

# “I Have Overcome the World”

John 16.29–33

<sup>29</sup>His disciples said, “Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. <sup>30</sup>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.” <sup>31</sup>Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? <sup>32</sup>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. <sup>33</sup>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.” [NASB]

HOPE  
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Rev. Chris Robinson

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## I. Introduction

There are some things in the Scriptures that are just plain unreasonable, and this is one of them. I suppose it is one of the things about the Scriptures that comforts us. Every now and again, we find ourselves being unreasonable. It would be disconcerting if in Scripture the disciples were always reasonable. Here is a living miracle! Jesus takes the moments of the disciples' unreasonableness and uses those moments to lay beneath them a solid ground of reason for the hope that is in them.

This distinguishes us from the Apostles. For us, the foundation already is laid. The foundation is complete. Our foundation, according to Eph,<sup>2,20</sup> is “the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.” The “apostles and the prophets” refers to writings of the entire canon, to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Our foundation is complete. But it was not yet complete when Jesus in this passage was interacting with the disciples. So you might say Jesus was building the foundation even as they spoke.

We see the miracle of moving from unreasonableness to reasonableness taking place and the way it takes place. It follows this pattern: hearing, examining, investigating, and receiving.

## II. Hearing

Hearing. There is no reason for the disciples to say to Jesus, “Now You are speaking plainly.” “Now You are not using a figure of speech.” “Now we know that You know all things.” “Now we believe that You came from God.” This is unreasonable. Jesus had just said,<sup>28</sup> “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.” But if you look at the text you’ll see that Jesus is not speaking any differently from how He has spoken before. Quite as plainly did He say previously that He came from God. <sup>Jn8.42</sup> “I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.” Quite as plainly did He say previously that He was going to the Father. <sup>Jn14.28</sup> “If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father.”

So what do you think? They are hearing something new but they are hearing nothing new. That’s not all... they also add that now “we know You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You.” We know that You are all-knowing, that You are independent, that You are self-sufficient as no one else in the world is. Their conclusion? “By this we believe that You came from God.” Well is that reasonable or unreasonable?

On the one hand, you could say it is reasonable. Premise: You know all things. You are self-sufficient. Premise: One who knows all things and is self-sufficient must come from God. Conclusion: You must come from God. That is reasonable. But on the other hand... where did they get the idea that Jesus knows all things? Did He say that? He *did* say, <sup>Jn10.30</sup> “I and the Father are one.” He did say, <sup>16.15</sup> “All things that the Father has are Mine.” But did He say while on earth, “I know all things”?

Something beyond reasonableness is happening here. We noted last week that the darkened and veiled reasoning of the fallen human mind causes clear words to seem like veiled and mysterious language. So when Jesus said last week that the day would come when He will no longer speak in figurative language but would tell them plainly of the Father, He was really saying that the day would come when He and His Spirit would remove the veil from His disciples' understanding. Not so much from His words as from their understanding. Well to some degree that day had come upon the disciples.

And, oh, what enlargement of heart did the disciples feel! Pebbles in the dark proved diamonds sparkling as light burst in! Calvin captures this in his commentary. “The same thing

falls within our own experience in the present day; for he who has only tasted a little of the doctrine of the Gospel is more inflamed, and feels much greater energy in that small measure of faith, than if he had been acquainted with all the writings of Plato.”

Hearing. The Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out. But they caught a glimpse of gospel comfort and that glimpse caught their breath. They had heard something they had not heard before. They had heard something not reasonable based upon visible evidence, but reasonable based only upon evidence they could not yet see. They had caught a glimpse of brilliance in the words of the Messiah who came from the Father.

### III. Examining

Hearing. But the miracle has only just begun. It would be eaten up by birds, burned up by the sun, or choked out by thistles if left unexamined by Christ. Hearing first, then *Examining*.<sup>31</sup> Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? <sup>32</sup>Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone.” ’Tis all well and good that your heart be enlarged upon the comfort of Christ’s words. ’Tis not so well to outgrow your britches.

The apostles—yes, the *apostles*—must learn that momentary enlargement of heart does not indicate unwavering deployment of faith. A moment of comfort! Ahh! Enjoy it, but don’t make your *moments* of comfort the *source* of your comfort! You will be tested in this! And you will find that your moments of comfort in the Lord Jesus Christ will fall painfully short of securing future moments of comfort!

