



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

John 16: 25-33

Spring 2023

"The World-Beater"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. We are in John chapter 16, and we're going to look at verses 25 through 33. This is the last portion of the instruction the Lord gave in the upper room discourse, so we're finishing that up this morning. I couldn't help but think of this text while listening to Dr. Beale speak from Revelation 18, (vs4), and the command, "Come out". We don't have that command given here, 'of coming out of the world', 'coming out of the temptations that surround us', but it certainly echoes through this passage because this is a passage in which the Lord informs His people, His disciples, His eleven who are with Him, that this world is not our home. In this world we have tribulation; and it's really how He ends the discourse. But we are well equipped for it, and that's the encouragement of John chapter 16, verses 25 through 33,

²⁵ "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. ²⁶ In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; ²⁷ for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. ²⁸ I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father."

²⁹ His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. ³⁰ Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to

question You; by this we believe that You came from God.” ³¹ Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? ³² Behold, an hour is coming, and has *already* come, for you to be scattered, each to his own *home*, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. ³³ These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.

John 16: 25-33

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we thank You for this time together and this opportunity to read this great text of Scripture: It gives us perspective on life and yet gives the encouragement that the Lord gave to His disciples. We have access to You through His work because He left this world; and left it through the cross, the resurrection, and ascension. It's because of that we have access to You.

At any moment in our lives we can come to You and come, as the author of Hebrews (4:16) told us to come, “boldly” —with confidence. This confidence is not in ourselves, LORD, we know that; it's in Your Son and His work for us.

And we pray for ourselves in this hour. We pray that You would bless us—give us a sense of who we are, our place in this world, our function; that we are not a part of this world, for we're not of this world. We are to be distinct from it; we're to be lights in the midst of it. And so help us to do that; help us to be that. And we can be that by the power of God, because we have within us the Spirit of God. What a privileged position You've put us in. You have well equipped us for life in this fallen world and for the brief time that we are here. So LORD, bless us in this way, keep us mindful of who we are, remind us of who we are and of all that You've done for us through Your Son.

We thank You for the privilege of coming before You. Jesus speaks of that to His disciples and of the fact that You hear our prayers because we love Him—because we're

joined to Him. And You answer our prayers; You answer them wisely. Often You answer them in ways we could not imagine, even contrary to the way we ask. You do better than what we ask for; You know our needs.

And LORD, we pray that You'd bless us, and we pray that you would bless us materially, as well as spiritually. We pray that You would build us up in the faith. But also, Father, we're weak and we're just "dust", as the psalmist put it. (Ps 103:14). We're frail, and we get sick, and we have surgeries, and we have hospital stays, and we have to deal with all kinds of things. But wherever we are, we live and move and exist in You—and You give us every breath of life we take; we are dependent completely upon You.

And that's true of everyone, yet the vast majority of this world gives no thought to that, doesn't even know that it breathes Your air, drinks Your water, lives off Your land without a word of thanksgiving. LORD, we thank You for every breath You give us. We pray that we will use it wisely, that we will use every moment to Your glory in obedience.

So LORD, bless us to that end as we study this morning, for this is a wonderful passage of Scripture. Instruct us and build us up in the faith. Give us a desire to live for You and not this world—in which if we're living for You, we will have tribulation. Thank You for Christ and what He's done for us. He's made our future secure and certain; we look forward to that and we pray these things in Christ's name, Amen.

(Message) There's a story that when Alexander the Great came to the Indus River he wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. He was 33 years old. He was a world-beater. Just over 300 years later, at the age of 33, Jesus sat with His disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem and said, 'I have conquered the world.'

Alexander was a general, Jesus was a carpenter. His followers were a few fishermen, a tax collector, and some peasants—simple Galileans. So this statement that concluded His upper room discourse, "Take courage, I have overcome the world," (vs33b), would seem puzzling to an outsider, even audacious. A few hours later He would be arrested by soldiers, abandoned by friends, nailed to a cross between criminals where His executioners would gamble for His robe, His only worldly possession.

That doesn't fit the profile of a world conqueror. But that's what the Lord was—and is. In fact, it was when He was abandoned on the cross that He overcame and conquered the world. It was not the conquest the disciples anticipated or the Jews expected of the Messiah, (a military one). Rather, it was a spiritual victory and a death blow to the prince of this world—and the world's system.

