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Overcoming Faith

John 16.23-33

Series: Signs of Life

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I. Introduction

- A. There is scarcely a more important issue in Christianity than faith
 - 1. And yet faith is one of the most misunderstood words in the church
 - 2. We find that elegantly expressed in the Gospel of John – which we’ve been studying together for...
- B. Faith is the central message of the Gospel of John
 - 1. Purpose – **John 20:30–31** (NASB95) —
 - a. 30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;
 - b. 31 but these have been written so that you may **believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that **believing** you may have life in His name.
 - 2. And yet, within the gospel itself, “faith” or “believing” (same Gk word) are used to describe responses to Jesus that are both saving and spurious
- C. **John 8:30–32** (NASB95) —
 - 1. 30 As He spoke these things, many came to **believe** in Him.
 - 2. 31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had **believed** Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”
- D. Well, these “believing” Jews were offended by the notion that what Jesus said implied that they were enslaved in some way, that they were not free
 - 1. They got into an argument with the incarnate Son of God – not usually the wisest course of action
 - 2. By the end of the chapter we read:
 - a. **John 8:59** (NASB95) — 59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.
 - 3. These “believers” were trying to kill the very One they claimed to believe in
- E. Even in the Gospel of John – the gospel of faith – not all descriptions of faith or of believing are legitimate
 - 1. Are representative of true, saving faith
- F. **Matthew 7:21–23** (NASB95) —
 - 1. 21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.
 - 2. 22 “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’

3. 23 “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’
 4. There are many in the church – involved and active in the church – who claim to have a relationship with Jesus, who claim to believe in Jesus – who call Him Lord
 - a. Whose faith is spurious
 - b. Counterfeit
- G. But truth be told, it doesn’t take much faith to be saved – it just takes the right kind of faith
1. Jesus said it could amount to nothing more than mustard seed kind of faith (Luke 17.6)
 2. The thief on the cross needed nothing more than a moment of clarity when he simply asked “Remember me when You come in Your kingdom!” (Luke 23.42)
 3. Jesus told the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican
 - a. Pharisee was bold and eloquent in his prayer – anyone listening would have regarded the man and a man of great faith
 - b. Tax collector: Luke 18:13 (NASB95) — 13 “... standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’”
 - c. Jesus: “I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other...” (Luke 18.14)
 4. Even weak faith, small faith, minuscule faith – may be saving
 - a. But “great faith” if it’s the wrong kind of faith – is worse than useless
 - b. James 2:19 (NASB95) — 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.
- H. For most of us, faith is a mixed bag – implicit trust in Jesus; and yet nagging doubts and failure of will to follow the commands of Christ
1. We’re like the father of the demon-possessed boy in Mark 9
 - a. “I do believe; help my unbelief” (Mark 9.24)
- I. Genuine faith becomes more important when the chips are down, when the challenges come, when our world seems to be coming apart
1. Faith becomes crucial when we’re faced with doing the hard things
 - a. The things that seem irrational
 - b. The things which are countercultural
 2. What does faith look like under those circumstances?
 - a. What does faith look like when the crucible is searing
 - b. When it doesn’t seem like you can’t take it any more
 - c. When you’re at the end of your rope
- J. Jesus’ inner circle of disciples – the eleven (twelve minus Judas) – are about to see their world crumble
1. We have been exploring the Upper Room Discourse – Jesus final time with these disciples

- a. He has been teaching them, preparing them the best He can – for the events which will turn their world upside down
 - b. And we are at the final instructions in this discourse – the end of Chapter 16
2. In this text Jesus shows us just what kind of faith it will take
- a. Not just to be saved
 - b. But to get through the collapse of their world as Jesus is taken from them, beaten, crucified, buried
 - c. And even after the resurrection – what kind of faith it will take to survive and overcome the onslaught of the enemy
 - d. As this small, fledgling church seeks to spread the gospel throughout a world hostile to God and to Christ

