

Peace to Overcome the World

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

Bible Verse: John 16:33
Preached on: Sunday, March 15, 2020

Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

Well, as we turn back to that passage in John 16 which I just read, let me give a sense of the setting and the context as we open it up. Jesus is preparing his disciples for his imminent departure. He is about to be crucified and he knows that his departure and his absence after three years of ministry, daily walking with his disciples, that absence is going to have a shocking impact upon them and so he's preparing them for that time for the sudden change that is about to come upon them. As he speaks these words that traitor Judas had left the room and Jesus is now speaking to the faithful 11 that are left behind, and he wants to prepare them for the trials that are just ahead, just within a matter of hours ahead of them, and so he says in verse 25, look at it there with me, he says in verse 25, he says,

25 These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father.

He is saying to them, "I understand that I have said things to you that are hard to understand," and he is acknowledging that and yet he goes on to tell them that the day is coming when things will be clearer to you than they are right now, and what he has in mind there is that after his death on the cross, after his resurrection and he ascends into heaven, he will send the Holy Spirit to them and the Holy Spirit will open their minds and give them understanding of things which they were only seeing darkly as if in a darkened mirror as Jesus was saying them to him. The Holy Spirit would indwell them after his resurrection and they would have light and understanding that they were presently lacking. He's planting a seed, as it were. He's giving them a down-payment that while things are about to get excruciatingly difficult in his imminent crucifixion, there was beyond that time a time coming where they would understand the Spirit would be with them and they would be able to preach with power and clarity based on the work of the Holy Spirit within them.

He goes on and says in verse 26 of John 16, he says,

26 In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; 27 for the Father Himself loves you,

because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.

And he's saying something very profound there. The disciples were confident of the love of Christ based on his interactions with them, even based on the words that he was saying to them there on that night in the Upper Room, but he was saying that, "Even though I am about to leave, you can be confident in the love of God the Father. God the Father Himself loves you. God the Father Himself will care for you." And so his point being that even though his physical presence was about to leave them, they would be in the same position vis-a-vis the heavenly Father who loves them, will care for them, and therefore they could have confidence going forward even though Christ was about to depart from them.

Look at verse 28. He says,

28 I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.

And what he's saying here is something really profound going into the purposes of the Triune Godhead from before the beginning of time. Jesus says, "The Father sent Me and I am going back to the Father in a very short time." Why is that important in this context? He's showing the disciples that God the Father was intrinsic to everything that Jesus the Son was doing. God the Father was intimately involved with every aspect in perfect harmony with Christ in the fullness of the ministry that Christ had conducted in their midst and that meant that the Father was favorably disposed to them in the same way that Jesus Christ himself was favorably disposed to them. He's building this sense of confidence, of security, of serenity in his disciples that even though there was a massive change coming upon them, there was an abiding security based on the eternal plan of God the Father which was in full operation and was not hindered by any change that was taking place in the immediate future.

So the disciples having heard this, had a flash of understanding. They had a moment of insight into what Jesus was saying and you see it expressed in verse 29 where it says,

29 His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. 30 Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God."

They understood something of the fact that Jesus was on a mission, so to speak, he was carrying out the eternal purpose of God and that God the Father was intimately involved with that. They understood that and they understood at greater theological depth the significance that Christ was with them and yet the unseen Father was with them also, and they were encouraged by that flash of understanding and they think that their prior difficulties had all been cleared up based on what Jesus had said. They are assured of the divine origin of Christ. They know that the Father cares for them and therefore they think

that they are in good shape. Their confession was accurate. Their confession was fine as far as it went but the sad reality is that they were not as advanced as they thought they were. Their heart and their will had not fully caught up with their understanding.