All human conquests are temporary. This is permanent: It is the basis for the eternal kingdom to come when righteousness and peace will cover the earth forever. Knowing the certainty of that conquest, the greatest victory, He could tell His disciples with absolute confidence, 'take courage, be at peace.' (vs33).

It would take the disciples a while to do that—to digest, understand, and apply the words of the Lord. The instruction the Lord had given them, (over the past four chapters), had been given for their encouragement. He told them the reason He was leaving them, why it was necessary that He had to die, and the blessings that would come as a result; such as the gift of the Holy Spirit. All of this was hard for them to understand.

And the Lord acknowledged that in verse 25, where He told them that He had spoken to them "in figurative language". He had used illustrations like, His Father's house, the vine and its branches, and a woman in childbirth. He hadn't explained His words thoroughly because they were, as yet, not able to comprehend very much. And so they only had a partial understanding of the great truths that He had revealed in these chapters.

But that would all change. He promised that "an hour is coming", when He would speak to them "plainly of the Father." (vs25). Very soon they would comprehend everything, (and that would happen immediately after the resurrection). We're told in Luke 24, verse 45 that when He met the disciples, He 'opened their minds to understand the Scriptures'. And He continued that work from heaven through the Holy Spirit, whom He had promised to give them and who would be their teacher and their guide.

And that ministry continues today, as the Spirit makes things plain for us; because as we study the Bible, as we study this very passage, the Holy Spirit gives illumination. If you understand what the Lord is saying here, it's because the Spirit of God has opened your heart and is instructing you: He gives illumination; He opens minds; He instructs us in the Word of God.

We, today, are actually in a much more privileged position than those eleven disciples were that Passover night as they listened to Jesus teach, because they understood little of what He said. We have the Holy Spirit to teach us and give us understanding of what they failed to grasp. But they would understand. That's what the Lord promised them, a divine teacher, the Holy Spirit, would guide them in all the truth.

And in addition to increased understanding they would enjoy increased fellowship with the Father through direct prayer with Him. He promised that next; "In that day you will ask in My name...", (vs26a): Meaning, they would pray, (and we pray), as believers—as people who through faith in Christ are united to Him and pray to the Father in Christ's authority.

Christ gives us access to the throne of grace. And we can approach God at any time, all the time, with our cares and with our requests because Christ has made us acceptable to the Father. That's why He says, "...I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf." (vs26b). Meaning, He doesn't need to try to persuade the Father to accept their prayers, (or our prayers).

He prays for us, of course; He is our great high priest who intercedes for us day and night. We have many passages on that: Romans chapter 8, verse 34; Hebrews chapter 7, verse 25. But His meaning here is that the Father didn't need any prompting from the Son to receive their prayers. —Just the opposite. "...the Father Himself loves you...", He said. (vs27a). It was out of love that He sent His Son to die for us—that's John 3:16. And as a result of our response of love for Him and faith in Him, we have received the authority to become children of God. And as children, as sons and daughters, we have access to Him. In fact, the author of Hebrews said that we can "come

boldly to the throne of grace to receive mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb 4:16).

We have more power than Alexander had. That's not a privilege enjoyed by every person, but only by those who love Christ, those who have believed in Him. Without faith in Christ there is no access to God in prayer. —And it's important to notice that a 'right faith', a 'saving faith' is an *informed* faith. Doctrine cannot be divorced from belief; and what they believed is that He came from the Father.

In verse 28, the Lord expanded on the meaning of that statement to give what amounts to a summary of His entire mission. He explained it in two movements: From heaven to earth—and then back again. "I came forth from the Father,...", He said, (vs28a), which refers to His heavenly origin and speaks of His deity. He was with God from all eternity, (which is exactly how this Fourth Gospel begins).

But this faith also involves belief in His humanity. He came "into the world", He said, (vs28b), referring to His incarnation. Again, chapter 1 refers to that in verse 14 where John wrote, "The Word became flesh"—*incarnate*. He had to become a genuine man in order to save mankind. To be our representative, He had to be one of us.

But now He says, "I am leaving the world again and going to the Father." (vs28c). He was leaving this world, by way of the cross, in order to fulfill the purpose for which He came, to ransom His people, to buy, (as I think Warren put it this morning), His people out of the slave market of sin, to purchase us—to save us.

Well, having accomplished that which He accomplished on the cross, He returned to the Father by the resurrection and ascension into heaven—which were the historical proofs that the Father had accepted His Son's sacrifice for us. When Jesus said, (as we'll read in this Gospel later), "It is finished!", He meant it! It's done! There's nothing more for you or for me to do; He's done it all—simply receive it. And the proof of that is He was raised from the dead; and then He ascended to the right hand of the Father.

