

“A Little While...” John 16:16-22

¹⁶ **“A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father.”**

¹⁷ Then some of His disciples said among themselves, “What is this that He says to us, **‘A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’**; and, ‘because I go to the Father?’”

¹⁸ They said therefore, “What is this that He says, **‘A little while’**? We do not know what He is saying.”

¹⁹ Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, **“Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’?”**

²⁰ Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. ²¹ A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. ²² Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. **John 16:16-22**

I was privileged to hear RC Sproul preach, more than one time on the Holiness of God! He spoke about how the Hebrews would use repetition, about the how the Genesis 14:10 pit was actually a PIT, PIT

How Holy, Holy, Holy means God is extremely Holy

Now, the TRUTH here, because this is God’s Word, is that it is not only the Hebrews using repetition to emphasize something; but God uses it!

God controlled, ruled over EVERY WORD of this Book! Every emphasis!

Including the repetition in todays passage of the phrase “a little while”

If God wanted us just to know the history of this passage, He could have done it with fewer words!

I believe “a little while” is repeated so many times for a purpose ...as all the writing of Scripture has a purpose –

Let us consider that PURPOSE today –

I. The phrase “a little while” is repeated seven times in a space of four verses –

- 1. Note the human author of this Gospel is the Apostle John, who also wrote the Book of Revelation with its seven golden lampstands, seven churches, Seven Spirits of God, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls! Seven is the number used in Scripture to refer to completion and God’s perfection!*
- 2. Of course, God is the ultimate Author of Scripture, and because He is Author of a Book read through the ages, I would argue none of it was limited in application to the day it was written but has application to us, TODAY –*

¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 timothy 3:16-17

- 3. My argument here is that what is said, could have been said with fewer words, meaning less than a seven-fold repetition of “a little while” but this is said this way because God Himself intended this and wanted us, even in the 21st Century to note something special!*

II. There is an obvious application for the Apostles -

²⁰ Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. ²¹ A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. ²² Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

- 1. They would weep seeing Jesus crucified!*

2. *An ungodly world rejoices in this, because they rejoice in evil, in inequity!*

3. *But their sorrow will be turned into “joy” –*

So would ours, if we know the LORD -

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Philippians 4:4

4. *Oh, what a great “joy” Christ’s apostles had, after His resurrection –*

⁴⁰ ... and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. ⁴² And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. Acts 5:40-42

But others had it too - **⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸ whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls. 1 Peter 1:6-9**

III. There is a rejoicing in the cross pictured –
but your sorrow will be turned into joy. John 16:20

1. *Their sorrow was the cross –*

A. *See Jesus questioning the men on the way to Emmaus -*

¹⁵ So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. ¹⁷ And He said to them, “What kind of conversation *is* this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?” Luke 24:15-17

B. *See part of their response –*

So they said to Him, “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him.²¹ But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Luke 24:19-24

The words “were hoping” past tense implied hope was now GONE! Because Jesus had died!

2. *The cross, itself was their redemption, a reason for “joy” –*
¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 1 Peter 1:18-19

This is why we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, picturing Jesus death on our behalf!

The cross brings hope –

On occasion I have seen a movie when someone commits murder, they wash their hands, they Keep washing their hands even after they are clean ... why? They are trying to wash away not only blood but guilt and they cannot do it!

What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Refrain:

Oh! precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

3. *This is why, even we, can rejoice “glory” in tribulation –*

The cross means not only that we can rejoice in Jesus' pains, but also our own –

They are no longer meant for judgment, but to prove and improve us -

5 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation **produces** (means tribulation is productive, it produces) perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Romans 5:1-5

Reasons for rejoicing:

- A. *We have been justified*
- B. *We have peace with God through Jesus Christ*
- C. *We stand in the realm of grace*
- D. *We rejoice in the hope of glory (meaning our pains are just “a little while” temporary) There is a beyond the cross “joy” pictured here –*

What is started by Christ on the cross does not end, except with New Heaven and New Earth glory –

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; ²¹ because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

Romans 8:18-22

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew,

He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Romans 8:28-29

Note the pains are called / compared to “birth pains or Pangs / Anguish” in both passages –

²¹ A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. ²² Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. John 16:21-22

*IV. The **little while** phrase applies to all our “pains” –*

¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a **moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* **temporary**, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18**

12 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1-2

Application:

1. Take up your cross / discipline yourself to godliness-

“It is better to take pains than to suffer pains, and to be bound to the cords of duty than with the chains of darkness.” Thomas Manton

2. Realize the time is **SHORT, and must be redeemed –**

A. The shortness is called even called evil –

**¹⁵ See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,
¹⁶ redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
¹⁷ Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Ephesians 5:15-17**

You don't know when you will die!

You will grow old or older faster than you think!

⁹ Rejoice, O young man, in your youth,
And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth;
Walk in the ways of your heart,
And in the sight of your eyes;
But know that for all these
God will bring you into judgment.

¹⁰ Therefore remove sorrow from your heart,
And put away evil from your flesh,
For childhood and youth *are* vanity.

12 Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth,
Before the difficult days come,
And the years draw near when you say,
“I have no pleasure in them”:

² While the sun and the light,
The moon and the stars,
Are not darkened,
And the clouds do not return after the rain;

³ In the day when the keepers of the house tremble,
And the strong men bow down;
When the grinders cease because they are few,
And those that look through the windows grow dim;

⁴ When the doors are shut in the streets,
And the sound of grinding is low;
When one rises up at the sound of a bird,
And all the daughters of music are brought low.

⁵ Also they are afraid of height,
And of terrors in the way;
When the almond tree blossoms,

The grasshopper is a burden,
And desire fails.
For man goes to his eternal home,
And the mourners go about the streets.

⁶ *Remember your Creator* before the silver cord is loosed,
Or the golden bowl is broken,
Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain,
Or the wheel broken at the well.

⁷ Then the dust will return to the earth as it was,
And the spirit will return to God who gave it.

⁸ “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher,
“All *is* vanity.”

The Whole Duty of Man

⁹ And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out *and* set in order many proverbs. ¹⁰ The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and *what was* written *was* upright—words of truth. ¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. ¹² And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books *there is* no end, and much study *is* wearisome to the flesh.

¹³ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:

Fear God and keep His commandments,
For this is man’s all.

¹⁴ For God will bring every work into judgment,
Including every secret thing,
Whether good or evil.

Arnold Brewick