

Facing an Uncertain Future
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John 16:29-33
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Amen. What a blessing, wonderful blessings in music this morning. We appreciate that so much. Turn with me in your Bibles to John 16, we'll be looking at Verses 29-33, the last five verses of the 16th chapter. We've been working through this Gospel for several years now, and we've been looking at the passage of John 13 through John 17, called '*The Farewell Discourse*' which are Jesus' words, John 13 to 16, to His disciples on the night before He is crucified. And John 17, of course, is His '*High Priestly Prayer*'. These five chapters span just a few hours in the life of our Savior. John gives us the clearest and fullest presentation of those last hours of Christ with the disciples, and in that gives us some wonderful treasure that helps us know how to live in difficult times, because He is preparing His disciples for the storm that is about to come upon them. That is the cross, but then also for their lives lived on the other side of Calvary, on the other side of the empty tomb, on the other side of the giving of the Holy Spirit, where they are going to be separated from Him physically. They are not going to have His daily, physical presence with them the way they have the last three and a half years.

We come in these verses, the last five verses of Chapter 16, to really again that same subject that has been kind of dominating the heart of the Savior as He looks at His disciples. He, Himself, is wrestling with the cross, all the agony spiritually that lays ahead of Him, as He will bear our sins, and be separated from the Father, to carry our sins away, to give us the bliss of the glorious thought that our sins have been nailed to the cross. And yet, even in that moment, He is concerned about the 11. Judas has left, and is betraying Him, and the 11 disciples that remain, His heart is heavy for them, and He wants to help them face the circumstances that lay before them. So I've titled the message this morning, 'Facing an Uncertain Future'. It was certainly the situation of the disciples, their future was very uncertain. Jesus was making clear that He was leaving them, but they had no idea what lay ahead of them. And so He is giving them, even in these last five verses of Chapter 16, great encouragement as to how they can stand up under the uncertain days that lie ahead.

Yesterday was the 239th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. I've done some reading through the years about the American Revolution, and George Washington, Nathanael Greene, other great generals, and stories of the Revolution. And one of the things that you see, as you read, the more you hear about the Revolution, is you understand how it was a time of great difficulty, and great

personal sacrifice by so many. It was a time of really a lot of disappointments that they had to keep fighting through. December 23, 1776, Thomas Paine wrote a pamphlet that he called *'The American Crisis'*, and it came after a series of defeats. In the fall of 1776, George Washington lost a series of battles in the area of New York, and New Jersey, and had retreated back in to Pennsylvania, and Paine wrote these words, at the beginning of *'The American Crisis'*, these famous words:

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will shrink from the service of their country, but he that stands by it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered.

Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered. These are the times that try men's souls. Those words aptly describe the calling of the American patriots in the winter of 1776. Those were times that certainly tried men's souls. But I think they are words that aptly describe our calling, not as Americans, per se today, but it is Christians, it is Christian Americans. These are now, we can say, the times that try men's souls, and the summer soldier, and the sunshine patriot, may shrink from the service to their true country, and their true King, Jesus. But we need to stand by it now and realize that, *Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered.*

In the Revolution, out of times of great difficulty and personal sacrifice, a nation was born. There were all kinds of problems, a string of defeats I mentioned in New York, the winter at Valley Forge, the treachery of Benedict Arnold, the defection of soldiers again, and again, and again. The victory came in the south, the least likely place. Nathanael Greene basically hounded the British General Lord Cornwallis through Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, into Virginia until the great victory at Yorktown. It is interesting when you read the history though, Greene never commanded a battle where he was on the field and they won. They won a couple battles where subordinate commanders were in charge. Greene wrote, famously, to a friend about his time there. He didn't know they were going to win, obviously, he thinks they are going to lose, but he says, "Basically, this is what we do—we fight, we get beat, we rise to fight again." It was actually the motto for the U.S. Army for a long time, "We fight, get beat, we rise to fight again."

Well, if that can be true of something, of the importance of establishing a nation, is it not a thousand times more true that the importance of the Kingdom of God requires that kind of sacrifice, that kind of commitment. You know where the decision, we talked about last Sunday, the decision of the Supreme Court, we see

that in many ways the future is bleak in ways, it looks that way, if you look at it the way we tend to look at it, uncertain. But in reality, when we understand who is on the throne, it is not bleak at all. So the question that I want us to ask today is: *How do we face the future?* ‘Facing an Uncertain Future’, and I think that Jesus does for us, in these verses, we’re going to see there are three basic points. But before we begin to unpack those, let’s read the text, John 16:29-33. Actually, let’s read from Verse 25 to get the context of what the disciples are going to say to Jesus, but we’re going to focus in on Verses 29-33. Verse 25:

John 16:25-33 ~ “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. 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. 28 I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.”