Leon Morris called this statement of verse 28, "The great movement of salvation: From heaven, God came to earth, lived among us, died for us, and returned to heaven." And that is the content, very simply, of real faith, saving faith. It is in the person of Christ—but in the person of Christ, the person of Jesus, defined by Scripture. Anything else is 'another Jesus'—and a false one. The Jesus of history is 'God in man, who was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. He is a living Savior, and He's coming again.'

Now the disciples affirmed all of that—that is, they believed the things that He said and claimed to understand them. They said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly...Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God" (vs29-30). 'We understand everything', they were saying, (but they really didn't.) They had genuine faith, but they had less reason for confidence than they suspected—and they would learn that when their faith was put to the test in a few hours.

Fortunately, our strength and our security are not based on our faith or the strength of our faith, but on the *object* of our faith—the Lord Jesus. We are weak—all of us are weak. We vacillate—but He does not. He holds on to us. He knew the real condition of their faith. It was genuine, He knew that, but it was weak. And He knew what lay ahead of them.

So in verse 31, He questioned them, "Do you now believe? Behold, an hour is coming, and has *already* come, for you to be scattered, each to his own *home*, and to leave Me alone...", (vs31-32).

Soldiers would come, and the disciples would flee. Jesus knew that because it was prophesied 400 years earlier when Zechariah wrote, "Strike the shepherd that the sheep may be scattered." (Zec 13:7). So they would abandon the Lord. But the Lord would not be abandoned, as He would go on to say, "....yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." (vs32c).

Now, in a sense, the Father would abandon Him too; it was when He hung on the cross and 'became sin for us'. Not *became sinful*, but 'became sin for us' in the sense that He became 'the sin bearer', took all of our sins upon Himself. (see 2Cor 5:21). And Jesus would cry out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Mat 27:46),—but that abandonment happened in His human nature, not His divine nature. (In the area of the divine personality, the Father and Son could never be separated.) But even in His human nature the Father only hid Himself for a time—and then brought Him up from the grave, glorified and triumphant!

The Lord's meaning here (in vs32c), is 'God is faithful'; and that's the reason that the plan of salvation succeeded. It was dependent on God, on His purpose—which could not fail. It was not dependent on the Lord's followers.

And the Father would not abandon those eleven disciples. In spite of their faithlessness to His Son, He would always be faithful to them. The Lord told them, "the Father Himself loves you..." (vs27)—that's the nature of God's love; it's always faithful; it is unconditional—and it is particular.

That's clear from verse 27, where it is qualified by the fact that they 'loved the Son'. His love is the love of a faithful Father for His children—for the elect. So if you want to know the love of God, then believe in His Son. It is as we love Christ that we come to know God the Father—and know His love for us.

We speak of God's general 'love for mankind' as its Creator. I think that's valid to do that; that's what we call *common grace*. He takes care of the world and of unbelievers with temporal blessings, (and far more than is deserved).

But *saving grace*, the special love of God that saves sinners, and keeps them, and answers their prayers, that's what the Lord is speaking of here. That special love is for His chosen ones who love and believe in Him.

Jesus spoke of that in chapter 15, (verse 19), "...I chose you out of the world...". John explained that love later in 1 John chapter 4, verse 19, "We love, because He first

loved us." That's electing love: Because He loved us, we are able to love Him. That's grace. That's sovereign, free grace, (which shouldn't trouble us).

But it does trouble some Christians. It shouldn't—just the opposite. It should thrill us when we think that He would choose me. Is that grounds for arrogance and/or pride? Not at all, not if we understand the Word of God, not if we have a wide range of theology and we know the doctrines—not only of God and His grace and His power, but of human nature, of anthropology. It's then we realize how unworthy every one of us really is.

Think of what you were by nature. Think of what you were as the Scriptures define you: Unbelieving, at enmity with God—at war with God. That's the teaching of the apostles and prophets. We were dead in our sins, (there's nothing lovely in that). "Sons of disobedience and children of wrath", (Eph 2:2-3)—Doomed!

God saved us by choosing us in eternity, and redeeming us at Calvary. As P. T. Forsyth said, "We are rebels, taken with weapons in our hands." That's grace. That's what makes grace, grace—and so amazing. He loved us when we were enemies. And having made us His friends, having made us His children, His sons, and heirs of eternity—having made us that, He will never stop loving us.

