

How Do You Fight the Good Fight of Faith?

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John 14:30-31

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Amen, thank you choir for that beautiful message in song. Young people, you are dismissed to your classes. May you grow in your knowledge of Jesus Christ this morning. I invite you all to turn with me in your Bibles to John 14. We'll be looking at Verses 30 and 31 this morning. We baptize our children, as Patti and I, and Craig and Gina did today, we're reminded of that Verse in 3 John where he says, "I have no greater joy than to hear of my children walking in truth." Of course, when John says that he is talking about his spiritual children, but what a double blessing when your physical children are also your spiritual children. John 14:30-31, the last two verses of this 14th chapter we're going to look at this morning, and we're going to see that we have in this really kind of a blueprint for battle, a spiritual call to battle, a call to arms, and really a game plan for how we ought to wage the spiritual war that we are in.

We were talking on Wednesday night about some things that I was sharing during our question and answer time we had this past Wednesday. My concern, I had received word, had missed it in the news, but one of the brothers in Christ had sent a letter about the action taken by Mayor Kasim Reed this week. You may or may not be aware of that, but he suspended the fire chief of Atlanta without pay, and his reason was that the fire chief of Atlanta had written a book a year or so before in which he expressed personal faith in Jesus Christ, and in the book talked about the fact that homosexuality was a sin. And because of that, the mayor said, "We cannot have people like that working in our city. We want people to know that Atlanta is welcoming to all people," except Christians, apparently. Amazing.

So we are drafting a letter, the Elders from our church, encouraging the mayor of Atlanta to immediately reinstate this fire chief, that freedom of speech necessitates that you not be a tyrant like this. We're going to pick our words. I won't start off with that line anyway, but this is ridiculous. This is un-American, it is unconstitutional. I mean, it's not that he's bound by the constitution, but he should reflect the society that we have created. He should be able to entertain the thought and speak freely. Isn't that what we believe? Political correctness is seeking to change that, isn't it? When you see things like that you can become very discouraged. You see things happening, I mean politically you can be very discouraged, but more than that, spiritually. You see the darkness kind of growing and you think how much different it is than it was 30 years ago, 20 years ago, or

even 10 years ago. And what are we to do in moments like that? If things are going to get worse, how do we handle that?

Well, the good news is this passage of Scripture we are looking at this morning, in particular, these two verses, but the whole extended passage in general is addressing just that. These are the last words of Jesus, John 13-17, these five chapters, His last really private message with His disciples, right before the cross, right before the biggest explosion of spiritual warfare the world has ever seen, and He is encouraging them how they are to seek to stand, and be faithful. We're going to see, as we look at this, I think five, or actually four things that we can do. Let's read, we will read from Verse 27-31, but we're going to focus on Verses 30 and 31. Jesus says:

John 14:27-31 ~ Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. 28 You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29 Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe. 30 I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; 31 but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here.

Here they are, they've been some hours around the table in the upper room. They have had the Passover meal in the institution of the Lord's Supper. Jesus has washed their feet. He has begun teaching them that He is going away, but it is good for them that He goes, and He has taught them about the Holy Spirit. And here at this point, what you see in Verse 30 and 31 is them getting up from the upper room, and leaving, and beginning to walk towards Gethsemane. The fact that these words are here, that the Lord included this, the ***Get up, let us go from here***. In fact, there is some controversy among Christian scholars about whether or not they really got up and left, and went to Gethsemane or not. Did they get up and maybe start to leave? Kind of like we do that a lot, don't we? "I'm leaving now," and you think, "I'm going to go start the car," and I go out to the car and I start the car, and, "Where's Patti?" We're not leaving. You know? And sometimes I'm guilty of that too. "We're leaving now," but we don't really leave. "Let's bring up something else," and we talk, and 30 minutes later we are still standing there. Some theologians think that that is what happened because the question is, see John 14:31, ***Get up, let us go from here***. But if you turn over to Chapter 18:1, after the next three chapters, it says:

John 18:1 ~ When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples.

