

## FOUR REASONS TO TAKE COURAGE

*16 I have told you these things so that you will not stumble. 2They will put you out of the synagogues; in fact, the hour is coming when anyone who kills you will think that he is offering a service to God. 3They will do these things because they have neither known the Father nor me. 4But I have told you these things so that when their hour has come you may remember that I warned you. I did not tell you these things from the beginning, because I was with you. 5But now I am going to the one who sent me; yet none of you asks me, Where are you going? 6But because I have told you these things your hearts have become filled with sorrow.*

*7Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go away; because if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. 8And when he has come, he will convict the world about sin, and about righteousness, and about judgment. 9Regarding sin, because they do not believe in me; 10regarding righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; 11regarding judgment, because the prince of this world has been judged. 12I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear those things at this time. 13However, when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak of his own accord; on the contrary, he will [only] declare the things he hears, and he will reveal to you the things that are still to come. 14He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and reveal it to you. 15All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said that he will take what is mine and will reveal it to you.*

*16In a little while you will no longer see me; and then after a little while you will see me [again]. 17[Some] of his disciples asked one another, What does he mean by telling us, "In a little while you will no longer see me;" and "After a little while you will see me [again];" and, "Because I am going to the Father?" 18They were asking, What does he mean when he says, "A little while?" We do not know what he means. 19Jesus perceived that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, Are you discussing among yourselves what I meant when I said, "In a little while you will no longer see me; and then after a little while you will see me [again]"? 20I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. 21When a woman gives birth to a child she has pain, because her hour [of delivery] has come. But when the child is delivered, she no longer remembers the anguish; because of the joy that a child has been brought into the world. 22So it is that you will now have grief; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.*

*23On that day you will not ask me anything. I tell you the truth, if you shall ask the Father for anything, he will give it to you in my name. 24Up to now you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you shall receive, so that your joy may be complete. 25I have spoken these things to you in a parable. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in parables, but I will speak to you in plain language about the Father. 26On that day you will ask in my name. I am not telling you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; 27for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.*

*28I have come forth from the Father and have come into the world. [Now] I will leave the world and go back to the Father. 29[Then] his disciples said, Now you are speaking*

*in plain language and no longer speaking in parables. <sup>30</sup>Now we know that you know everything and you do not need anyone to ask you [anything]. Because of this we believe that you have come forth from God. <sup>31</sup>Jesus answered them, Do you now believe? <sup>32</sup>Listen, the hour is coming, in fact it has come, when you shall be scattered, each one to his own home, and shall forsake me. However, I am not forsaken, because the Father is with me. <sup>33</sup>I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation. But have courage; I have conquered the world. (Jn. 16:1-33)*

## **Introduction**

In Czechoslovakia, a number of young people dedicated their lives to Jesus Christ even though it meant that persecution could follow. When the Marxist parents of one young man who became a Christian learned of their son's actions, they disowned him and drove him out of their home. An eighteen-year-old girl was whipped by her father for simply visiting the church. When a secret policeman learned that his daughter had covertly attended the church and received Christ as her personal Savior, he tightened the pressure against the congregation. (*POWER*, 1/12/92, p. 6.) What if such things were to become a real threat to us? How would they affect our allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ?

At the outset of John 16 Jesus warns His disciples of what treatment they can expect from this world—He warns them in advance so that when it occurs they may not be caused to stumble (vs. 16:1.) At the close of this chapter Jesus emphatically warns us that, for the Christian, tribulation is the hallmark—the distinguishing characteristic—of this world. “Tribulation,” as used in the Bible, refers to the opposition one encounters because of his identification with Christ. The Greek word translated, “tribulation” (θλιψις), literally means, “pressure, or, intense pressure.” In John 16:21 the same word is used to describe a woman's birth pains during the time of delivery.

The Christian may expect to encounter “tribulation” from the world. The world is constantly trying to squeeze the Christian into its mold; a spiritual phenomenon against which the Apostle Paul warns the church: *“Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will”* (Rom. 12:2.) The other thing the world seeks to do is attempt to squeeze the Christian out of its presence. Addressing this spiritual phenomenon, the Lord Jesus declares, *“Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of man. <sup>23</sup>Rejoice in that day and leap [for joy], because great is your reward in heaven”* (Lk. 6:22-23.) Sometimes this is all done very subtly—act like the crowd to be accepted by the crowd or else be ostracized by the crowd; speak like the crowd, or the crowd will speak against you in mockery or slander—at other times it is done by outright persecution.

At the outset of this chapter and again at the conclusion, our Lord Jesus warns all His disciples what we may expect from this world—and in the body of this passage He informs us of what provisions He has made for us. In the world we will have tribulation, but let us take courage from the assurances Christ provides us.

## **I. Take Courage, Because Christ Assures You of the Holy Spirit's Abiding Presence**

In verse 7 the Lord Jesus identifies the Holy Spirit as *"the Counselor,"* (or, *"the Helper."*) The Greek term that is used, (παράκλητος), is referring to someone who appears on another's behalf as a mediator, intercessor, and helper (*Arndt and Gingrich's New Testament Lexicon*, pp. 623-624.) Back in John 14:16 the Lord Jesus had previously identified the Holy Spirit as *"another Counselor,"* thereby indicating that the Holy Spirit will continue to carry on the work of Christ and fulfill the role of Christ.

