

War and Peace
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John 16:16-33
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the 16th chapter of John. Today we are going to look again at Verse 33, one verse today. We've been looking at this passage for some time, and last week we talked about Verse 33, but I feel like there are some things we needed to see before we move on to Chapter 17. The subject of the message, as I mentioned earlier, is peace, and how to have it. How do you find peace? What we're going to see is that Jesus wills that His disciples have peace. In fact, it is a great burden of His heart on the night before the cross, that His people have peace. It is something He keeps coming back to, and then after the resurrection, continues to emphasize. We're going to see that emphasis, and it is certainly here in our verse.

But how do you find it? He not only tells them He wants them to have it, but He tells them how to find it, and also where to find it. The title of the message is 'War and Peace', and what we're going to see is that peace does not come as a result of retreating, or appeasement of our enemies spiritually, but peace comes as a result of courage in facing conflict, and winning the victory. So actually a lesson that is repeated throughout history. You know, the old adage that 'If you don't know history, you are bound to repeat it.'? You see that happening, I think it is happening in our day in the way that the west is approaching the emergence of radical Islam. I think our leaders have taken the tack that appeasement, being nice, sort of apologizing, our president came into office apologizing to everyone about all we've done wrong, and trying, hoping that that would then assuage the concerns, and the frustrations, and the angers. What has happened over time is exactly what happens every time you try to hold out the olive branch to those who are intent on war, they just eat the olive branch, and start eating your arm too.

That was something that you see so clearly played out in the history of World War II. Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, his famous declaration of peace that was like the prophets in Jeremiah's day, who cried, "Peace! Peace!" and God rebuked them, "You cry, 'Peace! Peace!' when there is no peace." Neville Chamberlain said, "Peace for our time, peace with honor," after the Munich Agreement in which he had ceded a significant portion of Czechoslovakia to Adolf Hitler in hopes of finally appeasing the Germans, and now establishing peace, and, "Peace for our time, peace with honor." Well, it wasn't peace, and it wasn't honor. It was appeasement, it was cowardice, and surrender, and it didn't lead to peace.

So the question is, in the spiritual realm, how do you experience peace? Jesus wants us to experience peace. The burden of His heart is for His disciples to experience peace, and we see in this verse a recipe for how that is to be experienced. Look with me at John 16, we'll read simply 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.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You for the opportunity to bow before You in prayer, and to sit under Your word, and our prayer is that Your Holy Spirit would work in our hearts. That You would guide our thoughts, and our words, and Father, our response is that we might hear what You want us to hear, and that we might become what You want us to become by the grace and the power of Jesus Christ. We pray in His name, Amen.

The title 'War and Peace' of course I borrowed from Leo Tolstoy, the Russian author who wrote the epic novel that I must confess I haven't read. I don't know how many of us have. It is 1,225 pages in its original, published copy, so if you've read it, I'd like to shake your hand after church. You can tell me about it, give me a thumbnail sketch. I'm not intending to read it. No, possibly, who knows. But the reason I titled it 'War and Peace' is because you have in this verse a surprising juxtaposition of war and peace. They are side-by-side in the verse. Jesus says, ***...I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation,...*** which in a sense, the tribulation is referring to the warfare, but the next phrase makes it explicit. ***...but take courage; I have overcome the world.*** The word 'overcome' is the language of warfare. We mentioned last time, it is the Greek verb 'νικάω nikaō', which means 'to be victorious, to win the victory', and it is in the language, it is a word that comes from the language of conflict, fight. And so He is saying, "I want you to have peace, and at the same time you are at war." It is a surprising, and paradoxical juxtaposition, and that is actually what the Christian is called to.

In fact, the Christian life is filled with these kinds of surprising paradoxical realities. I mean, for instance, you know, you can have peace when you are at war. That is what you are supposed to do because you are in a warfare, and you will be until the day that you die, or until Jesus comes back. We are in a warfare, but we can have peace. We are to work out our salvation, but also, you are to work for the

Lord, but you are to rest in Christ. You work by resting, you have peace by warring.

Now what I want to do to try to unpack this concept is to consider this concept under three questions, two W's and an H. We are going to ask *What? What does Jesus want for us?* That's the first question. Secondly, *Where does He want us to find it, or to experience it? Where does He want us to experience it?* So, *What?* and then *Where?* Two W's, and thirdly, *How? How does He want us to experience it? Or how are we to experience what He wants us to have?*

1) What?

Now, let's begin with the first point, *What? What? Where?* and *How?* What does Jesus want for us? I've already said. He wants peace. It is the burden for His disciples. Here in the shadow of the cross, the last moments of His time with His disciples before Calvary, knowing that His post-resurrection appearances will be limited, and that then He will ascend to the Father, not to return bodily until the second coming. So the disciples will spend the rest of their lives without the bodily presence of the Son of God. Feeling the sense of weight upon them, He wants them to have peace. In fact, He said this throughout the evening. He's been concerned about their hearts being troubled, we saw in John 14:1, "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Don't let it be fearful." But in Verse 27 of Chapter 14 He says, ***Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you;...*** "Listen, what I want to leave behind is peace. I want you to have peace. He comes back to that same theme in our text this morning, John 16:33, possibly just an hour or two after He had said what He said in Verse 22, ***Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful.*** "I want you to have peace."