So that they are moving in Chapter 18:1 too, and the question is, did they leave the upper room in Chapter 14:31? I think honestly they did and they are making their way, and then they cross over the ravine. They are not rushing across, they are walking and talking as they go, but this has caused some question. The issue is, why did John say, ***Get up, let us go from here.***? I mean, why did he put that in the Bible? Obviously Jesus said it, but there are a lot of things that Jesus said that aren't included in the Bible. I really believe that what he is getting at, the reason he put it there is to remind us of the conflict. He said in Verse 30, He is basically saying in Verse 30, "Listen, we don't have much more time to talk. I will not speak much more with you. I will not speak with you much longer," is the idea. Why? The ruler of the world is coming. The emphasis is, "We don't have much time left to talk because I hear what you hear, and I hear what you don't hear, and I see what you don't see. I can hear the sounds of the legions of hell moving this way. The battle is about to commence. Time is short." That is kind of the urgency and I think it's the reason that he put that in here, ***Get up, let us go from here.*** It is kind of like it brackets this two-verse passage. "We don't have much time to talk. The ruler of the world is coming. Get up." It's kind of like, "Rise up, let us go to meet him." I think that is the force of it. "Let's rise up and march to meet him."

So they do get up and they begin moving, and I think after they reflected on this, John looks back and says, "I see the sense of what was going on." The disciples probably didn't know at the time because they didn't know what would lie ahead, what lay ahead. So it is that sense of how do you go and meet the enemy? How do you fight the good fight of faith? When the forces of darkness are coming against you, how do you bear up? We fight a battle every day, against our sin nature, and sometimes the battles are very seemingly small, but they are very important. Then sometimes they are much larger. How do you bear up? I think there are four things that we need to see from this passage, that we need to do. Four things that we see in what Jesus says to His disciples.

1) Face the Enemy of Jesus:

The first is we need to face the reality, or you could say, face the enemy of Jesus. We would like it to be true that there was no spiritual war, wouldn't we? I mean, doesn't everyone love peace? Everyone that has any sense about them? We would love for there not to be a spiritual war, and I know the disciples, they would have

loved not to have had to get up and march to meet the enemy, but the first thing you have to do is you have to realize the enemy is coming. There is no choice, you have to face the enemy. If you lived in France in World War II, the fact that you wanted peace wouldn't have mattered, you still would have had to get up and fight. Or in England, the same thing, you had to fight. And America eventually, had to fight because the enemy would not stop. The enemy did not want peace and we live in a world in which the enemy does not want peace. The war that we fight is a spiritual war. He says, "The ruler of the world is coming." He's speaking of Satan. He talks about him that way three different times in the Gospel. John 12:31, He's already told us, this is the image that Jesus is thinking about.

John 12:31 ~ Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

John 16, Verse 11.

John 16:11 ~ and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

Jesus has His eyes squarely on the enemy. He has come to defeat the ruler of this world. Remember how He said in the Gospels, Matthew reports that Jesus said, remember when they were accusing Him of casting out demons, and the Pharisees accused Him of casting out demons by the Prince of Demons? And He says, "A house divided against itself cannot stand. Don't you see that one greater than the strong man is here?" He said, "A strong man keeps his goods in his house, secure, but when one greater than the strong man comes, he comes in and binds the strong man, and plunders his house." What He was saying is, "I'm not the strong man. Satan is the strong man." This is what Jesus is saying. "Satan is the strong man and he has all of the world in his power. He has all of his goods in his house." As He says here, "He is the ruler of the world. He is the god of this age," 2 Corinthians 4:4, "who has blinded the eyes of unbelievers."

