

## **JOHN 16:1-7—CHRIST IS IN CONTROL**

**INTRO.:** There are many things that cause us to reject God or, if we are Christians, to become angry or bitter depressed or feel alone or abandoned by God. For example:

(1) Has anyone here ever faced significant hardship in your life?

- Serious health problem, for yourself or a loved one
- Lose job—significant financial problems
- Rejected, betrayed, or abandoned by spouse, significant other, close friend

(2) Sense of aloneness and isolation in the world. *Anyone ever say or pray like this:*

- Where are you God?
- Why don't you make yourself plain? If I could just see you or hear you audibly or sense you—or even an angel—then I'd believe or have peace.

These are trials that affect us all. Hardship and the sense of God's absence can unhinge us. All of these things *will* affect each one of us. How can we deal with this?

Today's passage, **John 16:1-7**, deals with these very things. It points us not only to how we can cope, but how we can face such trials with confidence, not despair; with hope, not fear; in triumph, not resignation.

(I'm reading from NASB)—This is Jesus speaking. **READ 16:1**—Let me stop right there for a moment.

- When he says “these things” what is he talking about? This is at the Last Supper. Judas left to go and betray Jesus. Then, in **John 13:31** Jesus began addressing his remaining disciples. What has He told them? Most directly, He has said we need to abide in Him and love each other because He has called us to a new set of values, a new primary citizenship and loyalty—to Himself; therefore, just as the world opposed Christ, so it will oppose us. But He will send us the Holy Spirit who will be with us.
- That is the background—But this should cause us to reflect—right at the outset: *What is my relationship with the world? Am I perfectly at home here? Is the world perfectly at home with me? Who or what really is most important in my life?*

Let's go on: **READ 16:2-7**. . . . So what is this passage telling us? This passage is telling us that:

**PROPOSITION:** CHRIST IS IN CONTROL. And as a result, He has made PROVISION for us to face the hardships of our lives and the absence of the visible presence of God. And therefore, our response should be *different* from the bitterness, anger, and depression that characterize those who are not connected with the living God through Christ.

**O/S:** We will see how CHRIST IS IN CONTROL as we look at: (1) the hardships of life we all face; (2) the absence of the visible presence of God; and (3) What Christ has done about those things.

Before we do that we need to look at an important contextual point: Namely, Jesus is talking to His disciples. By extension, since they were to make disciples of people from all nations, He is also talking to those of us who also are His disciples.

- Now, if you are not yet a disciple of Jesus you can become one. That is important b/c both Xians and non-Xians face the same problems: health problems; financial problems; rejection; family and relational problems; and ultimately, death.

But what Jesus is saying here can transform our *understanding* of our circs., and thereby transform our *reaction and response* to our situation—but only if we are, or become, a Xian. LET'S SEE WHY.

### **I. EXTERNAL, OBJECTIVE HARDSHIPS (vv. 2-4)**

#### **A. vv.2-3 Jesus is talking about the actual persec. of Christians, b/c they are Christians.**

- v.2 talks about the fact that Xians will be made “**outcasts from the synagogue.**” That happened just as Christ predicted in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.
- But then He says: “**But an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.**” WHY? v.3—“**Because they have not known the Father or Me.**” That statement is saying is that the ONLY way to know God is through Jesus. Conversely, NOT to know Jesus is not to know God; to reject Jesus is to reject God—and that spawns hostility to Christians and to Christianity.
- When He says “**an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to**

**God,”** that applies from the 1<sup>st</sup> century right up to now, anywhere in the world. More Christians, BY FAR, are persecuted for their faith than any other religion in the world. In fact, more Christians are persecuted for their faith than are Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and all other religions COMBINED.

- Last year Open Doors UK estimated that 100 million Christians face persecution, particularly in North Korea, Iran and Saudi Arabia. This last week: news report—Iranian pastor: if he doesn’t renounce his faith in Christ, he will be executed. A recent study, cited by the Vatican, reported that 75 out of every 100 people killed due to religious hatred are Christian—so 3X more than all the other religions put together). Jesus knew that—He knew all this in advance.

**B. In our country there is really little overt persecution of Christians—but the PRINCIPLE underlying what Jesus is saying applies to all external hardships.** The reason is that *God is sovereign over all.* **READ MATT 10:29-31.** Bad things happen to sparrows, and bad things happen to us—and it can shipwreck our life and our faith.