This idea of peace, He also mentions in His post-resurrection appearances, three times in John 20, the same Gospel. Verse 19, Jesus appears to the apostles, the first post-resurrection appearance of Jesus. They are all in a room, and Jesus appears, and He says, what is the thing He says to them? First word, 'peace', ***Peace be with you.*** Now you will remember that ten of the eleven were there, one of the eleven was not, and that was Thomas, and Thomas we call 'Doubting Thomas' because he doubted the testimony of his ten fellow disciples. "Unless I see the nail prints, and I put my hand in His side, I won't believe," and so then, in Verse 26:

John 20:26 ~ After eight days (From the first appearance.) His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus *came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, (What? First word, 'peace'.) "Peace be with you."

He wanted them to experience peace. In fact, He also said that in Verse 21, He repeated, during His first appearance, He said *'peace'* twice. ***"Peace be with you."*** Verse 19. Then they rejoiced, they saw the Lord, Jesus said to them again, ***"Peace be with you."*** He wants us to have peace.

Now this idea of peace is something very rich. The Greek word that is translated *'peace'* here is certainly important to understand, but in so many cases when you do word studies, and you want to understand a word, you need to understand the word from the Old Testament as well, because the disciples, or the apostles, as they write the Scriptures, they are drawing from the Old Testament. So the word, the Greek word *'εἰρήνη eiréné'*, as the Hebrew word *'shalom'*, which occurs more than 250 times in the Old Testament. The word *'shalom'* which translated it means *'peace'*, is a very rich word. Now it has as its meaning *'the absence of conflict, the cessation of hostilities, the absence of warfare'*. Certainly contains there those things, but that is not the real essential meaning. That is a necessary part of it, because you can't have *'shalom'* without those things in the truest sense, but it is not just the absence of warfare, it is the blessing that results from this state.

The real root idea behind *'shalom'* is the idea of wholeness, completeness, harmony, sense of well-being. It is the sense that all is well. Everything is as it should be. That is the idea of this word. So this is what we see throughout the Old Testament, I mean the Aaronic blessing in Numbers 6:24, where he says, "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May He make His face to shine upon you. May He lift up His countenance upon you." And what? "And give you shalom, peace. Give you peace." This idea that all is well. This sense that everything is as it should be. That relationally, there is harmony. And of course *'shalom'* in the Old Testament we see, comes from relationship with God.

The problem that we have, we don't have peace when we are at war with God. And in this world, in this fallen world, every single person is born into the world as a sinner at war with God. That is why Jesus came into the world to bring about reconciliation. You reconcile, you don't reconcile friends, you reconcile warring parties. People aren't born children of God. In fact, Jesus had said in John 8, remember when He was talking to the Jews. He wasn't talking to Gentiles, He was talking to Jewish people, "You are of your father, the devil." Speaking to one of

the leaders of the Jews in Chapter 3, He said, “Except you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God. You need a new birth from above. You need to be born from above, by the Spirit, so that you can see the Kingdom of God, because you are dead in your trespasses and sins,” as Ephesians 2 says. So peace begins with peace with God, and this idea of ‘shalom’ is very much relational. You think about it. I mean, we are made for relationship. How can the old saying, ‘*If mom ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy*’, there is not hardly a truer human saying than that.

I remember a comedian saying that his dad told him when he was getting ready to get married, he said, obviously this didn’t really happen, it’s a comedian talking, but he said his dad said, “Son, you can be right or you can be happy.” Then he said his dad broke down and cried for like ten minutes. Now we make light of those things but there is a sense in which if our relationships are not in harmony, there is no sense of completeness or wholeness. Now, wait a minute, let me be clear on this, what we are going to see is, that for the Christian, his relationship with God being right, swallows up everything else. This is the wonder of what He is saying, because He is going to tell us that you and I live in a state of war, and yet we can have peace. That would mean that it’s true that if you are married to an unbeliever, or if you are married to someone who is not wanting to walk with Christ, well you are called to serve them, and love them, and to walk in peace. Even though Mom ain’t happy, you can still really be happy in Christ. So He wants peace for us. He wants that everything is as it should be, all is well, and that comes in relationship with God primarily.

You know, think about the beauty of peace. This is something, I think we don’t realize it is what we are looking for necessarily. Let me give you an example. Maybe some of you are like me, if we have things to do, whether it is work, or at home, jobs around the house, and I’m thinking, “I want to get this done, and I want to get this done. Then I’m going to get this done.” So what? Why? So then I can sit down and rest, be together, and enjoy the blessing of all being well, everything being as it should be. That is peace. You know, for some ladies maybe, it is there is not peace until things are picked up, and put away, and everything is in order. Maybe you have trouble having peace, knowing that that drawer is as junky as it is. Maybe you have trouble having peace because your husband isn’t as committed to order and neatness as you are. Well the good news is, make what you will out of these. The reality is that God wills for you to have peace regardless of the disharmony, and discord in your life because the reality is, we’re not home until we get to Heaven. That is where peace will finally be everywhere, but we can have peace in our hearts because of our relationship with Christ.