When we were born, we were born as citizens of the kingdom of darkness. That's not a pleasing message, it is just reality because we were conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity. Jesus says, remember what He said in John 8? Remember when He told the Jews, "Listen, you need to believe in Me because the one who believes in Me," He says in John 8:32, that "if you know the truth, the truth will make you free." And they say, "We've never been a slave to anybody," which was a ridiculous statement, but they said that. "We've never been enslaved to anybody," and He said in Verse 34, "Everyone who sins is the slave of sin." He said, "Listen,

you don't realize you are a slave of sin. You need to believe in Me, receive My truth so that you could be set free from slavery to sin." Every single person that is born of Adam is born as a slave of sin. You need to be set free and Jesus can set you free. He goes on to say to that same group of people, remember they were so hardheaded they were arguing with Him, they said to Him, talk about being their father, "Abraham is our father. We weren't born of fornication," remember they said that? "Abraham is our father," and Jesus says to them, He's talking to Jews, He's talking to religious people who have the word of God.

It would be like, the analogy would be if you grew up in a Christian home, and you know the Bible, but you haven't yet been born again, but you know a lot of the Bible, this is what Jesus said to them, which would apply to you before you were a Christian, "You are of your father, the devil." That's what He said to them. I mean that had to hit incredibly hard. What He was saying was, "Listen, sin is so radical. It is so much worse than we realize that it makes us the slave of sin," and we are because we want to live our own way. We want to do our own thing, and you see this, remember I've talked about this before. A two-year-old, you don't have to teach them, they don't have to have classes in preschool on how to disobey. "Come this week we're going to teach you how to be defiant," right? It comes with the territory, doesn't it? "We're going to teach you as a teenager how to manipulate your parents." They just have a knack for it. "We're going to teach you how, as an adult, to get your own way." It's all about getting our own way from the time we are born because we are brought forth, separated from God because of our sins. And this means that we are a part of the kingdom of darkness, whether we realize it or not, and we have to be saved.

Now once you're saved, once you repent, and once you believe, and once you see that Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay for your sins completely, that He bore the wrath of God against your and my sins, and He paid the debt in full, and you believe that He rose again from the dead, and you repent, means you surrender to Him your will, and you're a child of God, you are justified. It is evidence that you have a new heart. Now, every day of your life until you go home, you are in war. Before you were one of the goods kept by the strong man. Now, as a child of God, you have entered into warfare, like it or not. And the first thing you've got to do is face the reality. If you are a follower of Jesus, then the enemy of Jesus is your enemy. That's why He says things like in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant. Your adversary, the devil, is like a roaring lion seeking who he may devour." If you are out in the Serengeti, it doesn't matter that you are there just to take pictures. "I'm not there to hurt you Mr. Lion, I'm just here to take pictures." When he's eating

you it doesn't really matter. You better be sober and vigilant, right? You better have a car or something where you can get away from it.

Well the same thing is reality. Face the enemy of Jesus. The enemy is spiritual, it is not physical. The enemy is not the mayor of Atlanta. He is not our enemy. We need to speak to him, but he is not our enemy. Paul says in Ephesians 6 that our enemy is not flesh and blood. We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with angels and principalities, and powers. The spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places who are at work in their kingdom, and the people that they have enslaved are unbelievers. But the unbeliever is the prize to be won, not the enemy to be conquered. The enemy to be conquered is Satan, and sin. So face the enemy, realize that your enemy is spiritual.

2) Focus Your Mind Upon the Words of Jesus:

