



**John 16:28-33**  
**Cheerfulness in Times of Sorrow**

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's amazing how often when Christ is preached in modern day Christianity, it's done in terms of how being a Christian will improve your life, how it will improve your job, and your marriage, and your bank account, how you'll just get along better with the world. By becoming a Christian, you will be able to "***Keep the Strife out of your Life***" to quote the title of a chapter of a best selling "Christian" book. The idea is, become a Christian and your external circumstances will improve.

***Now that's odd, because that's not what Christ said!***

He didn't say follow me, and your relationships with the world will improve, in fact He didn't say take up your cross and follow me and you'll keep the strife out of your life. He didn't even say you will have *less strife*, in fact he guaranteed that if you follow Him: "in the World You will have TRIBULATION." But despite having tribulation out here in the world, He guarantees that you will have something incomparably better in here: and that is **TRUE PEACE in HIM**. A peace the world knows nothing of. You see Christ doesn't tell His followers that they will be happy because their external circumstances have improved, they may often get worse, as thousands of converts in Islamic societies and families like Rifqa Bary can tell you. What Jesus says is that because of what He has done your spiritual state and your eternal destiny will be forever changed.

Externally things may get worse, but internally and eternally is were the great change for the better will occur. And because of that change Christians will no longer need to be slaves of their circumstances like the world is, they will be able to "be of good cheer" no matter what their circumstances.

Now when Jesus first spoke these words assuring the disciples that that would be the case they didn't really understand how that could be. They didn't really even understand how His dying and leaving them could be better. But He had told them that soon all these things would be clear to them, and they

wanted “soon” to be “now” so the moment he said something in verse 28 about his leaving and returning to the God the Father and then coming back they say “Now we understand” and because we understand “we believe” – its ok Jesus we’re good with it. It’s like one of those situations where you are explaining something complicated and its clear the person is really following but they think they are, and when you stop and say “I don’t think you’re getting this, let me go back and explain” they answer “No, no, no, I understand. It’s perfectly clear.” And no matter what you do, you can’t bring them to see they don’t get it. Until it comes time to put your instructions into action that is...

So the disciples want to believe that the “In that day” of John 16:23 has come, when in fact Jesus is referring to the time after His resurrection.

So when they say “Now we believe!” The response from Christ is “Do you now believe?” which is an ironic, Oh Really

Now they do believe in Him but they do not understand yet, and they do not fully trust. The Holy Spirit has opened their eyes as to who Christ is but the gift of the Holy Spirit has not yet been given to empower the church for worldwide evangelism and bring them into all understanding for the purpose of teaching and writing scripture.

So the faith they have in Christ is real and sincere, but not adequate to withstand persecution They are still wracked with fear and anxiety, they are like children who are confident enough to do something while their parents are there and with them, but lose their nerve when they aren’t around

Perhaps a better analogy might be that they were like Green soldiers, they had the uniform, they believed in their cause, and they felt invincible, they are full of bluff and bravado, but they did not yet know what it was to go through real battle and the moment the bullets start flying they are going to want to run.

Jesus warns them of that in verse 32 saying that when the hour of His crucifixion comes, they will be scattered – a reference to the prophecy of Zechariah 13:7 - ***"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, Against the Man who is My Companion," Says the LORD of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered; Then I will turn My hand against the little ones."***

When the Temple police come to arrest Him all his disciples will run away from the Garden of Gethsemane. Peter – who had said to Lord “Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.” – will follow Christ to the courtyard of the high priest, but he won’t even be able to withstand the questioning of a servant girl but will deny even knowing Christ with oaths and vile curses.

And yet Jesus wants them to know that even when they abandon Him, He will not be entirely alone. Because of the Unity of the Godhead the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can never be truly separated. The Father is always with the Son. And yet Christ’s anguish at the defection of His followers will be very real: ***Psalm 69:19 You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor; My adversaries are all before You. 20 Reproach has broken my heart, And I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; And for comforters, but I found none.***

They will be scattered and full of fear and when Jesus Christ rose on the Third Day and showed himself to the disciples we read that He found them way: ***“19 Then, the same day at evening, being***

*the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."*

Had not the Holy Spirit been given that is how they would have remained, but what a difference PENTECOST will make on them. These men will go from denying Christ and huddling in one room with the doors locked to preaching to thousands and defying even the orders of the Sanhedrin so that we read: Acts 5:40 And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”

Because of the victory of Christ over the WORLD, the FLESH, and the DEVIL!

