

## 46. THE JOY OF THE CROSS (12:27-36A)

We now come to a passage that portrays Jesus in a slightly different way to what we have seen so far. In chapter 9 after healing the man born blind, Jesus said that He is the light of the world. One of the seven “I Am” sayings in John that we are familiar with and readily understand. But this time Jesus presents Himself as a fading light. In other words, He does not have much longer to live and minister to the people.

The fading light is quite a striking image because it is not one we typically apply to Him. We are quite happy with Him being the light, and we like to think of Him always being the light, but not as a fading light. But as we saw last time, Jesus said that unless He dies, there can be no salvation.

What is more, the text before us highlights the humanity of Jesus. One of the amazing doctrines of Christianity is that Jesus is 100% God and 100% man (a doctrine technically known as the hypostatic union of Christ). It is a doctrine that does not make sense mathematically, however, it is an extremely important doctrine, because we cannot think of Him as anything less. He is not half-and-half, He is fully God and fully man (See [The “Physical” Death of Christ](#) in study 43. [Better that One Man Should Die](#)).

So far in John we have seen much evidence of Him as God, but here, in verse 27, we are given a unique glimpse into His humanity; *“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour”*. Note the anguish and agony in His words. At this point, Jesus is but days away from His crucifixion and He knows what is coming. In His humanity, He has a decision to make – does He push on and complete the work He came to do, or does He give up? Does He give in to the temptation to think that perhaps there is another way that salvation can be secured, or does He obey His Father?

This is part of the anguish that we see Jesus going through in this study.



### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. Read John 12:27-36a and Luke 22:39-46. How did Jesus think and feel about the cross within His human nature?
2. What thoughts come to mind when you consider the image of Jesus being the fading light? In what other ways can this image be used other than for Christ?



### THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM

In Hebrews 12:2 we read that Jesus was willing to die and able to experience all that He did on the cross, because of what lay beyond the grave; *“who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God”*. As troubled as His soul is in John 12:27, He is able to push it aside and endure to the end because something far greater is waiting for Him beyond the cross. But what is that joy? What does it look like? Is it a sense of pleasure or a feeling of accomplishment because He completed a task? Is it the exaltation He will receive that Paul talks about in Philippians 2 where He is given the name that is above all names and all creation worships

Him? Those things can certainly be counted, but they are secondary, for in the text before us we see three Joys set before Jesus that enabled Him to endure the cross that give us hope and joy today.



### The Joy of the Father's Glory (vv28-30)

If you were to ask the average Christian, "Why did Jesus die?", the most common answer you would receive would be, "He died to save us from our sin". That is correct of course, and it comes up again later, but it is incomplete, as it is not the main reason Jesus died. He died first and foremost to glorify the Father (v28 and John 17:1). Jesus was willing to endure the agony of the cross and everything that it entailed so that the Father's name would be glorified. This glorification even continues today beyond His ascension. In Philippians 2:11 after Paul states that every knee will bow before Him, Paul ends with, "*To the glory of God the Father*". So even when Jesus is exalted and all creation worships Him, He diverts all the glory back to the Father. Jesus is all about the Father's glory.

This pleases the Father, for in verse 28 John reports, "*Then a voice came from heaven: 'I have glorified it, and will glorify it again'*". In other words, the Father has always been glorifying His name, including during Jesus' earthly ministry through His teaching and signs. And He will continue to glorify His name for eternity, even during Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension, and the future second coming.

John then adds an interesting observation in verse 29, "*The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him'*". This illustrates the spiritual deafness of the people to the voice of God. Several times Jesus told the Jews that they cannot hear God because they are not His children, and this incident proves it. They cannot recognise the voice from heaven for what it is, the voice of God.

Compare the events of Exodus 20, Exodus 32, and here. What stands out as being different in each of these situations?

There are three recorded incidents in Jesus' ministry when the Father speaks from heaven: at His baptism, His transfiguration, and here. Each time it endorses Jesus and His ministry, but not for Jesus' sake, He knew that He always had the Father's favour. Rather it was for the sake of the people to show that Jesus and His ministry have the Father's stamp of approval and confirms that through His life, the Father has been glorified (cf. v20). Ironically the Jews cannot hear this approval, only those who have ears to hear what God is saying. Tragically, they miss the Father's and Jesus' words and miss the Messiah.