Secondly, focus your minds upon the words of Jesus. Now, where did he get that? Well, I was pondering the fact that He says in Verse 30, ***I will not speak much more with you...*** and then we have three chapters. That is something to take note of, isn't it? I mean, three chapters, that's quite a bit, that is 1/7 of the whole Gospel of John. ***I will not speak much more with you...*** Now did Jesus make a mistake like you and I can make? Now I certainly have done that before. In conclusion... and you're like, "Did he say that 20 minutes ago?" Right? We make mistakes like that, but Jesus didn't make a mistake. Why does He say that here? ***I will not speak much more with you...*** "I will not speak with you much longer." What He is doing is He is pressing on them the urgency of the moment. It's like He's saying, "Listen, guys, there is not a lot of time," and there wasn't a lot of time. It might have been just 20 minutes, or half an hour, I don't know, until they left for Gethsemane, until they got to Gethsemane. So it was short in time, but He has a lot to say. But why does He say that? "There is not much more time, I don't have much more to say with you." Relative to His whole ministry, it is a short time. I think what He is doing, if you knew that you are about to go into battle for the first time, and your general calls you together and says, "I don't have much time," wouldn't you really give attention to what he had to say? I think He is doing this to focus their attention like a laser on every word He's about to say. "The enemy is coming. I hear the sound of the boots, the battle formations, the battle lines are being drawn. Listen to what I have to say."

So what that says is, when we realize that we are in a spiritual war, the first thing we need to be about, how do you bear up under the tribulation, and the darkness, how do you bear it? The first thing you do is focus your mind on the words of

Jesus. Keep His word permeating your soul and your mind. Give attention to it. Chapters 15, 16, and 17, He's going to give them more and more encouragement to keep them strong in the face of the enemy.

3) Fix Your Eyes Upon the Person and Work of Jesus:

Now, thirdly, not only first you face the enemy, secondly, you focus your mind upon the words of Jesus, thirdly, you fix your eyes upon the person and work of Jesus. When He says in Verse 30, "The ruler of this world is coming," and He says, "and he has nothing in me, but so that you may know that I love the Father. I do exactly as the Father commanded Me." He's saying at this point, "Look at Me. Look at who I am and what I've done." This is the supremely important thing. How is a person saved to begin with? They stop looking at themselves, I mean, they deny themselves, and they start looking at the person and work of Jesus. "It is not who I am. It's not what I have done. It's not that I think I'm better than most of the people around me. No, I'm a sinner, I'm hopeless, but look at Jesus Christ and what He's done." God, the Son, has come into the world. He lived a perfect, spotless life of righteousness. Then He offered Himself as a spotless sacrifice, bearing our sins in His body on the cross. Paid in full, "It is finished," He says. The victory cry. He dies, He makes the way to Heaven open, and He gives us a perfect righteousness. When you believe in Him, it is as if God sees you as if you had lived Jesus' perfect life. Every moment from the time you believe, all throughout eternity, God looks at you as if you had lived His perfect life because He looked at Jesus as if He had lived your life on the cross.

You fix your eyes upon Jesus when you are saved, but you also do it to keep being saved. I mean, to keep living out the sanctification and growth in grace. You face the enemy, focus your eyes upon the words of Jesus, and as you focus your eyes upon the words of Jesus, fix your eyes upon the person and work of Jesus. He says, "Look, he has nothing in Me. The ruler of this world has nothing in Me." This is kind of a, and it's in the Greek, but it is a Hebraism, most scholars believe. It is a place where their native language was Hebrew, and so you know if you know another language, and you are trying to speak another language, you'll speak sometimes a phrase in your language. You try to translate it, it doesn't translate as perfectly, you know? People can recognize, "Oh, that is an Americanism," or whatever, as you are speaking Spanish, or whatever. Or it is a person speaking English from Spanish. It is a Spanish expression. Here is a Hebraism, a Hebrew expression which was used in legal context to mean that it has no hold over you, has no charge against you, "He has no ability to hold Me." Kind of like, "There is

nothing against Me that he has.” I think there are four things that come out as we look at this, Verse 30 and Verse 31, and there are four sub-points under the third major point, ‘Fix Your Eyes Upon the Person and Work of Jesus’. We are trying to fix our eyes upon the person and work of Jesus.

