

A World of Trouble Overcome in Christ (John 16:33)

Please turn in John 16 for a final look at the final words of Jesus before He prays and goes to Gethsemane and Calvary. Next month we'll start to study His incredible prayer before the cross (Jn 17), but these words of Jesus in Jn 13-16 are already the most personal, inspirational and directly applicable words I've ever studied or taught. This is Christ's emotional farewell speech with a powerful conclusion in 16:33. This stirring message ends with heart-strengthening words, like a general to soldiers about to go to war, and in the midst of that war on every side He promises peace on the inside if we apply His words, through His overcoming victory He shares so we'll overcome.

16:33 *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*

The title of today's message is: A World of Trouble Overcome in Christ.

Last week we looked at the first sentence in v. 33 – that promise of peace in Christ – today let's look at the 2nd half of the verse: the tribulation promised in this world, and how Christ overcoming this world should encourage our hearts in troubles we'll face. 3 clear implications v. 33 gives for us to apply:

1. Expect trouble in the world
2. Trust the Lord who overcame
3. Be encouraged to overcome with Him

1. Expect Trouble in the World

v. 33b ... *In the world you will have tribulation* ...

That's a general word for trouble, affliction, pressure, suffering, difficulty. This is where the rubber will meet the road quickly. It won't take long till you have opportunity to apply this in our real world that has real troubles. What types of tribulation are part of this world for the followers of Christ? In the context of v. 20 Jesus talked about things that make us weep, lament, grieve. Christians have sorrow in this world. v. 21 mentions pain a mother has, and the end of v. 21 uses the word *anguish* - same word translated as *tribulation* in v. 33. Jesus said there would be tribulation in the world till His 2nd coming, wars and rumors of war are like birth pangs. We're born into this world by tribulation pain, as loved ones leave the world in death there's pain. There's also anguish or affliction faced because of our faith. In the context of v. 2 Christ said His followers would be outcasts of their society, some enemies want to kill or destroy. That's still true of our world, secular society sees Christians as outsiders and some of the radicalized in our world want to kill or destroy, some have around the world this month.

Jesus wants His followers in v. 33 to expect a rocky road. When it happens we aren't to be surprised or shaken in our faith, it should confirm our faith. This is what Jesus promised to us: *'In the world you will have tribulation.'* If we didn't experience tribulation, Jesus would be a liar and couldn't be Lord. But when you experience tribulation, that proves Jesus and His Word is true

Don't ever think becoming a Christian means wealth or health or all is well in life, your best life now. This chapter promises the best Lord who despite the worst things in life now gives us a peace in Him and overcoming grace for a world of sin, suffering, and sorrow. In v. 1-2 Jesus doesn't want you to stumble when things don't seem best, when some things in life actually get worse in some sense because you're a Christian. Jesus never promised times of prosperity, He promised tribulation and pressure in the world you'll have.

Leonard Ravenhill wrote: "The Church fresh from the Upper Room invaded the world; now the Church in the supper room is invaded by the world. The New Testament Church did not depend on a moral majority, but rather on the holy minority. The Church right now has more fashion than passion, is more pathetic than prophetic, is more superficial than supernatural. The church the Apostles ministered in was a suffering church; today we have a sufficient church [or so we think]. Events in the Spirit-controlled Church were amazing; in this day, the Church is often just amusing. The New Testament Church was identified with persecutions, prisons, and poverty; today many [in professing church] are identified with prosperity, popularity, and personalities. We lack apostolic power because we lack apostolic piety, and we lack apostolic piety because we lack apostolic purity."¹ Well said.

