

Reading: John 16:23-33

Theme: Trouble, peace and victory!

Christians are strange people! We have such a great and wonderful Saviour, so many privileges and promises in God's word, yet we can find ourselves very easily out of sorts, feeling down and easily see things as wrong, not going right, even questioning "*Why do such things always happen to me?*" We can have many worries and fears - about ourselves, our families, health, jobs, pressures at work, school or college, at home, at church, our finances or lack of them. There seems to be a constant battle going on in us, even around us and we are caught up in it. There seems a tension between our spiritual life and our daily life. We seem to exist in 2 realms, 2 spheres of existence. Yet we are to realise this is exactly how we live! We are in a real world, having our lives here, but as Christians we now have real spiritual life, have a real spiritual dimension to our lives and these 2 realms are not always in harmony!

We see this in the disciples - they had many amazing privileges, yet are so slow and immature in spiritual things and they are so easily and readily affected by the world around them. Jesus had spoken of their leaving Him, but spoke of the comfort He had, for He was not alone as His Father was with Him. Yet the Lord Jesus did not leave it there, for He wanted to comfort and encourage His beloved disciples and He looked to and pointed them to a time beyond His death, resurrection; beyond their scattering as He pointed to their restoration and future life work. Jesus encouraged and comforted them not only for that night, but for their life's work ahead.

The Lord Jesus knew the disciples would go through difficult times, even that all believers would experience ups and downs, struggles and blessings, trials and joys. With that in mind, He addressed the disciples and subsequently all believers in the words that we have in v33. I want to note 3 headings to help us see what it says and apply it to our lives for both now and our futures:

1. Trouble in the world.

Jesus told the disciples and all believers, not to expect an easy ride from the world - shown clearly here *“In this world you will have trouble.”* This word *“trouble”* or *“tribulation”* means those things, also anguish, a pressing down on, pressing together, pressure and is a picture word for oppression, tribulation. It is a trouble that puts pressure on us in various ways - perhaps to give in or go the way it is pushing, or weigh us down, maybe to hurt us, crush us or win us over to something that seems so alluring and good. In the world, from this world order, it is against God. We are not to be surprised if we get either encouragements or pressurised to conform, to shut up, to live as society lives, to do as it says and to go with the flow.

If we are a Christian, we have new life - given us by God - once we were spiritually blind and dead, but now we are spiritually alive and see, so now we should desire to live for God to please Him. This will bring us into conflict with how we used to live, even how we would want to live and certainly how others would want us to live, behave and react! As Christians, we are to see things from God’s point of view - His standards and values are to become more and more our values and standards, which will bring us into conflict with

the values of a society that cares little for God and His standards; which says all standards are relative and if it means something to you then fine, but we are not to impose them on others!

As Christians we realise there are absolutes, fixed right and wrong values, for we take our standards from our Creator God and His word. Society will not like that, but such are not only our standards, but our motives and standards for living, as we live to please God - moved by thankfulness for His love and grace in our lives. In living like this, we can expect trouble, tribulation and pressures. The world around us will try to squeeze us into its mould and shape us, but we are not to conform, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind and affect, even transform the little part of society we are in.

The world, which will even include loved ones, will not appreciate this, but moved by their unseen ruler - the devil, they will seek to pressurise us as Christians in various ways - openly, antagonistically, by subtle pressures, by cunning devices to affect our views and thoughts. That is why we need to be careful what we allow ourselves to be influenced by - TV, reading, social media, papers, friends, families, celebrities we want to imitate or model our lives on; places we go and the things we do. Realise there is trouble ahead for each and every believer, but in contrast to trouble in the world we see:

2. Peace in the Lord Jesus.

All believers will know tribulation, trouble in the world - Jesus told us of such at the end of chapter 15 and start of 16 - the world will hate, be antagonistic against, even persecute

and kill believers. Just by dwelling on these things could make us afraid, panic, worry, avoid the Christian life and become morbid. Yet the Lord Jesus promises to His people that they will have peace **in Him**. He had already told the disciples He had given His peace to them (14:27) and in v33 He does this again.

At this point we are to note that this peace is for those and only for those who are in union with Him i.e. all who are born-again of His Spirit, are His child and are, as the picture is in chapter 15, in the Vine - have a living, life-giving union with Him. This peace is not by being a moralist, a good living person, even a religious person, but only for those who are in Jesus – for His words are emphatic “*that **in Me** you may have peace*” - that word “in” has the force of “*in union with*”. Only believers, those born of God have this peace bequeathed, given by the Lord Jesus and have access to it no matter the troubles or tribulations they encounter in this life.

The peace Jesus speaks of, is on 3 different levels and is realised and enjoyed to different degrees at different times. It is a peace that is **Godward, inward and manward**. For when we trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, we have our sin removed, our guilt is pardoned and from that moment onward we have peace **with God** through faith in the Lord Jesus. It is our justification by faith and brings about everlasting peace between God and us. We may not always recognise it, or feel it intensely, but this peace exists and is in place **forever** between God and us. We may have ups and downs, yet this peace remains the same - a legal act and declaration by God in heaven and stands for ever.