A) The Purity of Jesus:

There are four sub-points, and when He says, “He has nothing in Me,” the first thing is the purity of Jesus. He’s saying, “Satan has nothing in Me. I’ve not sinned.” In John 8:46, when He was talking to them and He said in John 8:44, “You are of your father the devil,” in Verse 46 He says, “Which of you convicts Me of sin? I’ve not sinned.” Peter’s testimony about Him in 1 Peter 1, you know the old saying, “Familiarity breeds contempt,” isn’t that true? I mean, grace overcomes that, but you can have an idealized view of a person until you live with them, and then it’s just like reality sets in, or you’re around them more. Familiarity breeds contempt. That is true in every instance except one.

The disciples were with Jesus for three and a half years, and familiarity did not breed contempt. It bred worship. After living with Jesus, Peter said, “A lamb without spot or blemish—we looked at His life, we watched Him live, and He is perfect, the sinless one.” And that’s what Jesus is saying right here. “Satan has nothing on Me, because I have not sinned.” That reason that we’re part of the kingdom of darkness when we’re born into this world is because we have sinned. He has a claim to us. He’s the god of this age. He rules over all those who have followed him in his rebellion. Remember, why is it that way? He’s the father of our nation, in a sense.

George Washington is the father of our nation, right? We call him that because he was so instrumental in the founding of the country, and also because he loved freedom. Remember they tried to make him king? The portrait of Washington that’s in the White House, when the British came in and were going to destroy the White House, they burned the White House down and Dolly Madison saved the portrait. The portrait is of George Washington standing with some men and having a discussion, and what’s really interesting, I just heard this recently, what they’re asking him is after his second term they’re asking him to run again and to be king, basically, and he’s saying, “No, you will not look to me. It’s the office. The authority doesn’t reside in one man.” He wasn’t a man who would be king. He knew he couldn’t be king. He’s the father of our nation. That’s really the essence of what the American experiment is.

Well, in a very similar way, Satan is the father of his nation. What was it that Satan wanted? Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 tell us that Satan wanted to be like the Most High. He was Lucifer. He was the highest of the angels, but in his heart, he wanted to have the place of the Most High, and he fell and rebelled. He wanted to be like God, and what did he say to Eve? “If you eat of this fruit, you won’t die, but you will be like God.” And what is it that we wrestle with? What is it that the 2-year-old is wanting when he wants to do what the parent doesn’t want him to do? There have been moments when we were raising our children where you see a defiance in this little angel. You’re just loving on your child. So many times it’s so wonderful the image of God, the beauty in a human being, right? And yet at the right moment when they want what they want and you don’t want them to, there’s just a flash. What are they saying? “I will be my own god. You will not tell me anything.” That’s what they’re saying. They rebel against the parent because it’s the closest thing they have to God, and all of us were born that way. We need a Savior.

The wonder is Jesus is able, because He is perfect in purity. Satan has nothing on Him. He’s not a part of that kingdom. He has no authority over Him because Jesus is spotless. The purity of Jesus is the first part of the person and work.

B) The Authority of Jesus:

When He says, “He has nothing in Me,” He’s saying, “He has no authority over Me. He has no power over Me.” He’s saying this because it’s going to look different than that. In a moment, Satan’s going to come—Satan’s the one who had entered into Judas and led him to betray Him. He’s going to come and he’s going to betray him with a kiss. They’re going to take Him, and try Him, and beat Him, and then crucify Him, and He’s going to look like He’s losing. It’s going to look like Satan is in power. But what He’s saying right now is, “Before we go to battle, guys, I want you to understand something. Appearance is not reality. He has no authority over Me.”

What He is saying is, “Satan cannot kill Me no matter how much he wants to. He can’t take My life from Me. He has nothing in Me. So when you see Me crucified what does it mean?” Look what He says in Verse 31:

John 14:30-31 ~ ...and he has nothing in Me; 31 but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me.

Do you see that? “When you see Me go to the cross, know that I am obeying My Father out of love. It looks like Satan’s taking Me, but he’s not taking Me anywhere that I don’t want to go.”

