

OVERCOMING DEPRESSION

“Sorrowful unto Death”

Introduction-

Song “The Joy of the Lord Is my Strength”

I. The Joy of the Lord

Though Jesus was certainly serious, this does not mean that His general demeanor was melancholy or somber. His cheerfulness and joyfulness is evidenced by the testimony of the gospels.

Matt 4:23

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, **preaching the good news** of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. NIV

Not only did Jesus preach the good news, He was the good news. What does the Scripture tell us about the affect of good news on the hearers?

Prov 15:30

A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones. NIV

Prov 25:25 “Like cold water to a weary soul is good news from a distant land.” NIV

To say the least, His appearance was refreshing! John the Baptist testified of the joy the Lord brought.

John 3:28-30

28 You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.'

29 The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and **is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice**. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.

30 He must become greater; I must become less. NIV

One of the most joyful events in Jewish social life was a wedding. Jesus is the bridegroom and his voice brings joy!

John 2:1-2

1 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there,

2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. NIV

Note that Jesus and his apostles had been invited to the wedding. It is here that he performs his first miracle, the changing of water to wine.

Ps 104:13-15

13 He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the earth is satisfied by the fruit of his work.

14 He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate-- bringing forth food from the earth:

15 wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart. NIV

The problem isn't the wine, it's the wine-bibber! The Lord has given wine to gladden the heart of man, not to dull or ruin his brain! In any event, a wedding feast without wine was unthinkable. You could say that with this miracle, Jesus was the life of the party!

Luke 10:21

At that very time **He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit**, and said, "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight. NAS

"Rejoiced greatly" in the Greek is literally "jumped for joy." This is not the Jesus we are used to imagining or seeing portrayed. He leaped up and down with exuberant joy!

Mark 10:13-16

13 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them.

14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them. NIV

In my experience, melancholy and somber people do not deal well with children (usually because they take themselves too seriously!). Here, the disciples tried to keep the "seriousness" of service by keeping children away from the "speaker." Jesus shows them that the children are the inheritors of the kingdom of God and that we all need to receive the kingdom as a child. Not content to simply lay his hands on their heads, he picks them up in his arms!

As final evidence of the Lord's joyful nature, I present samples of His humor. We refer to one type of humor as wit, as in "He's a witty person." With regard to humorous expression, wit is the ability to perceive and express in an ingeniously humorous manner the relationship or similarity between seemingly incongruous or disparate things. It is a synonym of irony, which at its base means "to say less than one thinks." Irony is a figure of speech used in the Bible and found in the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ. And personally, I think it is very humorous even in extremely serious situations.

John 10:31-32

31 Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him,

32 but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" NIV

This is a remarkable statement in the face of a crowd ready to stone you. Not only does it show His humor and insight, it is also evidence of His total lack of fear in the face of physical danger.

Luke 13:31-33

31 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."

32 He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.'"

33 In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day-**for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!** NIV

I have to go to Jerusalem because it is impossible that prophets be killed anywhere else!

I present these snippets to demonstrate that the general demeanor of the Lord Jesus Christ was joyful. His first sermon recorded in the gospel of Matthew was on happiness. And the joy His earthly ministry brought was expressed by the crowds during His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. So it is that Isaiah 53 ought to give us pause.

Isa 53:3

He is despised and rejected of men; **a man of sorrows**, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. KJV

II. The Man of Sorrows

Matt 26:36-42

36 Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."

37 He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and **he began to be sorrowful and troubled.**

38 Then he said to them, "**My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.** Stay here and keep watch with me."

39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

40 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter.

41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

42 He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." NIV

After serving His disciples the Last Supper, He departs to Gethsemane, the olive press. His words could not be more blunt or startling. "I am sorrowful unto death." We are going to examine what He faced, how He dealt with it, and His overcoming promise. But before we do, we should pause to note that our Lord had sorrow and distress. At the very least, this should tell us that sorrow and distress are not sins!

A. What He faced

➤ Crucifixion – severe physical pain.

The breaking of His body was severe and needful. No manner of death was worse than the cross. But compared to the trials of His heart, I believe that the trials of His body pale by comparison. Which is to say, the trials of His heart were severe!

John 12:27-33

27 "Now My **soul is troubled**, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

28 Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."

29 Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him."

30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake.

31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself."

33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die. NKJ

Jesus knew that He was going to the cross and what that entailed. And even though the trials of His heart would be more severe, His flesh was the least willing participant in the plan of redemption.

Matt 26:41

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: **the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.** KJV

➤ Betrayal – the treachery of a close friend.

John 13:16-21

16 I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

18 "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.'

19 "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He.

20 I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me."

21 After he had said this, Jesus **was troubled in spirit** and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me." NIV

Note that in the face of the crucifixion, His soul was troubled. But in the face of betrayal it is His spirit that is troubled. It is a deeper concern and wound. David psalmically prophesied about this wounding and the distress it would cause.

Ps 55:1-14

1 Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea;

2 hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught
3 at the voice of the enemy, at the stares of the wicked; for they bring down suffering upon
me and revile me in their anger.
4 My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death assail me.
5 Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me.
6 I said, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest--
7 I would flee far away and stay in the desert; Selah
8 I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm."
9 Confuse the wicked, O Lord, confound their speech, for I see violence and strife in the city.
10 Day and night they prowl about on its walls; malice and abuse are within it.
11 Destructive forces are at work in the city; threats and lies never leave its streets.
12 If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me,
I could hide from him.
13 But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend,
14 with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of
God. NIV

Ps 41:9

Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me. NIV

- Isolation – none able to commiserate with Him.

Matt 26:37-40

37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed.

38 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me."

39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

40 Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? NKJV

In His hour of greatest need, He finds those closest to Him unable to support Him. They collapsed the sight of the burden that He was carrying! Those who had earlier said that they would not abandon Him could not even stay awake to pray with Him.

