

Sermon on In Christ, Your Trouble Precedes Your Victory

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Text: John 16:33 I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble [tribulation, trials and sorrow]. But take heart! [be of good cheer] I have overcome the world.

Introduction

The main text is the conclusion of the upper room discourse.

John 13 through 17 is known as the upper room discourse. It is what I call the last will and testament of a dying man, Jesus. For it precedes the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. In these last moments of Jesus life, he gathers his twelve apostles together to partake in an intimate Passover meal. During this meal he shares some principles to guide them in their upcoming new life; a life without Jesus. He taught them humility and servant leadership, predicted Judas' betrayal, Peter's denial, and desertion by the rest, he definitively tells them he is God, promises them the Holy Spirit, exhorts them to connect themselves to him and the Word, warns them to expect hatred from the world, and assures them of positive answers to their prayers. Then at the very end of the discourse he concludes with the thoughts stated in John 16:33 – our text for today.

The conclusion states that trouble precedes predetermined victory.

In this conclusion to the long upper room discourse, Jesus told them that, as his followers, they should expect trouble. They should, however, know that so long as they remain in him they will have peace and that the trouble will give way to victory for them. In other words, so long as they are in Christ their victory is assured but it will happen after trouble.

This applies equally to you as a disciple of Jesus. There will not be a victory that is not preceded by trouble. You cannot win without a contest, and you cannot win without a war. But in Christ the contest or trouble or war is just the mechanism to make you victorious. Every war you face is pregnant with your victory.

But we know that in every contest or war there is a winner and a loser. So how is it that you are assured to be the winner all the time? Is it true?

A hustler knows of his predetermined victory

A hustler is an expert at a particular game, say table tennis. He approaches the victim and acts as if he doesn't know much about the game. He gets the victim to play with him and he loses a few times to him. And then he bets with the victim to play another game for real serious money. He then plays his expert game and beats the victim. The hustler is assured of his victory and so he is not worried. He goes into the game knowing he is going to win.

In the same way, we are like hustlers. Jesus has told us that our victory has been predetermined in any trouble that we will face. In fact, we go into trouble with the devil thinking that he is going to win. But we are overjoyed when we face such trials because we know we will win. So, take heart, take courage, be of good cheer, Jesus has overcome the world and so you are going to be victorious over your current troubles.

But in order to be guaranteed this victory you have to remain in Jesus because the beginning of the text says “in me you may have peace.” How do you remain in Jesus?

The Bible tells you what to do in order to be in Jesus

Jesus answered this question when he said in **John 15:10**, “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.”

This is a simple principle. If I tell you things to do and you do them I will favor you. But if you don't do them I will not favor you. If you obey Jesus then you are working with him and if not then you are working against him. You cannot say you love Jesus when you don't do the things he wants you to do. So you remain in Jesus by obeying his commands.

If I am in Jesus then why do I have to face trouble?

Because as an alien in this world you will face trials and tribulations

Jesus answers this in the upper room discourse when he says in **John 15:19**, “If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.”

As an alien in the US you face trials and tribulations

You are in this World but not of the World because your citizenship is in heaven. You are an alien passing through this world. It is the same as foreigners in the USA. If you don't have papers you face all kinds of trouble; second rate job, banking problems, inability to buy a house or own a car, and not being able to move freely around. Sometimes, you feel you are treated like a nobody.

The purpose of the devil is to give you trouble

In the same way, as a foreigner in this world you face troubles because the purpose of the devil is to give you trouble. For he has come “to steal and kill and destroy.” (John 10:10) “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

Trouble is a promise by God of the reality of the human condition

Jesus knows this troubling condition very well and so in this passage he gives the disciples certain assurances, one of which is the certainty of trouble for the disciples. For as sure and as long the world exists you will have trouble. Trouble is a reality of the fallen human condition. Trouble was projected on humanity by the Adamic curse – the edict of “thorns and thistles” was pronounced as punishment for the Edenic disobedience.

What can you do about this trouble?

Don't worry, be happy because Jesus has assured victory in the end

Don't worry, the battle is not yours to fight

This is the best part of it. **Don't Worry!** There is hope. Jesus says you don't have to do a thing about it. Actually, you do have to do something but it is not anything having to do with the trouble. You have to understand and carry the attitude that the battle is not yours at all. If you remain in Jesus then when the devil brings the battle to you he has to deal with Jesus first. Because you are in Jesus the devil encounters Jesus when he comes after you and he automatically loses!

So the key provision is that you have to remain in him and it is an easy proviso because as we discussed earlier Jesus already told us how to remain in him – obey, obey, and obey. Remaining in him is key; that is why the Bible says, “For in him we live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28) The battle is not yours to fight, remain in him so he can fight the battle for you.

Be happy, Jesus has fought the battle and won already

If Jesus is fighting the battle for you then “be happy!” Why? Because Jesus has fought all the battles you will face in this life and has won them for you already! If that is the case then why are you going through troubles right now? It is because of the certainty of trouble that we already discussed. But as certain as there will be trouble in your life so also there will be victory rising out of that trouble. Just as day is programmed to follow night, so also is your victory programmed to follow your trouble. The trouble you are going through is a reenactment of the troubles that Jesus went through.

Your trouble and victory is just a reenactment of Jesus trouble and victory

Every Memorial Day in Massachusetts there is a reenactment of the American revolutionary war fought against the British from 1775 through 1783. The Americans won the actual war. The reenactment always results in Americans winning against the British as was the reality. But each memorial day they go through the motions with gunfire and swords.

In the same way, Jesus won the spiritual war against Satan as stated in Colossians 2:15, “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” So you see each time you have trouble you are playing the role of Jesus in reenacting the battle that Jesus already won. So you will win. Because of that take heart, take courage, and be of good cheer.

Conclusion

Our main text teaches that when you are in Christ, your trouble precedes your victory. The Bible tells you what to do in order to be in Jesus – you must obey Jesus. As an alien in this world you will face trials and tribulations because the purpose of the devil is to give you trouble. And so Jesus tells you that you should expect trouble. But when the trouble comes, don’t worry, because the battle is not yours to fight. You should be happy because Jesus has fought the battle and won already. Your trouble and victory is just a reenactment of Jesus’ trouble and victory.

In Christ, your trouble precedes your victory.