Remember John 10 where He said, “The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep”? Five times He talks about laying down His life. In Verse 17 and 18 He says, “I lay down My life freely. No one takes it from Me. I have authority to lay it down,” and then He says, Praise His Name, “I have authority to take it up again.” He lays down His life freely and then He takes it up again, because Satan had nothing on Him.

I love how John ties all these things together in John 18 and 19. We’re going to see. We’ll get there sometime, Lord willing, but we’re going to see that Pilate says, “I’ve searched this Man and I find no guilt in Him.” That’s neat that he has that in there. Three times he says that. Remember he’s trying basically to talk the Jews into wanting Barabbas? “I find no guilt in Him. I find no guilt in Him. I find no guilt in Him.” Here in the glorious plan of God, God is making the mouth of the governor representing the emperor—in Palestine he’s the closest thing to Caesar, and here you have the Roman government that rules the world testifying three times, “There is no guilt in Him. There is no guilt in Him. There is no guilt in Him.” Do you get the message? He’s pure. He’s spotless. The purity means the authority of Jesus. He has no ability to take anything from Him. Jesus lays it down. But then finally, look at not just His purity and authority, but also His humility.

C) The Humility of Jesus:

He submits to the Father. He does exactly what the Father commands Him. The amazing beauty of the humility of God, isn’t that incredible the oxymoron of that? The humility of God. Man in sin is audacity and pride trying to climb up and claim his throne, and God comes down and lifts us up. And then the love. There’s the purity, the authority, the humility and then the love.

D) The Love of Jesus:

He does it out of love. It is a love gift to the Father. That’s why He dies. It’s not just because He loves us. It is because He loves us, but He says that, “My motivating force is I am loving My Father as I lay My life down.” That’s the love of a Triune God.

So he says, “Fix your eyes upon the Person and work of Jesus.” Now, we face the enemy, we focus our mind upon the words of Jesus, and thirdly we fix our eyes upon the Person and work of Jesus, and fourthly and lastly;

4) We Follow in the Steps of Jesus:

How do you bear up if you were to find yourself being persecuted by people? It could happen at the coffee shop when you speak the truth. I think it’s ridiculous that this fire chief got fired. Don’t we believe in free speech? And suddenly you’re surrounded. I mean, not necessarily physically, but people are like, “We’ve got one of those crazy Christians here,” and they start firing things at you. What do you do? You try to do what he’s saying here. “I forgot I was in a war. I need to face the enemy. It’s not these people. These aren’t my enemies. So I can love them even as I face the real enemy with firmness. And I need to focus my mind on the words of Jesus. Lord, give me some Scripture right now. I need to think back on what Your word says. I need to fix my eyes upon the Person and work of Jesus. You’re here with me. Look what You did. Look at Your purity, and Your authority, and Your humility, and Your love.” And now to follow in the steps of Jesus means listen. Think about the purity, and authority, and humility, and love.

For instance, because Jesus is pure, now we are pure. Isn’t that right? So Satan has nothing on us. It doesn’t feel like it. It feels like we could lose everything. But wait, even if we lost our life, what have we lost? We’ve lost nothing. “Don’t fear him who can kill the body,” Jesus said, “but fear the one who can kill the body and then cast your soul into hell.” If we lose this old body, what does it really matter? The older I get, the more excited I get about that prospect. Lose this old thing. “You’re not getting old, you’re getting better.” That is a lie.

So you think about the purity, but also the authority. This is what’s mind blowing. Even though Satan is far greater than we are, he’s far more powerful than we are, because we are in Christ, he has no authority over you. He has nothing in you, because you’re in Jesus. If you are in Jesus, then he cannot touch you, so there’s nothing to fear. Even though I’m surrounded by people who seem to be his agents, maybe being very angry or whatever, “Wait a minute. I’m in Christ.” This is where you’re preaching the truth of, “This is what the Bible says. This is what is reality is this Book, not what I’m feeling.” In humility, what you do is you offer yourself up to God in that moment, and you express your love to God. “Wait a minute. My job here is not to protect myself. My job is to submit to my Savior. In the same way He submitted to the Father, I’m submitting to Christ. Lord, what would You have me do right now?”

