

Christ's Final Consolations

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 16:25-33
Preached on: Sunday, June 14, 2015

Now we come to a text where the reality of what we've just sung is expressed in a very poignant way. The Lord is asking his disciples to hide themselves in him, that Rock of Ages, as well as each of us to hide in him so will you turn to John's Gospel 16, beginning in verse 25 through 33. This will be our text this morning as we continue to study our Lord's farewell discourse to his 11 disciples, words that speak to us as well. Let me read the text, John 16, beginning with verse 25,

25 "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will speak no more 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."

As I contemplate these transcendent words from our glorious Savior in his farewell discourse to his 11 disciples as together they prepare to leave the Upper Room and make their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, I find myself being deeply moved for several reasons, primarily because I know that his atoning work was an actual atonement and he knew that. He knew exactly for whom he was about to die, those that the Father had given him. It wasn't some potential atonement that man must somehow affirm by exercising their will and coming to faith in Christ but it was an actual specific atonement. Therefore he had intimate knowledge of all of those that the Father had given him. He had loved them in eternity past, not only the 11 but as I think about it by his grace, he loved me and he loved all of you who know him. So therefore what was on his mind that night had much more to do than just focusing on those 11, he was speaking to all for whom he would die.

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So these sublime words of our precious Savior are meant for all of us and you might say that he spoke them for us as well as for them. We could even say that he ordained them to be heard by us even this morning. When you think of it that way, it adds special emphasis on why we should hear what Jesus is saying. Why we should embrace these great truths and apply them to our life. Why we should study them, meditate upon them, savor them and speak of them to one another. In fact, I would encourage you to be quick to initiate spiritual conversations with fellow believers, especially in your family. It's important that you share your understanding of Scripture, that you share your testimony of God's grace in your life. It is said that the saints who lived in the Scottish Highlands in the day the automobile was introduced into their society became quite upset over that and their reason for being upset? Because it stifled spiritual conversations that they had walking to and from church. How many more things we have today to stifle our spiritual conversations, all of these gadgets and gizmos, people walking around doing this. They don't even know how to interact anymore face-to-face. So hopefully you will guard yourselves against failing to speak to your children and your family and your friends and having spiritual conversations. By the way, that's the purpose of the handout that I give you every week, to help guide you in those conversations.

Well, with this said, let's turn our attention to Jesus' words of consolation to his frightened, his confused, his distressed disciples along with all disciples of Christ who perhaps are distressed. Some of you today may be that way. You may be frightened. Your soul, I hope, is thirsting for the glory and the greatness of God and, if so, these words are going to be especially helpful for you because he is the one with infinite wisdom and from Christ springs all of the secret truths that bring comfort. I believe he would have us understand at least three comforting and essential truths that emerge from the text. He wants us to understand 1. The Father's love for his own. Secondly, the danger of spiritual overconfidence. Then finally, he wants us to understand the reward of what I would call bold faith.

So with this in mind, let's notice what Jesus says at the end of his farewell discourse to his disciples. Verse 25, "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language." Well, what things would he be referring to? Well, this would refer to his discourse on that memorable night in the Upper Room but I believe it would reach even beyond that into all of his previous teaching where he used figurative language. The term "figurative" refers to "obscure language; veiled, enigmatic language; statements that were cryptic, you might say." Cryptic speech where the meaning of what is being said is just not obvious. It requires us to really analyze and really think about it. This was always puzzling to the disciples as you may recall. It caused them to ask him in Matthew 13:10, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" And you will recall that Jesus went on to explain the purpose for that and it was in order to reveal spiritual truths to those who receive him and conceal

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spiritual truths from those who don't. You see, this was both an act of judgment upon those who had hard hearts who refused to hear the truth but it was also an act of mercy in that the degree of punishment for unbelievers is directly related to their knowledge of the truth according to Luke 12:48 and other passages. In other words, the more you know and reject, the worse the punishment.