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.” 31 Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? 32 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. 33 These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

Let’s pray together.

Father, we ask You for the blessing of Your Spirit now. That You would give us the Spirit without measure, and that the Holy Spirit that inspired these perfect words to be written down for us, would now illuminate our minds and hearts to see, and to understand, and to respond to in humble obedience to Your word, and in loving worship to our Savior. We pray in His name, Amen.

‘Facing an Uncertain Future’. Jesus basically, I think, answers three questions for us in this passage that we would do well to consider as we think about the future. The three questions basically are: *What? How?* and *What?* And the first question is, *What should we expect?* Secondly, *How should we respond?* And thirdly, *What*

should we experience? So, what should we expect? How should we respond when we get it? And then, what should we experience if we respond the way we should?

1) What Should We Expect?

First, what should we expect? Now, Jesus makes this very clear throughout the night in *'The Farewell Discourse'*, but it is absolutely crystal clear in Chapter 16:33. What does the future hold for the disciples? What does the future hold for us as Christians? Look what He says in Verse 33:

John 16:33 ~ These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. (But here is the key phrase.) In the world you have tribulation,...

What should we expect? Tribulation. In fact, the verb tense is the Greek present tense. He doesn't say, "In the world you will have tribulation." We might have thought He would say that. "In the future you will have tribulation. Guys, it is going to get bad here in a few hours. It is going to get bad in the future." He could have used the future tense, but He uses the present tense, and the Greek present doesn't just emphasize present time. It does that, He is basically saying, "You are now having it," but the Greek present tense is different than the English present in that it emphasizes the kind of action as well. The present tense is continual, ongoing, and so the emphasis is, He is basically saying, "In this world you are having tribulation. In this world you are continually having tribulation. So in this world, certainly, you will have tribulation because it is what you have now."

Now when He says *'tribulation'*, I mean the word *'tribulation'*, it is a good translation, it basically means *'oppression, distress, affliction'*. It comes from a verb, the noun *'tribulation'* comes from a verb which means *'to crush, to squeeze, to press'*. So when you crush, or squeeze, or press something, the impact of it is oppression, distress, affliction—tribulation. So He is saying that you are going to be pressed, and crushed, and squeezed. That is a part of what it is for a Christian to live in this world. That is what we can expect. When we look at this in context, what we see that He is talking about, it is really clear that in particular He is thinking of a kind of tribulation that He calls earlier in the passage *'persecution'*.

There are all kinds of tribulation in a fallen world, isn't there? I mean, the suffering of death, the suffering of disease, the suffering of accidents that happen. I mean, there are all kinds of tribulations that can come into your life. You could be pressed, and squeezed, and crushed by all sorts of things. Natural disasters, natural

afflictions, but here in context, He has in mind in particular, persecution. Because when we look at the context, just remember these chapters flow together as a part of one discourse on one evening. Look back at Chapter 15:18:

John 15:18-20 ~ “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you;...

He’s telling them just a few moments before, “You’re going to be persecuted. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you. If they hated Me, they will hate you.” Now there are two things that we can see about persecution, and let me just define persecution. I mean, it is ‘*opposition, or hostility, or ill treatment because of our religious commitments or expressions*’. So it is ‘*to be opposed, to be hated, to be mistreated because of your spiritual commitments, or your expressions of those commitments*’. The fact that you say there is only one way to Heaven is through Jesus Christ. People will oppose you, they will be hostile. At times they will mistreat you for that. For you to say that God is the one who creates us, male or female, and it is not up to us to change our sex. It’s clearly what the Bible teaches.

He made us, He formed us in the womb. You say, “Well, I feel like a woman, but I’m in a man’s body.” Well, we could be sympathetic, and we should be more sympathetic, sometimes Christians react too harshly. We can say, “I’m very sorry. I’m concerned about you. I want to understand, but let me tell you this, the way of freedom is to understand regardless of what you feel, God has made you, and your feelings are not more important than what God has done, and it is a great act of rebellion to change your sex, and it will not lead to life. It will not bring you real happiness or lasting joy.” So our concern is not to put people down, it is to lift them up, and to say, “There is a better way.” But in just saying that, they find that offensive, and they find that incredibly offensive.