Things are no different today. God speaks clearly through His Word, but most do not know His voice and so miss God's testimony of His Son. They do not have ears to hear when God speaks. They fail to see the glory of God that Jesus lived and died for. Instead it has been replaced with the glory of man. We pat man and ourselves on the back for the things we do and accomplish, we seek all the glory and attention for ourselves, and fail to give it to God where it is due (cf. Isa. 42:8).

Then when we go through suffering, we shake our fists at God and question why He is allowing us to go through such things. We cry out that "It's my life" and "I want to live it my way, therefore God ought to do things my way too". But as Jeremiah writes in Lamentations 3:39, "*Who is man to complain in light of his sin?*" If anyone had any reason to complain to the Father it was Jesus.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:21, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”. That is what Jesus did, and it enabled Him to endure the cross, and it is what you must do if you want to make it through this life. No suffering on this earth is greater than the glory of God.



### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. Despite witnessing many signs, why do you think the Jews did not believe in Jesus?
2. What would your life look like if you demonstrated complete commitment to the glory of God as Jesus did? Would anything be different?



### The Joy of the World’s Judgment (v31)

Jesus now makes a statement of victory as a result of the cross – judgement of the world and victory over the ruler of this world, the devil. Important to note is that the world referred to here is not the people or the planet, but the immoral and sinful spirit of the world. In other words it is the system, the philosophy, or the worldview that is behind all the evil in the world that causes things like war, drug addiction, homosexuality, even disruptions closer to home such as in the workplace or within our families. It is a mindset that is anti-God and affects all people and the planet. Here Jesus says that He has victory over all this at the cross. Not only that, He also has the victory over the one who is behind that system – the devil.

But wait a minute, if God has defeated the devil and he has been cast out, why is there still sin in the world? That is a really good theological question with several ways to answer it. Much of it has to do with timing. Paul tells us that the devil is still active today, that is why we must put on the full armour of God so that we can withstand his attacks (cf. Eph. 6:10-20). Peter also warns us that the devil prowls about like a roaring lion seeking to devour us through trials and persecution (cf. 1Pe. 5:8). However, his reach and his powers are restricted. This is because the devil can only do that which God allows him to do, but at the same time, he is essentially a dead man walking – he is walking to his execution.

But while he is walking to that end, the world still feels the effects of his presence. Not to forget that the world is still contaminated with the sin and lies that he and his demons have already perpetrated for thousands of years. We are living in a fallen world and we are all feeling the effects of it.

However, because of the cross, Satan has been rendered powerless against God’s people. In Colossians 2:15 Paul tells us that through His death, Jesus “*disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them*”. Satan may have thought that he had victory over Jesus while He was being nailed to the cross, but it actually was Jesus’ victory. Also in Colossians, Paul tells us in Colossians that through the cross, “*Jesus delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son*” (1:13). So although we are living in this dark world, we are no longer part of this world – God’s children are no longer part of the devil’s domain.

However, just because the devil’s end is certain, it does not mean that all evil has been dealt with yet, for the world and humanity will still be judged. In Ezekiel 18:4 we learn that “*The soul who sins shall die*”. In other words, each person will be held personally accountable for their sin. Man cannot use the excuse of “The devil made me do it” nor try to blame it on our upbringing or life circumstances. Every one will have to answer for one’s own sin at the judgement (cf. Heb. 9:27).

However, for Jesus on the cross, the joy set before Him is that all sin and the devil will ultimately be dealt with. The end of each is sure, and true justice for mankind will come, but it is only possible because of the cross. As a result, we too can have victory over sin in our lives. Like the devil, it is rendered powerless. The only power it can ever have over our lives is when we give it power as we give in to temptation. But, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can overcome.



### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. How does Galatians 3:13 give us further understanding of the words of Jesus in verse 31?
2. How does the fact that Jesus is victorious over the devil challenge your thinking regarding sin in your life in terms of its presence, power, and you being able to overcome it?



### The Joy of the Sinner's Salvation (vv32-36)

Jesus says in verse 32, *“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself”*. John explains in verse 33 that here Jesus is talking about the kind of death that He would die, namely crucifixion. However, this is not limited to describing the method, because it includes all that His death by crucifixion implies. In other words, there are both physical and spiritual aspects to this.

