

The Good Cheer that Overcomes the World – *John 16:16-33*

Introduction – This final section of Jesus’ Farewell Speech is his closing encouragement to His disciples in their sorrow over His coming departure. Jesus began with a troubled spirit (13:21) but then spoke to the disciples themselves to not be troubled (14:1) and will end the sermon the same, exhorting them to “*be of good cheer*” because He has overcome the world. Their sorrow will be turned into joy, their confusions will be turned to understanding, and their tribulations will not thwart the saving work Jesus came to accomplish.

Take Heart, Be of Good Courage, Take the Dare, Be of Good Cheer (v33b) – Let’s start at the end and the final command to the disciples (and so to us). The verb “*tharseo*” is not about being “*cheerful*” but having a strong, optimistic, courageous stand in the face of your circumstances. For instance Jesus tells the paralytic to “*take heart, my son, your sins are forgiven*” (Matt 9:2 ESV) as he does the woman with the discharge of blood who touches His garment, “*Daughter, take courage, your faith has made you well*” (Matt 9:22 NASB). When the disciples were afraid, seeing Jesus walking on the water, He said the same thing (10:49), and God said the same to Paul as he sat in prison (Acts 23:11). So it is not a cheer of simple happiness, but rather a “cheering on,” even “daring” you to press on to the end. Keep this in mind as we finish the discourse.

Your Sorrow will Turn to Joy (vv16-22) – “*A little while and you will not see Me...*” – these phrases throughout these chapters are why it is referred to as the “Farewell” discourse. It is easier for us on this side of the resurrection and ascension to see what Jesus meant that “*...you will see Me, because I go to the Father*” (v16b), but it was anything but clear to them at the time (vv17-18). And particularly, they did not know that “*a little while*” really meant just a few short hours.

Again, we see the great antithesis between the world and the disciples of Jesus (v20). The world’s joy over the crucifixion of Jesus, and for us His removal from the marketplace of ideas or any claim to Lordship in the public square, let alone over all heaven and earth, was manifest at His crucifixion and continues wherever unbelief rules. The disciples will weep and lament, but at His resurrection they were overjoyed. At His ascension and then the outpouring of the Spirit, their joy was emboldened even more (Acts 2:11, 46-47), even under persecution (Acts 5:41), as long as Christ was preached (Phil 1:18).

Jesus likens the sorrow to a woman in sorrow because her time of labor has come; and that sorrow vanquished, forgotten and replaced with rejoicing when the child is born (v21). Jesus promised those disciples they would soon have that kind of joy and that it could not be taken from them (v22). And while this first applies to their situation, certainly it is the same for all followers of Christ. Amid the unfinished business of our own sanctification and the curse upon the world in which we live, there can be much sorrow. But it all will be turned to joy at the final coming of our Lord (Rev 21:4).

Such promises of future joy that will wipe away all sorrow grants us courage today in the midst of the sorrows of life. We are being cheered on to faithfulness and hope by they Author of faithfulness and hope.

Take Heart and Dare to Ask (vv23-28) – Here again are some of those tricky verses on prayer. Recall that this asking is to be done as we abide in Him as He abides in the Father (15:7-8). Recall as well that the Helper will come and lead them into all truth (16:12-13). When Jesus has departed, they will not be able to ask Him to explain Himself any longer: “*you will ask Me nothing*” (v23a), but through the gift of the Spirit, the teaching of Christ’s atoning death, resurrection, and ascension, of the gift of salvation to Jew and Gentile alike, of Christ’s authority over all the nations would become clear (v25). Even after His resurrection and during the forty days prior to His ascension, Jesus began this good work (Luke 24:45). After Pentecost, the Book of Acts reveals the reasoned doctrinal explanations that fill the minds and mouths of the apostles in the preaching and the writing of the New Testament. The Bible in your hand is the answer to that promise.

Paul wrote that through the Son we have access in one Spirit to the Father (Eph 2:18), and so we understand that prayer, like salvation, is through the Son, by the Spirit, and to the Father (v23). This is the protocol of prayer. But as we make our requests known, abiding in Him, the work of prayer will make our joy complete and our lives full of peace that passes understanding (Phil 4:6-7). As we abide in the love of our risen Savior who is with the Father, our prayers, even amid sorrow, will lead to a fulness of joy (Psalm 30:11, 126:5-6). Jesus reminds them, “*I came from the Father and have come into the world*” (v28a) referring to His humanity. We have a High Priest who has passed through the heavens and understands our weaknesses and needs for mercy and grace (Heb 4:14-16). We are being cheered on to come before our Lord and ask the Father anything in the name of Jesus. “*We are so unwilling, upon the one hand, to pray, and Christ so willing to be employed that He can never enough press us to that duty*” - Hutcheson.

Take Courage in His Victory (vv29-33) – Something clicked, and the disciples felt they finally understood what Jesus was saying (vv29-30). His statement concerning His true nature, His heavenly origin, and His heavenly destiny (v28) was profound but simple and clear. But we must never take lightly the challenge of believing in and following Jesus. Our confidence must not be in ourselves, but in Him. Ryle says, *“Like young recruits, they had yet to learn that it is one thing to know the soldier’s drill and wear the uniform, and quite another thing to be steadfast in the day of battle.”* In a few short hours, they would fulfill Zech 13:7, *“Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.”* But Jesus never needed disciples and His confidence was not in them, but in His abiding unity with the Father – *“And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me”* (v32b).

And then He ends with this final charge showing us where our confidence is to be and where our courage will come from. It will not be in our own works – like the disciples, we will stumble and fall. But we are to *“take heart”* for the victory is not in us nor up to us. *“I have overcome the world.”* The peace that Christ promises is both objective (reconciliation with God, Rom 5:1-2) and subjective (the quiet and comforting assurance of our adoption, Rom 8:16-17).

Cheerful Daring – You are to hear the words of Your Savior cheering you on. You have fallen in sin, denying His Lordship in some way. He dares you to get up, remembering that it is He and not you that has overcome your sin (He did so on the Cross). Your sins do not hound you like they did before, so take courage and be of good cheer. You are in a different place than you were before you were in Christ.

You find yourself in a season of suffering with no reason you can find for it. He dares you to embrace the sufferings, just as He did, as the perfect work of the Father, both to drive you to prayer and faith, and to live as though He has victory in and through it – even when we don’t (2 Cor 12:7-10).

He dares you now to show Him off amid the trials the world will bring because you name the name of Christ. Dare to live for Christ and be of good cheer. Take up the sword of the Spirit and get court-martialed for showing it off. Shod your feet with the gospel of peace and run into the charges that will come (Martin). Receive the faith of Moses who in the face of the superpower of his day told the people, *“Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.”* (Ex 14:13-14).

“we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom 8:37). Be of good cheer. Take courage. Dare to live for Christ.