

# How Can We Be Joyful When Our Loved Ones Are Lost?

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Here's another question. This is from John.

*"I know we find hope alone in Christ. All other ground is sinking sand. But how do we remain joyful when your spiritual eyes are open to the fact of the lostness of your earthly family and friends? They have heard the Gospel and rejected it. How do you remain joyful knowing if they don't repent what finally awaits them? Just having a hard time with joy. In fact, it is downright depressing knowing the hell that awaits them. Any help or direction on this matter would be appreciated."*

What do you all say to a guy who says that? Well, Christ was a Man of Sorrows. Paul in Romans 9 had unceasing anguish for the lost, so I think part of what he's feeling is righteous and correct, but he can't let that strip his joy at the same time, right? It's kind of like you have to have both.

Somebody read the first three verses of Romans 9. *"I'm speaking the truth in Christ - I'm not lying. My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit - that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh."*

Ok now, what's interesting about that is he says I have **unceasing anguish**. That's the same apostle who writes to the Philippians and is calling on them to **rejoice in the Lord always**, and again, I say rejoice. **Unceasing anguish. Always rejoicing in the Lord. Contradiction?**

I think we say both are a reality. Now, whenever I think of the first verses of Romans 9, I almost always think about the first verse of Romans 10. Read the first verse of Romans 10. *"Brothers, my hearts desire and prayer to God for them is that they might be saved."*

Ok. You want to get that. Because he's talking about the same folks he was talking about in ch. 9. The ones he has unceasing anguish and could wish himself accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of, his brethren according to the flesh. One of the things that I would say to John is this:

*We know from Scripture that it's possible - because Paul would tell us on the one hand unceasing anguish for the lost; on the other hand, rejoicing always in the Lord.*

But I would say this to John:

*Let the anguish do in you what it did in Paul. Which was what? It produced prayer.*

Jesus, in one of the classic places where you see His anguish for people; people who are rejecting Him is where? Where He's weeping over Jerusalem, and anybody know where that passage is found? It's in Luke 19. Somebody look up Luke 19:41-42. Somebody read that. *"And when He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.'"*

And then, you know, like James said, a Man of Sorrows... and yet you read somewhere else

for the joy set before Him. And we know that we know as Christians that those realities are possible to have together. It's not a contradiction because we're not saying that we feel sorrow and anguish over something, and we feel joy over the same something for the exact same reason at the same time. That's not what we're saying. The idea here is we can have anguish over these lost folks, but we can also rejoice in the Lord greatly because He's rescued us. And you can rejoice because his family and friends aren't dead and in hell yet. And God has not ceased to be the God that we repeatedly find about in Scripture that's long-suffering, that's gracious, that's merciful, that's full of loving-kindness, that's ready to show mercies to people.

Listen, I'll tell you the kind of God that we have, we have the kind of God that Jonah went into Nineveh, and at the end of it, he said, "I knew it!" I knew You were that kind of God. I wanted Nineveh destroyed. These people are enemies of the people of God and they're enemies of You, God, and I just knew You were going to show them mercy. That really is how Jonah talks. It's like I just knew it! I knew He was so gracious, and so merciful, He would have pity on these people. See, we can take a lot of hope in that. Family and friends are not gone. And you can take courage in this:

*That if God has taken a person who is a family member or a friend and placed that person in the midst of these people, and given that person a real burden for their souls and they're praying for them? I mean we can take great courage in that.*

One of the things that we want to remember too is that - he admits this - he says, "*they've heard the Gospel and rejected it.*" And that's right. You think about the text there in that talks about the lost, and the fact that they love to believe a lie. They refuse to love the truth and be saved. They love to believe lies. And refusing to love the truth and so be saved - that's what's true of lost people. The lost refuse. The lost are like the people who were invited to the wedding feast, and said, no thank you. And so one of the things that we do need to remember is people are wicked. And they deserve this.

Now that may be true that we love them. I mean, the thought of - brethren, you start having children and the thought of your children perishing is sometimes, I guess for most parents they can't accept that reality. I didn't want to spend the time today to look it up, but I remember years ago reading a Spurgeon sermon, and Spurgeon basically has a picture in his mind of Christ coming, and a mother who's saved, and the children are lost. And you know how that saved mother - she more than anything wanted to see her children saved, but here Christ has returned, her children are unsaved. And how she, as Christ comes, and she lifts up her eyes and beholds Him, and now she looks at those children and she reproves them and said I pressed you to believe in Him. And she goes to finding fault with them. And she parts to be with the Lord forever, and they're cast away. And what Spurgeon does is he paints the picture of the affections of that mother as they let go. And that's a reality. That's going to happen. On judgment day, when everybody's divided, we're going to see the lost for what they really are. We're going to see the beauty of Christ and what rejecting Him really is. And refusing to love the truth - how heinously wicked that is. And how guilty sinners are. And how vile that sin is. How monstrous that sin is. And we're going to see people for the way they really are. And for the love and the affection of Christ, there's going to come that break. And here and now, we wrestle with God for

those lost ones. But one thing in the midst of it, that if a person is saved, they can certainly rejoice in the goodness that God has shown them, even while they're feeling the anguish for those that don't yet know the Lord. And it's not as though it's hopeless. I mean, Paul wasn't talking as a hopeless man. In fact, through those three chapters, of Romans, Paul is talking about his hope that God is going to save some of those Israelites and they're going to be made jealous and they're going to be grafted back into that tree from which they were broke.