Jesus knew that and Jesus spoke to them and cautioned them in verse 31 where he said,

31 Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? 32 [He says] Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

What's he saying here? Well, if I can paraphrase it, he's saying this to the disciples. He says, "Do you think you've really arrived based on what you've just said, based on that flash of insight that you have?" He sympathetically and yet clearly, firmly warns them that there is an hour of testing that is just ahead for them and their sincere faith is about to be severely challenged in a way that will make it look like they are in the process of failing. The Roman army would soon come and take Jesus captive and carry him off to crucifixion. The disciples watching this happen in the very near future, would be so frightened that they would flee Jesus and that they would all run away from the situation and leave Jesus Christ alone, and Jesus would therefore be taken to the cross alone without his supportive disciples around him because they are going to flee. At that moment in the security of the Upper Room, that must have seemed unthinkable to the disciples that they who loved Christ, who had just gained understanding would within a matter of hours abandon him so easily. That would see beyond their possibility and that's exactly why Jesus said what he said to them at this point. He said, "Have you believed, do you really think that you're confident, that you're strong now?" He warns them and he prepares them, "You're about to be scattered and leave Me alone."

Now he goes on to say, he says, "I'm not alone because My Father is with Me." From a human perspective based on human presence he would be alone as the Roman army takes him away, but there is this abiding confidence that Christ has in his Father saying, "But My Father is with Me and therefore I am not alone." The disciples would fail him in their hour of testing but the Father would be consistent and faithful to him throughout it all. And so Jesus knew in advance that they would fail and here's the point that I want to draw out for you from this, is that the disciples were over-confident based on their little bit of understanding there. You remember that Peter had said earlier, he said, "Everyone else may abandon You but I will never fall away," and Jesus said, "Really, Peter? Before dawn a rooster, before a rooster crows three times you will deny that you've, before a rooster crows twice you will deny three times that you've known My name." Over-confident disciples, here's the point, over-confident disciples are not prepared for the difficult trials that come to them. Over-confident disciples are truly still disciples but they are prone to fail because they have not stopped trusting in their own selves, in their own understanding, in their own ability, and abandon themselves completely to the care of Christ and the care of Father without any trust in the human flesh.

And what does that mean for us here today? Well, maybe that comes as a word of encouragement to a broken disciple like you this morning. You thought that you were a giant for Christ and yet here you are, you've stumbled perhaps into sin, perhaps you've been overwhelmed and fallen into panic and anxiety over circumstances. You thought that you were a giant for Christ and yet now you find that adversity has shaken you to the core. Jesus has words for you here this morning. Jesus has words of comfort for you here this morning. Jesus has words to pick you up this morning that even though you may be shocked at the level of your failure, at the level of your despair, the level of your discouragement, the depth of your fear in whatever is happening in life, what we find here in this whole passage is that Christ knew all of those things about you in advance. Christ made provision for them in advance. Christ has continuing, abiding, unchanging love for you that is carrying you through this trial even though you yourself have stumbled badly along the way. We find in this passage an abiding love of Christ and a promise from Christ to sustain us even in the midst of the greatest, deepest adversity where it seems like our faith has been shattered and failed to the uttermost.

Well, Jesus having hinted at the disciples' defection, says to this in verse 32, let's just look at it again because it'll launch us into the primary text that we want to see today, he says in verse 32,

32 ... an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

And what we're about to see is that Jesus is giving them this warning not to rebuke them but to encourage them. Christ has the encouragement and strengthening of his disciples uppermost in his mind throughout this entire exchange as we see in verse 33. Jesus says to them precisely why he was saying these things to them. As you look at verse 33, look at what he says there. He says, "These things I have spoken to you, so that," here is his purpose. "Why am I saying these things to you? I'm saying these things to you so that, in order." He's giving the purpose of his words in what he has been saying throughout here. "This is my purpose in saying all of these things to you. Here's what I want for you," he says. Look at it again with me in verse 33,

33 These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace.

You may have peace. He's not disappointed in the disciples, he's strengthening them. He is helping them with the words that he is saying. Now this word "peace" that he's talking about here, he's using it in that subjective sense that there would be an inner tranquility in their hearts; that there would be a sense of abiding confidence, of abiding hope; that they would have a state of mind that their perspective is that they lack nothing in Christ; that in Christ they have everything that they need, and therefore they have no fear of being troubled in the future because who Christ is, what his love is for them and what that means for them is so settled in their hearts that it governs their entire perspective to everything else that comes.

