



“The Art of Overcoming”

John 16:16-33

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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John 16:16-33 *"A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father." 17 Then some of His disciples said among themselves, "What is this that He says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and*

you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?" 18 They said therefore, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is saying." 19 Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, "Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'? 20 "Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. 21 "A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. 22 "Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. 23 "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. 24 "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. 25 "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. 26 "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; 27 "for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. 28 "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father." 29 His disciples said to Him, "See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech! 30 "Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God." 31 Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? 32 "Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. 33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

“It hurts when they're gone. And it doesn't matter if it's slow or fast, whether it's a long drawn-out disease or an unexpected accident. When they're gone the world turns upside down and you're left holding on, trying not to fall off.”

(Walter Mosley, Debbie Doesn't Do It Anymore)

Jesus was leaving them. Oh the horror! Through their long 3 year journey it was clear that they had become quite dependent upon Him. He was their strength, their protector, their voice of reason, *their miraculous*. And now it is clear that He is saying that He is going away. How would they make it? How would they carry on without Him? Jesus, as always, tried to explain Himself. He told them simply what was going to happen, but the apostles didn't get it, and seldom do we.

When we are young we are so naive. We think we will live forever and the road is long before us. Then when we are old and finally know the truth of the scant nature of our lives, it is often too late to do anything of consequence. All the time in the middle is usually an attempt to suck the marrow out of our time through pleasures, possessions, and self-exaltation.

Despite all the blunt and often difficult things that Jesus said in these past 3 chapters, the “final word” on the whole issue was now coming. Jesus would now wrap it all up with a ribbon and pass verdict. He clearly tells them here that despite all he had warned and asked, to not freak out. He is not trying to make them worry or panic, but in fact He points to where they can acquire peace through all of it. Certainly in our day and age it seems we would sure appreciate the location of such! Because peace is in short supply in our world today. According to Christ, there is one fountain and only one.

I think to say that these boys were sad would be an understatement! What would be going through their minds after the past three chapters of virtual monologue and graphic pictures? What would they be thinking as all this heavy stuff had come at them...one issue after another where they could barely catch their breathe in between? What are *you* thinking after the same? Perhaps you thinking that it is all just too much. This isn't what we got into this for. The apostles...and maybe you too, were not just distraught but no doubt trying hard to not be, well, *angry*. For the apostles, they wanted some answers, and it seems that Jesus is not being as forthcoming as they would like. Maybe because, as He has already said, they wouldn't understand at this point if He were to elaborate?

So what are we who are here today supposed to do with all this seriously challenging stuff that has been "put on the table" over these last chapters? The reality is, we all will undoubtedly at some point find ourselves "standing on that particular street corner." I guess this is where all that faith and love actually play out. Do we really have the stuff when stare into that abyss?

Like the apostles, perhaps we too will weep and lament, even while the world rejoices. Maybe we feel pretty alone today when it comes to the presence of Christ. It's easy to feel that we have suffered enough, been persecuted enough and have endured enough trials. It's easy to see that these apostles thought so even as it seemed they were, if it were possible, being challenged at an even greater level than ever before.

They had **followed** Jesus, **believed** in Jesus, and had **loved** Him. Now they were being asked to actually **trust Him**. And that even when they didn't actually have a clue what He was doing! The fact remains that whoever is going to believe upon Christ, all those who accept His call, all those who follow Him into the field of mission and take upon themselves His very name, will all stand at this 'crossroad.' Each of us being radically called to trust in what we cannot see and perhaps cannot even understand.

Many will, *many have*, come to this point of faith and simply "folded their hand." Despite all they have witnessed, experienced, and embraced, they will however at this point, just stop. Hebrews 6:2-6 speaks of such saying:

"You don't need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding. For it is impossible to bring back to repentance those who were once enlightened — those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come — and who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people back to repentance; by rejecting the Son of God, they themselves are nailing him to the cross once again and holding him up to public shame."

Oh, these folks may perhaps continue to wear the religious façade and claim an allegiance to the cause, but in actual practice they will go no further. It's over. They are unwilling to cross that "line in the sand." All the training and all the preparation will eventually bring each of us, *as it did these apostles*, to that moment of supreme testing. And frankly, many will not make the cut. It is not just a matter of how much do I love Him, although that plays into it. It is moreover "how much do I **trust Him**?"