I think one of the reasons that there is this mad rush for the affirmation of gay marriage, why do they care so much? Is it really that big of a deal from the standpoint of insurance? There may be small little differences that they get, but many folks have already been given the benefits to that anyway. Companies have been acting like if you have a relationship like that, they treat your partner the same way they would a spouse. So it has already sort of happened informally, what is the drive for it? The drive for it is ultimately that, I think the impetus behind so

much of it is the guilt and the condemnation that the people who are living that lifestyle have in their hearts, and they are trying for affirmation because the guilt is crying out. And they think that we are the cause of their guilt. The cause of their guilt is their own conscience. When we speak the truth and we're trying to help them, they hate us because we are reminding them of the pain and agony of their souls. What it should bring from us is genuine compassion, and love, and concern, but unashamed conviction in declaring the truth, because we are holding forth the word of life. God is the one who has made us, He knows how our bodies are supposed to operate. It is like trying to live your life by ignoring the manufacturer's handbook. You just want to do it because you feel like that, but do what you feel like.

I bought a weed eater a few years back, and I don't normally read the manual that carefully, but I made a point to read it carefully enough to see that what I needed to put in it was an oil/gas mix, and how to do that. I read the instructions on how to do that. It was the first thing I'd ever owned that needed that. It has been 10 or 11 years ago, I guess, that I bought the weed eater, like that really matters. But if I had tried to run that with gasoline, I don't know, maybe it would have run a little bit, probably it wouldn't have, but if I ran it for a while with gas/oil, and then forgot, and, "Hey, I'm just going to do it the way I feel like. I don't have any oil mix, and I don't feel like going to buy some oil mix. I feel like doing it right now, and I think that how I feel should trump everything else, and I'm going to do it." What would happen? I wouldn't have that weed eater very long. You just don't do things against the manufacturer's instructions, and that is what we are saying. That is our message. It is that simple. It is not a message of hate, it is a message of love, it is a message of kindness, and we need to be careful not to be angry with those people.

In a sense, one of the problems we have at July 4 as Christians, is remembering that America really is not a Christian country, and it really never was. I know there were some wonderful things that God did in His grace, but I think that we can, if you put it in context biblically, you could just say that the only Christian nation, really ultimately, has always been the church. That is God's nation. The Old Testament church of the true Israel, and the New Testament church of the true followers of Christ, which are the true Israel. Wherever they live, that is the nation of God, and when we understand that, we are not so angry, and we don't see the left as political enemies, we see them as we should see them, as the mission field. These are people who need Christ, they need a Savior, and the darkness is getting darker, but the opportunities are great.

A couple of things I want to say about this, what we should expect in tribulation. We should see that tribulation, or persecution, two things under this first point, *What should we expect? Persecution is Normal*, is the first one. And the second is, *Persecution is Reasonable*. This is not a happy, feel good message. In some ways, for us, at first glance, but when you really understand the truth, God's way is much more glorious than what you or I would like.

A) Persecution is Normal:

We would like things to go our way, we'd like every day, every green light to magically turn green as I'm driving, everywhere I go. Everything to go well when we are preparing a meal, or we are going about our business, or we are doing our yards, or whatever. Everything to go well, that is what we want. That is just not God's will for you. That is not God's will for you in a fallen world. That is what Heaven will be like, but until then, we just have to get used to the fact—that's not God's will for us. We need affliction, so normal, Jesus says it is the normal thing for His people to be hated. It is the normal thing for His people to have tribulation and persecution.

I was with a group of pastors last week, actually the day before the Supreme Court ruling. We were talking about this, and one of the pastors was sharing, just that he had preached the Sunday before the Supreme Court ruling, basically from another passage, 1 Timothy 2, where it says that, "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." He said, "Listen, folks, this is now, America has now returned to normal, that what has been going on for the last 200 years is abnormal, an aberration." That it is normal for the church to be against the world, and it always, we really have been, but it has not been so obvious, has it? Because so much of our thought processes have been, were imbibed in the founding of our country. So there was a lot of good things that were true of what America is, or was, or may be again. That is all up to God.