- Mountain Goats: “A kind and loving God won’t let my small ship run aground.” Yes He will. Bad things happen to good people. I’ve never (yet) been mugged, or had cancer, or had one of my children die in a car crash, or (yet) had any of the other terrible things happen that are common to life in this world. I don’t know how I would react if and when those things happen. But that is why Jesus is saying in **v.4: “These things I have spoken to you, so that WHEN (notice: not ‘IF,’ but ‘WHEN’) their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them.”**
- It’s just like he said in **John 13:19** concerning His own betrayal (**READ**); or **16:1** concerning the *hatred they will face but the HS they will receive (READ)*; and how he concludes his entire discourse in **16:33 (READ)**. In fact, in **16:33** the word “**tribulation**” is a word that has a broader meaning than just persec. It can include any distress, hardship, difficult circumstances, and trouble. Thus, as I say, the PRINCIPLE that Jesus is saying here applies to all hardships we face.
- What he is saying is: “I know; I know what is happening in your life; I AM IN CONTROL; I know the future; and I know YOUR future.” Therefore, **WE** don’t have to be unhinged when bad things happen to us as Xians, b/c **CHRIST IS IN CONTROL.**
- And it’s more than just KNOWING what will happen in advance: Rather, He is saying that everything is working toward a pre-determined end. It is all part of a vast plan of such amazing and complexity that we couldn’t understand it even if He told us now. He is saying: **“Trust me; I have you in My hands, and I’ll never leave you or forsake you—and just as I have overcome the world by rising from the dead and am alive today, so I will raise YOU, and you will live forever in perfect peace, joy, and happiness, if you are Mine. You see: I AM IN CONTROL.”**
- BUT MORE THAN THAT: the Bible says that Jesus has bought and paid for us. He did this b/c He **LOVES** us. And He was tempted and tested in every way that tempts and tests us. IOW, nothing happens to us that He didn’t go through first. So, we can have confidence that whatever occurs to us had to pass through His hands first—b/c we are His. *Knowing this—meditating on it—taking it deep w/i us—should transform us.* That is why it is **VITAL** that we know Jesus in a personal way—have His values, His mindset, have Him at the center of our lives. B/c only then all of these sufferings and hardships can be seen in a new light and take on new meaning. That can calm and assure the persec’d, the person facing great hardship, and the grieving, broken heart in a way that is not possible w/o Christ.
- We see this in **Rom 8:28-30 (READ)**. This shows us that those who belong to Jesus are in the process of being glorified to ultimately b/c just like Him. And God is using everything—the good, the bad, and the ugly—to achieve that end. That is the point of our lives. Nothing is wasted, and nothing is by mistake. It may be **OUR** mistake, but God uses it as part of His overall, amazingly complex plan. So we can have real **HOPE**.
- God **USES** the persecution, hardships, and difficulties of life to help us in that process of b/c’g like Him. Therefore, Paul can say in **Rom 5:3-5 [READ]**. James says the same thing in **Jas 1:2-4 [READ]**. John Piper has online article that talks about this called “**DON’T WASTE YOUR CANCER.**”

So that is what Christ is saying here about the hardships we face. What about the absence of the visible presence of God?

## **II. THE ABSENCE OF THE VISIBLE PRESENCE OF GOD (vv.5-6)**

I can be much shorter with this than with the outward, objective circs. of our lives, b/c the absence of the visible or physical presence of God is intimately bound up with Jesus’ answer or solution to the problem. So let me just

state the issue, and then we'll move to the solution.

**A. Most people feel like Job [READ Job 23:8-9].**

Now, in fact, God DID come to earth once in visible, bodily form:

**B. Christ IS the visible, physical, presence of God on earth.** Jesus claimed to be God come to earth (**John 10:30; 14:7-9**). Even His enemies recognized what he was claiming about Himself and tried to kill Him for making such claims (**John 10:30-33**).

- Muhammad never made that claim; Buddha never made such a claim; in all of history no one has ever made such a claim with any credibility or plausibility at all except for 1 person: Jesus Christ.
- But now he's saying: "I'm going away; I'm leaving you; you won't see me anymore." And sorrow filled the heart of the disciples. And, like them, we say: "Can't you just give me some physical manifestation of your presence?"

So what is the answer?—THE HOLY SPIRIT (v.7—READ)

**III. CHRIST'S ANSWER TO OUR PROBLEM: THE HOLY SPIRIT (v.7)**

**A. Jesus is being very emphatic here:** He is saying both "**I tell you the truth**" (i.e., "*Listen up!*" "*This is the actual fact even if you don't think so right now*") + "**It is to YOUR ADVANTAGE that I go away.**" IOW: Jesus has the disciples', and our, best interest in heart. He knows what is really best for us, even if we don't think so.

- Think about it, Who's smarter and knows more: The little kid who only wants to eat ice cream and candy, or the mom who says "eat your veggies"? The teenager who only wants to play video games, or the dad who says "do your homework" or "get a job"?—Us, or Jesus?

**B. So here He's saying that it's better that He go away—IOW, it's better that we do NOT have the visible, physical, external presence of God with us.** WHY? B/c now we have the INTERNAL presence of God with us. In fact, not only *with* us, but INSIDE of us.

- The visible presence of God can come and go; the HS comes inside of us and *will never leave us*.
- Jesus Himself could only be in 1 place at 1 time; so if a disciple went somewhere else, he was not in Jesus' presence. But now, we are *always* in His presence.
- Notice the HS is called the "HELPER"—the Greek word is *Paracletos*—which can mean: One who comes alongside to help; or Comforter; or Advocate; or Intercessor. The HS does all of these things. In **14:16** Jesus called the HS "*Another Helper*"—i.e., another one just like Me; of the same nature and substance as Jesus Himself. IOW: although Jesus did leave us in one way, He has already come back to us in another way—through the HS—and is with us all the time.