Now, people didn't understand a lot of what Jesus said for these two reasons. People could not grasp, for example, what he meant when he said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." Remember, Nicodemus didn't have a clue what he was talking about when he said, "You must be born again." The Samaritan woman didn't understand what he meant when he said that, "I will give you living water and you will never thirst again." What did he mean when he spoke to people and told them that there were some that would never see death? Or when he talked about eating his flesh and drinking his blood? Or when he said that he preceded Abraham in time? Or when he spoke of the Good Shepherd who would lay down his life for his sheep? Even the disciples struggled to understand much of what Jesus said but part of that was because it didn't quite fit into their theology and many times that's the way we are. We have a preconceived idea about our theology. Many times it's unbiblical but this is how we think it ought to be and you remember that they thought that the Messiah was going to come, wipe out Rome and establish his glorious kingdom so when he starts talking about dying and going to the Father, it's like, "Well, we just don't understand." But the other reason they didn't understand is because Christ had not yet died on the cross. Once he died on the cross and rose again, things would begin to make sense. Once he gave his life as a ransom for many as the substitute for sinners, then it would all begin to come into place. Likewise, when the Spirit was poured out upon them, he was the one that would guide them into all the truth.

So Jesus says to them, "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language," but he says, "an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father." Now, we must pause here for a moment. I want you to notice this last phrase "but will tell you plainly of the Father." When you look at what Jesus has been saying in his farewell discourse, all of these statements regarding the Holy Spirit, all of the statements about him preceding from the Father and now with what he says here, we have an undeniable attestation to the Trinity, to the Triune Godhead, to the three persons in the Godhead. Now, in the Old Testament, we begin to see the embryonic statements that speak about the Trinity but when we come to the New Testament, it becomes abundantly clear that indeed there is one living and true God, one in essence eternally existing in three persons Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Now, this is a reality that we cannot comprehend but one that is needed in order to help us understand God's work of redemption and here we see Jesus talking about it very clearly.

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May I caution you? Never limit your theology to what you can understand. You take any of the great doctrines of the Bible and I cannot understand any of them. Now, I understand what the Bible says but I cannot explain to you how God can speak things into existence. I can't understand the sovereignty of God and how that works with man's responsibility. I cannot understand the Trinity. I cannot understand the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. I cannot understand the doctrine of prayer. I know what the Bible says but I can't fathom these things but I don't base my theology on what I can understand. I base my theology and you must do the same on what God has revealed in his word. We see today through the eyes of faith but one day we are going to see clearly through the eyes of our glorified state and how I long to see the blessed three in one. Can you imagine what that will look like? The answer is no. I can't either.

So he says, "an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father." You see, not until his death on the cross when he became the substitute for sinners and atoned for their sins would they understand. Not until he would rise from the dead would his work of redemption on the cross make sense. Not until the Helper arrived would they be able to comprehend the Father's love in delivering up his own Son. Not until after the death and resurrection and exaltation of Christ and the gift of the Spirit and then the character and the purposes of God would be further disclosed and this is what we see in the rest of the New Testament. It's fascinating, after his resurrection, Jesus no longer spoke with enigmatic figurative type language and after his ascension and the coming of the Helper, we see the Holy Spirit inspiring the apostles to write Scripture and illuminating their minds so that they can understand it and illuminating our minds so that we can understand it.

In verse 26, he goes on to say, "In that day you will ask in My name," in other words, you will ask in harmony with my will on the basis of my atoning work on the cross, "and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf." In other words, "I'm not saying that I'm going to need to go to the Father and plead your case as if he is unconcerned about your needs. No, you're going to be able to pray directly to the Father for the things that are in harmony with the will of the Son." Now, I might add in relation to God's work and his plan of redemption, Christ, we know, intercedes on behalf of all believers as our great High Priest but that's with respect to his work of redemption. Don't misunderstand and think that somehow we have to go to Jesus and then get him to go to the Father to convey our requests. Nor, by the way, must we go through a priest. Nor through Mary, the mother of Jesus. Nor through some lesser saint consistent with some of the heresies promoted by the Roman Catholic church.