But it is normal for Christians to be persecuted, and the original audience of John's Gospel, we've noted that probably John was writing around 85 to 90 A.D., the last Gospel to be written, he was writing during the reign of the emperor Domitian. Most historians believe that the first great, widespread persecution was under Nero, 64-68, and the second, even more widespread in some ways, was under Domitian, 81-96. Domitian, we can read from documents, we know that he executed members of his own family, and it appears because they were Christians. Because he executed members of his own family, and what we have in the Roman documentation is for atheism, and for Jewish manners. That is kind of basically

code for how they understood what the Christian was. They called Christians atheists because the Christian was the person who would not worship the Roman emperor, or the Roman gods. Atheism—no gods. “We won’t worship *their* God,” atheists, and Jewish manners implies that connection. So he killed people in his own family.

So John is writing this Gospel to people in their life circumstance where persecution is all around them, or the winds of it are close enough that they can feel it. In fact, when you look at John’s other writings, like Revelation, turn over to Revelation for a moment, and there are various controversies, or disagreements about when exactly Revelation was written. Some people believe in the 60’s, some believe in the 90’s. I personally believe the 90’s, but it really doesn’t change ultimately the message for us, what we’re going to see today. What we see though is that when Jesus gave these words to the apostle John, the same author of John’s Gospel, receives the revelation of Jesus Christ. And at the beginning of the revelation of Jesus Christ, Jesus dictates to him seven letters to seven churches, and He tells us some things about those seven church’s circumstances. These were seven literal churches in Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey. These were seven places where the Gospel had made significant inroads, and they were established churches, fellowships of the people of God in these various cities. But what do we see about their circumstances? Let’s just look at the first three letters here for a moment. Look at Chapter 2, Verse 2, this is the church at Ephesus. He says:

Revelation 2:2-3 ~ ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; 3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary.

Do you see? Does it sound like it is easy to be a Christian in Ephesus, or hard? It is hard. Your perseverance, Verse 2. Your perseverance, Verse 3, repeated. Endured, not grown weary. Chapter 2 and Verse 9, to the church at Smyrna, He says:

Revelation 2:9-10 ~ ‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), (Spiritually, the idea is.) and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Chapter 2, Verse 13, to the church at Pergamum, He writes:

Revelation 2:13 ~ 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

You see that one of the believers there at Pergamum had died for the Gospel, for the cross. So the idea is, the point is, that John's readers, he is writing around 85 A.D., he writes this Gospel of John. He is writing to people in circumstances of persecution who understand the reality in the impending nature, the potentiality of persecution. And so when Jesus says these words to the disciples, they ring especially powerfully in the hearts of his readers. They can understand, when He says to them, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world," "We understand what He was talking about when He talked to the apostles because we see it ourselves. We see that it is hard to be faithful to Christ, that it means being opposed, and having people hate you, being ill-treated by the Jews, and by the Romans." So it was normal, persecution was normal. It was also reasonable.

B) Persecution is Reasonable:

Now He said in Chapter 15, Verses 18-19, we looked at a moment ago, when we looked back at that:

John 15:18-19 ~ "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world,...

It would love you, but you are not of the world, therefore it hates you. If you were of the world it would love you, but see once you become a Christian, what happens is you have been radically transformed, and made a citizen of another world. You've been, to be in Christ is to be a new creature, you've been recreated, and so the world does not naturally have affinity for you, it has hostility for you. This is perfectly reasonable. It is not what we would like or prefer, nobody wants to be disliked, but it is part of the inevitable nature of the change that has happened to us. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 2, Verses 15-16, He says we are the fragrance of Christ to those who are perishing, and to those who are being saved. So that when we interact with people, when we talk with people that we are the fragrance, that they may not understand why at first, but there is something about us that is the fragrance of Christ, and to those who are being saved, it is the fragrance of life

unto life. To those who are perishing, it's the fragrance of death unto death, and we cannot change that. It's part of what it is to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Those who are elect who have not yet been saved, who are in the darkness, in the agony that sin brings, when they are around us, the Lord will make us to them a fragrance of life unto life. "I want what she has. I want what he has." But to those who are perishing, they will see us a fragrance of death unto death. So in that sense it's reasonable. It's unavoidable. The *cosmos*, the world, in the world you have tribulation. The world hates you, a key word for John. The idea of *cosmos* even in John, has this idea of conflict. The world system is the value system, the patterns of thought, the ideas and ideals that permeate society, and that basically we see that society is against God, and against Christ, and against those who belong to God in Christ.