John, who recorded their fearfulness before Pentecost also recorded the difference that the Resurrection and gift of the Holy Spirit made in them:

***1 John 4:13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.***

***14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.***

***15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.***

***16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.***

***17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.***

***18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.***

***19 We love Him because He first loved us.***

Paul also writing from jail was able to speak of the peace and joy that Christians should experience because of the change that believing in Jesus makes:

***Phil. 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!***

***5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.***

***6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;***

***7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.***

But perhaps you are thinking that that kind of boldness was something only for the NT period, well let me give you an example of how it goes on today in spite of the greatest of tribulation:

***Gao Zhisheng was born into a very poor family, so poor in fact that for a time his family had to live in cave. But despite that Gao studied hard, and became a member of the Communist Party in 1991 he saw a newspaper advertisement that China wanted to train more lawyers. Against all odds, Gao studied by himself and passed the bar exam on his first attempt in 1995. He started his own firm and six years later, he won a legal debate competition, and government officials named him one of the nation's top attorneys.***

*Gao began taking human-rights cases in 2003, mostly on a pro bono basis. After winning the largest sum for a medical malpractice suit in Chinese history, Gao gained attention not only for his legal ability but also for his compassion. He began taking on more and more human-rights cases, including those of persecuted Christians and Falun Gong believers.*

*Geng He told CT that her husband began regularly attending a Beijing house church in 2005. She believed his "turning point" came when a minister prayed with him after a sermon. "Gao would get up at 6 a.m. and read the Bible for an hour," his wife said. "He would attend Bible study and enjoyed singing some of the hymns. He read the Bible to the children and sometimes discussed the Bible with me too." In *A China More Just*, Gao says he was baptized in 2005 and became a member of a house church.*

*Gao made his voice heard beyond courtrooms through speeches, organized protests, and letters to the government calling for reform. In his book, Gao describes how the government's lack of response to human-rights violations disgusted him.*

*Another turning point came in 2005, when the couple quit the Communist Party, publicly calling it "inhuman, unjust, and evil." In response, the government shut down Gao's law firm, and the family lost its livelihood.*

#### *Siege on the Family*

*In August 2006, government authorities placed Gao's family, including his now 16-year-old daughter and 5-year-old son, under constant and intense police surveillance.*

*But the surveillance intensified dramatically. Six to eight officers stayed inside their home at all times. Geng He told CT, "They would sit across the sofa and always be watching us. They even sat by our bedside when we slept."*

*Despite the surveillance, Gao continued to speak out about human rights. He updated his journal daily. When the authorities took out the family's phone line and shut off Internet access, Gao read his journal over a cell phone to others who would post it online.*

*In September 2007, Gao wrote a letter to the U.S. Congress. He listed the ways China had refused to honor its own human-rights laws and implored the U.S. to take action, such as boycotting the 2008 Beijing Olympics. He concluded his letter by stating,*

***"Jesus said, 'Love others as well as you love yourself.' Those struggling in the [Chinese Communist Party] prisons, those crying under the [Chinese Communist Party's] tortures, those roaming around to avoid mistreatment need your help.***

***"May God bless America, may God give each person justice, responsibility, and firm determination, may the light of freedom shine upon China proper, let evil have no place to hide, and may the mistreated no longer be in pain."***

*After the letter was released, China imprisoned Gao. Guards told him, "We can torture you to death without your body being found"*

*Because of that letter Gao was kidnapped by the police and has since “disappeared” – how can one do this? It is because of the strength and peace that only Christ can give despite tribulation.*

Applications:

**NOT GREAT MEN BUT JESUS:** It is worth noting that the apostles were all discredited men: when we look at the church we see that it owes its existence not to their courage or to their genius, but to what Christ had done in them. This should show us, that WE need to learn to depend not upon ourselves but Jesus Christ, and that we should remember that without Him we can do nothing. If we want to understand why despite having so many resources the unbelieving church always withers away, we need only consider that having rejected Christ, they have cut themselves off from the only source of true spiritual power to do anything.

**The need for humility:** Let us mark these things, and learn wisdom. The true secret of spiritual strength is self-distrust and deep humility. "When I am weak," said a great Christian, "then am I strong." (2 Cor. 12:10.) None of us, perhaps, have the least idea how much we might fall if placed suddenly under the influence of strong temptation. Happy is he who never forgets the words, "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall;" and, remembering our Lord's disciples, prays daily "Hold me up and then I shall be safe."

This is the KEY to our own ability to persevere and even be happy in the midst of trials!: He does not tell us that we shall have no trouble in the world. He holds out no promise of freedom from tribulation, while we are in the body. But He bids us rest in the thought that He has fought our battle and won a victory for us. Though tried, and troubled, and vexed with things here below, we shall not be destroyed. "Be of good cheer," is His parting charge--"Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Let us lean back our souls on these comfortable words, and take courage. The storms of trial and persecution may sometimes beat heavily on us; but let them only drive us closer to Christ. The sorrows, and losses, and crosses, and disappointments of our life may often make us feel sorely cast down; but let them only make us tighten our hold on Christ. Armed with this very promise let us, under every cross, come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Let us often say to our souls, "Why are you cast down, and why are you disturbed?" And let us often say to our gracious Master--"Lord, did not You say, Be of good cheer? Lord, do as You have said, and cheer us to the end."