That's what Christ is doing here and those of you that come to Truth Community Church on a regular basis, you know that we talk about these things consistently and over time we have repeated these things in various ways from this pulpit again and again and again. The purpose of Christianity, one of the purposes anyway, one of the benefits of being a Christian and studying Scripture together consistently over time is it develops within us a worldview, a life-governing perspective that helps us understand everything that happens around us through a greater, broader perspective. We are not prisoners of our circumstances. We are not prisoners of fear based on what might happen in the future because we understand the sovereign nature of God's love for us, that he has everything under control, that Christ has loved us supremely even at the cost of his own life, and therefore we have everything that we need to give us tranquility, to give us serenity, to give us a pervasive sense of calm no matter what comes to us whether it's a national calamity like what we seem to be facing in our day here even as I speak, whether it's a personal calamity of a sudden loss of life or a sudden illness that comes upon us, a sudden reversal of financial security, sudden loss of relationship, beloved, what I want you to see is this, is that Christ is teaching us in this passage that a Christian responds to all of those things whether they're private or public, whether they're inward afflictions or outward afflictions, he has given us, in Christ we have that which makes us respond in a fundamentally different way than what the world responds to anything. We respond in peace. We respond in confidence in Christ. We respond from a perspective that understands that whatever our earthly circumstances have changed in the past day, in the past week, or whatever they may change in the future, all of our response is preconditioned by, is governed by the sovereign love of God which was perfectly expressed for us when Jesus Christ stretched out his arms and suffered and died for our sins at Calvary. If a God like that is in control of our destiny and our future, then there should be an abiding cornerstone of peace that governs the way that we look at everything that could ever happen to us. And beloved, I want to say to you that that should kick in immediately when the bad news comes to us. It should kick in immediately. We should be so fresh in these things, so grounded in these things that we never respond to adversity in the same way again.

So my prayer for you as you hear these things is that the Holy Spirit would drive these things deeply into your heart, even deeper into my heart, that we might have a mindset and we might have a lifestyle of responding to adversity that is worthy of Christ, worthy of the trust that he deserves and is a reflection of the very words that Jesus said here, that we believe him for the peace that he gives, and that the words that he said were intended to settle our hearts in the midst of any affliction that might come to us.

Well, with that said Jesus goes on in verse 33 and he lays out three keys to this kind of enduring peace that we're talking about and that's what I want to bring out for you in the remaining time together, these keys, these principles that give us understanding that the Spirit of God uses to produce the fruit of peace deep in our hearts. And so what is it that we're supposed to do? What is it that Jesus would have us understand that our minds might be transformed by the Holy Spirit to respond in this way? Well, first of all, we need to understand that Christ tells us to, number 1, if you're writing notes and I hope that you are, although there's certainly no way for me to know that from my distance here, but

our first point for this morning is for you to recognize this, is that Christ wants us to recognize the obstacles. Recognize the obstacles. Perfect serenity and a perfect life uncluttered by trouble is coming for the Christian but it's coming for us in heaven. It's for the life to come. Here on earth, not so much.

