

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

The Offer of Peace

John 16:31-33

Intro: The Lord is bringing His last teaching session with His disciples to a close. At the end, He summarizes a few topics that He has taught on before but now, at the close of His own ministry and life, He adds special emphasis to the profound importance that each of these themes should have for those who follow after Him. He has spoken of the fact that the disciples will soon experience great sorrow but that the circumstances of this very sorrow will then be transformed into joy; speaking, of course, about His crucifixion. He spoke to them again about the importance of prayer in their relationship with Him and with the Father. He had already taught them how to pray, had modeled it with His life but here He shared with them the conditions for effective prayer and the new promise associated with it. He then delivered a profound statement of His own heavenly origin and destination – a statement that declares His full divinity and full humanity, the scope of which covers from eternity past all the way into eternity future.

The final subject Jesus will discuss with His disciples concerns peace and this is an appropriate topic to end with because the disciples are blind to what is about to happen to them and their Lord. They are about to discover that the opposition of the world is real – it hurts personally and it shows up with devastating consequences. But, more importantly, they're also about to learn that Jesus, their Rabbi and Friend, is in the process of overcoming the world.

If you recall from last time, the disciples had responded to the Lord's statement of His divine origin and destination with a profound declaration of their own – they made a tremendous affirmation of their faith in Jesus! First, they professed to finally understand what He had been teaching them (about time). Not only that, they also affirmed both their faith and assurance in Jesus Himself. But, here's the question: Is it possible to have faith, understanding and assurance in spiritual things and still fail the Lord? We know that they did fail Jesus when it came down to crunch time. How do we avoid that in our own Christian walk? Our text provides answers for this and other hard questions.

29-32- The disciples have just delivered an amazing declaration of faith in Jesus but He is not deceived by their new confidence. He knows there are limits to their faith and these limitations will be revealed in short order. Jesus is not expressing any doubt here concerning the reality of their faith; He's just drawing attention to the current inadequacy of their faith. The disciples do believe but they do not have the quality of faith that stands firm in the face of difficulty and danger, at least not yet. Thus, Jesus warns them that their faith will be severely shaken before it is finally settled upon Him. They found it much easier to believe on Him in the upper room than in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The disciple's faith in Jesus was a long time coming, that's true, but it was about to evaporate into the ether. They were sure in their belief, but the problem was that they were weak in their commitment. The Lord's comments in **vs32** are not an attempt to establish an "I told you so..." moment. On the contrary, the very fact that Jesus had known and had foretold that these events would play out as they did was something the disciples could hold on to. The memory of it would not condemn them but actually would help them establish their faith back into Jesus again. We, in our humanity, have a tendency to take the super-natural working of God in our lives in a negative way; we always assume the worst. Take Samson's father for example (**Judges 13:2-3, 8, 17-23**). Oftentimes, the working of God in our lives can be disruptive and even traumatic but that's because God is moving us to the frame of mind He wants us to be in. We might think He's trying to kill us but the truth is, He's trying to help us - trying to use us for His glory!

In **vs31-32**, Jesus gives a realistic appraisal of the depth and strength of the disciple's faith in Him. He does so by prophesying 3 things concerning them. First, He told them they would soon be scattered. At this moment they were still together and there was encouragement in numbers. Plus, Jesus was there. They thought they were strong in their confidence in Him and each other but they didn't really know themselves. So before long, much to their shame, they would be scattered. Most would scamper back over the Mount of Olives toward Bethany when Jesus is arrested in the Garden. Peter would follow the arresting party back into Jerusalem, but only from afar. After the crucifixion, Cleopas and Mary would return to Emmaus while the others undoubtedly made plans for their own departures.

Second, Jesus foretold their confusion. This is implied in His questions about their belief in vs31, for when He asks, “Do you now believe?” it’s just as much as saying that the time was coming when they would no longer believe and everything they believed would be thrown into confusion. At this point in time, they were sure that He was the Messiah, come from God. But how could they still be sure of that after the harsh reality of the crucifixion? They would all, like the Emmaus disciples, be saying, “We were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel” (Lk 24:21).