But the beauty of it, and the idea, thinking about getting everything done, and when you've done a task, and it actually worked out properly. You had something that you wanted to fix, this is something for me, I don't experience success that often. You know you start doing it, and you think it is so much harder than you thought it would be, or how many trips to Home Depot will this take? But when it actually works, the first time even, or the assembly instructions are accurate, and all the pieces, and all the bolts are used. The sense of just rest and enjoyment, that is a window into what He is talking about with '*shalom*'. We all are made to desire that, and the good news is, Jesus wants you to have that. This is not a '*name it, claim it*' kind of silliness that we see in our world, but this is biblical. This is where they kind of get the right idea, but they just twist it, and distort it, and miss the main point. God doesn't want us to have faith so that we just decide what we want, and you speak to your wallet, and you tell it that it is supposed to have money in it. That kind of nonsense, that is ridiculous. But He does want us to have faith that lays hold to the blessings which He has willed, and expressed in His word that He wants us to have, and He wants us to have, in a sense we're going to see an aggressive faith even, but it is a faith that responds to His word, not one that comes out of the desires of our own hearts. But He wants us to have peace. That is the first question, *What does Jesus want for us?* He wants peace.

2) Where?

Where does He want us to experience it? Where? The second question. In the midst of conflict, in the midst of warfare, we are called to have peace. We are at war, and He has been telling His disciples very clearly that they are at war. In fact, we titled the series of messages just on a few verses ago, from John 15:18 to John 16:4, we spent three weeks on the title 'The World at War with Us'. Jesus is basically saying in John 15:18, "If the world hates you, you know it hated Me before it hated you. 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. A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they are going to persecute you. There is no escape. You are at war." When you surrender to God, when He found you in your sin, and your misery, and He caused you to be born again, and gave you life, and eyes to see, ears to hear, repentance, and faith, when He gave you those gifts, and you began to follow Him, and you were transformed, and you were made a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, by definition you were made not of this world, and the conflict is inescapable.

But the wonder is, we can have peace in that realm. It is interesting to note, in Verse 33, the important preposition '*in*', because there is this contrast. ...*so that in*

Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation,... Jesus speaks of us being *in* Him, and *in* the world at the same time. This is what it is to be a Christian in a fallen world. We are in the world, and we are in Christ. There is a sense in which the more that you understand that, the more you see it is really that we exist in two realms. The reality is everybody exists in two realms because there is the spiritual realm, the invisible, and there is the visible. And before someone is saved, they are in both realms, physically they are a human being, spiritually they are sold in sin, under the children of the devil, by nature objects of wrath, they are bound up in Satan's, the strong man's house. But when we become a follower of Jesus Christ spiritually, something radical happens, and you could do a word study on this, and just look at this, look for all the places in the Scripture where you find the phrase '*in Christ*', '*in Christ Jesus*'. It is about 75 or 80 times depending on exactly how you count those, because there are some that are a little questionable. "Is this talking about our position, or is this talking about faith in Christ?" or something like that. But at least 75 you have signs in the New Testament, phrases like '*in Christ*' positionally, '*in Me*'. You see it in John's Gospel in Chapter 14:20, He doesn't use the phrase '*in Christ*', but He uses the phrase '*in Me*'.

John 14:20 ~ In that day (When the Holy Spirit comes.) you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me,...

Do you see that? "You are positionally in Me," you are inside of Christ. Then in Chapter 15, '*in Me*' occurs over, and over, and over again. Verse 2, ***Every branch in Me...*** "I'm the vine..." remember that is the vine and the vinedresser, the Father is the vinedresser. ***Every branch in Me...***, Verse 2. Verse 4, ***Abide in Me,...*** Verse 5:

John 15:5 ~ 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.

Verse 7, ***If you abide in Me,...*** In Christ, you look at like Ephesians 1:1, Paul says:

Ephesians 1:1 ~ ...To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:

The saints, the people of God, those who professed faith in Ephesus, Paul says are '*in Christ Jesus*'. Verse 3, what does that mean?

Ephesians 1:3 ~ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

This is the other realm we live in, that we are in the heavenly places, and the idea that it is not really two worlds like Earth, and some other planet. It is the physical realm, and the spiritual realm that are right over top of each other, and that are connected, intimately connected. But that for us to be ***...blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ***, he is saying that when you trust in Jesus Christ, you are brought into Him, in the heavenly places you are counted as being part of Christ. It is wonderful what He says, when you turn to Chapter 2, Verse 5. He says:

Ephesians 2:5-6 ~ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

He's saying that the Christian is somehow positionally seated in Heaven, in Christ right now. That is where you are, and it is really understanding this that is the basis for peace. It is really that as your eyes are able to see the unseen, this is what faith is, isn't it? Faith is the substance of things not seen, the assurance of things hoped for. It is to believe in what you don't see. The temporal things are seen, the eternal things are not seen. And the reality is, the Christian, when he places his faith in Christ, is now *in* Him, and *in* Him we have peace. The more that you realize you are in Him, the more you have peace. To see the unseen, that is the key to having peace while you are at war. The idea is, what do you see around you? You see war. To live as a Christian in this world, you see evil around you, you see evil even in our own flesh, our sin nature, we see evil happening, and growing, and increasing. It feels like it is coming in like a flood in our day, doesn't it? And yet, the Christian is to have peace because we are in Christ.