Look at what Jesus says at the end of verse 33, he says,

33 ... In the world you have tribulation,

In the world you have tribulation. This word "tribulation" is a word that includes the idea of pressure. It's broad enough to include all manner of affliction, external afflictions of circumstance or internal afflictions of the heart. It's broad enough to cover all of them but it has the idea of those circumstances of life, those conditions of mind that put pressure on us and tempt us to fear and tempt us to doubt God in the process, and so it's a multifaceted word that Jesus is using here. In context, in the immediate context of what Christ is describing, he is referring to the fact that his 11 disciples are about to scatter when the Roman army comes. That will be the tribulation that is about to come upon them that will cause them to scatter, but his words are broad enough to include all of the trouble that comes in a fallen world for his true disciples, and here's the point that we need to understand, that we really need to let this become a foundational part of how we view the world and view our lives and view the future that the Lord may have for us here: trouble will be an inevitable part of the fabric of life for us here on earth. We live in a fallen world and we are not exempt from its troubles and what Jesus is saying is that you need to recognize that there will be obstacles that come to you in life from a variety of different sources. In fact, in Acts 14:22, the Scriptures say that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. Sometimes that's tribulations that come from being a Christian, sometimes it's simply the physical afflictions that come from having an ever-increasing broken body, sometimes from failed relationships or difficulties, sickness, death, you name it, you get the point. There are a multitude of afflictions that come to us in this life and being a Christian does not exempt us from those. It is only our future deliverance when we are glorified in heaven in the presence of Christ that we'll be utterly delivered from these things. In the meantime, we walk through life with the recognition that our faith will be tested by a variety of trials that come to us. The writer James said that, didn't he, in James 1:2, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance." Romans 5 speaks of this. 1 Peter 1. Throughout all of the New Testament you find Christians being exhorted to trust God and to recognize the fact that trials are a regular part of life.

Now that might seem to be upsetting. How does that help you have peace in a difficult world? You know, you might be tempted to think, "Well, thanks a lot. I, you know, let me go live in a bunker and hider away since all of these things are going to come upon me." Well, that's not obviously not Jesus' point at all, is it? No, what Christ has in mind is something different. What Christ has done has given us something far better than an empty promise of health and prosperity that eventually is not going to be true for any of us. We're all going to die one day if the Lord tarries because it's destined for man to die once and after this comes judgment, and so it's inevitable that we're going to face these

things. How does Jesus telling us that there are obstacles help us? It does this, beloved. If you know in advance – this is so very important – if you know in advance that troubles are to come, you will not be thrown off course when they do come. You won't be so perplexed when adversity hits you. And even today in the midst of the adversity that you're facing as you're watching this live stream, even today as you're facing different kinds of trials and tribulations, the biblical understanding, the biblical response to the existence of trials in our lives is this, "Of course I have trials. Of course there are difficulties in life. This is to be expected. I live in a fallen world. Ever since our father Adam betrayed his commandment from God and fell, sin has entered into the world, adversity and death have entered into the world and that is the environment in which we all live, Christian and non-Christian alike." And Christians are not brought out of the experience of adversity in this life.

Jesus said it plainly. Look at the text with me again, John 33. He said as a matter of statement of fact, he said, "In the world you have tribulation." Think about it this way if we want to approach it from a different perspective, we say that we're followers of Christ, right? That Jesus is our Lord, right? He's our Master and we're his disciples, right? Well, our Master suffered in his life. In fact, shortly after he preached these words, he suffered more greatly than anyone in human flesh ever did when he went to the cross and bore the eternal wrath of God for his people. Beloved, our Lord suffered trials. Our Lord went through adversity. Our Lord knows what weakness is like and that has two implications for us. One is that if we're following in his footsteps, then we understand that if we're following in the footsteps of a suffering Master, that we're going to suffer too and we accept that, we embrace that if it will only conform us to the image of Christ, but it does something else that the book of Hebrews promises to us, it means that we have a Master, we have a High Priest, an Advocate in heaven who has experienced the same nature of human suffering that we have except without sin. It means the Christ can sympathize with us. He has feelings of understanding for his people who suffer in human flesh because he himself suffered in human flesh. He knows what that was like. He knew what it was like to live with scarce resources. He knew what it was like to face death of his friends. He stood outside the grave of his friend Lazarus, didn't he? He knew what it was like to have people oppose him and to say wicked things about him when he was perfectly innocent. All of those things are wrapped up in who our Savior is. He has gone before us into this realm of suffering and he has come out safe on the other side. Now he tells us as we walk through this life as followers of his, he says there will be a realm of suffering that you go through but the impact for us is this, our Master has gone before us, our Master has conquered through this, our Master is even with us as we go through them, and so therefore while we recognize that we have obstacles, we have a comprehensive perspective that lets us respond to them in a godly way. We have a comprehensive perspective that takes away that core fear of the future and replaces it with a sense of peace that Jesus said was supposed to be the way that we live our lives through it all. "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation," but that does not conquer, that does not contradict, that does not eliminate the peace that Christ promises to his disciples.