K. Text

1. **John 16:23–33** (NASB95) —
- a. 23 “In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.
 - b. 24 “Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.
 - c. 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.
 - d. 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.
 - e. 28 “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.”
 - f. 29 His disciples said, “Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech.
 - g. 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.”
 - h. 31 Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe?”
 - i. 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.
 - j. 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.”
2. He tells them they’re about to be blasted
- a. “... an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered...”
 - b. What kind of faith will carry them through?
3. And what kind of faith do we need to carry us through

- a. In the challenges that we face?
- b. In the onslaught of life's declining years?
- c. In the collapse of our moral culture?
- d. And in any number "tribulations" as Jesus would describe them?

II. Prayerful Faith

- A. It's safe to say that the kind of faith we need in the midst of challenging times is prayerful faith
 - 1. We must have the kind of faith whose first impulse when the going get tough is to pray
 - a. We need to have the kind of familiarity with Jesus that conversation with our Savior comes easily and quickly
 - b. The kind of relationship where we don't have to reintroduce ourselves to Jesus like we haven't seen each other since our last high school reunion
 - c. "Excuse me, Jesus, I don't know if you remember me, but..."
 - d. Not that kind of relationship
 - 2. No – in order to get through the times when life is coming apart at the seams, we need to be in constant communication with the Lord of all the earth
 - 3. And it's not the kind of prayer life which, as John Piper once observed, is like asking the house servant for more pillows in the den
 - a. Instead, it's like the kind of prayer life when the sergeant in the foxhole, with shells raining down all around him, is on the walkie-talkie pleading for more reinforcements
 - 4. That's the kind of faith we must have
 - a. A prayerful faith – even as the praying is desperate
 - 5. This final instruction in the Upper Room Discourse begins at just this point – teaching His disciples about prayer
 - a. But it's not the only instruction on prayer in the discourse
 - b. **John 14:13** (NASB95) — 13 "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son."
 - c. **John 15:7** (NASB95) — 7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."
 - d. **John 15:16** (NASB95) — 16 "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you."
 - 6. So Jesus has been teaching His disciples a lot about prayer in His final time with them
 - a. He's taught that believing prayer is about the glory of God – "... so that the Father may be glorified in the Son"
 - b. He's taught that believing prayer flows from abiding in Christ and in His word – "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you..."
 - c. He's taught that believing prayer flows from His electing grace –

- “You did not choose Me but I chose you...”
- d. He’s taught that believing prayer fuels their capacity to bear spiritual fruit – “... that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain...”
7. So one final time Jesus reminds them of these crucial instructions on having prayerful faith
 - a. And in so doing He reaffirms some things that He’s already taught them
 - b. And adds yet one more crucial dimension of prayerful faith
- B. **Extravagant prayer**
1. **John 16:23** (NASB95) — 23 “In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.”
 - a. “Ask anything!”
 - b. That’s extravagant praying!
 - c. The Father will give you anything you want! Just ask Him!
 2. Of course, there are all the earlier conditions
 - a. The glory of God
 - b. Abiding in Christ and in His word
 - c. Priority of prayer so they would bear spiritual fruit
 3. But He’s already taught them to pray extravagantly
 - a. And once again He drives that glorious message home
- C. **Christ-centered prayer**
1. **John 16:23** (NASB95) — 23 “... if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.”
 2. Must be in the name of Christ, in the name of Jesus
 - a. That’s not just a formula for the way we end our prayers – “In Jesus name, Amen”
 - b. No! That means that we’re seeking the mind of Jesus, seeking to follow the will of Jesus
 - c. It means we are willing to submit our minds, wills and emotions to Jesus
 3. We’re taught in the Lord’s prayer to prayer, “Thy will be done”
 - a. Jesus Himself prayed that way in Gethsemane
 - b. There are some in the faith community who believe that to pray “if it be Your will” to Jesus is hedging your bets, and shows a lack of faith
 - c. Nothing could be further from the truth!
 - d. Praying in submission to the will of Jesus is the essence of genuine faith
 4. Prayerful faith is Christ centered
 - a. We are commanded to pray in Jesus’ name
 - b. Submitting our minds, wills and emotions to Jesus
 5. So, as we pray extravagantly, and pray in a Christ-centered way, what else does Jesus add to His instruction in this seminar on prayer that is the Upper

Room Discourse?