This is like the distinction Annie Dillard draws between watching a beautiful sunset, and watching yourself watching a beautiful sunset. The one enjoyment has a source that you cannot control. The other enjoyment demands that you be in control. The one will fill you; the other will fry you.

“Dear disciples, you are now enjoying a moment of illumination that you did not initiate. So! You believe I came from God, do you? And you feel pretty good about believing that I came from God, do you? Enjoy that moment, but know you are at a hinge-point that is not going to feel so good. Now we’re going to see whether your good feelings of comfort are enough to compel you to stick with Me when all mankind despises Me.

“Now we’re going to see whether your good feelings of comfort are enough to save you from your sins... or whether your salvation will come even though you abandon Me and flee to your own homes. Now we’re going to see whether your comfort depends upon your comfort or whether your comfort depends upon Me—only Me. Disciples... your examination is at hand. What do you want? Do you want comfort... or do you want Me?

“Comfort will come with Me, but I will not come as an addendum to comfort. Comfort will attend My arrival in your heart, but My arrival in your heart will not depend upon your comfort. Examine what *you* want.”

### IV. Investigating

Such hearing and such examining cannot secure the miracle of moving from unreasonableness to reasonableness. If you want a reasonable foundation to rest upon, then you need to investigate Christ. Hearing, examining, and now *investigating*. Investigate Christ.<sup>32</sup> “And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. <sup>33</sup>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.”

Investigate Christ. But what does He say? “I am not alone. You will all leave Me... Na, na, na... before you answer too hastily, remember that you just said you believe I know all things? Well, I know you will all leave Me. Hold your arguing. The rooster has not yet crowed. Yes, you will leave me. But I will not be alone; My Father won’t leave Me.”

And now, dear Saints of Hope, you and I have to ask, did Jesus really know all things? Or do you and I know something that Jesus did not know yet? Did Jesus not know that the hour was coming, yes was even at hand, when He would cry out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” What are we to say, dear Saints?

We may say that Jesus has not yet been to the Garden of Gethsemane. We may say that Jesus has not yet seen the fullness of agony that was nigh upon Him. We may say that Jesus has not yet wrestled as the antitype of Jacob, with the reality that to be with the Father He must first be without the Father. We may say that Jesus has not yet sweated great drops of blood pressed out of Him by the weight of God’s glory onto the holy ground.

We may say that Jesus, although He was a Son, had not yet learned the fullness of obedience from the things which He suffered,<sup>Heb5.8</sup> that is, the fullness of obedience required by the Law of God to cover all of our disobedience to the Law of God.

We may say quite boldly that the Father would *not* be with Jesus. We may speak thus boldly because without this stark reality we would never, ever have a moment of real comfort... and we *have* known such moments of real comfort.

But we may also say that the divine nature of Christ could never for a moment be separated from the Father or from the Holy Spirit. “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One!” We may say with Calvin that “when Christ is forsaken by men, He loses nothing of His dignity. For since His truth and His glory are founded on Himself, and do not depend on what the world believes, if it happen that He is forsaken by the whole world, still He is in no degree impaired, because He is God, and needs not any assistance from another.” Now *that*, dear saints, is a firm source of comfort, even when all your world is coming apart at the seams.

Investigate Christ. <sup>33</sup>“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.” There it is, dear saints. You cannot get your peace from comfort. We’ll have to respectfully yet vigorously disagree with the world on that one. You cannot get your peace from comfort. No matter how much comfort—even gospel comfort—you feel, comfort cannot and will not produce peace.

What do we know about this peace?<sup>cf sermons on Jn14.25ff</sup> Among other things, we know the peace Jesus gives is most noticeable in the midst of war, and that it is unshakable. It is abundant; and it divides as well as unites. It is declared rather than debated. The peace Jesus gives is other-centered, not selfish. It comes by divine benediction, and you must be born again to know the peace Jesus gives. We also know that God the Father *sends* this peace to us by non-negotiable grant. God the Son *secures* this peace at the cost of His own blood. He *leaves* His peace with His disciples as He undergoes the infinite violence of the cross. And God the Spirit *seals* this peace in confirmation.