It's amazing how powerful that question is in the moment. "What would You have me do?" Not, "What do I need to do?" but, "What would You have me do, Lord?" And I love this when He says, "I love the Father and do exactly as the Father commanded." What He's saying is He's facing the enemy. Remember I said He can see what they see, because He's omniscient. He can see what they don't see. He can hear what they don't hear. He knows Satan's coming, and He has in Him in His humanity, He is struggling with fear. He's been troubled Himself. He's not sinning, never sinning, but He is affected and tempted to sin. He's tempted to be overwhelmed, and what is He doing? He keeps reminding Himself of the truth, and He's forging the path for us. He basically says, "Listen, the way that I'm going to meet the enemy is I'm going to offer myself in love to My Father."

So how do you fight the fiercest battles? You offer yourself in love to Jesus Christ. "Lord Jesus, I love You and I will stand for You, and I want the world to know..." Did you see what it says?

John 14:31 ~ but so that the world may know that I love the Father...

When He's hanging on the cross, His thought is, "I want everyone to know..." I mean, think of the agony. Think of the difficulty. Think of the pain. Think of the spiritual anguish as He is separated from the Father, in some ways separated from the Father's favor for the first time in all eternity. That's why He trembled and sweat drops of blood in Gethsemane, because He could not imagine that moment being separated from the Father's favor. And there He hangs in the dark. Remember the sky gets dark at 12 noon? He hangs in the dark. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He knew that was coming. He quotes that Psalm to show us the reality of what's happening, but as He does, He must continually be thinking, "I'm doing this out of love for My Father. Father, I love You and I give Myself to You." And that's how we overcome.

We overcome by loving Jesus in the moment. "Lord Jesus, I will say this word. Even though it may cost me the respect of this person, I'll say this word because I love You, and I want them to know I love You. I want the world to know that I love You." The power of love for Christ, how do we love like that? We just reflect on His love for us. "If You so love me, how can I not love You?"

Not only do we imitate the example, we follow in the steps of His purity, His authority, His humility, and His love, but I think one last thing I want to add that we need is we need faith.

5) We Need Faith:

To follow in His steps, we need to walk by faith, not by sight. Jesus was seeing what they couldn't see, and we still can't see. We're like the disciples. We can't see the spiritual realities. We can't hear those things, but we know that reality and appearance are different things, and this is what Jesus is saying to them. "Listen, it appears that I am losing, but in reality I am winning. It appears that he has authority over Me, but in reality, I am in authority. I mean, if you think about it, it appears that My life is being forcibly stolen, but in reality it's being freely given. It appears that I am in abject weakness, but in reality, on the cross I am manifesting absolute power. It appears on the cross as I breathe My last, to be in utter defeat, but in reality, it is ultimate victory." Appearance has nothing to do with reality most of the time, and so when we live in a world where it appears that we're losing, darkness is sweeping in, in reality God is sovereign. He's still on the throne in the same way He was then. Darkness was enveloping the world like it never has, and that was the moment of great victory. And the same thing is true for us. In our lives when we have little storms that come and terrible things happen, when people we love are suffering or we suffer, and this feels like the end of the world, in reality it's an opportunity for glory. If we could see what God sees, this is victory, not defeat. Just walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