So the way that this helps us when we recognize the obstacles, we know in advance if we have been forewarned, we are forearmed, we are prepared to walk through them knowing that whatever may surprise us in life by way of adversity is something that Christ warned us about in the past. If Christ suffered, we will too. It's not a question of if, it's simply a question of when this will come to us. You know, if you think about it, commercial airplanes have instruments that help pilots keep their bearings as they fly through difficult weather, for example. They orient the pilot when he cannot see where he's going. Well, these words from Jesus function like an instrument to us. One of your spiritual instruments as a believer in Christ is this, to recognize the obstacles is to understand that they are to be expected in the Christian life, and therefore when they come, we don't even have to go into the realm of why is this happening, we don't have to be tortured by questions, am I being punished for what is happening here or by what is happening here, is God angry with me, all of those questions are sealed off and put away for the Christian. We understand that the Father loves us. We understand that Christ loves us and that he has appointed trials to be one of the avenues by which we are conformed to the image of Christ. All of this, understanding that obstacles will come, gives us a settled sense of peace as we go through them. We realize that this is not something strange and extraordinary. This is simply the tribulation that Christ told us would come.

In the world you will have tribulation, and so, my Christian friend, I encourage you to take heart in that. Your troubles are not unexpected, certainly not unexpected to God. God saw it all from the beginning. God has appointed whatever comes into our lives to be an outworking of his purpose for you, and so while that doesn't make the tears go away necessarily, while that doesn't eliminate the difficulty or the hardship that we face going through it, it gives us a right, a true, a godly perspective on it all. This is what God has for me. God told me in advance. All is still well with my soul even though the outward circumstances have changed so dramatically. Recognize the obstacles, my friend. Your spiritual plane isn't off course, you're simply having troubles, you're having tribulation just like Jesus said that you would.

Well, that's helpful but it's not enough to simply recognize the obstacles in what Jesus has given us here, we need to go further. We need to go to our second point for this morning and it's this, it's to rise to the occasion. To rise to the occasion and I'll show you what we mean by that. To rise to the occasion means that when the trials come, we step up to them rather than shrinking back in fear. We lean into the trials, as it were. We say, "Okay, this is what God has for me in this time of life. I'm going to be strong. I'm going to be courageous. I am going to respond to these things in faith, not in doubt, in trusting serenity, not in fearful panic." The difference is profound and this is exactly what Jesus tells us to do when he says this in verse 33, look at it with me there in John 16:33. Jesus said, "In the world you have tribulation, but," by way of contrast here's what you are to do. Rather than to give in to the tribulation, he says,

33 ... but take courage.

Take courage. Take heart, in other words. Don't give into fear but be strong and courageous in the midst of your trials.

Now this is something that has been imprinted in Scripture from the earliest days. If you go back to the book of Joshua 1, for example, just to see how the Lord exhorted Joshua as he and the Israelites were about to enter into the Promised Land. There was tribulation waiting for them. There were wars and battles awaiting for them as they went out and dispossessed the people from the land that God had given to them, and God told Joshua in advance before the battle began he said this in Joshua 1:6, he said, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them." And he repeats it, he says, "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go." Verse 9 of Joshua 1, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua told to be strong and courageous. Christ looking at us as his disciples saying, "Take courage. Be strong in the midst of those trials that come to you." Play the part of the man. Play the part of the one who lives out the knowledge and the confidence and the trust of believing the word of God, of believing Christ, and that he is in sovereign control of everything that comes to you.

