

## **“A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN” SERIES**

### **#31: “Take Heart; I Have Overcome the World”**

**SCRIPTURE:** John 16:16-33

#### **INTRO:**

Isn't it interesting, the way Jesus' words translate in verse 16? Sounds like double-talk, doesn't it? <sup>16</sup> *“A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again, a little while, and you will see me.”*

He's referring to the events of (1) the crucifixion, (2) His appearances after the resurrection. But since His disciples didn't understand that He was going to be executed and then resurrected from the dead, His words were very confusing to them.

So, He tells them:

***“YOUR SORROW WILL TURN TO JOY.”***

He says, *“You will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy”* (v.20). In other words, as believers, you will be sorrowful, but non-believers will be glad.

It's like the response today when a well-known Christian is caught in some form of immorality. We believers are sorrowful; non-believers are glad. They've got something to use against us.

Jesus offers an illustration. He says, <sup>21</sup> *“When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. <sup>22</sup> So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.”*

Now, I know that once in a while a woman responds differently. I have heard that there are women who decide that they never want to have that experience again, so they have just one child, but I don't think that is the rule. Ladies, is this true? I thought so.

Jesus' followers would go through a time that they would never want to go through again, but they would eventually think it worthwhile, and they would be willing to suffer and sorrow many times afterward. Knowing the living Christ and the eternal life He offers is worth the sorrow.

He says in verse 22,

***“NO ONE WILL TAKE YOUR JOY FROM YOU.”***

What is “joy”? What is biblical “joy”? What is joy in Christianity? It's a natural human inclination to think that living through trials and negative circumstances would not be an occasion for joy. Choosing to respond to life's difficult situations with inner contentment and satisfaction doesn't seem to make sense. Joy is a choice! But the Lord is the originator of true joy. James wrote, ***“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”***

While this may seem illogical to us, to those who have gone before us, it is rather common.

Stephen, the first to die a martyr's death, said as he was stoned, ***“Behold, I see the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”***

Polycarp of Smyrna is quoted as he was burned at the stake, ***“Lord God Almighty, Father of your beloved and blessed Child Jesus Christ, I bless you that you have thought me worthy of this day and this hour, that I may be able to share in the number of the martyrs, to drink from the cup of your Christ, that I may rise and live forever, body and soul, in the incorruption of the Holy Spirit. May I be admitted with those martyrs to your presence this day, as a welcomed and acceptable sacrifice. You have made my life a preparation for this: you let me see that this was to happen, and now you have brought it to pass, for you are the true and faithful God.”***

Justin Martyr, from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, said as his last words: “I ask nothing more than to suffer for the cause of my Lord Jesus Christ. If I can do this, then I can stand in confidence and quiet before the judgment seat of my God and Savior, when in accordance with his will, this world passes away.”

Eusebius, of the early 4<sup>th</sup> century, wrote: "The servants of Christ residing at Vienne and Lyons, in Gaul, to the brethren in Asia and Phrygia ... The greatness of the tribulation in this region, the fury of the heathen against the saints, and the sufferings of the blessed witnesses, we cannot recount accurately, nor indeed could they possibly be recorded. For with all his might the adversary fell upon us, giving us a foretaste of his unbridled activity at his future coming. He endeavored in every manner to practice and exercise his servants against the servants of God, not only shutting us out from houses and baths and markets but forbidding any of us to be seen in any place whatever. But the grace of God led the conflict against him, and delivered the weak, and set them as firm pillars, able through patience to endure all the wrath of the evil one. They joined battle with him, undergoing all kinds of shame and injury. Regarding their great sufferings as little, they hastened to Christ, revealing truly that ‘the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us’ (Church History, Book V, Chapter I, Par. 3-6.)

My point is this: The joy that we have through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit cannot be taken away! No sadness, no sorrow, no disappointment, no pain – not even dying – can take away our joy in the Lord!

Then Jesus says to His disciples in verse 25:

***“THE HOUR IS COMING WHEN I WILL NO LONGER SPEAK TO YOU IN FIGURES OF SPEECH BUT WILL TELL YOU PLAINLY ABOUT THE FATHER.”***

I’ve noticed this about what Jesus has said to the disciples. Have you? That He has spoken to them in allegories and other figures of speech. He hasn’t “come out with it” so to speak. His

teaching of the disciples has had a “veiled” characteristic to it. Why do you think He did that?

I think He was building the faith of the disciples by giving them truth yet giving it to them in terms that weren't so specific, that weren't plain enough for non-believers to understand it at all. Had He spoken plainly, the immature Galilean disciples might have left Him, never to return.

Now, He says the time is at hand for Him to speak plainly and for them to hear the message of atonement, justification, the church, godliness – all that would be made plain through the Holy Spirit, Who would lead them into all truth.

That process continued at the day of Pentecost and on into the era of the New Testament writings. The way of entering into the New Covenant with God, the growing of the kingdom, the functioning of the church, and how to live the Christian life are all taught plainly in the book of Acts and the New Testament epistles – so plainly that a child can understand.

But He warns them:

***“IN THE WORLD YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION. BUT TAKE HEART; I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD.”***

He says to them: ***“Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. <sup>33</sup> I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”***

You know, after they saw Him die, they thought it was over – they thought the cause was dead – they thought His work had ended – and when the women reported that the tomb was empty, they assumed that someone had taken his body, so they went home. They went away, just as Jesus said they would, and left Him alone.

**But God raised Him from the dead! Jesus overcame the world! Nothing speaks to the tribulation of this world like death, and Jesus overcame death!**

**And we, like the disciples, can take heart! We, too, can overcome death! We, too, can return to the Father! We, too, can live forever and ever!**

### **IN CLOSING...**

**Jesus doesn't tell the disciples that He'll make their tribulations go away; He tells them that while they experience tribulations, their faith will cause them to have peace. Peace, my brothers and sisters.**