Really the picture is, it is kind of like, where are we supposed to have peace? We feel like we are being surrounded. I mean, we are battling the world, and the world has surrounded us. Do you ever feel like that? Like you've been surrounded? And if you focus on what you see, you are not going to have peace. But if you can focus on what you don't see, through the word of God, the clear promises of God, you will have peace. A great picture of this in the Old Testament is the story of Elisha at Dothan. Remember? Elisha and his servant are sleeping on the roof. It was

probably a day like now, a hot day like now. You know, our air conditioner is struggling a little bit, and at night, man, we are working to get cool.

Well, Elisha, in that day they had no air conditioner, so they would go up and sleep on the roof so they would catch the breeze better, and Elisha and his servant are up asleep on the roof. The servant gets up, and he is doing the stuff that his servant would do every morning, maybe getting the coffee ready, getting the bagels out, and Elisha is still snoozing. The servant is looking around, but he is up on the roof, and he happens to notice, he's looking around, he sees the glimmer of the sunlight shining off of something out there. He looks out there, and there are thousands, upon thousands of shields, and spear tips, and he sees the army of the Arameans, the Syrians, and he looks, and they have surrounded completely the city. He knows why they've surrounded it because Elisha has really been a thorn in the Arameans' side, because he keeps telling the king of Israel how to avoid entrapment. The Arameans set a trap somewhere, Elisha tells them, "Don't go that way, go this way." And so the king of the Arameans is, "What is happening? Which one of you are spies?" And they said, "Listen, Elisha knows what you say in your bed chamber. The prophet Elisha knows. Let's go get him." That is basically what led to all this, and now they've surrounded him, thousands of them.

Elisha has got no army, and so Elisha is waking up in the morning, and his servant says, "Master," but this is a paraphrase, "You've done it now. We're dead." "What's happening? What are you talking about?" "The Arameans have surrounded us." And Elisha is just calm, and the servant says, "What's wrong? Why are you not scared?" And Elisha prays and says, "Lord, open the eyes of my servant," and suddenly this servant, that had been trembling because he was focused on what was seen around him, his eyes were opened, and Dothan is nestled in the hills there, in the land of Israel, his eyes were open to see that surrounding this massive Syrian/Aramean army were brilliant, glimmering armies of God. The heavenly hosts had them surrounded. So it wasn't Elisha that was in danger, it was the Arameans that were in danger, and it was when he could see what is true, heavenly reality, then he had peace. Elisha saw it right away, the servant had to be helped to see it. Well, you and I are like that servant, aren't we? We need help to see it. We need to grow in our faith. But Jesus is saying, "When you understand what it is to be *in* Christ, you will have peace in conflict. Stuff will be happening around you, but you will understand that you may feel like you are surrounded, but in reality the world is surrounded," and Jesus Christ has already conquered. It is just a matter of His timing to work it out.

3) How?

So *What?* We're to have peace. *Where?* We're to have peace in the midst of conflict by realizing that we are *in* Christ. And then *How?* How does that really look in practice? The third question, how does He want us to experience peace in conflict? In John 16:33, Jesus says, ***In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.***" That imperative there, 'take courage', we need to talk a little more about that. We talked about it briefly last time. It is translated by the King James 'be of good cheer'. That shows how kind of the older translations, they just don't mean the same thing as it did then. It meant that in 1600 it meant 'take courage', but now it doesn't seem to carry that same thing, 'cheer', but the idea is 'take courage', or as the ESV and NIV translate it, 'take heart'. The picture is you are wanting to lose heart, you're wanting to draw back, you feel the pressure to shrink from your duty, to turn and run, and the exhortation is, 'don't draw back', 'don't shrink', 'take heart', 'don't lose heart', 'take heart', 'take courage'.

In fact, to see how this word really plays out, I think there are two things I want us to say. There are three sub-points under *How?* and the first two concern this meaning 'take courage'. How does He want us to experience peace in conflict? There are three things that we need to do, and the first two relate to taking courage. What is the first thing we need to do? *We need to Commit Not to Run from the Battle* because Jesus' exhortation is essentially, by taking courage, don't run from the battle. Secondly, we're going to see, we're to *Run to Christ*, and take courage is about both of those things.

A) Commit Not to Run from the Battle:

First of all, don't run from the battle, don't draw back, don't shrink from your duty. The idea is He knows that's what we would be tempted to do. When the world surrounds you, it is natural to want to retreat, it is natural to want to draw back. When it presses in on us, we feel our frailty, and our weakness. Who are we to stand up, and to proclaim the truth in this moment? "How can I possibly speak the truth when so many people around me right now are opposing God, or opposing Christ?"

This is happening all around us. People are beginning to retreat and have been retreating, people who call themselves Christians. I was discouraged to learn about a fellow seminarian. Patti and I knew him and his wife in seminary back at Reformed Theological Seminary in the late 80s, whose church have just,

supposedly a Reformed Evangelical church has just agreed to take married gay persons into their membership, married homosexuals. How does that happen? He's in San Francisco, and that would be one of the more difficult places to be. I think that when you look at the numbers, Houston is tough. Atlanta is also up there. But the pressure, the unrelenting pressure of the world has finally resulted in somebody caving in. Don't make waves. You go along to get along. And sometimes people convince themselves the Gospel will advance if we don't make this an issue. We can't offend here so that we can reach them there. But the Gospel never advances through retreat, and Jesus is just saying that. This is what He's saying right here.

