Lamentations - Commentaries by John Thomas Mawson

Scripture Truth: Volume 1, Joys of the Man of Sorrows, The

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“Behold, and see If there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, where with the Lord has afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger!” (Lam. 1:12).

It is precious for us, as we think of the Lord Jesus in the midst of contempt and rejection while here on earth, to learn somewhat of those things which gave deep joy to His heart, and which sustained Him in that pathway. Let us look at a few of them.

1. Doing the Father’s Will

“Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God” (Psa. 40:7-8).

“I came down from Heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me” (John 6:38).

“I do always those things that please Him” (John 8:29).

Here was the motive that led Him to leave His glorious heavenly abode, and become a homeless Stranger in this sinful world, and to suffer, bleed and die. He delighted to do the Father’s will.

2. Seeking and Saving the Lost

In carrying out the will of God, our blessed Savior found special joy in seeking and saving lost sinners. When, at 30 years of age, He emerged from His long retirement in the humble domestic circle of Nazareth, and entered upon His public service and testimony, He at once identified Himself with the movement so distinctly “of heaven,” evidenced in that wonderful revival in the land, which led to multitudes of convicted sinners wending their way from every quarter down to Jordan, to hear the preaching of John the Baptist, calling them to repentance, and declaring the knowledge of salvation by the remission of ‘their sins.

Mark well, this was the Lord’s first appearance to the world; and this, His first public act, is in the highest degree significant, as intentionally demonstrating in what direction lay His interests and His sympathies. Not with the mighty, the wise, and the noble, not with the self-righteous and the self-satisfied, but with the poor, the brokenhearted, the captive of sin, the blind and the bruised, as His first sermon, given us in the next chapter (Luke 4) expressly declares.

And how magnificent is the joyful outburst of responsive delight with which the Father, from the opened heaven, acclaims Him, as He beholds Him thus engaged; while at the same moment the Holy Spirit descends upon Him, and the voice is heard, “Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22).

Later on, when publicans and sinners, attracted by His grace, drew near to hear Him, and the Pharisees taunted Him, saying, “this man receiveth sinners,” we are permitted to hear His defense.

“What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it upon his shoulder, rejoicing” (Luke 15:4-5).

He was the Shepherd, who, finding His sheep, layeth it upon His shoulders rejoicing; nor does He rejoice alone, for, when He cometh home, He calleth His friends and His neighbors together, saying unto them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.”

And do we not remember what Jesus said to His disciples, when they found Him without food after His interview with the poor outcast at the well of Sychar? “Master, eat,” they say to Him; to which He replied, “I have meat to eat that ye know not of.” How these precious words let us into a little of the deep sweet joy He had in bringing salvation and living water to one unhappy soul I Reader, are you altogether a stranger to such joys?

3. Revealing the Father

But it was not only in the seeking and the saving of the lost, that He found joy, but also in that which is connected with their subsequent spiritual enlargement and growth.

In one of the darkest periods of His earthly pathway, when His dear servant John the Baptist, wearied with long imprisonment, had begun to doubt Him, as shown in the question sent to Him, “Art Thou he that should come, or do we look for another?”; when cities where most of His mighty works were done, repented not; when He was denounced as a gluttonous man and a winebibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners; when all things looked dark and forbidding and sorrows pressed hard on His loving heart; could He then find any joy? Hark!

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, “I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight.”

“All things are delivered to Me of My Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him.”

And He turned Him unto His disciples, and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see.” (Luke 10:21-23).

Now what was it that gave Him joy in that dark hour?

There was, on the one hand, the intimacy and communion in which He Himself ever walked with His Father, which no adverse influence could touch; and, on the other, the joy of knowing that the gracious work of bringing others — the “babes” — into this intimacy was unhindered — a work in which He and His Father were one. Babes, if they know but little else, “know the Father,” and this is, after all, to know very much. But, mark, Jesus rejoiced that these blessed things were revealed to babes, while the wise and prudent of this world remained in darkness as to them. And He rejoices still that you and I should know His Father as our Father, and His God as our God, and that we should nestle closely in His bosom. What a sweet and peaceful retreat amid the storms and stress of this poor world! Reader, do you know anything of this joy, which Jesus knew to the full?