This is the way it was in the 1st Century. Even the Romans at times would articulate this in the writings of Tacitus the historian, or Pliny the Governor, or various correspondences between the emperors. At times they would talk about the Christians and the atheism, and the basic sense that you get as you read through the historical documents is they believe that Christians were so out of step with Roman society that basically Rome was a pluralistic society. You could believe anything you wanted to believe as long as you also allowed that everybody else could believe what they wanted to believe, and everybody's okay. It was kind of an, "I'm okay, you're okay, and by the way, we'd also like you to sacrifice to the emperor," that that was what would bind the social fabric together. All these diverse peoples that Rome had conquered were now under one window, one emperor, and they felt like to keep it together, they had to have the bond of emperor worship. So it was kind of a practical reality, and Christians were a fly in the ointment. We would not worship the emperor, and so the sense was they had this sense that Christians are basically bringing down spiritually, they'll bring down the wrath of the gods, because they don't honor the other gods, for the more religious people. For the more practical people, they're like, "They're messing up our society." So they would talk about how the Christians were guilty of crimes against humanity, because our insistence on one Lord, Jesus. So it was normal and it was reasonable.

We can see that today so much of that same kind of mindset has come back around. We live in a pluralistic society where it's okay to believe anything as long as you don't say that your truth, your spiritual truth, is absolute and exclusively right. If you allow for everybody else to be right too, it's okay. But when you say the words of Jesus, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me," that makes you divisive and against the grain of the culture. When you maintain that truth is absolute, you are going against the grain of the

culture. That there is absolute truth, people today don't even want to talk about absolute truth. "What's your view of history?" "Well, it just depends on you." Everything's relative intellectually and certainly morally. Everyone does what is right in their own eyes, and it's your responsibility to affirm their right to do that, and to bless them as they do it, and to give hearty approval to them in what they do. And if you don't do that, you're out of step with the culture. And for those who are more spiritual today, sort of the new age kind of people, what are we? We are a dissonant note in the cosmic world peace kind of mindset.

You know those silly things like *visualize world peace*? That just thinking about something makes it better, that there's cosmic consciousness in all of that. The Christians are a dissonant note that they'd like to drown out. Politically we're a problem because we agitate. We do nothing but speak the truth, and that agitates the world. Lovingly, kindly, if we have an opportunity to meet someone that we can tell is living a lifestyle in some area, anything that is sinful, and we care about them and we want to say, "Listen, I'm a sinner just like you, but I found salvation through Jesus Christ. He's changed my life and He's given me a reason to live. And as I'm living according to His word, my life is coming into order more, and more, and more. I still struggle in every way. I need Christ every moment of every day, but it is so wonderful to be a follower of Jesus Christ." You say that as gently as you can, and yet that itself is offensive. And given the world's commitments, their logic is reasonable. And why is it? It's because the god of this age has blinded their eyes. The ruler of this world has orchestrated things so that black is white, good is evil, yellow is purple. Everything is completely out of phase. So what should we expect? Tribulation and persecution, that's what the Scripture says.

2) How should we respond?

That's the second question. In a sentence, or in just a few words, we should respond in faith. Faith is the answer. Tribulation and persecution are what to expect. How do you respond? Respond in faith, but what does that look like? There are two sub-points under this. How do you respond in faith?

A) We should put no confidence in ourselves:

It's interesting when you look at the context of what Jesus says in Verse 33, how it flows upon what the disciples say in Verses 29 and 30, and it's important to stop and think about what they're saying. Now, He's been telling them, "Listen guys, I'm going away, and when I go away, I'm going to send the Comforter. And when the Comforter comes, you're going to then know things that you don't know now.

He's going to guide you into all truth. It's going to be so much better for you. After I go away and come back, and after I send the Comforter, it's going to be so much better." That's what He's saying. But they get it wrong as they continually get it wrong, because they don't yet have the Comforter. And in Verse 29, they say:

John 16:29 ~ ... "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. 30 Now we know..."

In fact, the emphasis is on the word *now*. Jesus had been saying basically, "Listen. Now you're going to have tribulation. Now you're going to have difficulty. In that day it's going to be better." But they say, "No, now we have it." They're saying, "Now we know that You know all things. Now we believe that You came from God." And then Jesus answers, and you can see that this is how He's interpreting it, because He says: ***Do you now believe?*** There's sarcasm in that. In fact, in the Greek it's two words: *now believe*, because the *you* is contained in the word *believe*. So it's ...*now believe? Now you believe?*

John 16:32 ~ Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered,...

