision the pain, agony, and horrible suffering that awaited these men. Their mode of departure from this world was no longer a question. They would die in one of the worst possible ways that anyone could die; they would leave this world in the awful suffering of crucifixion. The women’s hearts went out to these prisoners. They wept over the pain that the three men were facing.

Part of the human experience is for tender hearts to weep over the sorrow of others. Hardly anyone lives long in this world before he finds himself weeping with those who weep. Whoever has eyes that see will observe heartache, physical trauma, death, poverty, and

sufferings of all kinds that will pull sympathy from the heart and tears from the eyes.

*Second, there appears in this situation an entirely different kind of weeping, a weeping over sorrow that is colored with coming joy.* It is amazing but true. Hebrews 5:7 describes Jesus as weeping in the garden with “loud crying,” yet Hebrews 12:2 says that He endured the cross and despised its shame because of “the joy” that was set before Him. No one can imagine the sorrow and pain that He must have felt as He approached the cross, but He faced it strengthened by the joy that He saw in the salvation that would be made available, through His death, to those who would respond in faith and obedience to Him. He endured it all through a high and holy anticipation. Even through the pain, He could see the eternal life that all of His suffering would provide.

We also know this type of weeping. A mother experiences these tears when she enters the pain of childbirth. She is sustained in her pain by the joyful anticipation of holding her newborn baby. The person who must undergo a difficult operation in order to regain normal health chooses to experience pain because of the joy he sees beyond it. He agrees to have the discomfort of the operation because he looks to the new life that it will bring him. On a much higher level, one comes to know this joy when he voluntarily undergoes a severe sacrifice so that others might be blessed. He smiles in the midst of his pain because he can see the help that his suffering will provide for others.

*Third, there is a weeping over sorrow that is connected with the rejection of God.* Jesus referred the weeping women to the future fall of Jerusalem. It would cause a sorrow that only the rejection of God and His Son can bring. The suffering about which Jesus warned would involve even women and children. It would be so severe that the natural desire for motherhood would be curtailed and a blessing would be pronounced upon those who did not have children. “Why bring children into the world to experience such a calamity as this?” people would say. The depth of the tragedy is seen in

its hopelessness. When it came, people would seek refuge from it by calling upon the mountains and hills to fall over them and kill them.

The physical death of Jesus would involve one of the greatest periods of suffering that anyone can imagine; but Jesus understood that there is something worse. He implicitly said, “If this suffering happens to someone who is innocent, what do you think will happen to someone who is guilty?” Jesus’ suffering was great, but the worst type of suffering will come upon those who reject the Lord’s salvation so that their souls enter into eternal death.

The hottest and most profuse tears will come from the tragedy of rejecting God. These tears are associated with the “weeping and gnashing of teeth” that will occur in the outer darkness into which the condemned are thrown (see Matthew 8:12; 22:13).

In this conversation between Jesus and the wailing women, three types of weeping are evident: the weeping arising from sympathy, the weeping that is tempered with coming joy, and the weeping that results from rejecting God. Let us weep with those who weep; but let us weep with hope in spite of our sufferings, knowing the joy of our future glory. Above all, let us resolve anew that we will live in God so that no one will have to weep over our loss of the salvation which our dear Lord died to give us.

Eddie Cloer



*Jesus did not come into the world to remove all sorrow from it. He came into this world of woe, suffered even as we do, and went to the cross to sacrifice Himself as an atonement for every sin that the human race has committed. His living and dying in this world did not remove suffering from it, but His sacrifice and His example enable us to live the abundant life in the midst of the struggles that we experience and to have eternal life in the world to come.*