Mt 24 gives the pure words of Christ to the apostles just a day before this:

⁹ *they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.* ¹⁰ *...many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.* ¹¹ *Many false prophets will arise...* [that began in NT times, in the future] ²¹ *...there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now ...* ²⁹ *after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.* ³⁰ *And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.*²

So the night before Jn 16:33 Jesus taught much on *tribulation in this world*. Jesus' word in Mt 24 for gathering up the elect in the sky is the same word in 1 Thess 4 for gathering up Christians in the air\sky with trumpet sound. The gathering in Mt 24 happens after the great tribulation, post-tribulation is the phrase in Latin and so some scholars believe that's the one end time gathering, while others think there's 2 gatherings of Christians in end times. But what's clear to all is tribulation won't come to an end till the world ends

1 Thessalonians 3:3 uses the same word 'tribulation' and says Christians are destined for that, we're appointed to tribulation. Paul says later in that book we're not appointed to wrath (5:9). We don't face end-times wrath or eternal wrath, Jesus bore all wrath on the cross for believers, but 3:4 says '*we told you before...that we would suffer tribulation*' (NKJV, so we're destined for tribulation until Jesus comes again but God's wrath is only for unbelievers). 2 Thess 1 says our relief from *tribulation* comes when He comes in wrath.³

Jesus is clear here in v. 33 that we will have tribulation in this world. Acts 14:22 says: '*through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*' John who heard Jesus speak of future tribulation in Mt 24 and in John 16:33 understood he was experiencing this promise. Rev 1:9 '*I John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation...*' He didn't see 'the tribulation' as all or only future, he saw himself as he wrote sharing '*in the tribulation.*' John wasn't exempted from tribulation, he was in it, in suffering on the island of Patmos. Christians do face tribulation but not God's wrath in Revelation. *In the world you will have tribulation*, it says, but not His terrifying wrath on it

Expect tribulation or trouble in the world, that's point #1, next part of v. 33: **Trust in the Lord who overcame (that's the 2nd point Jesus emphasizes)**

*In the world you will have tribulation.
But take heart; I have overcome the world.*

In our world of tribulation Jesus tells us not to be overtaken by the troubles, not to be overwhelmed by the trials, our hearts need to turn from the world to trust its overcomer. We need to take by faith the One who has overcome.

[some translations 'I have conquered' – it's a note of victory]

Spurgeon: 'How could the betrayed man of Nazareth say, "I have overcome the world"? We can imagine Napoleon [saying 'I have overcome'] when he had crushed the nations beneath his feet, and shaped the map of Europe to his will. We can imagine Alexander [the Great as he conquered] palaces of Persia and led her ancient monarchs captive. But who is this [saying v. 33]

...It is a Galilean, who wears a peasant's garment, and consorts with the poor and the fallen! He has neither wealth nor worldly rank nor honor among men, and yet speaks of having overcome the world. He is about to be betrayed by his own base follower into the hands of his enemies, and then he will be led out to judgment and to death, and yet he says, "I have overcome the world." He is casting an eye to his cross with all its shame, and to the death which ensued from it, and yet ... "I have overcome the world." He had not where to lay his head, he had not a disciple that would stand up for him, for he had just said [in v. 32] "Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone"; he was to be charged with blasphemy and sedition ... he was to be given up to a brutal soldiery to be mocked and despitefully used and spat upon; his hands and feet were to be nailed to a cross, that he might die a felon's death, and yet he sai[d], "I have overcome the world." How marvellous, and yet how true! ... see not alone the despised bodily person of the Son of man, but the indwelling, noble, all-conquering soul which transformed shame into honor, and death into glory"⁴

For over 33 years Jesus had overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil in His perfect life, through tribulation and every temptation we face. Lk 10:18 said Jesus already saw Satan fall from heaven, the miracles of Jesus overpowered the domain of darkness as He cast out demons, His foot is already on the serpent's head, and His final victory at the cross is only hours away. In v. 11 the end of the verse says '*because the ruler of this world is judged*'. Satan was the ruler of the sinful world until Christ judged him by the cross and Christ's kingdom of light overcame the devil's kingdom of darkness. Jn 1:5: *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

On the cross, darkness overshadowed Jesus for 3 hours but didn't overcome Him. At that moment He looked defeated, He defeated the world, flesh, the devil. Col 2:15 says of the forces of darkness Jesus '*disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them...*' Jesus rose triumphant victorious from death, overcoming not just demonic rulers, death itself is swallowed in victory in the resurrection, 1 Cor 15:25-26, 55.