"You see, you're not really believing like you think you believe. You're not really where you think you are. You have too much confidence in your flesh. You don't understand that you're going to need the Holy Spirit to come, and you have no ability to do anything for Me." That's what He says.

John 16:32 ~ Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home,...

The word that He uses here, *scattered*, is a word He used in John 10 when He said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd protects the sheep. When a wolf comes in and attacks the sheep, he scatters them." So the image is like sheep just running in panic and terror from an attacker. There's no sense in which sheep do it orderly, like, "Hey guys, what we need to do is circle," like musk ox or a water buffalo. They kind of have a strategy. They will panic a little bit at first, and then you'll see them kind of get it together. "Wait a minute, guys. We're big. We can handle this. We can fight against these lions." Well, sheep I guess wouldn't have any option anyway. If they really took stock, they'd still say, "RUN!! There's nothing we can do." But they don't seem to even take time to think, and so the disciples did that.

He said, “Look, you guys are going to scatter each to his own home. You’re going to run scared in every direction,” and just like Peter had said a couple of chapters ago, “Listen, I won’t deny You. Though they deny You, I won’t,” and Jesus said, “You’ll deny me three times.” What Jesus was trying to do was to smash their self-reliance and their self-confidence. He’s saying, “The only way that you’re going to be able to bear up under the affliction, under the trials that come, is for you to do what Paul says, to worship in the Spirit of God, to glory in Christ Jesus.” We are the true circumcision (Philippians 3:3) who worship in the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh. Jesus is trying to demolish their self-confidence. That’s the best thing that He can do for us. Pride goes before destruction. The one who will stand is the one that God makes to stand. Remember he says that in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 10:12 ~ Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

You think you stand? Take heed lest you fall. But he will stand, for his God will make him stand. Do you see the difference? That’s what Jesus is getting at. They thought, “We see it all now,” and He said, “No, you’ve got to have the Holy Spirit, and even after you get the Holy Spirit, you’re going to have to remember that you’re going to be tempted again and again to think that you can do it in your own strength, and you’re going to have to realize that you must depend completely upon Me. You will fail, and fail miserably, unless you humble yourself and put no confidence in the flesh.

So how should we respond? We should respond in faith. In faith means first of all you put no confidence in yourself, because remember faith is the empty outstretched hand of a beggar. Faith brings nothing to Christ. It brings only emptiness reaching out to Christ. So how should we respond? Put no confidence in ourselves. Secondly, how should we respond in faith? Not only put no confidence in ourselves, but put all our confidence in Christ.

B) Put all our confidence in Christ:

He says, “Listen guys, you’re going to leave Me alone, and yet I’m not alone, because the Father is with Me. The difference between you and Me is massive. I stay on My course. I stay on My task.” And then He says in Verse 33:

John 16:33 ~ These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.

He basically is saying, listen, what we need to do to stand up under tribulation and persecution and difficulties, no matter when they come or how they come, to respond in faith as we have no confidence in ourselves. We have all confidence in Jesus. He says, "In Me you have peace." Now, the idea is when you go through troubling circumstances, when you see things around us like they are today, it is normal for us to know that we don't have peace. We get to the sense of, "I have no peace. I have no courage," and actually that's the best place to be. In and of myself, I have no peace and I have no courage, but I can find peace in Christ. I can find courage in Jesus. That's what He's saying, "In Me, you will have peace."

In fact, He said it in John 14:27. Remember this has been the burden of His heart throughout the whole evening. In John 14:27 He said, "Don't let your heart be troubled," and right before that He said, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Listen, what you need is My peace. You don't have it. You can't manufacture it. You can't work it up." You're going to have to have it given to you by Jesus. That's what we need. When He says, "In Me you'll have peace," I think it recalls when He said, "In Me," so much, just a few moments before in John 15:1-7, when He talked about, "I'm the vine. You're the branches." In Verse 2:

John 15:2 ~ Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit,...

John 15:4 ~ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

That's an important phrase right there, isn't it? ***...for apart from Me you can do nothing.*** We can do nothing. Not some things, but we can do nothing, and so we need to be completely dependent and look completely to Christ. But in Him you will have peace. "I have said these things so that in Me you may have peace." There's also the encouragement here, that how do you abide in Jesus? We talked about this then in John 15, but it's again a window to it here. "In Me you may have peace."

John 16:33 ~ These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace.