- D. **Joy-filling prayer**
1. **John 16:24** (NASB95) — 24 “Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.”
 2. Prayerful faith is joyful faith
 - a. Joy is not dependent on our circumstances
 - b. Joy is dependent on the knowledge that God **Romans 8:28** (NASB95) — 28 causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
 - c. Joy is dependent on the knowledge that **Philippians 1:6** (NASB95) — 6 ... He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.
 - d. Joy is dependent on the knowledge that neither tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword will be able to separate us from the love of Christ (**Romans 8.35**)
 3. When we pray with that kind of faith, we find our souls filling up with joy!
 - a. Our minds resonating with glorious redemptive purpose of God in Jesus
 - b. Our wills delighting to obey the commands of our Savior
 - c. Our emotions filled to overflowing with the pleasures of God
 4. Joy-filling prayer
 - a. Extravagant prayer
 - b. Christ-centered prayer
- E. Prayerful faith

III. **Loving Faith**

- A. Faith rooted in the Father’s love for His dear children
1. Faith in which the true believer reciprocates with a heart filled with love for the One who so loved us that He sent us His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins (propitiation)
 2. Faith in which the believer can’t wait to express our love for the One who has poured out His love in our hearts by His Holy Spirit
- B. **John 16:26–27** (NASB95) —
1. 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;
 2. 27 for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.”
- C. Jesus is saying that the love relationship with the Father is such that He no longer has to do the asking for us
1. We can ask the Father directly
 2. Why?
 - a. Because the Father loves us!
 3. Jesus has already taught them that – in the Lord’s Prayer
 - a. “When you pray, say, our Father...”

- b. That was revolutionary!
 - c. That the Jew could actually speak to the Father directly!
 - d. You can if you believe in Jesus
 - e. If you believe in Jesus – if your faith is genuine – it’s because the Father loves you
- D. This knowledge and the doctrines of grace which flow from the scriptures transformed Martin Luther
 - 1. God, for Luther, was an austere, distant, fearsome, judgmental, tyrannical despot
 - a. Luther once said, “Love God? Sometimes I hate Him!”
 - 2. But once He saw that through faith in Jesus Christ alone that God was not His enemy, but His dearest friend
 - 3. Hate became love
 - a. Deep and abiding love for the Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- E. The kind of faith we need for our most troubling times is a faith that is confident that God loves us
 - 1. That God is for us!
 - 2. That is confident that **Romans 8:32** (NASB95) — 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?
- F. The faith we need is
 - 1. Prayerful faith
 - 2. Loving faith

IV. **Truthful Faith**

- A. There is a remarkable verse in this passage which encapsulates the whole of the gospel
 - 1. And that our faith – to get us through the tough times, the challenging times, the times of tribulation
 - 2. Needs to be rooted in the gospel truth
 - a. In the truth of the person and work of Jesus Christ
 - 3. **John 16:28** (NASB95) — 28 “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.”
 - a. Four simple phrases in one sentence
 - b. That describe the whole of the gospel
- B. **The Preexistence of Christ**
 - 1. “I came forth from the Father...”
 - 2. Jesus is the Son of God
 - a. As He told “those Jews who had believed Him” back in John 8: “Before Abraham was, I am”
 - b. Jesus is the eternally begotten Son of God
 - c. He came from the Father
 - 3. This is a concise statement of the preexistence and the deity of Jesus Christ
 - a. And unless Jesus came from the Father, we have no Savior