In John 17 we find Jesus carrying out His work of intercession on behalf of His disciples, note especially John 17:11,15,

*I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one ... <sup>15</sup>My prayer is not that you would take them out of the world but that you would protect them from the evil one. (Jn. 17:11,15)*

In John 17:12 we hear Jesus testify of His work of guarding and preserving His disciples: *"While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled."*

Now, on Jesus' behalf, the Holy Spirit continues to carry on the work of intercession, as the Apostle Paul informs the church at Rome:

*... the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know for what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. <sup>27</sup>And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. (Rom. 8:26-27)*

The Holy Spirit also carries on the work of preserving the Christian from the evil one. In the Book of Jude, Christians are identified as *"those who have been called, loved by God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ"* (Jude 1.)

In verses 8-11 of John 16 the Lord Jesus indicates that it is the Holy Spirit who will bear an effective witness to the world. With regard to His disciples and their witness, the Lord Jesus had assured them of the Holy Spirit's presence with them

and His speaking through them: *"But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say; <sup>20</sup>for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you"* (Matt. 10:19-20.) As was true of those original disciples, we, too, must rely upon the Holy Spirit for the words to speak, and for the grace to be faithful witnesses for Christ in word and in life. Note the assurance and exhortation the Apostle Paul gives to young Timothy: *"God did not give us a spirit of fearfulness; but [the Spirit] of power and love and discipline"* (2 Tim. 1:7.)

In verses 12-15 of John 16 the Lord Jesus assures His disciples that the Holy Spirit—in His capacity as the Spirit of truth—will guide them into all the truth. By means of the apostles, Christ by His Holy Spirit has given the church the deposit of God's truth, the completed Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. By means of teachers and preachers, and by means of the personal study of the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit leads the church into a deeper understanding of the truth, and a deeper discernment between truth and error.

In the world we have tribulation, but let us take courage from Christ's assurance of the Holy Spirit's abiding presence with us—His presence to uphold us and assist us in living the Christian life and in being a faithful witness for Christ:

*I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—<sup>17</sup>the Spirit of truth. The world cannot receive him, because it does not see him, nor does it know him. But you know him; because he remains with you and will be in you.* (Jn. 14:16-17)

## **II. Take Courage, Because Christ Assures You of a Joyful "Reunion" with Him**

In verse 16 the Lord Jesus declares, *"In a little while you will no longer see me; and then after a little while you will see me [again]."* Jesus speaks of a brief period of separation to be followed by a reunion between Himself and the disciples whom He loves and who love Him.

In verse 20 Jesus solemnly declares that what lies in store for His disciples is a moment of great grief (λυπη): *"I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy."* Jesus emphasizes the fact that His disciples will weep and mourn—they will experience the type of grieving commonly found at funerals, note John 11:33, *"When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he groaned in his spirit and was troubled"* (Jn. 11:33.) This was the state of affairs at the tomb of Jesus' dear friend, Lazarus. At the same time, what is a cause of grief to His disciples shall prove to be an occasion of joy for the world. But this period of deep grief experienced by the disciples shall be replaced by great joy. What Jesus is speaking about, of course, is His impending crucifixion and subsequent resurrection.

In verse 21 Jesus emphasizes His teaching by means of an illustration: a woman in the process of childbirth. As she goes into labor, as the hour of her delivery approaches, she has “intense pain,” or, “grief” (λυπη.) But when the child has been born, not only is the “grief” past, it is completely forgotten and replaced by joy over the newborn child.

In verse 22 Jesus applies this illustration to the situation His disciples are about to undergo: *“So it is that you will now have grief; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.”* As Jesus has introduced this painful subject of His (temporary) separation from His beloved disciples, the disciples have entered into this period of grief and pain. But, Jesus declares, *“I will see you again!”* Indeed, following His resurrection, Jesus came to His disciples and pronounced upon them His blessing of peace:

*On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you! ... <sup>26</sup>A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you! (Jn. 20:19,26)*

What will be the result of this blessed reunion between the Lord Jesus and His disciples? The result of this reunion will be deep joy—*“your heart shall rejoice!”* Here is the experience of joy in the very depths of their being. A further result will be abiding joy—*“no one will take your joy away from you.”* it will prove to be an everlasting joy that can never be taken away, for it shall be the result of the finished work of Christ.