- Abandonment – the flight of close associates in time of trouble.

Matt 26:31-35

31 Then Jesus said to them, "Tonight you will all desert me. For it is written in the Scriptures that God will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

32 But after I have been brought back to life again, I will go to Galilee and meet you there."

33 Peter declared, "If everyone else deserts you, I won't."

34 Jesus told him, "The truth is that this very night, before the cock crows at dawn, you will deny me three times!"

35 "I would die first!" Peter insisted. And all the other disciples said the same thing. TLB

Matt 26:55-56

55 At that time Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me.

56 But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled. NIV

Even though He was not surprised by their desertion, one can be certain that it still caused Him distress.

- The Wrath of God – Receiving the punishment of our sin.

Luke 22:42 NIV

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

The cup He had to drink was none other than the cup of God's wrath. Gethsemane was the oil press. Jesus was crushed by the wrath of God to produce the anointing of the Holy Spirit for us.

Ps 75:8

In the hand of the LORD is a cup full of foaming wine mixed with spices; he pours it out, and all the wicked of the earth drink it down to its very dregs. NIV

Isa 53:6

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. NIV

Matthew Henry has an insightful comment regarding the suffering that the Lord faced.

"On the saints' cross there is a blessing pronounced, which enables them to rejoice under it (Matt 5:10,12); but to Christ's cross there was a curse annexed, which made him sorrowful and very heavy under it. And his sorrow under the cross was the foundation of their joy under it."¹ (see Gal 3:13-14)

Jer 25:15-18

15 This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.

16 When they drink it, they will stagger and go mad because of the sword I will send among them."

17 So I took the cup from the LORD's hand and made all the nations to whom he sent me drink it:

18 Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings and officials, to make them a ruin and an object of horror and scorn and cursing, as they are today; NIV

¹ (from Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.)

Like the prophecy over Jerusalem, Jesus was about to become an object of horror, scorn, and cursing after drinking the cup of God's wrath. No wonder He was sorrowful unto death! But Hebrews tells us that it was for the joy set before Him that He endured the cross. He would only have to drink of the cup once for all mankind.

Isa 51:21-22

21 Therefore hear this, you afflicted one, made drunk, but not with wine.

22 This is what your Sovereign LORD says, your God, who defends his people: "See, I have taken out of your hand the cup that made you stagger; from that cup, the goblet of my wrath, you will never drink again. NIV

B. How He dealt with it

- He determined to pray.

Matt 26:36

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." NIV

- He confided in His friends and asked them to pray with Him.

Matt 26:37-38

37 He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled.

38 Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." NIV

Jesus was transparent in His distress and His need for their supporting prayers. How often do we hide our disquiet of soul and don't request needful prayer?

- In prayer, He determined the will of the Lord.

Luke 22:42-45

42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

43 An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.

44 And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

45 When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. NIV

If the trial is from the Lord, He will strengthen us to bear up in it. But we need to determine the will of the Lord in prayer. Notice that even the prayer life of our Lord Jesus had different levels of passion. "He prayed more earnestly" and in His anguish of soul, sweat blood from His forehead. That blood He spilled redeemed us from any and every anguish of mind and soul.

The Garden teaches us that whenever a traumatic situation is confronted with a willing spirit and weak flesh, a sorrowful soul results. I don't know about you, but my flesh has always been weak! The way out of sorrow is submission, not our will be done but His.

The disciples were asleep, exhausted from sorrow. How often do we deal with depression in this manner? The sadness is overwhelming, so we curl up in our beds and sleep, hoping that it will all pass us by. Jesus says, "Keep watch with me." In fellowship and supplication with God we will find the strength to avoid the temptations that befall us in depression and find His will to show us the way out of the valley of the shadow of death.

Luke 22:49-51 NIV

49 When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?"

50 And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear.

51 But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him.

Once Jesus had submitted His will (which resides in His Spirit, i.e. the spirit is willing) to the will of the Father, He refused to fight His circumstances in the flesh. Overcoming depression is not a matter of picking yourself up by your own boot straps or just bucking up. It is a matter of submitting our will to the will of the Father and trusting Him to bring us through the fire.

C. His overcoming promise

John 16:20-22

20 I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.

21 A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.

22 So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. NIV

Jesus knew that they would grieve when He died. But He also knew that they would rejoice when He was resurrected. Their time of sorrow was the cross. Their time of rejoicing was the resurrection. So with us, when we encounter the cross, that which the world rejoices in causes us godly sorrow and we grieve over that which we have done. And at the cross, He gives us life and turns our grief to joy – a joy no one can take away!

John 16:32-33

32 "But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." NIV

In this world, we will have trouble. That's a promise! But we can take heart, for the world has been overcome!!

III. The Oil of Gladness

Isa 53:4-11

- 4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.
- 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.
- 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
- 7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.
- 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.
- 9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.
- 10 Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.
- 11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. NIV

He bore our sorrows because we are unable to! His soul suffered to liberate ours! It is His joy that is our strength, the joy of One who is righteous and justifies many!!

Heb 4:15-16

- 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin.
- 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. NIV

Have you ever been so distressed, anguished, and sorrowful that you sweat blood? We have been redeemed from every turmoil of the soul. (And if our depression is due to physical ailments, He has saved us from them as well!)

Isa 61:1-3

- 1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,
- 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,
- 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, **the oil of gladness instead of mourning**, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. NIV

Heb 1:8-9

8 But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.

9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." NIV

The oil of joy is none other than the Holy Spirit of God poured out into our hearts in redeeming grace. Man's deepest sorrow is the sting of death and the specter of eternal separation from God. Jesus has redeemed us from death and hell. When we recognize this, no one can take away our joy! Amen!