Crown Him the Lord of life, Who triumphed o'er the grave,
And rose victorious in the strife For those He came to save⁵

Martin Luther: 'A Christian should emphasize and magnify these words—"I ...*have overcome the world*"—more than heaven and earth. It is as though Christ wanted to say: "My dear friend, write the word 'I' with a very large capital letter, in order that you may see it well and take it into your heart ... "I am the One who is saying this." He does not say: "The Roman...emperor

is making these statements.” ... Nor does He say: “All the holy angels...are making these statements.” No, He says: “*I, I* am making these statements.” ...Consider the Person saying this, not yourselves, who hear it. And do not consider what is outside Me, that which assails you ... in ourselves we are very weak and that when we take stock of ourselves, we are too greatly frightened and terrified by these great giants, death, the devil, and the world. Christ declares: “I am very well aware of this. Therefore I want to attach you to Me...I am the One who says this to you. But you must turn your eyes from yourselves and...be sure to consider who I am, in order that you may be able to say: “Listen, death, devil, pope, emperor, and world, you are really putting on airs...says Christ. “I have overcome the world...”⁶

Rev 5:5 '*Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, **has overcome**...*' And I saw...*a Lamb standing, as if slain...*' Jesus, the Lion has overcome as the worthy Lamb who was slain and who's risen and who reigns on the throne as the world's conqueror and victor. Rev 17:14 says earth's kings '*will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will **overcome** them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings*' (NASB)

S.M. Lockridge, late pastor in SD gave a tribute to Jesus, “That’s my King”:
'captain of the conquerors ... He’s the overseer of the overcomers, He’s the governor of governors, He’s the prince of princes, He’s the King of Kings, and He’s the Lord of Lords ... He’s enduringly strong ... He’s eternally steadfast ... He’s imperially powerful, He’s impartially merciful ... He’s the only one able to supply all of our needs simultaneously ... He sympathizes and He saves, He guards and He guides ... He discharges debtors ... He’s the wellspring of wisdom, He’s the doorway of deliverance, He’s the pathway of peace, He’s the roadway of righteousness, the highway of holiness ... He’s invincible, He’s irresistible...You can’t outlive Him and you can’t live without Him! The Pharisees couldn’t stand Him but they found out they couldn’t stop Him. Pilate couldn’t find any fault in Him ... Herod couldn’t kill Him, Death couldn’t handle Him, And the grave couldn’t hold Him!’⁷

That's our King! Do you know Him? Do you trust Him? He's the defeater of darkness and death, the sovereign over Satan and sin that are now subjected under His feet. He's Overcomer of everything that threatens to overcome us. King Jesus conquered the grave and He can conquer our greatest troubles as we trust Him. He is the Victor who offers us victory in this world of trouble.

What Grace is Mine: ‘All fear can flee for death's dark night is **overcome**
My Saviour lives and reigns forevermore’⁸

From vict'ry unto vict'ry, His army shall He lead,
Till ev'ry foe is vanquished, And Christ is Lord indeed.

If He's not yet your Lord and King and commander, trust Him today, enlist.
Trust the Lord who overcame, that's the 2nd application Jesus gives in v. 33.
His 3rd and final application is: Be encouraged to overcome with Him

... But take heart; I have overcome the world.

This is really the heart of the Lord's application and it focuses on our hearts.
NKJV '*be of good cheer*'; NASB '*take courage*'; NET f.n. 'be courageous'
HCSB '*You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world*' (or some versions say 'I have defeated the world').
How did John, the disciple closest to Jesus in the upper room, the author of John's gospel, how did he understand Christ's use of this word *overcome*?
Turn to 1 Jn 4 for the inspired answer of how John applied this very concept

1 Jn also helps us define the *world* that Jesus overcomes: '*all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world...*' [and in the verse right before that it said to men who the Word abides in '*you have overcome the evil one*', 2:16, 14].
The world is the evil system and its lusts that are passing away in contrast to the one who does God's will and overcomes the world, the flesh, the devil.