Let's get a sense of the word that Jesus used when he said, "Take courage." Turn over to Matthew 9 for just a moment. We'll look at a couple of passages there. Matthew 9. And the point here is simply all we're doing here as we look to Matthew 9 is we're simply getting a sense of the meaning of this word that is translated "take courage." We can see how Christ used it in a couple of different passages.

Matthew 9:2, the Gospel of Mathew 9:2. Certain men brought to Jesus "a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven.'" He's brought to Jesus in this position of weakness and physical infirmity, and Jesus says, "Take courage. Your sins are forgiven. Have an inner response of strength, draw confidence from what I am saying to you. It is okay. Be strong. Be courageous. I've forgiven all of your sins." And so the idea is, "Don't let your circumstances overwhelm you into a position of fear. Step out of the fear and into the realm of courage because I have spoken to you. I have forgiven your sins and I am sovereignly in control of what happens to you."

In like manner in verse 20 you'll find Jesus using these words to the woman who had suffered a hemorrhage for so long. Look at Matthew 9:20, "a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; for she was saying to herself, 'If I only touch His garment, I will get well.' But Jesus turning and seeing her said, 'Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.' At once the woman was made well." Jesus looked on her at her very imperfect faith, she was thinking in physical terms, reaching out trying to touch the hem of his garment and in faith reaching out to Christ based on the understanding that she had, limited as it was. Christ turns to her and in a moment of love, of blessing, of kindness says to her, "Take courage. Your faith has made you well." And her flow of blood stopped but, beloved, it wasn't simply a physical healing that Jesus was giving her there,

Jesus was giving her the gift of salvation as well because what good would it be for her body to be healed, how could you truly take courage if your body was healed but your soul was still destined for hell as judgment for your sins? Jesus had given her a comprehensive healing of body and soul that put her in a position where the adversities of life no longer needed to affect the way that she responded inside. She could be like Joshua, strong and courageous as she responded to the obstacles that lay ahead of her.

So take courage is the call of the Lord to have confidence in the face of testing. Let me just say that again. When you are tested as a Christian, Christ comes to you in multiple passages of Scripture and in essence says to you, "Take courage. Be confident despite the obstacles. Be confident despite the adversities. Walk through this situation knowing that I have you in My hand and no one can pluck you from My hand," John 10.

Now let me just say a little word of encouragement to kind of expand on that just a moment. The temptation is for us when we think about courage in the context of adversity, sometimes we're tempted to think about this in terms of really dramatic encounters or really dramatic episodes in life or in history. So for example, we could look back to Martin Luther when he stood against the Catholic Church and practically stood alone, said, "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen." As he stood on trial at the Diet of Worms and knew that his life was in danger because he would not recant his writings, he took courage. He was strong and courageous there in that moment, but what I want to say to you here this morning is that if we only think about taking courage in those really dramatic moments and episodes of history, we might miss out on the encouragement that is there for us in the normal activities and in our obscure, seemingly mundane issues of life. But beloved, what Christ is saying to us here is very applicable to daily life and it's applicable to the stay-at-home mom caring for young boys who are rambunctious and are about to cause you to lose your patience, it's applicable to the young person in a career that's struggling and having difficulty and the boss is unhappy with you and you're not quite sure what's going to take place, it's applicable for that elderly person facing the end of life with declining health and wondering why does God leave me here, what's the purpose of this, and looking for meaning in your day-to-day existence and finding that it's hard to know what you're doing when it's so different and so isolated compared to what your prior life had been, and all points in between. Beloved, for each of us, there is the opportunity to rise to the occasion in those ways and in those circumstances that honor the words of Christ here.

