

Jesus, the Overcomer (John 16.33)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. John 13-17 (often referred to as the Upper Room Discourse) are some of the most beautiful chapters in the whole of Scripture. In these chapters we are given a “behind the scenes” look at the instructions that Jesus gave to his disciples as they were about to face some of the greatest crises they would ever face.
- B. As Jesus prepared for his own death (these chapters take place the night before his crucifixion), he draws close to his disciples and shares with them truths that are intended to bring stability to their souls in the coming days. Jesus knew that the events of the next twenty-four hours (also, the events of the next several months and years) would create situational difficulty and pressure for the hearts of his followers in such a way that they would become overwhelmed or weighed down if not stabilized and oriented in the truth.
- C. One of the most difficult realities of walking through life in this fallen world is all the ways our hearts are prone to become weighed down with trouble. Many people in this world long for, hope for, and seek after some form of ‘peace’, but it is often illusive or unattainable, which leads many to give up hope that they may ever find any lasting peace or comfort in this life.

II. PURPOSE: THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE PEACE

- A. Jesus closes this teaching to his disciples by reminding them of the reason he has spoken to them all of these beautiful and glorious truths. They are about to face significant difficulty in both the near (his crucifixion) and far (his ascension) horizons of their lives. He has intentionally and purposefully taught them in order that their hearts might remain steadfast in the midst of the pressures they are to face.
- B. From the opening exhortation of the sermon, Jesus has oriented the purpose of this teaching in their hearts not being overcome by trouble. He also related this teaching to the experience of peace that he would give to them through the coming of the Spirit.

¹Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me... ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled. (John 14.1, 27)

- C. The *means* that Jesus gave to his disciples for engaging their troubled hearts in the midst of crisis and hardship was to *believe in God* and *believe in him*.

²⁹And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe (John 14.29)

- D. We are not left to ourselves in the face of such dynamics of hardship and pressure in this life. Jesus gives us storehouses of truth that we are to seek to lay hold of in the midst of our troubles.
- E. The disciples are also promised that Jesus will send to them a *Helper* (the Holy Spirit) who will be with them. The Spirit will unite them to Jesus in order that they might experience the full measure of God’s life, power, and blessing. It is here, *in Christ*, that the disciples are said to experience union. This is a profound aspect of the experience of union with him that would come to them with the sending of the Spirit.
- F. Paul later related the experience of peace to a heart that comes to the Lord in a spirit of *thanksgiving* and *supplication*.

⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil 4.6-7)

- G. To have a heart guarded by peace is the opposite of a heart that is offended by the hardship and trouble of this life.

⁴I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away (John 16.1)

- H. Jesus also promised that these words were given to his disciples in order that they might experience his joy, and that it would be experienced in fullness.

⁵These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full (John 15.11)

- I. We engage our hearts by coming to the Lord *in the midst* of hardship and communing with him around the truths he has given to us. We **thank him** for the reality of these truths and ask him for **more revelation** of these truths to be awakened in our minds and hearts.

III. PROMISE: IN THIS WORLD YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION

- A. Jesus wants to remind his disciples that they *will* experience trial and tribulation in this life. This is a reality for all of Jesus' followers throughout this age as we wait for him to return and make all things new.

- B. Two days before the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus had given his disciples an extensive teaching on what the times between his comings would be like. He narrated for them that these times would be marked by heightened difficulty (wars, societal unrest, famine, pestilence), persecution, and deception. The weight of these words would have still been resting upon his disciples in the Upper Room, and Jesus' words of comfort and exhortation to them would serve also to stabilize their hearts through those crises.

⁴Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. ⁵For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. ⁶And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed... ⁷Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. ⁹Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. ¹⁰And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another... ¹²because of lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. (Matt 24.4-12)

- C. Jesus does not promise that his disciples will be removed from the trials, suffering, and hardships of this life. Rather, he demonstrates that he will express his power to *keep us* in the midst of this world.

¹⁵I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one (John 17.15)

- D. As disciples of Christ, we are simultaneously *in Christ* (recipients of his peace) and *in the world* (experiencing tribulation).

¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (John 15.19)

IV. POWER: I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD

- A. Jesus concludes his teaching to his disciples in the Upper Room with a statement that situates his power over all of creation. This statement roots all of his exhortations and promises for them to not be troubled and for them to experience his peace.

- B. The disciples can have certainty that although they will experience tribulation and trial within the world they will not ultimately be overcome by the world. They know this because their Savior, the one with whom they are to experience full union, has himself overcome the world.

- C. **The World:** Throughout the Gospel of John, the “world” stands for the moral order that describes and encompasses sinful humanity. This is not merely speaking about the created area in which we live, but rather speaks of the realm of sinful humanity that is set against God in rebellion. This includes the values, practices, and structures that define life in rebellion against God.
- D. For Jesus (and the recipients of John’s Gospel), the world was set under the sway of the Devil and wickedness (cf. 1 John 5.19). However, Jesus had won a decisive victory over the world and the devil throughout his life, his ministry, his death, and ultimately in his resurrection.

¹⁹We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. (1 John 5.19)

- E. Within the Scripture, Jesus did not only come to seek and save the lost (provide atonement and forgiveness of sin in order that people might have communion with him). We also see that Jesus came in a particular way to destroy the works of the devil. He did this through bringing the kingdom of God to bear in the world as the heavenly Son of Man (cf. Dan 7).

⁸Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3.8)

- F. This victory happened in a decisive manner at his death (he won victory over sin, death, and the devil) and will be fully and finally expressed at his second coming (cf. Rev 11.15).

- G. There are several ways that the New Testament portrays how Jesus has overcome the world.

1. Jesus **endured temptation and testing** and won victory over the devil by refusing sin.

¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil... ³And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” ⁴But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” ⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” ⁷Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” ¹¹Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him. (Matt 4.1-11)

³⁰I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me (John 14.30)

¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Heb 4.15)

2. Jesus **bound the devil’s power** by bringing the kingdom to bear in the world through manifestations of God’s power — particularly expressed in demonstrations of healing and deliverance.

²²Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. ²³And all the people were amazed, and said, “Can this be the Son of David?” ²⁴But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.” ²⁵Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. ²⁶And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁸But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹Or how can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. (Matt 12.22-29)

¹⁰Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." ¹³And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. ¹⁴But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." ¹⁵Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? ¹⁶And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" (Luke 16.10-16)

3. Jesus *casts out "the accuser" from the heavenly court* and put demonic principalities to open shame by his crucifixion and resurrection.

²⁷Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." ²⁹The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." ³⁰Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now will the rule of this world be cast out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. (John 12.27-33)

¹⁵He [God] disarmed the rulers and authorities [i.e., demonic principalities and powers] and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him [Jesus]. (Col 2.15)

⁷Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon [Satan]. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world... ¹⁰the accuser of our brothers... who accuses them day and night before our God... (Rev 12.7-10)

- H. Jesus' powerful demonstration against the world, sin, and the devil *demonstrates* that he will fulfill his promise and empower his disciples in the midst of the world. Though we will continue to experience the effects of tribulation in the world, we need not lose heart because he has conquered the world.
- I. We can have steadfast hearts in the midst of the tribulation and trials of this world because we are joined to Christ in union. Because he has overcome the world, we are empowered to overcome.

¹¹And they have conquered (overcome) him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. ¹²Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and who you dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short! (Rev 12.11-12)

³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ...³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 8.35-39)

⁴For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5.4-5)

- J. We seek to overcome by pursuing righteousness in obedient love to Christ.

⁹No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. ¹⁰By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. (1 John 3.0-10)