1 Jn 4:4 *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* Same word 'overcome' and 'world' that John heard Jesus use, here he understood Jesus overcoming the world means I overcome because He's in me, the spirit of Christ in me.
5:4 *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.* ⁵ *Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

So every born-again believer is an overcomer. Jesus as God said 'I have overcome the world,' and all born of God overcome the world with Jesus.
The victory that overcomes the world is our faith, not faith itself, the object of our faith. We trust our commander for victory, onward Christian soldiers:

His banner over us is love, Our sword the Word of God;
We tread the road the saints above, With shouts of triumph trod ...
Faith is the victory, we know, That overcomes the world.

Faith is the victory (2x), Oh glorious victory that overcomes the world.⁹

Here's how John describes the glorious victory over Satan by faith, Rev 12:
'They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

For this reason, rejoice...' (v. 12-13 NASB). Satan is overcome by Christ's blood, by His death, and by His Word that helps us overcome fear of death. Even when the world makes Christians martyrs they overcome the world in their testimony to the power of the gospel, not loving their life but losing it. Now flip forward a few pages to Rev 2 to see more why we should rejoice.

William Hendriksen's book *More Than Conquerors* explains the overcomer can also be translated: 'The conqueror...the man who fights against sin, the devil, and his whole dominion and in his love for Christ perseveres...' ¹⁰

Rev 2-3 is written to 7 historical churches but it applies to all: 2:7 *'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers* [others say 'overcomes'; same word same author uses in Jn 16:33] *I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God ...* ¹¹ *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers* [overcomes] *will not be hurt by the second death.'*

This is Christ speaking, if you have a red letter edition, Rev 2-3 is all red, and the end of v. 8 makes clear this is *'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.'* Jesus overcame the world as He died and came back to life, and because of His death His church overcomes death forever. The second death is eternal death at the end of Revelation for unbelievers. This is the word of the Lord who conquered the world so we could conquer our sins and be a part of the next world (pictured as paradise of God with a tree of life, paradise=heaven as Jesus promised the thief on the cross *'today you'll be with me in paradise'*). This promise isn't for super-Christians, it's for every Christian, even death-row or death-bed Christians like that thief. Everyone born of God, every believer in the Son of God overcomes (1 Jn 5)

Let this encourage you to overcome: ¹⁷ *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.*

- *hidden manna*=Christ, we're given a portion in Christ who called Himself the manna from heaven and bread of life (Jn 6:51), but Christ was hidden to the world and Col 3:3 says our life is hidden with Christ
- *'I will give him a white stone'* the color white often symbolizes victory (Rev 19 is the victory of Christ the conqueror on a white horse with believers in white robes that signifies their victory). Some think white *stone* is the image from the ancient Roman court system where a black stone meant a guilty vote and a white stone meant declaring not guilty

- or a study Bible says ‘When an athlete won in the games, he was often given, as part of his prize, a white stone which was an admission pass to the winner’s celebration afterwards. This may picture the moment when the overcomer will receive his ticket to the eternal victory celebration. **New name.** A personal message from Christ to the ones He loves, which serves as their admission pass into eternal glory. It is so personal that only the person who receives it will know what it is’¹¹

Rev 2:26 promises one who perseveres in Christ’s work and overcomes the world, the believer will be given authority over nations in the world to come (not sure exactly how that will look millennially but the imagery is not just a conqueror but someone who is more than conqueror, reigning with Christ)

3:5 *The one who conquers* [or ‘overcomes,’ every believer] *will be clothed thus in white garments* [victory], *and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.*

To him that overcomes the foe, White [garments] shall be giv'n;
Before the angels he shall know his name confessed in heav'n.
Then onward from the hills of light, Our hearts with love aflame,
We'll vanquish all the hosts of night, In Jesus' conquering name.¹²