You see, you rise to the occasion when you trust God and refuse to fear the future despite an uncertain time of what lies ahead. You rise to the occasion when you find contentment in your life even when your relationships and maybe you're having a time of physical need that is not being immediately met, you rise to the occasion in those times of adversity when you trust God and you praise him and you find your contentment in the Lord Jesus Christ even when there is nothing earthly to feed your satisfaction. Beloved, what I want you to see is that the spiritual success in those moments of trusting God like that, it is not diminished because it occurs in the mundane details of life. Indeed, doesn't Scripture itself call us to glorify God whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God? Do you see, beloved, do you see, my friend, that what is given to us

in Scripture is a promise that you can live a life that pleases the eternal holy God by the way that you respond in trust, love and obedience in the midst of a seemingly very ordinary life that God has given to you. You and I don't have to be Martin Luther in order to please God. You and I don't have to conquer visibly the hosts of demons that are arrayed against us in a way that the world applauds. No, it's enough for us to know that the Father himself is with us; that the Lord Jesus Christ is with us; that the Holy Spirit indwells us, and the Father honors your simple faith, your simple trust, that pleases him in a way that he will honor and reward you for even when it occurs in what seems to be the very ordinary details of life. It is precisely in those ordinary details of life where the Christian life is most gloriously displayed because we honor God and we love him even when there's nothing spectacular to feed it from an outward perspective.

So my friend, here's what I would have you to see, to respond to, and to take heart in. Look beyond your present circumstances, whatever they may be, and recognize that supremely what righteousness does, what righteous godly living does is that it supremely trusts God no matter what our circumstances may be, and it doesn't matter that your circumstances may seem to men to be very ordinary, they are what God has given to you. God has given you your life today as the platform upon which you would live out these principles, living for him, loving him, and honoring and trusting him, and God sees what man does not see. Man looks at the outward appearance, God looks at the heart. And my friend, as a humble Christian, you have the opportunity to develop a trusting heart that is pleasing to God in the life that he has given to you. That's how you rise to the occasion in the midst of the obstacles that come to us.

So our perspective can be as simple as this: Christ loves me, Christ is in control and I, therefore, will not yield to anxiety or fear in the midst of this adversity. I will not grumble and complain against the ordering of my circumstances. I am content simply to be in the hand of my heavenly Father. That's enough for me. My heart is satisfied. Praise be to God. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Beloved, the encouragement in this is that that lifestyle, that heart attitude is pleasing to God. That's what he wants from you more than any outward display of success.

So you rise to the occasion by trusting God in the midst of it, but it comes to a third and final point here. Yes, we recognize the obstacles, we rise to the occasion by taking courage and trusting God in the midst of it, but there's a Christ-centered focus in it all that Jesus brings in our third point which is this, is that ultimately you rest in the Overcomer. You rest in the Overcomer. Look at the end of verse 33. Jesus is ultimately calling us to rest all of our hope, all of our confidence, all of our trust in him. Look there at the end of verse 33. He says,

33 ... I have overcome the world.

So bring those three phrases together in your mind. "In the world you have tribulation," recognize the obstacles, "but take courage," take courage and rise to the occasion. Jesus says the reason that you can take courage is that he has "overcome the world."

Now understand what's happening here and remember the circumstances in which Christ said this. Christ is going to the cross. He is about to endure the eternal wrath of God on behalf of his people, and so there is the greatest tribulation awaiting him as he says these things but he goes to the cross not in gloom, not in defeat, but he goes as a victor and the question is how could he say that when he is on the verge of crucifixion? How could Christ say that he had overcome the world when he knows that he is about to be crucified? And look at the outward circumstances of his life. Jesus Christ had no wealth. He had no status in the eyes of men. His own disciple, Judas, had just betrayed him and walked out and handed him over to the authorities. His closest friends would soon abandon him. Jesus does not look like a world-beater here. Jesus does not meet our definitions of success if we are defining success as the world defines it, and yet here he is saying, "I have overcome the world." Do you know what that tells me, my friend? It tells me that maybe we've got our definitions all wrong because I'm pretty confident that Christ knew what he was talking about and if we judge him by outward circumstances and come to any other conclusion, the problem's on our end, not in what Jesus is saying.