In other words, how do you abide in Jesus? You abide in Jesus through the word of Christ. You get into the word of Christ and you meditate on the word of Christ, the word of God about Christ, and the words of Christ, and then you will find peace. That's how it comes, because faith is faith in the word of God. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. So the idea is the way that we're going to do this is that we're going to let the turmoil in our lives drive us to Jesus. The more unsettled things get around us, the more we're driven to Christ. This shows us that tribulation is really beneficial. The benefit of trials is they expose our abject weakness, our absolute poverty.

Isn't it funny how we can feel like we've got it together, and then something happens and we know we don't? The Christian is the person who knows that, and embraces that, and rejoices in it. This is what Paul is talking about in 2 Corinthians 12. It's really profound what the apostle says there. Paul, the author of almost half of the New Testament, a man of God, says in 2 Corinthians 12:7, he talks about:

2 Corinthians 12:7 ~ Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!

Paul says, "Listen, as I was growing in knowledge of Christ, what was my temptation? It was to exalt myself." Wait a minute. You should know better than that, Paul. This is true for every believer. We have to keep fighting against pride, and the good news is God is more committed to us fighting against pride than we are just like He did for Paul. Paul didn't ask Him for a messenger of Satan, a thorn in the flesh. "Lord, please give me a thorn in the flesh." But he might have said, "Lord, keep me humble," and the Lord gave him what he needed. But he goes on to say in Verse 8:

2 Corinthians 12:8 ~ Concerning this...

We don't know exactly what it was, and we're not going to stop to consider it right now.

2 Corinthians 12:8 ~ Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”

“My power is perfected in weakness. Paul goes on to say:

2 Corinthians 12:9 ~ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

That’s the path to power in the Christian life, suffering and weakness. So we put all our confidence in Christ. In Him we have peace. We don’t have peace. We look to Him for peace. We run to Him. We look at what He’s done for us. We need courage. We’re afraid. Well, how do we take courage? Look what he says.

John 16:33 ~ ...but take courage...

He doesn’t just say, “Take courage,” and stop there. He could have. I mean, the idea of *take courage*, some translations say *take heart*. I think sometimes we do this. I know I do in my life. I talk to myself that way sometimes, like, “Hey, you’re not supposed to act like this. Stop it. Take courage.” I don’t usually say, “Take courage.” That’s not one I use much, but anyway, “Stop acting like that. You’re a Christian and you’re a pastor. You shouldn’t be doing this. That’s not going to avail anything.” Jesus said:

John 16:33 ~ ...but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

The *take courage* is to be followed by looking at Jesus. If you want courage, you need to look at the Captain of your salvation. If you want courage in the midst of conflict where it feels like everything’s falling in upon you, and it looks like we’re losing, what we have to do is look at our Savior and realize, “Look, He overcame the world.” And He overcame the world in the most profound way when it appeared that He was losing. And it is God’s way to still overcome the world in just that way, that when it appears His Kingdom is losing, His Kingdom is massively triumphing and going forth. But it goes forth through the lives of people like you and me who are timid, and afraid, and weak, but who have grace from God to just trust and to look at Christ. We have a great Savior.

This is so wonderful. When we don't have peace, what we're supposed to do is like we talked about last week—prayer is pouring out your heart to God. “Lord, I don't even know where to start. I'm overwhelmed,” and you just start pouring out your heart to God, and you realize that's where He wants you to be. This is relationship with God. He wants you to come and pour out your heart to Him. He wants you to do that so that then you can let Him fill you with His goodness and His glory.

So when you don't have peace, you go and say, “Lord, I'm all troubled. I'm anxious. I'm looking around me. I see what's happening, and I'm afraid.” What do you do? Go to Him and find peace in Jesus. Go to Jesus. That's where you find peace. You're not going to find it anywhere else. You say, “I'm afraid. I don't have the courage. I don't know how to say something in this circumstance. I know I should say something in this circumstance to speak the truth, to point this person to Christ, but I don't have the courage.” What do you do? Go to Jesus.

Don't get discouraged. What Satan wants you to do is when we realize we don't have courage, he wants to kick you while you're down, and say, “You bum. You're not worthy to talk to this person.” Our flesh joins in on that. That's not from God. God convicts you and says that you're sinning, but He says, “Follow Me.” He never puts us down. In Christ, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. He convicts and He calls, and He says, “Look, you don't have courage? I do.” So we come to a situation where we need courage, and we say, “Lord, I'm afraid. I don't have the ability to stand up under this trial. I get nervous. I cave in. You know what a people-pleaser I am.”