It had only been a short while since they stood on that boat out in the midst of that storm. They woke Jesus up with panicked words, "*Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?*" And Jesus got up from His sleep, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "*Peace, be still!*" The wind ceased and there was a great calm: *Well, at least with the weather!* Because Jesus then asked them intensely and incredulously, "*Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?*" Mark 4:38-40

I don't know, why is it that we have no faith? Is it because He has failed us so much, or this life He has given us is so distasteful? Or is it in fact that to trust Him, means I cannot trust in **me**? I believe that the problem here lies in one word: **authority**. Having seen innumerable folks stand at that gate of trust and fail the test, I cannot help but ask myself, *what is the problem here?* The thing that keeps us out of that place Jesus spoke of, that place of total trust, is the battle of authority.

So many folks who have come so far, will 'pack it in' when they stand at that threshold. It can come at any age and at any point in our life journey. But if we walk in the community of Christ, it will most assuredly come! We will come to that place in our walk, where Jesus holds out His hand and asks us to surrender the control of our lives, the *authority* of our lives. To give it up. To turnover our keys...

Many of us in our self-sanctioned rebellion will try to reject all authority in our lives. That may encompass the law of the land, our spouses, our parents, our bosses, our pastor, the Christian community we are a part of, but it never fails that if unchanged, we finally will rebel against the very written Word of God. It seems to be an inevitability. Ultimately we will reject the authority of God Himself. And in such we “lock up.” We freeze in our tracks. All forward motion stops. We are, at that moment, faced with a crucial decision that will affect the rest our lives, and our very eternity.

It is perhaps the greatest crossroad of our time on this planet. In some ways, more so that even the day of our personal salvation. For perhaps on *that* day of redemption we understood very little except that life was not going well and that Jesus offered a way out. But now...well *now* we have grown up some and we have been taught some and we grasp a little more of the picture and the reality of the Christian path. Now we tend to understand some what this all means. Now we have to make a decision with a greater clarity of our standing and yet still a foggy presentation of the future of our days. The blindfold is off. We have to “face the music.”

Such a place seems inevitably full of pain and sorrow as we fight against that surrender. The struggle, the refusal to acquiesce, ironically means not freedom, but bondage. We fail to understand that to give ourselves over is not death, but new life. Our lack of trust, our lack of faith, comes from our pride, our self-dependence, and the seemingly insatiable lust for control. Yet the truth is, none of us have it. Control is an elusive mist which no man can grasp.

The individual who stands in the midst of this battle is easily identified. They are sad, tense, and withdrawn. Their participation in the Christian community is muted and sporadic. We see the marriage troubles, the family struggles, the financial battles, the legal hassles, the emotional turmoil. These folks respond occasionally out of guilt and/or some weird peer pressure. But it never lasts. There has to be a breaking. They either surrender or run away. Sadly, it is so often the latter.

These folks genuinely want to be Christians, but they also want to still have authority over their lives. The day will come when they must choose. God is patient. He allows us to get to know Him and witness His ability and loving care, and definitely His faithfulness. He takes away all our reasons not to trust Him, then finally He asks us to choose.

When I have talked to women about their children coming into the world, they seem to never mention the pain that accompanies birth. It’s just all about the incredible entrance of creation, the first breath, even the sound of their first *cry*. It’s all good. Jesus understood this and sights such as a great example. Yet there is no doubt herein that there is more than what meets the eye. For while there is and will be some momentary pain, His hour had come, and the birth of the church was upon them, and afterwards, it will be that life of the newborn church that will steal the show. **“...I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.”**

Jesus had been telling His apostles about His soon departure and the coming of the ‘Comforter,’ the arrival of the Holy Spirit. In that day, Jesus would not be around for them to talk to physically face to face, but the power of His being and presence would still be felt. Their requests, *our requests*, made in His name would be answered. But please understand that such is not to imply that saying the word “Jesus” is some sort of magic incantation to evoke to make all our earthly and fleshly dreams come true! In this, lies the same ground of understanding where we speak of believing *on* Jesus versus believing only *in* Jesus.