And so, He will never stop being faithful, even when we are unfaithful for a time. That's the assurance Jesus gave His disciples in verse 33. He looks beyond their temporary failure and defection, to a better day when they are restored. That's how the Lord ends the discourse—with encouragement, "These things...", He said, (that is *everything* that He has spoken in this discourse), "...I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace.", (that's peace in Him), "In the world...", He said, "...you have tribulation..."

We live in two spheres: Every believer lives in Christ—and we live in the world. The world's not our home; it is a hostile place; it is opposed to what we are and believe. So here, we have tribulation, we have troubles and trials of all kinds. From temptations

that would draw us away, to opposition and persecution that would destroy us. The challenges we face daily are greater than our ability to resist and overcome naturally, just as they were for Adam in the garden—but they are not too great for Christ.

And then we are in Him, spiritually. He explained that in chapter 15, 'Just as the branch in the vine receives the life of the vine and is, (as a result of that), fruitful—so too we are joined to Christ and we have His life and His strength in us.' We draw that from Him; His life is in us. And as we *abide* in Him, as we *walk* with Him, *live by faith* in fellowship with Him, we experience the spiritual fruit of peace—personal peace.

So peace is not the absence of conflict. The New Testament is consistent in its testimony that the earnest Christian will suffer tribulation in this world. After Paul was stoned, we read this in Acts chapter 14, (vs22), he told the young believers there in Lystra in Asia Minor, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God"—the future kingdom. Paul wasn't rattled by that; his faith wasn't discomfited by that. He was confident when he said that—he embraced it.

Peace is 'contentment in conflict'; and the reason for this is that, Jesus has beaten the enemy; "...take courage;" He concludes, "I have overcome the world." (vs33c). Meaning, He has *conquered* the world—not geographically or militarily, obviously, but spiritually. He has overcome the world's system which is organized against God—and is what drives the hostility and tribulation.

Now if that seems a little abstract, 'the world's system', it's Satan's realm populated by unbelievers who, by nature, oppose the Light and hate God's truth. In a few hours they, (inspired by that evil system, inspired by the prince of this world and that system), would target Christ and seek to put out the Light.

But the irony is, that is when and where the world was defeated—at the cross. Because that is where our sins were all laid on Him and we were liberated from the *world*, the *flesh*, and the *devil*.

Paul described it in warlike terms in Colossians chapter 2, verses 13 through 15, where he explained how it is that God made us alive and forgave all our sins. It

happened when Christ was crucified. At the cross, Christ, (quoting Paul), "...canceled out the certificate of death consisting of decrees against us...", (vs14a). All of the charges, (as it were), against us, 'nailed to the cross' —each and every one of your sins...and Christ paid for all of them, canceled them out having "nailed it to the cross", (vs14c), as Paul said, and He "disarmed the rulers and authorities." (vs15).

He gained forgiveness for us by paying all our spiritual debts when He suffered the full penalty of our sins by dying in our place. With that payment made, God's justice is satisfied and we are forgiven—forever. We're declared righteous; and that declaration is made at the moment of faith, and it's forever.

At the same time, in the same way, He overthrew the powers of darkness who had controlled us by our sin and guilt. Sin separated us from God, and left us in Satan's domain—the domain of darkness. But when the debt was canceled, and sin forgiven, the devil's power was broken and we were set free.

John Stott put it simply, "By liberating us from these, He has liberated us from them." By liberating us from our sins and guilt, He has liberated us from those demonic powers. "By liberating us from these, he has liberated us from them."

Paul described the Lord's victory over Satan's forces as a parade; like a Roman Triumph in which a victorious general would ride in a chariot through the capital with captives in chains before him. That's the picture: "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him." (Col 2:15).

The forces of the world and the devil are still around and their attacks continue; but they're all under Christ's control. And their opposition is pointless, futile for them—and even used, in God's grace, to refine us and make us more like Christ—and make us stronger in the faith.

Christ's incarnation and atonement have been likened to D-Day, when the Allied forces invaded Europe and conquered the beaches of Normandy. (It's a pretty good

illustration for our Memorial Day weekend.) That was the decisive victory of the war. There was another year of battles and skirmishes, but Hitler's defeat was made certain at Normandy.

And so it is with the world and the devil. It fights us, but it cannot overcome us, because everyone in Christ shares in His victory. He is our representative. He stood for us. He is our champion. He won for us. —It's settled.