That's what Christmas is, isn't it? I mean, the manger scene. Some years ago it hit me just reading Luke 2:1-14, the astonishing paradox. What has happened? God has entered time and space, but how would you know it? Look at appearances. God has become a baby. Not just a baby but a Jewish baby. Not just a Jewish baby, but a baby born in a nowhere place Bethlehem, and He's lying in a stall, in a manger, a feeding trough. He's lying in a feeding trough. He's a picture of complete weakness. The reality is that Jesus needed to be fed, and He needed to be changed, and He needed to be cared for, and He needed to learn to walk, and He needed to be taught to talk, and that's what you could see with your eyes. But that wasn't the ultimate reality of what was going on. It wasn't really utter weakness. It was ultimate power, and that's why you have this transposition. You have the manger and the baby, and Mary and Joseph, and then you have the shepherds out in the field, remember, keeping watch over their flock by night. And what you have is God telling you that what appears to be reality is not reality. It's not really just weakness and nothing that's happening, because nobody in Bethlehem is paying any attention to that couple and their baby. I mean, they couldn't even get a room. It was all ordained by God to say, look, it seems like nothing, but out on the hillside in the dark, those shepherds see one angel.

Suddenly an angel stood before them, and this angel wasn't like the angels that we have—even the best angels we have on our trees and all that are nothing like the angel they saw, and God forbid, the Precious Moments angel representation. I'm not saying to get rid of them. I'm not saying anything like that. Just don't bring it around me, please. No, I'm just kidding. But seriously, an angel is a being that is created with much more power than us, and he's a soldier. He may have his sword drawn, light is shining, and you know he's not a Precious Moments angel, because what happens? They were sore afraid. They're terrified by this angel that appears, his glory immediately showing them that they are in a potentially life threatening moment. They're about to die. That's why his first words are, "Don't be afraid, for I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all people. For unto you this day is born in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord. The Savior has come. This shall be a sign for you. You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

Wow, God has come, and yet look at the appearance. It's a baby lying in just cloths wrapped around him, born of poor parents who don't even have a room in the inn, and yet in reality, that is the King of glory, because it says right after that, "Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host." I mean, these guys, they had a vision. The Lord gave them a vision of the reality of what's going on. What is going on is the glory of Heaven has invaded time and space. God has come. Victory is coming. It's like D-Day multiplied by a billion trillion. You've been locked up under the darkness of Nazi tyranny, and that day the foothold is established, liberation is coming. Can you imagine what the people through Europe were thinking when they heard the news the allies have a beachhead, they're coming, the Americans, and the British, and the French that had been in this place are coming to rescue us, once it was established it was over?

How much more the news the shepherds see, it looks like nothing, and yet in reality, all the glory of Heaven has come down. All those angels' glory compared to the glory that's in that baby are as a drop in the bucket. Victory is ours. So He tells us listen, no matter what happens, no matter how bad it gets, what are we to do? We can't escape the fact that we are at war. Every day that we live, we have to fight. Our own sin nature we have to fight against sin in those that we love, Christians around us. I say fight, but I mean we have to love them, overcome evil with good, we have to encourage and speak the truth to each other in love, but it's a battle. And then when we see the evil of the world getting darker, and darker, and darker, face your enemy. Focus your minds upon the words of Christ always. Fix your eyes upon the Person and work of Jesus. Keep looking at Jesus, and then follow in the steps of Jesus.

He's charted the path for us. What an amazing thing. Our God came down and walked so that we could follow in His steps. Not just merely an example. No, much more than that. He's a Savior. He is the substitute who died in your place, but then He says, "Now follow Me," and He will lead us in the train of His triumph. May God do that in these days.

Let's go to Him in prayer...

Our Father, we praise You for the wonder of what You've done for us in Jesus Christ. We marvel. The glory that You have manifest in coming into this world, the unspeakable, unimaginable plan, so great that eye could not see nor ear hear, nor could it have entered into the heart of man the things that You were going to do for us. We praise You. Lord, we pray for those that are here that have not truly repented and believed. Perhaps they've been in the church through the years, but they haven't personally come to Christ. May today be the day. But for all of us, we pray that Jesus Christ would be enthroned in our hearts, for He is worthy, and we pray this in His Name, Amen.

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