“In the world you will have tribulation.” Remember we saw this is basically persecution is what He's talking about in context. You will be persecuted. They will hate you because of who you are and what you say. But what are you to do? Are you to acquiesce? Are you to try to make peace through appeasement? Peace for our time? Peace with honor? Or are you to do what He says, to take courage, to stand on the truth of His word? Not to run. Don't run from the battle. When everyone around you believes something different, it's time to look for opportunities to speak the truth gently and not necessarily offensively, but boldly and lovingly. So don't run from battle. That's the first thing. How does He want us to experience peace? We will experience peace if we don't run from battle, but we'll experience peace not just by not running from battle. You've got to do the second thing that this take courage is about. You've got to run to Christ in the moment.

B) Run to Christ in the Moment:

This word *take courage* again, and by connecting it to, “I have overcome the world,” I think He's making it explicit. The idea is you take courage. You don't run from the battle, but you run to Christ. The way that you don't run from the battle is by running to Christ. When you feel the pressure, I mean we've all been in situations like that. You can find yourself in situations like that in the most surprising places, can't you? Where suddenly something comes upon you that you weren't anticipating, and here you are.

I remember when I was representing my seminary. I worked for a couple years as the Director of Admissions for the seminary I want to after I graduated, and I had a moment where I was just completely surprised by an opportunity to either deny the truth or to stand on the truth. I mean, here I am recruiting at a large Baptist university that's since no longer Baptist, Furman. This was like 1993, and there was a group of seminaries there, and I knew that there were some Liberal

seminaries there—Vanderbilt, Duke, Candler, Emory, and there was a guy from Columbia Bible College I knew was Conservative, and then there was me. There were some other ones. I can't remember all the others, but we were sort of assessing things, meeting people, yeah okay, and I'm supposed to talk about our school. They put us on a panel and they asked us questions. So there were like seven or eight of us, and one of the questions one of the kids asked, this is 1993, "What kind of support groups and fellowship groups are available for gay and lesbian students?" I thought, "Wow." I'm recruiting in the religion department, people that are Bible majors at this school, and he's asking it in the way that you're hearing it. "It's okay to be homosexual and Christian. What kind of fellowship groups do you have?"

I remember that was just out of the blue, and I was sitting next to the guy from Columbia, and I really felt like I was surrounded. I was thinking to myself, I couldn't say it to him—I probably should have, thinking back on it, "Listen, you hold the line and we'll be back to back as we back out of here, and I've got your back." I didn't say anything. It came to him and somehow he sidestepped it. He didn't do what he should do. We can miss opportunities that we need to be faithful to, and I don't feel great about how I handled it, but I did start off well. I didn't finish as well later, but I said, "Look, we believe that homosexuality is a sin," and you heard an audible gasp. It wasn't a hissing, but it was sort of that feel. And then I said in a little bit of timidity actually, I was trying to sort of soften the blow, and I said, "But we don't believe it's worse than heterosexual sin like adultery." Then I heard a louder gasp in equating it to something like that, because monogamous homosexuality was apparently what they were advocating.

So I said, "We believe it's sin, and we would try to help people that are thinking that way, to think biblically and repent." I got a cold shoulder the rest of the night, and the guy from Columbia I think was kind of sheepish too. He headed out of there pretty quick and we realized, "We don't have any recruits for our school here." If there were any at Furman, they weren't in the religion department, maybe in business or biology, somewhere else. But you can be surprised by that. You're not expecting it. You think you're in safe quarters, and then suddenly people are coming against the word. What do you do? Well you don't run from the battle but you run to Christ, and this is what I wish I had done a better job of, because I felt like after it was over, I was beaten down. I'd held the line, I'd said what needed to be said, but I didn't feel like I walked in the kind of victory that I should have.

I don't mean like just celebrating that I'd just confronted them all. I'm not saying that, but I mean in my heart feeling confident that I had done what the Lord had wanted me to do, because you feel the negative and the hurt of the rejection, but fear God. Don't fear man. How do you do that? Well, you don't run from the battle. You run to Christ. The only way you can really stand up under it and handle it the way He wants you to by speaking the truth in love, with confidence, is by running to Him, because you and I don't have the strength. We may know what needs to be said, but we don't know how to say it, and most of the time we don't know what needs to be said. That's the way I feel. I find myself more and more thinking, "I don't know what I should do right now, Lord. Help me." It's counterintuitive. You think the longer that you walk with Christ, the more you always know what to do. And there's some truth to that, of course, the more you know of the word, but I think that the Lord has a way of allowing His people to continually confront circumstances that they don't readily quickly recognize what to do, so that it makes you pray more, because He wants you to live a life of praying without ceasing.

