

## Christian Grief

Charles H. Spurgeon

*"We grieve, but not as those who have no hope."* The exhortation here is delicately hinted at – that the sorrow of bereaved Christians for their Christian friends ought not to be at all like the sorrow of unconverted persons for their ungodly relatives. We are not forbidden to sorrow: "Jesus wept." The gospel does not teach us to be Stoics; we ought to weep for it was intended that the rod should be felt otherwise we could not "hear the rod, and who hath appointed it." If we did not feel the stroke when our friends were taken away, we should prove ourselves worse than heathen men and publicans. God's grace does not take away our sensibilities, it only refines them and in some degree restrains the violence of their expression. Still, there ought to be some difference between the sorrow of the righteous and the sorrow of the wicked.

First, *there should be a difference in its vehemence.* It may be natural to the unbridled passions of an ungodly man, who has lost his wife, to tear his hair, to throw himself upon the bed, to clutch the body, to declare it shall not be buried, to rave through the house, cursing God, and saying all manner of hard things of his dispensations; but that would not do for a Christian. He must not murmur. A Christian man may stand and weep; he may kiss the dear cold hand for the last time and rain showers of tears on the lifeless body while "pity swells the tide of love." But God and his religion demand that he should say, after doing this, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." He may weep – he ought to. He may sorrow – he ought to. He may wear the habiliments of mourning – God forbid that we should ever believe in any religion which should proscribe our showing some outward signs of sorrow for our friends! Yet we may not, and we must not, weep as others weep. We must not always carry the red and tearful eye; we must not always take with us the face that is downcast and distressed; if we do, the world will say of us that our conduct belies our profession, and our feelings are at variance with our faith.

Again, there is another thing we must never allow to enter into our grief – *the least degree of repining.* A wicked man, when he sorrows for those who are gone without hope, not unfrequently murmurs against God. But it is far otherwise with the Christian: he meekly bows his head, and says, "Thy will, O God, be done." The Christian must still acknowledge the same gracious hand of God, whether it be stretched forth to give or to take away. The language of his faith is, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; though he should take all away, yet will I not repine." I do not say that all Christian persons are able to maintain such a cheerful submission of spirit. I only say that they ought, and that such is the tendency of the Christian religion; and if they had more of the Spirit of God within their hearts that would be their habitual disposition. We may sorrow, beloved, but not with repining. There must be resignation mixed with the regret. There must be the yielding up, even with grateful acquiescence, that which God asks for, seeing we believe that he doth but take what is his own.

And now, there is just one further observation. I do believe that, *when the Christian sorrows, he ought to be as glad as he is sorrowful.* Put thy sadness in one scale and thy gladness in the other scale; then see if the reasons for praise be not as weighty as the reasons for grief. Then thou wilt say, "She is gone; there is a tear for her. She is in heaven; there is a smile for her. Her body is with the worms; weep, eyes. Her soul is with Jesus; shout, ye lips, ay, shout for

joy. The cold sod hath covered her, she is gone from my sight, she sleeps in the sad, sad grave; bring me the habiliments of mourning. No, she is before the throne of God and the Lamb, blest for aye; lend me a harp, and let me thank my God she hath joined the white-robed host on yonder blessed plains. O hearse and funeral, O shroud and garments of woe, ye are most fitting for her! I have lost her, and she herself, with many a pang and struggle, hath passed through the valley of the shadow of death; but O joyous face! O songs of gladness! O shouts of rapture! ye are equally becoming! — for when she passed through the valley of the shadow of death, she did fear no evil, for thy rod and thy staff did comfort her. Now, beyond the reach of death's alarms, she doth bathe her soul in seas of bliss; she is with her Lord." It is well to have a little singing as well as weeping at a funeral; it well becomes the burial of the saints. Angels never weep when saints die; they sing. You never heard a saint say when he was dying, "There are angels in the room; hark! you can hear them sobbing, because I am dying." No; but we have often heard a saint say, "There are angels in the room, and I can hear them singing." That is because angels are wiser than we are. We judge by the sight of our eyes and the hearing of our ears; but angels judge after another fashion. They "see and hear and know" the joys of the blest and therefore they have no tears, but they have songs for them, and they sing loudly when the Christian is carried home, like a shock of corn fully ripe.

*And now, beloved, we shall soon all of us die.* In a few more years, I shall have a gravestone above my grave. Some of you, hope, will say, "There lies our minister, who once gathered us together in the house of God and led us to the mercy-seat, and joined in our song. There lies one who was often despised and rejected of men, but whom God did nevertheless bless to the salvation of our souls, and sealed his testimony in our hearts and consciences by the operation of the Holy Ghost." Perhaps some of you will visit my tomb, and will bring a few flowers to scatter on it, in glad and grateful remembrance of the happy hours we spent together. It is quite as probable that your tombs will be built as soon as mine. Ah, dear friends! should we have to write on your tombstones, "She sleeps in Jesus," "He rests in the bosom of his Master," or should we have to speak the honest truth, "He has gone to his own place?" Which shall it be? Ask yourselves, each one of you, where will your soul be? Shall it mount up there,

*"Where our best friends, our kindred, dwell,  
Where God our Savior reigns;" —*

or

*"Shall devils plunge you down to hell,  
In infinite despair?"*

You can ascertain which it will be; you can tell it by this: Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you love the Lord Jesus? Do you stand on Christ, the solid rock? Have you built your hope of heaven alone on him? Have you, as a guilty sinner, cast yourself at his mercy-seat, looking to his blood and righteousness, to be saved by them, and by them alone? If so, fear not to die; ye shall be safe, whenever the summons comes to you. But if not, tremble, tremble! You may die tomorrow — you must die one day. It will be a sad thing so to die as to be lost beyond recovery. May God Almighty grant that we may be all saved at last, for Jesus' sake! Amen.