It is of great importance to realize that the New Testament teaches that there is a direct connection between the personal resurrection of Jesus Christ and the final resurrection of His people on the last day:

*But now [the fact is] Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep [in death] ... <sup>23</sup>But each in his own turn: the first fruits, [which is] Christ; then those who belong to Christ when he appears [in glory]. (1 Cor. 15:20,23)*

Thus, when the disciples saw the risen Lord following His resurrection, they were experiencing a glimpse, a foretaste, of His final appearance in power and great glory at the end of the age. The things they experienced at their post-resurrection reunion with Christ were a foretaste of what the whole body of believers will experience in its full dimension when Christ returns in glory. At that time shall our Lord’s words recorded in verse 22 be fulfilled in all of their blessed fullness: *“I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.”*

In the world we have tribulation, but let us take courage from Christ's assurance that we shall have a blessed "reunion" with Him. The hymn writer, Frances R. Havergal, well expresses the joy we shall experience in the fullest degree on the day of our Lord's appearing in glory:

You are coming, You are coming;  
We shall meet You on Your way.  
We shall see You, we shall know You,  
We shall bless You, we shall show You,  
All our hearts could never say.  
What an anthem that will be,  
Ringing out our love to Thee,  
Pouring out our rapture sweet  
At Your own all-glorious feet.

### III. Take Courage, Because Christ Assures You of Access to the Heavenly Father

During the days of Jesus' earthly ministry we find Him praying for His disciples and teaching them how to pray. But we do not find the disciples personally addressing the heavenly Father themselves, note Jesus' words in John 16:24a, "*Up to now you have asked nothing in my name.*" But now Jesus assures them (and us) of their direct access to the Father's throne (vs. 23b) and exhorts them to make use of that access (vs. 24b):

*I tell you the truth, if you shall ask the Father for anything, he will give it to you in my name.* <sup>24</sup>*Up to now you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you shall receive, so that your joy may be complete.* (Jn. 16:23-24)

The teaching Jesus had imparted to His disciples at the beginning of His ministry (note Matthew 7:7-12,) He now repeats at the close of His ministry, because that teaching must now be put into practice:

*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you; <sup>8</sup>for everyone who asks, receives; he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. <sup>9</sup>Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? <sup>11</sup>If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him? <sup>12</sup>In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.* (Matt. 7:7-12)

Our Lord's teaching recorded in Matthew 7:7-12 stresses the necessity of persistence in prayer on the part of the Christian (vs. 7.) It furthermore stresses the willingness on the part of the heavenly Father to give **good** things to His children (vs. 9-11.) In addition, it stresses the importance of a godly life; note how the admonition contained in verse 12 immediately follows our Lord's

instruction on prayer, and consider the significance of this in light of Proverbs 15:29, *“Jehovah is far from the wicked; but he listens to the prayer of the righteous.”*

Now at the close of His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus reminds His disciples of their access to the heavenly Father—their privilege to come before the Father in the name of Jesus Christ the Son. This access is now made possible in full measure because Jesus is about to accomplish the work of redemption by means of His atoning sacrifice upon the cross of Calvary. The way is now open for the Christian to come directly into the heavenly Father’s presence, by virtue of the redeeming work of Christ: “through him we ... have access to the Father” (Eph. 2:18.)

In the world we have tribulation, but let us take courage from Christ’s assurance that we have access to the heavenly Father’s throne when we pray to Him in the name of Jesus:

*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God ... <sup>16</sup>Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.* (Heb. 4:14-16)

#### **IV. Take Courage, Because Christ Assures You of His Victory Over the World**

Our Lord closes this discourse by exhorting us to take courage because He has conquered the world: *“In the world you have tribulation. But have courage; I have conquered the world”* (vs. 33b.)

Our Lord Jesus Christ has conquered the very prince and ruler of this world, the devil himself; as our Lord testifies in John 12:31, *“Now has come the judgment of this world; now the prince of this world shall be cast out.”* He has done so by means of the cross of Calvary: *“having disarmed the powers and authorities, [Christ] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by [the cross].* (Col. 2:15.)

As our Lord Jesus Christ anticipates the cross of Calvary and His faithful acceptance of His Father’s will to endure the cross, He declares to His disciples, *“I have conquered the world.”* The Greek verb, “to conquer,” or, “to overcome,” occurs in the Greek perfect tense, indicating an action or state of being that is continuous and permanent. Our Lord’s victory over sin and over the devil is a lasting victory, one that cannot be overturned; it is a victory that lasts not just for a moment of time, but for all eternity.

Note the combination of our Lord’s statements recorded in verse 33: *“in the world you have tribulation ... but have courage ... I have conquered the world.”* As we live our lives for Christ in this present world the spiritual battle at times may

rage; but we need not fear, for our Lord Jesus Christ has already secured the victory. At present, Christ employs His divine power and authority to protect and preserve His church against the onslaughts of the devil. At the end, when He reveals Himself in glory, Christ shall exercise His divine power and authority to dispatch the devil and consign him and all of his legions to the lake of hellfire. The Apostle John describes the vision he received of the final fate of the devil on the last day: *“And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet also are; and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever”* (Rev. 20:10.)

In the world we have tribulation, but let us take courage from Christ’s assurance that He has triumphed over the world, having done so by means of the cross.

### **Conclusion**

As Christians, we must be aware of the fact that tribulation—the opposition we encounter because of our identification with Christ—is the hallmark of this present world. But, nevertheless, let us take courage (and comfort) from the assurance our Lord gives us.

Let us as Christians live our lives soberly and confidently in the light of our Lord’s parting words to His disciples, spoken just prior to His departure to the cross of Calvary: *“I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation. But have courage; I have conquered the world”* (Jn. 16:33.)