So run to Christ. Take courage means run to Him. In fact, there are three instances, and I'll give you these references and you can look them up later. This word *take courage* isn't used much in the New Testament. It's used in Acts 23:11. "Don't run from the battle." It's used in that sense, the first point I was just talking about, "Don't run from the battle," in Acts 23:11, where Paul is in Jerusalem. He has been at the temple and a riot breaks out because they see him with some guys that have been purified, that they recognize not as Jews, but they've gone through the purification properly and they're in the temple appropriately. Paul is trying not to make any unnecessary offenses, but a riot breaks out and they're ready to kill him.

Well, Romans come in and surround him and rescue him. Paul asks to speak and the Roman Centurion lets him speak, and he begins to speak in Hebrew or Aramaic. They hear the Hebrew dialect, it says, and they quiet down. They think, "Oh, these guys aren't Greeks after all." Paul then preaches to them and tells them about his conversion and his calling, and he talks about the Old Testament and the Gospel, and then when he finally says, "God's called me to go to the Gentiles," they say, "Away with him! Kill him!" The crowd erupts again. The Romans are carrying him out. This is a chaotic mess.

The next day he's called before the Council of the Seventy, the Sanhedrin, the priests and the elders, to give an account. The Romans are there with him and he's giving an account of what happened yesterday. And as he preaches, they again, the people start going nuts. They want to kill him. "Away with him." They're going to

rush upon him and the Romans have to come in and say, “No, you can’t have this guy. We’re not letting anarchy reign.” So they take him out. That night, Jesus appears to him, and it says in Acts 23:11, “The Lord stood with me and He said, “Take courage. You must bear witness for Me in Rome the same way you bore witness in Jerusalem.” Do you see that? “The enemy is going to come, the world is going to come, but I’m standing with you, and you bear witness and continue to take courage. Don’t run.” He understood his frailty. Paul needed that. You wouldn’t think Paul would need that when you read about Paul, would you? But he did. Of course he did. When you understand what he says in 2 Corinthians 12, that he glories in his weakness, you understand absolutely Paul needed that just like you and I do. He was weak, but in Christ he was strong.

So don’t run from the battle. But then this word is also used in helping us run to Christ, because the irony is we feel unable to stand in the battle, but then what happens is we feel unable to run to Christ at that moment, because we realize, “Here I am afraid. Here I am timid. I can’t run to Christ.” This is one of Satan’s tricks. He tempts us to run away and to deny the truth, and then when we want to run to God for help, he says, “You can’t go there. Look at you. You’re not even a Christian the way you’re acting.” He is, after all, the accuser of the brethren. He hurls accusations. But what do we need to do? Jesus wants us to take courage, and the idea is don’t shrink back. Don’t lose heart. And particularly this is used in the New Testament more often to speak of really running after God.

Let me tell you three different accounts, and you can look at them more. I’m going to have to summarize for the sake of time. First of all, that word *take courage* is used in Mark 10:49. That’s where Bartimaeus is healed. You can read the companion account in Matthew 20, and you can kind of put it together. Luke also has the account. You can put together exactly what happened by looking at all the accounts, because each author gives you different glimpses that support what they’re trying to do in their particular passage in their Gospel. But when you look at it, what happened there is Jesus is passing through Jericho and there are two blind men, we find out from Matthew. Mark focuses on the one named Bartimaeus, and he tells us his name. But in Matthew, two guys are yelling out, “Son of David! Have mercy on me! Son of David! Have mercy on me!” And it says in Matthew that the crowd sternly warned them to be silent. Here they are, “Lord, please bless me! Please, Son of David, have mercy on me.” “Listen you guys. Shut up! You’re irritating us. Don’t bother us. Don’t bother the Master. Let Him go.” But they kept on yelling.

Then Jesus after hearing them keep on yelling, He says, “What do you want from Me?” And when you look at Mark 10:49, what happens is, “What do these guys want from Me?” Maybe some of the people who had been saying, “Shut up, don’t yell, you guys stop it,” they go to Bartimaeus and they say, “Take courage, the Master is calling for you.” What is it now? “Don’t stop. Don’t retreat. You’ve been making your need known. Don’t stop now. Go to Him. Don’t draw back. You’ve been annoying us this long. He’s calling for you now. Don’t stop now.”

Then you look at two times it’s used in Matthew 9, in Verse 2 and also in Verse 22, two other healings. In Verse 2 it’s the story of the paralytic who’s lowered through the roof. We don’t find out that detail in Matthew. You find it in Mark 2:3-12, where you have the parallel account. It’s also in Luke’s Gospel as well. But in Matthew 9:2, what you have is the paralytic is brought to Jesus, and Jesus says, “Take courage, son, your sins are forgiven.” Take courage. Well, when you look at it in context of the other accounts, what happened is he’s been lowered through a roof. Now, imagine if somebody was to lower somebody through the roof right now. It would be a little distracting, wouldn’t it? I’d probably stop preaching if somebody was lowered through the roof now, and we would all have to be interrupted. Well, that’s what happened.

Jesus is teaching inside someone’s house. They can’t press in, so what they do is they go up on the roof and they take the tiles off or the thatch off, and they lower this man through the roof on ropes until he comes down right in front of Jesus. And I think what’s happening is Jesus is saying, He understands this guy is, “I feel a little presumptuous here. I know I need to be healed, but I wasn’t really convinced this was a great idea,” and Jesus says, “Take courage. Don’t draw back. Lay hold of God. I’m a God who wants to be laid hold of. I’m a God who blessed Jacob who wrestled with Me. I revealed Myself as a Man so that I could have a wrestling match with Jacob, and allow him to, in a sense, feel like he was overpowering Me, and yet I’m the one who spoke the world into existence.