You go to the Lord with that, and you say, “Father, forgive me for being so sinful that I would care more about what people think than what You think, that I would care more about their being pleased, than Your Name. Forgive me for that. That's wicked. Thank You that the blood of Jesus Christ has already cleansed me from that. It's washed me from that. And not only am I clean and righteous, but You see me as if I always was courageous for you, because Jesus was always courageous for You. And because He was always courageous for You, He's going to live out through me even now, the Spirit of Christ in me. This is what Paul was talking about in Galatians 2:20 when he said:

Galatians 2:20 ~ I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,...

I depend on Him. “Lord Jesus, when You were tempted to shrink back, You never shrunk back. You were bold and courageous at every moment. You’re my Savior, the One who lives in me.” And as you keep looking at Him, saying, “Lord, help me now,” you trust in Him, and suddenly you find yourself being filled with peace and courage that you didn’t have.

So what should we expect? We should expect tribulation and persecution. How should we respond? We should respond in faith, by putting no confidence in ourselves, and by putting all our confidence in Christ. And what should we experience? I’ve been touching on it a little bit right now, but let me just say this quickly. We should experience supernatural peace. The wonder of what God wants to do in our lives is put us in circumstances where we have no peace, and He wants to fill our hearts with such peace that we can say with the apostle Paul, “I know what peace that passes understanding is experientially. I’ve found it in the most difficult circumstance, because of my great Savior.”

He wants to take people who have no courage and make them as courageous as lions, because they’re following the Lion of the tribe of Judah, so that they can say, “I was afraid. I was timid, and yet God in my weakness made me strong. My Savior helped me. When I falter and when I stumble, I go back to Him, and I ask Him to forgive me, I move forward with more boldness next time.” He makes us supernaturally victorious. In the same way that He overcame the world, we will overcome the world. I mentioned those seven letters from Revelation. Remember the seven letters that Jesus dictated to the churches in Revelation? In each of them, seven times, He says, “To him who overcomes.” Basically He’s saying Christians are overcomers. That’s the word νικάω (nikaó) that He uses here. “I have overcome the world.” That is the verb νικάω. The noun is νίκη (niké), like Nike shoes, victory, overcome, to be victorious.

In those seven times in Revelation, He says, “Listen, Christians are those who by His grace and by His power will be victorious. Or as Paul says in Romans 8:37, “For in Christ we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” ὑπερνικάω (hypernikaō) means hyper-victorious. We’re more than victorious. When we put all our confidence in Christ, no confidence in the flesh, and we trust in Him, and we look to Him, and we know that He’s sovereign and working in our lives, He makes us more than victorious. When you feel alone, when you feel uncertain, when you feel afraid, when you feel anxiety and fear, that’s the time to run to Jesus, and to realize God has given me this opportunity to commune with Him.

One of those beautiful things about times that are tough is it makes us look to God in ways that we don't when things are pleasant. Isn't that just true? I mean, as Christians, as we grow in grace, we should be more about thanking God in those wonderful moments, right? Whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God. If you eat a good meal, thank Him for it. Eat in His presence. "Lord, this is so good. Thank You for this time I'm having with my children, or this time I'm having with this friend." But isn't it much easier to remember to pray when things are tough? "I don't have the resources right now. It drives me to You." So that should make us be like Paul who says, "I glory in my weaknesses. I glory when God shows me how inadequate I am, because when I'm weak, then I'm strong." We have a wonderful Savior.

Let's go to Him in prayer...

Father, we thank You for a message of comfort, confidence, joy, and peace that is in Jesus Christ. We know that You hold all things in Your hand, that when we walk in any circumstance, we may feel alone, but we are never alone. We have the Spirit of the living God in us, the Spirit of Jesus Himself, who said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you," and our loving Father brooding over us caring for us. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear so that we'll be more faithful. Help us to be people who joyfully, with Your peace, walk through our lives with increasing manifestations of Your supernatural peace, Your supernatural courage, and Your supernatural victory. We ask this not for ourselves ultimately, but for the glory of Your Name. You are worthy of lives like that.

We pray for those that are here today that do not know You as Savior, that today You would grant them the grace to repent of their sins and to turn to faith in Christ, to understand that Jesus can wash the filthiest sinner. His blood is more than able to save to the uttermost the one whose hope is in Him. Help them run to you and realize that the best place in the world to be is walking in the train of Christ's triumph. Lord, be with us and help us. We pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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