So let's think about this for just a minute. Maybe we have our definitions all wrong. Maybe we're not looking at these things the way that God looks at them. And look at the reality of Christ's position here as he said these words. The fury of hell had been unleashed against him and yet Christ did not flinch from obedience to his Father. He spoke the truth even though it cost him his life. He loved his own even to the end, even knowing that they would betray and scatter away from him, he did not compromise his love for those disciples that were in front of him in the same way that he does not withdraw his love for us as believers when we stumble and sin against him in our own lives today. He loved his own all the way to the end. In spite of all of the provocations of the trial that was about to come, they would blindfold him, they would beat him, they would spit upon his face, they would thrust a crown of thorns into his scalp, they would mock him and with a purple robe and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" in utter mocking and derision and through all of that Christ did not retaliate, Christ did not fall short of enduring it all and going through it all to his final destination of the cross. You see, the world could not turn him back from the mission that he came to fulfill. His tranquility was intact. My friends, Jesus Christ was an impeccable spiritual success despite all of the fury of demons, Satan himself, and a hostile world thrown against him. Jesus met it all and met it all without sin, perfectly obeyed his Father and triumphed in the end, so much so that his ultimate triumph was shown when after his crucifixion, after they had put him in the grave, three days later he comes out resurrected. The worst that the world could do to him, the penalty of death put upon him as he bore our sins on our behalf, even death itself could not hold him down. Christ had overcome the world, he had overcome death, he had overcome sin. Jesus Christ was the greatest success that the universe has ever known and ever will know. Jesus Christ overcame the world.

Now the beauty of that, the beauty of that and how that informs us as we respond to this text here today is this, Jesus says to us, "Take heart. I have overcome the world." How does that help us? Well, beloved, when we are united to Christ in saving faith, his victory becomes our victory. Jesus' success becomes that which you inherit as your own. You see, his victory is your victory because he shares it with you. The same power that

enabled Christ is the same power that dwells within you. Listen to Romans 8:11 where it says, "if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

You see, Christ didn't simply accomplish this victory for his own sake, he accomplished it for us, for his people. He accomplished it so that we would share in the fruit of his victory; that we ourselves would come through this world and come out safe on the other side, come out and be with Christ in heaven on the other side of it. That's the outcome. Because Christ has overcome the world, because we are in Christ, then the outcome for us is guaranteed, we also will overcome the world no matter what the obstacles may be that we face in the interim. Christ did that for us. Christ guarantees the outcome, so much so that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So my friend, in your times of affliction whether it's now or future, I encourage you always to come back to this text and let it refresh your heart. You have the power of Jesus Christ now if you are in Christ and you will share in heavenly glory in the future without fail. Not one of us will be lost. So let that bring peace to you that gives you the power to overcome whatever the obstacles may be.

For those of you that are listening and perhaps you're mindful of the fact that these things do not belong to you, that you have no idea of what the overcoming power of God is like, your controlling anxiety shows that you're a foreigner to these kinds of principles and this kind of reality, I just want to encourage you, my friend, and invite you in this time of great national uncertainty that whatever else may happen in the future, you yourself can have peace with God. The Bible says in John 1:12, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God even to those who believe in His name." If you will humbly come to Christ as I urge you to do, as I plead with you to do, come to Jesus Christ confessing your sins and asking him to save you and Christ will bring you into this realm of blessing where you can recognize the obstacles, rise to the occasion, and rest in the Overcomer. God bless you. In whatever lies ahead, we are confident in Christ and he will lead us to victory in the end.

Let's pray together.

Our gracious God, we thank You for this wonderful passage. We thank You for a wonderful Lord who has overcome the world, who shares His victory with us and therefore gives us what we need to take courage in a world that is filled with tribulation. May it be true for all upon whose ears my words have fallen here today, Father, that they would be found in Christ at the end, safe in the arms of Jesus, and that You would lead us all safely into Your heavenly kingdom by Your grace, for Your glory, and for our eternal good. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