Then you have Matthew 9:22, the same words. Jesus says, “Take courage, woman. Your faith has made you well.” There a woman who had a hemorrhage, a bleeding hemorrhage for twelve years. When you read Mark and Luke’s accounts as well, what you find out is she had gone to the doctors and spent all of her money to no avail. And when you put them together, basically what happens is she just thinks, “If I can touch the hem of His garment.” Jesus is passing through the crowd, she touches the hem of His garment, and immediately she’s healed. Jesus stops and says, “Who touched Me?” The disciples said, “What do you mean who touched You?” It’s like if after church you’re trying to get through out of the way here, and

people are pressed in, and you have to kind of bump into somebody and, “Who touched me?” Well, look around. It could be anybody, right? It was worse than that. They’re trying to get close to Jesus, and people are wanting to see Him, to hear Him, and they’re pressing in around Him. And Peter’s like, “Lord, how can we possibly know who touched You?” Jesus says, “Who touched Me?” and Luke tells us in Luke 8, that the woman when she realized that she basically had been discovered, she wanted to touch the hem of His garment and not be discovered. She believed that she could be healed if she touched Him, but she was scared to press herself upon Him. So she touched the hem of His garment, and He keeps looking for her. Obviously He could have known immediately, but He chooses not to, and He keeps looking for her, and it says, “When she realized that she had been discovered, she fell down in fear and trembling before Him, and she explained why she did it.” Then He says, “Take courage, woman. Your faith has made you well.”

She felt the yearning desire to lay hold of Christ, that He was the answer, but at the same time there was this hesitancy. We see this in all three circumstances. The paralytic, the faith of the men that lowered him down, but the paralytic himself thinking “Can I really be healed? Should I really even be bothering Jesus? Would He even care about me?” Take courage. The woman, twelve years of disappointment, spending all of her resources, “I just want to touch the hem of His garment. Immediately I’m healed, but now I can’t possibly go before Him.” She didn’t say, “Here I am. It’s me.” It was when she knew that she had been discovered, because I guess the eyes of Jesus finally settled upon her, that she then rushes forward and falls down before Him in fear and trembling, and He says, “Take courage.” The idea is, “Don’t stop. This is the way God blesses. This is who I am. This is who Yahweh is. This is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Triune God. This is how I’ve revealed Myself to be. I’m a God who blesses the one who comes in faith, the one who comes empty-handed, and who seeks to lay hold of Me.” Without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who comes to Him must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of all who diligently seek Him. So He’s saying, “Take courage,” to us. This is what He’s saying in Hebrews 4:14-16.

Hebrews 4:14 ~ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens,...

Then he goes on down and it says:

Hebrews 4:16 ~ Draw near to the throne of grace with boldness...

What are you supposed to do? You're supposed to go boldly to the throne of grace, not because of who you are. No, because of who He is. So here I am timid and afraid. I want to run away. I want to turn my back and run from the battle around me. What am I supposed to do? Run to Christ. He wants to be laid hold of. *Jesus, I am weak. I am trembling. I am afraid.* "Lay hold of Me," He says, "and I will make you strong." So don't run away from the battle. Run to Christ. This is how we experience peace in conflict and war. Don't run from the battle. Run to Christ. And thirdly, the final point of this third point of *How?*

C) Walk in His Victory:

If you run to Christ, you will walk in His victory.

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

He doesn't just say, "Take courage." He then points them to Himself. "I have overcome the world." There are some things that I think that we need to meditate more on what Jesus has done for us and His victory. He says, "I have overcome the world." He says, "I have fought the world. In My humanity I have fought the world, and I have vanquished it." He's speaking before the cross and He says the victory is won. "I have fought the world and I have won." There are three things about His victory I want to hit really quickly.

The first is the ferocity of the conflict that Jesus had in the world. When He says, "I overcame the world," it wasn't just a pretend battle or as one of the great Scottish theologians, Alexander MacLaren says, "It wasn't a shadow fight." Sometimes we think this. We don't really understand that when Jesus became Man, when God became Man, He lived a life of true humanity, and every day was a violent war. And the war wasn't Him like battling demons like this with swords. It was Him trying to continue in dependence and trust on the Father, when Satan was in every way through the world trying to distract Him to take Him away from loving dependence and surrender to the Father, moment by moment communion. It was a war. Listen to what this theologian writes in the 19th Century, Alexander MacLaren:

Notice then how our Lord's life was a true battle. The world tried to draw him away from God by appealing to those things desirable to sense, as in the wilderness, or things dreadful to sense, as on the cross. And both one and the other form of temptation He faced and conquered. It was no shadow fight which evoked this peon of victory from His lips. The reality of His conflict is somewhat concealed

from us by reason of its calm, and the completeness of His conquest. We do not appreciate the force that drives a planet upon its path because it is calm and continuous and silent.