Third, Jesus also revealed that they would soon be isolated as each would be scattered “to his own.” What does that mean? Scattered “to his own” what? His own house, city, friends? Jesus is saying that each would be scattered to his own little world and as such, each would be isolated in that world. With the center of the group gone, there’d no longer be any cohesion to the little itinerant band. It’s as if the devil would have his way and that this heroic attempt to bring the sinful and scattered race of Adam into the glorious new unity of the church would come to ruin.

Well, that’s tough for the disciples but surely it has no bearing on us, right? We understand the meaning of the cross and we stand on this side of the resurrection! But is that right? Are we never scattered or confused or isolated? Yes, even as believers, we are and can be! We’re scattered—sometimes by persecution, sometimes by troubles within the church, sometimes just by broken fellowship with other Christians. We’re confused, even believers don’t always have ready answers to give to those who ask them a reason of the hope within. Circumstances, sickness, and other troubles rattle us. We’re isolated; even Christians can often feel terribly alone. These might be rare occurrences in your Christian walk but they’re not rare in the life of the church. These things happen quite often to many believers.

But notice that in each of these aspects (scattered, confused, isolated) Jesus is the exact opposite of the disciples. They scattered at the time of His arrest, but Jesus stood firm. He stood firm even to the point of death, as a result of which, after His resurrection, He became the magnetic point they re-gathered around. They were confused, but He was strong in His faith in the Father and His plan, as a result, the disciples would recover their faith from Him. They were isolated. But even though Jesus would be abandoned by them, He could still say, “I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.”

Jesus relied upon His close relationship with the Father all the way to the cross and even upon it. In the loneliest moments imaginable, Jesus understood that the Father was with Him. But, the disciples would only emerge from their isolation when Jesus came to them again after His resurrection.

What this teaches us is no less than the amazing truth that the Lord accepts weak, stammering, even ignorant faith. It's good that He does because if He didn't, what would become of us? Who could be saved? Of course, let's not think that it's our faith that is the crucial thing in all this because "weak, stammering and ignorant" is really an accurate description of it. Our strength is not in our faith but in him who is the object of it. It is in Jesus. Ultimately, the survival and success of the church is established on what God has done in Christ, it has never depended on the courage or wit of its members; not the first ones nor the current one. It depends solely on the work of Jesus Christ.

33- Here it is, the last statement of instruction Jesus will give to His disciples before He is taken from them and true to form, He concludes on the notes of peace and victory. He had just gently exposed the weakness of their imagined strong faith and He didn't want to leave them with that exposure. He goes on to talk about something that really is strong, something that will endure even in the face of tribulation. Jesus begins to talk about peace but not just any peace, His peace. The same peace He mentioned in **14:27**. It was announced at His birth that He had come to bring peace – peace on earth, good will towards men. He had brought peace and He left it behind when He departed.

What is the meaning of Christian peace? It's certainly not the absence of conflict or any other trial or disappointment in this life. The context this statement is given in plainly teaches us that. Jesus makes this offer of peace in the most unlikely of peaceable circumstances. At that very minute, Judas was meeting with Jesus' enemies to plot His arrest. Jesus knew He would be arrested, forsaken, rejected, mocked, humiliated, tortured and executed before the very next day. Obviously, the peace He offers doesn't mean the absence of trouble. It must mean something else.

This peace Jesus offers here refers to a contentment and trust in God despite difficult circumstances. One theologian defines Christian peace as

the possession of adequate resources. In Jesus Christ we have all the resources we need for every situation, for any eventuality. It is exactly this peace that gave Horatio Spafford the power and desire to write those words we so love to sing – Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to sing, It is well, It is well with my soul. He didn't pen those words from some theory of Christian peace but after experiencing the loss of all 4 of his children at one time in a terrible shipping accident. This was a tragedy that would break the stoutest of hearts but He was not only able to move forward with his life but also bring glory to God in the midst of his suffering and loss. This is the peace that Jesus is offering here; this is the peace that each one of us so desperately needs.

But, here's the thing we need to understand – this peace Jesus is offering is not automatic. Jesus is offering this peace, He's not promising it. There are 3 contrasts presented in the first half of vs33 – 1) "In Me" is set in contrast with "in this world." 2) "You may have" is contrasted with "you will have." 3) "Peace" is set against "tribulation." The 2nd one (may have / will have) points to the contrast between the life all must lead (a life in this world) and a life that all do not lead (a life in Christ). We all must live in the world and as such, we all will have trouble. But, people can also live in Christ and when they do, they will have peace. Yet even then, people can follow Jesus and still deny themselves this peace. There are actually conditions for entering into this inheritance of peace and Jesus provides it right here.