¹² *The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.* [i.e., permanent place in heaven] *Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name* [our name written in His book won’t be erased, His new name written on us symbolizes deeper intimacy, permanency, ownership, eternal security]

Jesus says in v. 21: *The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.* Unbelievable intimacy, the King shares His reign! 21:7 *He who overcomes will inherit all this* [the Father says] *I will be his God and he will be my son.*

I don’t know of any greater encouragement in Scripture to overcome, to be of good cheer, to take heart, to be courageous: Christ has overcome for you and offers to you overcoming grace, overwhelming promises, overpowering conquering triumphant exultant omnipotent strength to endure tribulation in this world. We have a glorious victorious King who says ‘I have overcome the world, be courageous, take heart, because everyone with Me overcomes and will receive the victor’s crown and share an inheritance with your King’

To him that overcometh a crown of life shall be; he with the King of glory shall reign eternally¹³

Jesus had said earlier '*I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it*' (Mt 16:18 NIV). Rev 2-3 shows how the forces of hell cannot overcome the church but she will overcome the world till heaven and a new world comes. Rev 6 shows vividly how this world will have tribulation. Rev 7 shows Christ overcoming great tribulation by saving a great multitude of every tribe and nation of the world. In Rev 19 Jesus conquers with believers

Christians conquer because they're with Christ inseparably connected. Rom 8:35,37: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ...in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us!*

Christ loved us and conquered for us the world and its tribulation to make us not only conquerors, but 'more than conquerors through him' (Grk *huper* + word for *overcomer* in Jn 16:33, we're *super-overcomers* through Christ)!

Strong in the Lord of hosts, And in His mighty pow'r,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts, Is more than conqueror ...
That having all things done, And all your conflicts past,
May overcome through Christ alone, And stand entire at last.¹⁴

Christ alone can overcome the world of evil but through Him we're more than overcomers in Rom 8. But he didn't stop there. Rom 12:21 '*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*' Because Christ overcame evil in His life, those in Christ can overcome evil with good in their life. How does that work practically when someone does something evil to us, and your nature is to become overcome by that evil? It starts with being overcome by the love of Christ, thinking about His gospel promises and provision and permanent love despite our sin. Through Christ who loved us so we're more than overcomers, can do all in Him (Phil 4:13). Rom 12 takes high lofty truths to the lows of everyday life. All this overcoming sounds well and good but how does it work itself out practically in real life? Study Rom 12's examples to apply. Before '*overcome evil with good*' Rom 12 says '*be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer...Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse...repay no one evil for evil...if possible so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves ...if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink...Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good*' (v. 12-21)

How do we apply that being constant in prayer? Come back tonight for that to apply further. In this evil world of trouble Christ has overcome so we can

¹ Leonard Ravenhill, *Revival God's Way*.

² NASB.

³ 2 Thess 1:6–9 (NKJV) ‘*since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,*’⁷ *and to give you who are troubled* [same root word for tribulation of believers in Jn 16:33] *rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,*⁸ *in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God ...*

The clear implication is rest or relief from tribulation for Christians will not come until the Lord comes in fiery judgment (Rev 19) and brings a new world free of trouble (Rev 21).

⁴ Charles Spurgeon, "Christ the Overcomer of the World," *MTP Sermons*, 22:674.

⁵ Matthew Bridges and Godfrey Thring, "Crown Him with Many Crowns."

⁶ *Luther's Works*, 24:417.

⁷ S.M. Lockridge, "That's My King," cited by Mike Abendroth, *The Sovereignty and Supremacy of King Jesus*, p. 217-20.

⁸ Getty Music, "What Grace is Mine."

⁹ John Yates, "Faith is the Victory."

¹⁰ William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors* (London: Tyndale, 1942), p. 63.

¹¹ *MacArthur Study Bible*.

¹² John H. Yates, "Faith is the Victory."

¹³ George Duffield, "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus."

¹⁴ Charles Wesley, "Soldiers of Christ Arise."