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We have direct access to the Father. Why? Well, verse 27, Jesus says, "for the Father Himself loves you." This is such a comforting truth that Jesus wants to convey. So number 1 in our little outline, we see the Father's love for his own. The Father loves you. *Phileo* in the original language. This speaks of a father's affection, that special affection that a father has for his child. I want you to let that sink in. Think about this: our heavenly Father loves us and what loving father would be indifferent to the needs of his child? And what is it that makes us a child of the Father? What is it that ensures his love for us? Well, he says in verse 27, "because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father." By the way, that verse right there contains some of the most central doctrines of our faith. These truths are at the very heart of the Gospel. The Father loves us because we love his Son and we believe that he is the one the Father has sent to die in our stead and purchase our redemption. We believe that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone and that this love that we have for Christ is a continuing love. We place our trust in him as our only hope of salvation.

He goes on to say, verse 28, "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father." Again, this is what we believe. This is why the Father loves us. We believe in the deity of Christ, that he came from the Father. He was the Incarnate Son of God that came into the world. It's interesting, in the original language it's in the present tense and it indicates that there was a past act together with a present result. He came, he died, he rose again, he ascended back into glory, having accomplished our redemption which he purchased with his very blood and by the power of God, he preserves our salvation which awaits a final consummation. So he says, "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father."

With respect to verse 28, I need to remind you of something that may just seem so obvious but for some people it's not: a man simply cannot be saved unless he believes in the deity of Christ and the Trinity. The Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses, reject those central truths. I get a call at least once or twice every year from a very arrogant, rude Jehovah's Witness that wants to debate the Trinity and I'll give him a few things and then end up hanging up on him because he simply does not have ears to hear and I will not entertain that type of thing. 1 John 2:22, "Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ?" By the way, the cults don't believe that Jesus was the Christ, that he was God but he was a god. "This is the antichrist," John says, "the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also." And he says in chapter 4, verse 3, "every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God." 2 John 1:7, he says, "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist."

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So all that we believe with respect to Jesus as the Son of God, his suffering, his crucifixion, his resurrection, his ascension back into glory with the Father, all of these things are the basis for the Father's love for all who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And might I remind you that when Jesus died on the cross, that magnificent veil that separated the Holy of Holies in the temple was torn from top to bottom. May I remind you that that veil was so thick, it was about six inches thick and it required 300 men to move it when they cleaned it. A terrifying miracle that symbolized that the only way to enter into the presence of a holy God was through the death of his Son and because of this, we have what is called the priesthood of the believer. We do not need to come into the presence of God through a priest. 1 Peter 2:9, Peter says, "you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood." In Revelation 1:6 John says, "He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father." It is for this reason that we reject the Roman Catholic notion that somehow we can't come into the presence of the Father who, by the way, from their perspective, is indifferent and harsh but rather we have to come into his presence through compassionate intermediaries like the compassionate Mary, the mother of God, or priests or other saints. But no, we see here that we have direct access to the Father because he loves us and because of Christ. The writer of Hebrews tells us in chapter 4, verse 14, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Folks, there is no place for a formal religious priesthood anywhere on the planet. Jesus is our perfect, our great High Priest. He was the perfect and final sacrifice for sin and by faith in him we can enter into the presence of a holy God and stand in his presence blameless with great joy as Jude tells us, unlike the Roman Catholic belief that says we can only go into his presence through a priest. In fact, at the 22nd session of the Council of Trent held in 1562, they said, "If you say that Christ did not institute the priesthood to offer the Mass, you're anathema." In other words, you're cursed by the pope, you're excommunicated from the church and you are consigned to eternal damnation. It's a pretty severe curse.