1st, The peace Jesus offers is for those who are in Him. This could simply mean that peace is for Christians. When we become Christians God places us in Christ so that it can be said that we have died and risen with Him and are sitting with Him in heaven even now. This is probably not what Jesus is talking about here. We must remember that this discourse has been full of admonitions to believe on Jesus and, more importantly, to remain in Him. This is not the kind of being "in" Christ that is equal with being saved. Rather, it's a conscious dependence on Jesus and a deliberate staying close to Him - that's the prerequisite to joy and fruitfulness in the Christian life. This is what Jesus has in mind as He closes this discourse. Jesus offers peace but the gift of peace is only appropriated by those who depend on Him, trust Him, and remain close to Him in their daily living of the Christian life.

This interpretation of being “in” Christ is actually reinforced by the 2nd condition: that the words of Jesus might be in His followers. Jesus indicates this when he says, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace”. What things? The doctrines of this entire section of John’s Gospel. Jesus spoke of His love for His disciples in [ch13](#); about heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit. He spoke of great work His disciples would accomplish in His absence and the important part prayer would play in their success. All of these topics are true and have bearing in the lives of all believers today. If we’re going to appropriate the peace Jesus offers here, each of these things must be faithfully accepted and obediently responded to in our everyday lives. Jesus’ peace depends on an appropriate relationship with Him. Jesus has all the resources we need but spiritual resources depend on spiritual relationships.

Even though tribulation is promised, Jesus calls His disciples to “Cheer up!” Why? How? They can be of good cheer because Jesus is declaring His victory over the world! This is the point we will conclude with – His victory! This was a bold statement from a man about to be arrested, forsaken, rejected, mocked, tortured and executed but Jesus insists “I have overcome the world.”

Jesus overcame the world in 3 areas: in His life, in His death, and in His resurrection. He overcame it in life because, in spite of abundant griefs and temptations, He pursued the course the Father had set before Him without deviation, sin, or error. He said of Satan, “The prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me” ([14:30](#)). He overcame the world in death because His death was the price of sin and it broke sin’s hold on us. He overcame the world in His resurrection because by His resurrection He began His return to the throne of heaven from which He now rules the church and from which He will one day come again to put down all authority and power.

These words were spoken under the shadow of the cross, spoken on the verge of what surely seemed a stunning defeat. But they were true when Jesus spoke them and if they were true then, on the far side of the cross, how much more true are they today? Do you believe them? Is Jesus victorious? If you do and if He is then you can stand with Him in victory. Every believer is either overcome by the world or an overcomer. The world wants to overcome us, that’s why Satan uses it to persecute and pressure

believers. The world wants us to conform to its standards; it doesn't want us to be different, to be set apart (sanctified). But, when we yield ourselves to Jesus, He enables us to be overcomers. We must claim our spiritual position in Christ and believe Him for the victory, whatever the problem!

Is it possible to have faith, understanding and assurance in spiritual things and still fail the Lord? Yes, it's quite possible but it is also quite avoidable. It's not enough to just possess faith, understanding and assurance. If we want to be strong in the face of adversity; if we want to be able to stand in that day when the world does it's worst to us then we must be in the regular habit of practicing our faith, exercising it on a regular basis – constantly stepping out on God's Word and putting it to the test in our lives.

We must also be in the deliberate habit of applying our understanding of God's Word to the circumstances and events of our daily lives; be they adverse, pleasant or just mundane. The Bible teaches that there's a purpose for everything that comes into our lives – do we seek God's purposes or do we merely seek deliverance?

We must be of the constant habit of resting in our assurance of Jesus Christ. He is who He says He is and that bears directly to every situation we face, every consideration we entertain and every determination we make. If we learn to trust Jesus for who He says He is then we will trust Him to do what only He can do when the trials of this world come our way.

Are you in the midst of a trial? Cheer up! There is good cheer in His pardon from sin ([Mt 9:1-8](#)); in His power ([Mt 9:18-22](#)); in His presence ([Mt 14:22-27](#)) and in His victory ([33](#)). We are overcomers because He has first overcome for us. 😊