What then does it mean to “ask in His name?” It is not nearly so much a key to our wants and wishes, as it is a surrender to both authority and conformity to the will and plans of Christ. Using Him as a rabbit’s foot or magic wand is not what He is telling us. But rather a capitulation of sovereignty. A yielding of one’s self-determination. Asking “in His name” is to ask in His authority over us and our will. Asking in His name is to ask conformed to the person and power and character behind that name. Thus this is not about seeking *our* will done through Him, but rather *His* will done through the spiritual realm, and His will done through *us*! Hence the prayer, “*Lord, your will be done...*” We cannot say that we are servants and disciples of Jesus and still attempt to circumnavigate His will and plan for us!

I often frequently hear people say “*yes, I prayed about this and God told me to _____.*” And the truth is that in many of the situations they present, God told them no such thing. Such is not merely a personal judgement call on my part, but rather an understanding that their position is clearly contrary to His nature, His character, His history, and His promises and teaching. So He did *not* say any such thing. So when these folks tell me this, I tell them, “*No, He did not tell you that. Your flesh is telling you that!*”

Jesus had already acknowledged that his speaking was primarily delivered in childlike terms because their maturity level would not grasp the spiritual concepts He was seeking to teach them. We see this throughout the gospels, especially when He taught the masses. He generally taught in simplistic terms, and most of the people listened, took His blessings, and ate His food. They gave Him their attention for a time, but they never gave Him their lives. All they would have needed was maybe some pews and they could have sat there their whole lives, just taking what stuff He gave them. Once He asked them to “eat of his flesh and drink of his blood,” well, that was the end of it.

The apostles too, at this point, lacked experience as well as the supernatural wisdom that comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit. There would come a time where they would embrace both, as both are critical to the maturity and understanding that is demanded within a servant’s world.

This is why we have the disciples’ community here at this fellowship, which finds its center in the schools of believers, discipleship, and ministry. In these schools there is a focused process of maturation through education, experience, and service, all of which is directed toward an ultimate goal of knowing the character and the ways of God so as to be used in the furthering of the kingdom. It is so we can learn to be a giver, not just a taker. It is to take the path of Moses as contrasted with that of the people and their fickle, childlike lifestyles. Ps 103:7 *He made known His ways to Moses, (but only) His acts to the children of Israel.*

Upon the surrender of the control of our lives to Christ and the baptism into the Holy Spirit, our relationship with God has changed. Jesus doesn’t cease to be the mediator between God and us, however there is now a unity with God as never before. Access to God that was not available to us unilaterally is now an accepted part of our relationship with Him. The apostles would be able, as we are now able, to pray to the Father directly.

Because of what He was soon going to do, what for us He has *already* done now for us, we can have an audience with the Father directly through the Holy Spirit and prayer, *in the name of Jesus*. The Father loves us. Because we love Christ, really love Him in heart, mind, body, and soul, ...because we believe in Christ, that He is our Messiah sent forth from God, we gain a direct access to God and in doing so, the awesome plan He has for our personal lives!

God is not angry, nor do we need to beg or prod to be heard. He is not far off someplace out in space—too far to be reached. Every time we go to prayer, we are heard because God sent His Son to open the door, and the Holy Spirit to hold it open.

The language Jesus uses here is important. He did not say, “I came forth from *God*” as if He were just a Prophet sent by God, but “I came forth from the **Father**.” It’s as if all that Jesus had been telling them up to that point seemed for the first time, to ‘click.’ They seemed to not only fully realize who He was, but the ramifications of what that meant. They believed Him, and they believed He would indeed come back to them and *for* them. They **trusted** Him...

Yes, there were still some dark waters to be crossed. It seemed they now understood the stakes at hand. As if the window was opened and they finally got it, and the future stood clearly before them. The spiritual war that would ensue throughout history, the battles that would be won, and those that would be lost, the lives redeemed and the lives destroyed. It’s as if the magnitude of just what they were part of exploded before them.

Jesus never tried to sugarcoat the Christian life, and He sure didn’t in these previous 3 chapters. But He knew that the only path of peace in this world was and is *His* path. Christian or not, you will come to know troubles in this world. It is a surety. But, *and here it is gang*, Jesus has “overcome this world.”

You and I can never beat it or hide ourselves away from it. We’re here. But Jesus beat it and He is offering us tickets for His train. “**Be of good cheer, (He) has overcome the world...**”

He has overcome, and with Him in us, so will we. The Christian race is the only race in the world that begins at the finish line. We don’t fight *for* victory. We fight **from** victory.