- C. **The Incarnation of Christ**
1. “I came from the Father and have come into the world...”
 2. That’s the incarnation
 - a. The eternally begotten Son of God, adorned Himself with our humanity, and entered our world
 3. This is the final message in John for a while
 - a. Believe it or not – next week begins Advent!
 - b. And in Advent we celebrate this one phrase: “I ... have come into the world”
 - c. And we’re going to do it by celebrating the songs of Advent
 4. But this sentence teaches
 - a. The preexistence of Christ
 - b. The incarnation, the advent, of Christ
 5. But there’s more
- D. **The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ**
1. “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again...”
 2. This phrase encapsulates all that is about to happen to Jesus to take Him away from them
 - a. His life – all that He taught, all that He did – and how it antagonized the religious authorities
 - b. And led to His crucifixion
 - c. Which eventually led to His resurrection
- E. **The Ascension of Christ**
1. “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.”
 - a. Going to the Father – the ascension of Christ
 2. We celebrate Advent and Christmas – the coming of the Son of God into our world cloaked in our humanity
 3. We certainly celebrate the resurrection – seasonally in Easter, but every week on the Lord’s Day
 - a. Do you know why we worship on Sunday?
 - b. Because that’s when the early church worshiped
 - c. Because that’s when Jesus rose from the dead
 4. But we don’t do very well celebrating the ascension
 - a. But we should!
 5. Jesus ascended to the Father – and now sits exalted to the right hand of God (**Acts 2.33**)
 - a. Where He orchestrates the events of history, bringing all things to their appointed conclusion
 - b. **Ephesians 1:19–23** (NASB95) — 19 ...These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named,

not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

- c. Where He intercedes for us (**Romans 8.34**)
- 6. What a glorious gospel!
 - a. And it's here in this one sentence
 - b. The preexistent Christ, the Son of God
 - c. Came into the world as the God-man
 - d. Died in our place, buried
 - e. Rose from the dead
 - f. Seated at the right hand of the Father
- 7. In this one sentence you have the whole of the Apostle's Creed
 - a. ... and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
 - b. Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit,
 - c. Born of the virgin Mary,
 - d. Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 - e. Was crucified, dead and buried;
 - f. He descended into hell;
 - g. The third day he rose again from the dead;
 - h. He ascended into heaven,
 - i. And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
 - j. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
- F. That's the truth of the gospel
 - 1. And the kind of faith we need is a faith rooted in those great truths
 - a. Truths that will never be swept away by the vagaries of human history
 - b. Or by the tides of the times
 - 2. Truthful faith

V. **Persevering Faith**

- A. **John 16:31–32** (NASB95) —
 - 1. 31 Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe?”
 - 2. 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.”
- B. They will be scattered
 - 1. They will be persecuted
 - 2. Most of them will be killed – martyred
 - a. All because they would have persevering faith
- C. Prayerful faith
 - 1. Loving faith
 - 2. Truthful faith
 - 3. Will inevitably produce persevering faith
 - a. Faith that will not just survive

- b. But faith that will prosper
- 4. Faith that will carry the gospel, by the end of the first Century, all across the Roman Empire and beyond
 - a. Faith that will inevitably fulfill the Great Commission
 - b. So that there will be believers from every people, tongue, tribe, and nation
 - c. Surrounding the throne in worship of the Lamb of God

VI. **Courageous Faith**

- A. That's why Jesus says they need to have courageous faith
- B. **John 16:33** (NASB95) —
 - 1. 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.”
- C. If you have genuine faith you can be courageous
 - 1. Even in the face of tribulation
 - a. In fact – you can't have courage without tribulation
 - b. Courage isn't courage until things get dicey
- D. But you can have courage – you know why?
 - 1. Because Jesus has overcome the world
 - a. “I have overcome the world”
- E. You can too!
 - 1. You can have overcoming faith
 - a. Because Jesus has overcome the world
- F. So believer, have courage!
 - 1. Stand firm!
 - 2. **1 Corinthians 15:58** (NASB95) — 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.
 - 3. It's not in vain because Christ has overcome the world