4. Seeking a Bride for Himself

But, if it were possible, the Lord has still a deeper joy in finding the treasure, which lay hid in the field (i.e. the world), “which,” to quote the passage, when he “hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field” (Matt. 13:44). This treasure, which the Lord saw hid in the world, was the Church, which is formed of all His redeemed ones since the day of Pentecost, and baptized by one Spirit into one body. It is to Him a treasure so great, that, for the joy of securing it, He shed His life’s blood, and bought the field; and, as the next parable indicates, the Church was to Him as the pearl of great price was to the merchantman, who, to secure it, went and sold all that he had and bought it. So the blessed Lord has not only bought the world for the sake of the treasure, but He has redeemed us to Himself by His blood, that He might win the Church for Himself forever.

And fast the moments are speeding us on to the time, when His chiefest joy will no longer be a prospective one, but He shall come to claim His Church, which is His Bride, for she, next to His Father, has the deepest place in His heart. Long before time began to run its course — before all worlds — the Father gave the Church to Jesus, as tilt: great expression of His love to Him. She is the object of the purposes and counsels of God, from all eternity, and is destined to be for the delight and glory of Christ forever and forever.

When the rebellion of Adam’s race culminated in the murder of the Son of God, proving, its hopelessness and resulting in its condemnation, God began, by the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven at Pentecost, to form the Church, gathering those who form it, out of the world by the gospel, and uniting them to the exalted Christ as their Head.

It is of the Church, made up of every redeemed one, that it is written:

“Christ also loved the Church, and gave Him self for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Eph. 5:25-27)

He has been nourishing and cherishing her, as His own body, throughout her sad and lengthened history, but soon He will come — the day of His patience over: and with a shout of joy — the glad enrapturing shout of hope fulfilled — He will descend from heaven and claim her as His Bride. Then, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be raised, and the living, changed into His likeness, shall meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:16-17); and He will take the Church into her destined place in the Father’s house in heavenly glory, to be forever with the Lord. Hallelujah I May God stir up His saints to more fully realize the love and longing of the Lord for them, so that, when He says, “Surely I come quickly,” the glad response of their hearts may be “Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

5. The World to Come

Hebrews 12:2, speaks of yet another joy:

“Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

This, I judge, embraces all that the Lord Jesus was to enter upon as the result of His resurrection from the dead, and His being exalted as Man to the right hand of God, to become the center of the universe — all that which the assembly of the first-born ones, the spirits of just men made perfect (Old Testament saints), the angelic hosts, restored Israel, and the universal gathering (Heb. 12:22-23), will, each in their respective ways and spheres, contribute to, in the “dispensation of the fullness of times,” when everything in heaven and earth will be headed up in the Lord Jesus Christ. But who could limit “the joy that was set before Him?” May it not look on further still to the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and where God shall be all in all?

6. The Rewarding of His Servants

But the Lord will have yet a further joy in rewarding those, who have been faithful to Him in His absence. After the rapture of the saints, there will be the manifestation in glory of all, and “every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor” “whether it has been good or bad” (1 Cor. 3:8-15; 2 Cor. 5:10); and glad shall we all be to see burned up everything which did not meet with His approval. But all that has been the result of love to Him will stand, even though it be but a “cup of cold water” given for His dear Name’s sake, sand we may be sure that the reward at the loving hands of our blessed Master — who always magnified, beyond recognition, the little service of His poor disciples — will altogether exceed our highest expectations.

Happy indeed will it be for those who are privileged to hear from His lips the inspiriting words, “Well done, good and faithful servant:... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”... (Matt. 25:21). It is the Lord’s own joy that the servant is called to enter.

May each dear servant be found: at his post, seeking more earnestly to live to Him, until that bright day when we shall hear His shout calling us Home.

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