Did you get that? We don't appreciate the power and the force that drives a planet upon its path, because it is calm, and continuous, and silent. And he says this:

But the power that kept Jesus Christ continually faithful to His Father, continually sure of the Father's presence, continually averse to all self-will and selfish living, was a power mightier than all others that have been manifested in the history of humanity.

The Captain of our salvation has really fought the fight before us. It wasn't a shadow fight or a sham. He wasn't using His supernatural power. He laid aside His prerogatives of deity and He lived as true Man. He didn't use like his superpower button to jump over temptation at every hurdle. He ran as a man each hurdle that was put before Him. Now, how did He do it? He did it in dependence upon the Father, in complete surrender to the Father, in complete submission to the Father. But it was a war. It was a battle. This is why Hebrews 5 talks about in the days of His flesh. It talks about the difficulty of His obedience.

Hebrews 5:7 ~ In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety.

Do you hear that? There were loud cries and tears.

Hebrews 5:8 ~ Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. 9 And having been made perfect,...

What does it mean He was made perfect? Yes, His obedience was perfected. It was never blemished in any way, but 33 years He was tempted in every single way that you or I will ever be tempted, and He wrestled with temptation in a way that we can't imagine. When you wrestle with temptation and you give in, there's relief from the wrestling, isn't there? Ultimately it's defeat and it's discouragement. You reap a harvest of corruption, so you don't want to give in, but it's easy. Jesus never once gave in. He was tempted every day continually and He never gave in. That's the ferocity of His conflict.

The strategy of His victory was simply this: To depend upon the Father and to surrender to the Father. And this is the way we should fight. We are to depend upon Christ and surrender to Christ. So when we find ourselves wanting to run, we run to Jesus and we lay hold of Him, because He has made Himself a Savior who can sympathize with us in our weakness. What an amazing reality that is. These are things that we need to really, I don't say meditate lightly, but need to spend time praying and praising God for this. He truly understands. He lived a life of dependence. That's why He says twice in John 5, "I can do nothing." Jesus said that twice. Do you know that? "Apart from the Father, I can do nothing." He said that in John 5:19 and John 5:30. It's because He was not using His eternal power. He was living as a man depending on the Father to direct Him and to empower Him. In John 15:5 He says, "Apart from Me, now you can do nothing." So when you realize you can do nothing, when you realize that you don't have the ability to stand up and be bold in this moment, what are you realizing? You're realizing exactly what Jesus wants you to know. You can do nothing. Congratulations, you're exactly where you need to be. The problem is when you think you can do something. Ask Peter about that. The strategy of His victory is complete dependence and complete surrender.

And then the totality of His victory finally. The ferocity of the conflict, the strategy of His victory, and the totality of His victory. This is how you walk in victory. Look at the reality and ferocity of His conflict. Look at how He won the victory, by depending and submitting, and then look at the totality of it. He says in John 16:33, "I have overcome the world." He overcame the world. He's already been telling them this is a reality. In John 12:31, He spoke:

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

He's saying, "I'm judging the world. Now the ruler of this world is cast out. This is what's happening, disciples." In John 14:30, remember when He ends up, "We've got to leave the room now. We need to start making our way to the garden," basically is what He says. I'm paraphrasing, but in Verse 30:

John 14:30 ~ I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me;

He saying, "He's tempted Me in every way, but he has nothing in Me. My righteousness is perfect." And then in John 16:11 He says:

John 16:11 ~ ...the ruler of this world has been judged.

“I have defeated Him completely and totally, and if you will walk in dependence upon Me, you will defeat Him completely and totally. You will be more than conquerors. You’ll be more than conquerors when you’re tempted to fear, to run away from battle, and you can be tempted to run away from battle with sin. If you take these same principles and take courage, and don’t give in but run to Christ, and look at His victory, you will walk in victory. And when you walk in victory, what you find out is you have peace. You didn’t find peace by retreating. You found peace by overcoming. You found peace by defeating. You find that your foot is on the head of Satan, because Jesus’ foot is on the head of Satan. We’re made mighty in the Captain of our salvation. May God help us to be faithful to walk in victory, to walk in confidence, and to enjoy His perfect peace, because everything, for the Christian, when you see what really is reality, no matter what battle you’re facing, all is well. Everything is as it should be. “This attack is what You have brought into my life, Lord. I wasn’t expecting it. I wasn’t planning it. I don’t really want to right now. Well, wait a minute. I’m going to submit to You, trust You, run to Christ. Everything is as it should be. Let me be faithful.” That’s peace.

Let’s pray...

Father, we thank You for a glorious Savior. We thank You for the power of His blood to wash away our sins, and the perfectness of His righteousness that He gives us. Lord, we pray that You would help us to be people who don’t turn back and don’t retreat. But we confess, Father, we feel that pressure every day in some way or another, whether it be the battle with sin, the battle with the world. We feel the cowardice in us, the weakness, but we’re thankful that You understand that and You’ve taken every step necessary to deal with that, and His Name is Jesus. We praise You for such a wonderful Savior that has done everything necessary for us.

Father, we pray for those that are here today that have not truly repented and believed, that today You might open their hearts to surrender completely to Christ. How could they hold back from such a glorious God who entered into human flesh and took our sins, and has taken them out of the way? Father, may You be glorified in each heart. We pray in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

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