You know, in light of this, I think it's important for me to digress for a moment. There is such a staggering lack of discernment in evangelical circles today with respect to this issue of Roman Catholicism. So much ignorance. So much false teaching. People would have us believe that Roman Catholics are true believers in Christ. I cringe when I see millions of people worshipping the pope. Praying to Mary. Thinking that the pope is the head of the church rather than the Lord Jesus Christ. I find myself getting upset when I

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hear men like Rick Warren calling him "our Pope." When I hear men like him and others embracing apostate Roman Catholicism as a viable form of historic orthodox Christianity.

Recently I was listening to a very popular self-proclaimed prophetess, her name is Beth Moore, perhaps you're familiar with her. She claims to receive special revelation directly from God. She claims that God gave her a special vision of the church as Jesus sees it and that God spoke directly to her regarding this. By the way, it's sad that her ministry and materials are heavily promoted by the Southern Baptist Convention and their publishing arm, Lifeway Christian Resources. But in one of her presentations that I examined this week, she clearly sees the Roman Catholic church as being one of many Christian denominations that is part of the body of Christ, the universal church and that Jesus, obviously, has showed her this. This betrays such a staggering lack of discernment and either an ignorance of the word of God or just willful rejection. I'm not sure what. It's not my position to judge her or anyone's motives but when you see this, I just find myself shaking my head.

Folks, the Roman Catholic religious system is one that, again, believes the pope, not Christ, is the head of the church. They believe the Mass saves people who are alive and even people who are dead but not yet purified. And if you say that the Mass isn't propitiatory for the sins of the living, in other words, if it doesn't appease the wrath of God and therefore bring salvation, if you say that it doesn't do that and if you say it's not propitiatory for the sins of the dead, they say you're cursed. It's just hard to believe that any Christian teacher could say that such an apostate church is part of the body of Christ. Beloved, please understand: the Roman Catholic religious system is a system that literally worships Mary. It has a twisted idolatrous sacramental system in the Mass. They claim that the pope is the Holy Father, the Vicar of Christ. These are names and roles that apply only to God and this type of theology betrays an apostate, corrupt, heretical, false Christianity. It is simply blasphemous to say that the pope can speak ex cathedra and thus exercise God-like infallibility to add to and augment Scripture and thereby wield an unholy authority over millions of people and usurp the role of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. What a perversion of all of that. What a demonic lie.

The Reformers understood this. As Martin Luther wrote to a friend, "We here are of the conviction that the papacy is the seat of the true and real antichrist." He went on to say, "Personally I declare that I owe the pope no other obedience than that to antichrist." In a sermon titled "Pray for Jesus," Charles Haddon Spurgeon exhorted his congregation that, "It is the duty of every Christian to pray against antichrist and as to what antichrist is. No sane man ought to raise a question. If it be not the popery in the church of Rome and in the church of England, there is nothing in the world that can be called by that name." We must remember what Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and one mediator

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also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." There is no one else that we have to go through so the pope has assumed for himself a position of authority that does not need to be filled. So we don't need the pope or priests to come into the presence of God because the Father loves all who love Christ. In Ephesians 3, Paul says, "in Christ Jesus, our Lord, in Him whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in him." Hebrews 10:19, "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus," you see, it's by Jesus that we have this confidence that we can enter in. He says, "by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

Well, so much for that digression as important as it is. Let's come back to the text. His disciples hear what Jesus says and they say to him in verse 29, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. 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. Jesus answered them, 'Do you now believe?'" Here we come to number 2 in our outline: the danger of spiritual overconfidence. Indeed, some of what Jesus had been saying is beginning to make more sense to them but the foundation of their faith is still very weak but they are not able to see that. So their confident assertion, "by this we believe," was really premature as we're going to see. Christ had so much more to reveal to them. The Spirit had not yet even come upon them. I have to say how easy it is for any of us to deceive ourselves into thinking that now we understand things fully. Now we've got a real handle on it when many times in truth our ignorance is exceeded only by our immature faith. We must be very careful and it's funny too, they believed that Jesus had come from the Father which was a fact that the Lord had told them so many times before. It's like, "Oh really? You're finally getting that." But it's also interesting that they did not mention anything about believing what he said about returning to the Father. This is still a mystery to them.