On the physical side it is the obvious means of death – He was arrested, tried, beaten, mocked, nailed to a cross, and after several hours He died and was laid in the tomb. However, on the spiritual side, there is the reason why Jesus had to undergo the physical – the forgiveness of our sin and the salvation of those whom the Father has given Him.

In study 43 we considered some of the deeper theological aspects of the cross of Jesus taking our sin upon His shoulders and dying in our place. There we looked at some technical terms such as propitiation, vicarious atonement, etc. All those terms are implied here in Jesus being lifted up in verse 32. Because what Jesus is saying is that in just a few days, He is going to take the sin of the world upon His shoulders and die on a cross in the place of all those whom the Father has given Him, yet are the ones who deserve to be on the cross. As He is lifted up, the Father will pour out His wrath upon His own Son who committed no sin, instead of on us so that our records can be wiped clean.

Now unfortunately, the Jews do not fully understand Jesus' words. It appears they understand that He is referring to His death, and somehow seem to connect that He is the Son of Man, but they cannot connect the Son of Man to death. As far as they are concerned, the Messiah, will never die (this thinking is based on passages like Psalm 110:4 that says the Messiah is a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek and Daniel 7 that talks of Him receiving an eternal kingdom).

But note how Jesus does not answer their question. He does not go into Old Testament theology and defend who He is. This is because the root of their problem is not theological, it is moral. He has proven many times already who He is. The problem now is that they are still walking in spiritual darkness and have to forego their preconceived ideas about the Messiah being a political saviour and recognise the fact that they are sinners, walking in darkness. They need to come to Jesus as the Light, which implies turning from their sins. They need to believe that He is the Saviour so that they may become sons of Light. But their time is running out (cf. vv35-36).

Now whether any of these people do repent or not, we do not know. However, Jesus' joy here goes beyond the salvation of those in front of Him, but includes all who will be saved as a result of the cross. Note His words in His high priestly prayer in John 17:20; *"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word"*. This means that the joy set before Jesus that enabled Him to endure the cross, includes you. Although the crucifixion occurred almost two thousand years ago, He was looking forward to the day when you and I, and every believer past, present, and future would be saved as a result of the cross.



### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. In verse 27 Jesus asked the rhetorical question, *"And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'?"*. Consider for a moment what the situation would be like if Jesus had seriously asked the Father to save Him from the cross and the Father responded accordingly. What would it mean for the state of our souls?
2. We have so much to be thankful for because Jesus did indeed go to the cross. Spend some time in thanksgiving prayer for the cross.



### MY SOUL IS TROUBLED

There is one more application to note, and it is found in Jesus opening statement in verse 27, *"My soul is troubled"*.

The Greek word for troubled is really interesting in that it has three different descriptions. Firstly it is to have your spirit struck with fear and dread. Secondly it is to have internal turmoil and lose calmness of mind. And thirdly it also means to be disturbed, restless, and distressed. Descriptions that all can relate to in one way or another.

But the comfort we have is that Jesus also knows what to be troubled in these ways feels like because He experienced all three at this one time. He knows what it means to be really grieved and heavy, and when you are troubled, He knows what you are going through. Hebrews 4:15-16 puts it like this, *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need"*.

Whatever you are going through, Jesus knows. If you are troubled, Jesus has been there, so call on Him. When you are struggling you can pray and bring it to the Lord. And you can be, in fact you must be, honest in your prayers. Pour out all your emotion, all your anger, all your hurt to the Lord and know that he understands because He went through greater trouble than you can ever imagine. And the same joy that He had that enabled Him to endure the cross, can be yours today too, and so help you to endure through your sufferings.



### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. Some argue that we should "be honest with God" about how we feel, even to the point of raging against Him. Agree or disagree? Support your answer with Scripture.
2. How does your answer above affect how you pray?

The light of the world was fading two thousand years ago as He approached His death. But the light that is the church is still fading in the world today. Therefore, while there is light, believe in the light, that you may become sons and daughters of light, and so shine that light into the world so that others may be drawn to the True Light, before it is too late.