And there's no threat of reversal—victory is permanent. Christ's statement here, "I have overcome the world," is in the *perfect* tense. Now grammar is important and here you see the significance of it because the *perfect tense* is a 'past tense' that stresses *abiding* results into the *present*. And so that's what is being described. "I have overcome the world": 'I overcame it at the cross, and the results of that continue into the present—and will continue on forever.' They are *abiding* results.

No man can make that claim because no human conquest is ever permanent. But the Lord's is: He has "overcome the world". He won. He's victorious. The Greek word, 'overcome', is, *nikaō*. The noun that comes from that verb is *nikē*, 'victory'. (So the shoe company chose an illustrious word for its name.)

Another Greek word that has become familiar is *hubris*, which is *pride* or *arrogance* that invites a downfall. And the Greeks showed that when they built beautiful temples on the Acropolis. The most famous is the Parthenon, but there's a small temple there to Athena Nike. It is known as, 'The Temple of Wingless Victory'. The goddess of victory was normally represented with wings, but in this temple, she had none. Legend has it that the Athenians plucked off her wings so that victory would never leave Athens. They did that during 'The Golden Age'—which lasted about 40 years. 'The age of Pericles', so, 'victory will never leave our city!' ...Hubris!

Only a few years later the Spartans conquered Athens. Then the Macedonians conquered the Greeks and Alexander went across the earth conquering nations all the way to India. Then suddenly he died, young, and his kingdom was divided among his four generals—and their kingdoms were all eventually conquered by the Romans, who established a vast empire—that finally fell. And so it goes down through history. Man's

conquests are short lived. Any thought that dismisses that, is *hubris*: It's pride; it's arrogance.

The kingdoms of this world come and go: But Christ's victory is permanent—and His kingdom will be forever. He conquered the world and world's system when He died. He conquered death when He was resurrected. He is alive today—and He is coming back.

Then the conquest of the cross will be the conquest of the earth. That's when the voices of heaven will declare in Revelation 11, verse 15, "The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." So certain is it to happen that it's stated in the *present* tense as a present reality. That's our future.

So we who have believed in Christ, joined ourselves to Him, are now in Him, absolutely safe, and have peace. That's Christ's promise. "I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace." (vs23).

That reality brings the discourse full circle. The Lord began chapter 14 saying, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me." That is the key to peace, believing in Christ and believing His words—and believing all of His promises. When we do that we can take courage, even in the worst tribulation that the world can give. And the world has put God's people through some hard, hard tribulations—some that are really unspeakable.

One of the most famous that the world put God's great saints through was that of Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer, who were burned at the stake for their faith. As the fire was lit, Latimer famously called to his friend, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and 'play the man'. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out." They died a hard death; but by the grace of God they died well.

The world cannot give such peace or have such peace. God said, "There is no peace for the wicked." (Isa 48:22). And someday all of the world's hope of peace will be gone and lost forever.

Peace is only *in Christ*. And we become *in Christ* only through faith—by trusting in Him as God and Savior, by resting only on His sacrifice for us. And then, by faith we persevere through life's troubles. We won't escape them, not if we're living well for the LORD, but as John promised later in 1 John 5, in verse 4, "...this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith." As we *trust* daily, as we *abide* in Him, we have peace—we even have joy. We triumph over trials. Christ has made us, (as Paul told the Romans 8:37), "more than conquerors", —He is the true world-beater.

If you've not believed in Him, if you're here without Christ, we invite you to come to Him—to trust in Him. Having conquered the world, the Lord is now calling the lost out of this fallen world that is passing away—*presently* passing away. Hear His voice; **Come out** of darkness; **Come** to the Light; Believe in Christ and receive from God the Father full forgiveness of sin and life everlasting. May God help you to do that.

And help all of us who've put our faith in Him, and are in Him to live faithfully and joyfully.

(Closing prayer) LORD, some day in great triumph we will sing that: "Hallelujah, what a Savior!" But we say it now, "What a glorious thing!" We, who have put our faith in Him have our sins forgiven; we're declared righteous, fully accepted by the Father. We have the Spirit of God within us. We are secure in this world, regardless of the tribulations—and we have power to deal with them, daily, as You give them to us and as we look to You.

And we have a glorious future, all of that purchased by Christ... What a Savior! We thank You for Him, and LORD, impress that upon us.

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Now the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. In Christ's name, Amen.

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