Now, I want you to notice how their overconfidence is met by an immediate rebuke. He says, "Do you now believe?" Literally, "Now you believe?" In the original language, "Now you believe? Really?" We might add, "Seriously?" You get the idea. You see, their faith was certainly accurate and it's genuine but it's hardly complete and mature. They had no idea all that would be revealed to them in the New Testament. I must confess that when I finished four years of seminary, I thought to myself even though I would never express it, "I pretty well understand all that's in the Bible now. I've got a handle on the Christian life. I'm glad that I finally got it all figured out." You're laughing because obviously you can tell I still am struggling with that, right? Well, the Lord was gracious

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and showed me my pride and my ignorance and my immaturity and he continues to do that to this very day and he will do it until the day he brings me into glory.

But then Jesus predicts the consequences of their overconfidence. Notice verse 32, he says, "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." You see, despite their claim that they believed that he came from God which should have emboldened them to face any kind of adversary, any kind of adversity, Jesus is telling them, "Oh, so you believe now? Let me tell you what's going to happen: you're going to scatter in fear; you're going to run to your homes and you're going to leave me alone." You see, Jesus had previously warned Peter of his impending failure in chapter 13 but now he's humbling all of them about their impending defection.

Now, none of us know how we might respond when we face some life-threatening persecution for our faith. None of us really knows that when temptation, severe stress causes our spiritual needs to buckle, but we should remember a lesson that the disciples had to learn the hard way and that is we are never as strong as we think we are. Every soldier is proud and bold when he marches in step with his brothers wearing their noble uniforms and hearing the inspiring drums but will he be able to stand firm in the heat of the battle? Beloved, as believers we've got to learn that the secret to spiritual strength is admitting that we just don't have it. Our dependency is in Christ. We should always be suspicious of our spirituality. Solomon tells us in Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall." Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10, "let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall." We must understand that self-distrust and humility are really the virtues that will make a man or a woman mighty in Christ. We are never so strong as when we embrace our weakness.

You remember as Paul struggled in his ministry, the Lord told him, "My grace is sufficient for you for power is perfected in weakness," and then Paul went on to say, "Most gladly therefore I will rather boast about my weaknesses that the power of Christ may dwell in me." Then he said, "For when I am weak, then I am strong." It is said that Martin Luther feared his own weaknesses so much that he spent four hours a day in prayer. To be sure, the disciples had overestimated their spiritual strength, their faith and had underestimated the power of the flesh, the weakness therefore of their flesh. They didn't see that. They underestimated the power of Satan, a lesson that they would learn the hard way. I often think about the great men that were the disciples that are really the foundation of our faith and isn't it interesting how defective they were? How weak they were? It wasn't like somehow they were men with this great faith and great virtue and courage. Now eventually they became that but they became that because of God's grace,

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because of what Christ did in them. Indeed, whatever we accomplish for his glory, it's all because of Christ.

So Jesus wants them to understand the Father's love for his own and the importance of being suspect of your spirituality, the danger of overconfidence and then finally he wanted them to understand, as well as us: the reward of bold faith. Notice what he says in verse 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." I like the old King James, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And what are the things that he spoke to them that night? He says, "These things I have spoken to you." Was it a message of health and wealth? Was it a prosperity Gospel that he preached like the charlatans of our day? Did he tell them, "Guys, I want you to understand that financial blessing is really the will of God and if you will donate to my ministry, God will increase your material wealth"? That's what's preached today. Did he say as Joel Osteen did recently, "If you develop an image of victory, success, health, abundance, joy, peace and happiness, nothing on earth will be able to hold those things from you"? By the way, it is said that 90% of those claiming to be Christians in Africa believe these lies.