There are times when we recognise, we have this peace with God and it affects our lives on a personal **inward** level and the peace of God in our lives spills over and affects us in the situations of life we are in. It is this 2nd area which I feel the Lord Jesus is referring to here. Yes, it is livingly, lovingly organically connected to our peace **with God** as we are in union with Him, but it is to be worked out and applied in the nitty-gritty realities of everyday life - both in troubles, tribulations, as well as in the good times.

If we are a believer, we will face hard times, but we are to remember this eternally existing peace with God - which is to spill over into our lives as we remind ourselves, He loves and cares for us. In His wisdom and love He can allow such troubles and tribulations to come our way - for reasons He knows even if we do not! We are to realise we are not abandoned or forsaken as no child of His has ever been forsaken and we can have a confident trust in Him, we are able to cast all our care on Him for He cares for us and we will find we are at peace, as the peace of God garrisons, guards us and our hearts.

Prayer is an important part of this inward peace and the apostle Paul tells us of this in Philippians 4:6-7. Our hearts and minds are guarded by His peace, but it is not some mystical experience, for it is grounded on what our God has promised in His word. God's word is to encourage us to pray, to trust and as it is fulfilled, we see we have a sure foundation for this peace. For here the Lord Jesus says to His disciples "*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace.*" In a short while they would be scattered, all seem hopeless, but they could have remembered what Jesus had said and

recall He had said these things - He was leaving the world, He would be betrayed, suffer, die and rise the 3rd day. Yes, they missed the blessing of peace in the days before His resurrection, but what peace they knew later, as all He said was right and true. Yet in their crisis, they forgot what He had said!

Jesus told them amazing things in His ministry, especially amazing things that night - things that were full of hope and comfort for the disciples and for us, especially the teaching of the Spirit, the Son and the Father's work in chapter 16. These things also need to be noted and applied to our daily lives! God's word is to be prayed over, through and with so that we will know and experience in our own lives the peace of God. In all troubles we are to remember truths from God's word - Romans 8:28 or Isaiah 43:1-3 and many, many promises from God's word. Spurgeon pictured God's promises like cheques that we can cash in at the bank of faith and get their full benefit! As we know this inward peace, it should show and be recognised by others as it affects our lives **manward** - but that is the matter of Christian living!

I pray we would all know the Saviour, be in union with Him and know His peace in all our life's situations. Some may look at the tragic events later that evening and wonder how such a One gives us peace, but the Lord Jesus was not a helpless victim, but a conquering hero who triumphed and so we see:

3. Encouragement by His overcoming the world.

It is incredible that on the brink of all He was going to go through later that day, Jesus was able to say with confidence He had overcome the world! This was the foundation for their

encouragement, for being of good cheer, to take heart - He really is the Victor! Yet for the disciples, the next few days seemed as if Jesus had been overcome and defeated. Yet the resurrection, the ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit said loud and clear "*He has overcome the world!*" His overcoming the world was not by a narrow margin of victory, just scraping through, but He totally defeated and conquered the world, sin and the devil. All the opposition against the Lord Jesus was utterly useless and was destroyed. The decisive battle was won and this makes the devil and the world's attacks pointless, but they still go on!

Now we, ourselves are to take heart in our lives, be of good cheer, be encouraged that Jesus' victory and triumph is to be shared by us. At the moment we may be going through the pain and heat of battle, but we are on the victory side and Christ's victory is the Christian's triumph! Yes, we may have trouble and tribulation, but because we are on the victory side, we can take heart, be of good cheer, because our Lord Jesus has overcome the world.

People who are learning rock climbing will often be trained by an experienced climber, who will lead the way, put in the pegs, secure the rope and then call the pupil to follow - as they have done it and marked the way, that they would provide help and they have safe hold of the pupil, who can be encouraged to press on. Our Lord Jesus has overcome, He's given us directions, His Holy Spirit and He has hold of us and tells us to take heart because He has overcome the world - so we can know His peace and encouragement in all we go through. We have seen in this chapter the work, person and help of the Holy Spirit, of all the Son of God has provided, of

the Father and who He is to us and all these tell us to keep on going, to take heart to be of good cheer. Jesus could say this even as the horrific sufferings of Calvary lay just ahead of Him.

We live after Easter and Pentecost and so these words of encouragement are gloriously true for us in our day and situations. I like the KJV translation “*Be of good cheer*” as it contains encouragement to joy as well as peace. The Greek word is used 8x in NT – 7x said by Jesus and once by the crowd speaking to blind Bartimaeus that Jesus is calling Him – all joyful news. This is the One who is our Saviour if we are a Christian, who says such to us in our lives and their messy, even painful situations – as He speaks and tells us to be of good cheer, for He has overcome the world. As believers we should live this out in the midst of our troubles, as we are those who are in the care and love of the all-conquering, triumphant exalted Saviour and we can know His peace. Sadly, we often fail to realise how privileged we are and many of our problems begin with being short sighted – as we look at ourselves and our frailty, not fixing our eyes on the Lord Jesus, all He has provided and done for us; as well as all He has promised. I pray we would all know, even in life’s pressures, this peace of the Saviour ruling in our lives.