This peace is confirmed by comfort, but does not come from comfort. The Israelites were not comfortable with the sea in front of them and the Egyptian army behind them. Not comfortable when Moses said, <sup>Ex14.13</sup>“Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.” God would that day overcome the Egyptians and the Israelites would only be comforted when they beheld the peace God gave them.

The widow of Zaraphath, starving with her son, was not comfortable when Elijah said, <sup>1Ki17.13</sup>“Do not fear... make me a little bread cake from it first and bring it out to me, and afterward you may make one for yourself and for your son.” God would that day overcome her poverty and her comfort would come only when she knew she was not at war with God.

The woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years was not comfortable. But when Jesus said, <sup>Mt9.22</sup>“Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.” While at once the woman was made well, her comfort only confirmed the peace Christ gave her by forgiving her sins.”

<sup>33</sup>“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace.” Peace comes from nowhere but Christ. “In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” Now, you see, unreasonableness is being transformed to reasonableness. <sup>Ps34.19</sup>“Many are the tribulations of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.” *That is reasonable!* <sup>Ps50.15</sup>“Put your tribulations on My account; I will rescue you and you will honor Me.” *That is reasonable!* <sup>Ro8.35</sup>“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” Nothing! *That is reasonable!*

Not only in all the days of old, but in these last days as well, <sup>Is63.9</sup>“In all their tribulation He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, and He lifted them and carried them.” It is *reasonable* that Jesus Christ should bear our grief, carry our sorrows, even though we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. It is *reasonable* that He was pierced through for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; that the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and that by His scourging we are healed. <sup>Isa53.4f</sup> *Reasonable*, I say, because for this very purpose He came from God. *Reasonable*, I say, because for this very accomplishment He would return to God.

Investigate Christ and what do you find? It is very *reasonable* in Him to find your peace, and in Him then to find your comfort. Investigate Christ, and find that when you are scattered and your world is coming apart at the seams, in Christ you may relax. He Himself came apart at the seams so that He might put you all together again. He came from the Father. He would be separated, rent apart at the seams, from the Father. In so doing you are secured in your togetherness with God. Peace with God. And thus... comfort from God.

## V. Receiving

Hear, examine, investigate. Once you do, the only *reasonable* thing to do is to *receive* Christ. Christ has overcome everything that might prevent or even hinder your salvation, your peace with God. Receive Christ. Trust in Him. Then it will be said of you, <sup>1Jn4.4</sup>“You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. That is reasonable!” <sup>1Jn5.4</sup>“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. <sup>5</sup>Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

To receive the Son of God who has overcome the world is the only reasonable thing for you to do. Yet it is entirely unreasonable until He gives you the faith by which you will receive Him. So if you have received Him you have overcome the world... *thank Him!* If you have not received Him you are still overcome by the world, and to be sure, the world is coming apart at the seams. *Plead with Him!*

There is an enemy who will steal your comfort and who will try to steal your peace. He may do the one, but he cannot do the other. Take courage, but don't expect your courage to depend upon comfort. Throughout the ages the saints of God have overcome the accuser

Rev12.11“because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.”

Now... do you find that a decision you made yesterday or yester-century keeps coming back to haunt you? What if your whole world comes apart at the seams because of that decision? All the king's horses and all the king's men can't put Humpty back together again. But the King of kings Who is not impressed with the strength of all the horses in the world put together, has overcome the world. That decision which appears to have ruined your life cannot stop the Lord Jesus Christ from giving to you the life He poured out when nail and spear tore Him apart at the seams on the cross.

The market investment you did or did not make... the college you did or did not attend... the friend you did or did not keep... cannot stop the Lord Jesus Christ from giving to you the life He poured out when nail and spear tore Him apart at the seams from His Father. “I have overcome the world.”

The horrible sin you have never told anyone about, cannot stop Him from giving to you the life He poured out when nail and spear tore Him apart at the seams from His Father. He has torn you apart at the seams from your sins. “I have overcome the world.”

The gut-ripping failures in your parenting cannot stop the Lord Jesus Christ from giving to you—or to your spouse and children—the life He poured out when nail and spear tore Him apart at the seams from His Father. “I have overcome the world.”

Listen, have any of your sins, your fears, your disappointments, or your failures overcome the world? Why, then, let them fill your world? Go ahead, let that world come apart at the seams. It already has, anyhow. Now let Him fill your world... let Him *be* your world. That is *very* reasonable, for “I have overcome the world.”