Well, what did Jesus tell them? He told them that, "In this world you will have tribulation therefore these things that I have spoken to you, you need to hear them. You need to heed them so that in Me you may have peace so that you can be of good cheer because I have overcome the world." You see, he taught them about love and humility in this discourse. Again, he's saying, "These things I have spoken to you." What did he tell them in the discourse? He talked to them about love and humility. You will remember after washing their feet he declared, "A slave is not greater than his master. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them." He even predicted in his discourse that one of them would betray him and that Peter would deny him three times, that the world would hate him and all who followed him, that the world would rejoice in his death and that his disciples would scatter. Well, how would that bring peace? Because when those prophecies were fulfilled, their faith would be strengthened.

He told them that he was going away to prepare a place for them and that he was going to come again and receive them unto himself. He told them that he alone was the way, the truth and the life and that no man can come to the Father but through him. He told them that they did not choose him but he chose them and he appointed them to go and bear fruit that would remain. He told them that, "If you will abide in Me, if you will have rich communion with Me, you will bear much fruit for apart from Me, you can do nothing." He told them that, "Greater works you will be able to do because I'm going to go to the Father." He said, "If you love Me, you're going to keep my commandments." That he would not leave them as orphans but he was going to send another Helper to them that

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would teach them all things, that would bring to their remembrance all things and would guide them into all the truth. He told them that the Spirit would come and convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. He told them that they were going to weep and lament and be sorrowful but their sorrow is going to turn to joy and that their hearts are going to rejoice with a joy that cannot be taken away.

Jesus told them all of these things. Why? Well, as we see in verse 33, "so that in Me you may have peace." When you understand the truth of God's plan of redemption and you live consistently with it, you will have peace even in this world where there is tribulation and you will be of good cheer because he has overcome the world. You see, Jesus knew that the powers of darkness had formed a union with ungodly men, had joined forces, and they were about to seek the destruction of the disciples. He knew that they were eventually going to be killed for his sake and so he wants to prepare them for what lay ahead that they might not be overwhelmed by the trials. I know that some of you today are struggling in significant ways. I know that firsthand. Some of you feel as though the world is just squeezing in on you, squeezing the life out of you. You're experiencing tribulation, anguish of soul and to be sure, Satan is the temporary god of this world, Paul tells us and his greatest delight and his supreme purpose is to make you miserable. This is what he's all about. To make you doubt the goodness of God. To make you falter in your faith and so you say, "Well, what must I do?" Well, what Jesus says here: "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace."

Folks, inner peace in the midst of great suffering is really the reward of bold faith. You must understand these things. And what is the litmus test of bold faith? How are you going to see it in your life and in the lives of others? Well, you're going to be a person that takes courage or, again, as the King James puts it, you're going to be a person "of good cheer." In other words, you will choose to be happy and bold as a Christian. I remember my dear sister, Kathy, when she began her battle with breast cancer. I remember her telling me, "Dave, I have decided that I am going to choose to be happy. I can be sad but I'm going to choose to be happy because the worst thing that can happen to me is the Lord will take me home and that is the greatest blessing of all," and I can still see her smiling face, her teeth shining through the clear mask that was giving her oxygen to keep her alive.

This is what Jesus is talking about. Child of God, you must have this kind of perspective if you're ever going to survive a life of tribulation. Be of good cheer. Know that Christ has overcome the world. The great English Puritan, Richard Baxter, said, "The best Christians are the happiest." I love that. I simply refuse to spend much time around sour, sullen, what I call Eeyore Christians. You remember Eeyore with Winnie the Pooh? I can't stand that. They're always unhappy. They're critical. They're complaining. In fact, I

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Christ's Final Consolations

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 16:25-33
Preached on: Sunday, June 14, 2015

have learned that when I see a Christian come into the church who hardly ever smiles, I know that eventually they're going to cause trouble because a sad Christian is a mad Christian. There is something wrong. If you truly want to experience peace, you must live consistently with the truth that Jesus is talking about and that is that our Savior and King has overcome the world. He has conquered all of his enemies, all of our enemies. "Overcome" comes from a Greek word "nikao," we get our word "Nike" from that. You kids know Nike shoes? And it means "to conquer or prevail." We are overcomers. Jesus has overcome. He has overcome sin and Satan and death and because we are united to him, we too are overcomers. In fact, Paul said in Romans 8:37, "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." Hupo nikao in Greek. It's superconquerors.

Practically speaking, folks, you must have a well developed biblical theology in your mind and in your heart because that will become the wellspring from which the doxologies of your soul will literally erupt at the first sign of trouble in your life. It's for this reason that Peter knowing that he was going to be crucified at the end of his life, would write to the suffering scattered saints in 1 Peter and when he wrote them, you will notice in 1 Peter, that he begins with this long list of all of the glories of our salvation and all of the riches that we have in Christ, all of the blessings of our inheritance. Then he says in verse 6, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials." He went on to say, "Believe in Him," and then he says, "you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls." Beloved, can there be anything more blessed than this? Such an exhortation is all the more powerful when we consider that, indeed, Peter was crucified along with his wife. So folks, we've got to learn to listen to what Jesus has said.

I close with this story. It was England in the year 1555, during the reign of the wicked Queen Mary when two great scholars and pastors of the Protestant Reformation, Hugh Lattimer and Nicholas Ridley, were sentenced to be burned at the stake at Oxford. When I studied there, I was able to see where this happened. Their crime? Their belief in the biblical Gospel. Their rejection of the apostate Roman Catholic religious system. They argued that the doctrines of the real presence of Christ in the Mass's transubstantiation where they believed that the wine and the bread literally become the blood and the body of Christ and the propitiatory merit of the Mass, all of those things were unbiblical. They rejected the notion that the pope was the head of the church. They held to the five Solas of the Reformation that you see adorning this worship center. And they rejected the whole sacerdotal system, the priesthood. They believed in the priesthood of the believer.

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It is said that when they were escorted to the stake, the younger Ridley ran to the older Lattimer and embraced him with tears of joy. And it is reported that Lattimer comforted him saying, "Be of good heart, brother, for God will either assuage the fury of the flame or else strengthen us to abide in it." You can read in Fox's Book of Martyrs all of the rest of the things that occurred as they talked with one another and the crowd and all of this happening at this time.

But to summarize it: after they disrobed, the smith took a chain of iron and wrapped it around their middle to strap them firmly to the stake so that they would remain in it. And it is said that when they brought a lighted faggot and laid it down at Ridley's feet to set him ablaze, that Lattimer shouted to Ridley the essence of the text that we have before us right here. He said to him, "Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, and play the man! We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out!"

Oh dear Christian, learn these lessons well. God may never call upon us to suffer at the stake but we are going to suffer because we live in a world that hates us, a world filled with tribulations. So it is time now to hear and heed the word of God that he has given to us, not only to be saved but to give us hope and comfort even as he comforted his disciples and then our faith is strengthened and we have peace in the midst of great affliction come what may and we are able to take courage because we know that our Savior and our King has overcome this world.

Let's pray together.

Father, we meditate upon these truths with great joy. It stirs our hearts because it causes us to reflect upon the glory and the greatness of our God and I pray that if there be one within the sound of my voice that knows nothing of your saving grace, that plays the cultural religious game of our current society, Lord, I pray that by the power of your Spirit, you will break their hearts over their sin and cause them to see the glory of the Savior and come running to the foot of the cross in repentant faith that they might be born again by your Spirit, by your grace. And Lord, for those of us that know and love you, may we be Christians of good cheer, Christians that hear and heed your word that we might have peace in this world. Lord Jesus, we give you praise knowing that you have overcome this world and because we are united to you, we too will overcome. We give you thanks and we give you praise. Amen.

We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.

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