**C. We need to consider the Holy Spirit, and see why Jesus' answer to the problem of life's hardships and the absence of the visible presence of God is so profoundly important.**

- Rom 8:14—"All who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." Having the HS is not optional, but is absolutely necessary in order to be a Xian.
- HS = active and we are not alone anymore to try to live this life on our own:
  - **Eph 1:13-14**—HS seals us and is the guarantee of our ult. redemption & inheritance.
  - **8:15-16**—HS reassures us that we are his and he is ours.
  - **8:26**—HS helps our weakness & intercedes for us.
  - **John 16:1** ("**These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling**")—"that you may be kept from stumbling" is in the passive tense. In the Bible it's called a Divine Passive. IOW: it is God, in the person of the HS, who will keep us from stumbling. HE will bring to our minds the words of Jesus, in the hour of trial or temptation or grief, that we have learned. HE will give us the will and strength to not fall back into sin or apostasy or despair—*when we draw upon Him*.
  - **Gal 5:22-25**—As we follow his leading, HS manifests his work in us by making us more loving; joyful; peaceful; patient; kind; good; faithful, gentle, and self-controlled. IOW: Just as we said that the whole point of our lives is to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ—to b/c like Him—it is the HS who does that & brings about that change.

- Sometimes the HS may work dramatically in our lives: He may give us visions or dreams or a tangible or sensible manifestation of His presence, or may bestow on us some of the more dramatic gifts of the HS (speaking in tongues; interpretation of tongues; healings; words of knowledge; prophecy, etc.)
  - BUT: we can't control that: Jesus compared the HS to the wind that **“blows where IT wishes” (John 3:8)**. Paul says in **1 Cor 12:11** that the HS gives to each person different spiritual gifts **“just as HE wills.”**
- Most of the time the HS works in a more quiet, unfelt, unsensed way: REMEMBER: the HS is SPIRIT, which, by definition, has no physical mass, and can pass through anything without leaving physical evidence.
  - In **John 14:26** Jesus said that an important role of the HS is to **“bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”** That implies that WE have first taken the time to study and learn what Jesus has said, through spending time with Him in prayer and in the Word. Then, the HS will take that and bring it to our mind when we need it.
  - The HS also speaks through us. We see that in **Matt 10:19-20** and **John 15:26-27**.

#### **D. Why are these, especially the more subtle workings of the HS so important?**

- B/c although Christ left & returned to the Father, in a real sense, He HAS left us with His visible, physical presence on earth today. It's called the “body of Christ,” also known as the church. Every Xian *has the HS inside of himself or herself*, and therefore, God is present. So closely does Christ identify with His people that He said to Paul, when he was still known as Saul and was persecuting Christians: **“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting ME?”**
- The working of the HS is where the Spirit of Christ and the Body of Christ converge. **1 Cor 12:7** tells us: **“To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit FOR THE COMMON GOOD.”** THAT is key. We all face the same problems, griefs, anxieties, worries, hardships. The HS acts and speaks through one part of the body to help and heal another part of the body, so that the entire body can be well and whole.
- Right here in this fellowship we have many, many people in whom the HS is at work to help each other. Everyone has a story, but let me just pick 4:
  - Grief at the loss of a loved one? Donna Mulder has been through that and now leads a group called Griefshare which meets Wed. evenings @ 7:00PM, to help you through your grief.
  - Depression? John McCarthy went through deep depression for a long period of time. But the HS got him out of it, and deepened him as a result. He is a resource for you.
  - Abuse, betrayal, terrible things done to you by others? Betsy Rozelle and Sally Buss have both been there. They know 1<sup>st</sup> hand the power of God through the HS to heal terrible hurts—and they are now here as resources to help you through your hurts.
  - Draw upon the resources that God has given us. He never intended that we face life's hardships, stresses, and problems alone. As Francis Schaeffer said: “He is there and He is not silent.” He speaks through His Spirit, and is visible through His people.
- *Don't just draw on the resources God has given us, but make yourself available AS A RESOURCE for others to draw on.* As I say: everyone has a story, but most people don't know what we've been through, how the HS has used us, and how we can help.
  - Christ has put us in a position to help those who are suffering. How are we doing that? What is it costing us? How are we helping our suffering brothers and sisters? What are we doing with our experiences? Every hardship we have gone through is designed to be an experience that deepens us—which the HS can then use, not only to make us more like Christ, but to help others who are going through similar ordeals.
  - Suggestion: If you let Wade or the office know about a particular area where you could be a resource for hurting people, you would be enabling the HS to use you. Consider doing that.

**CONCL.:** Christians are people of hope. Jesus also says that we are lights to others. Everyone, Christian or non-Christian, goes through what has been called the “dark night of the soul.” Jesus knows that. In today's passage He's telling us, “I AM IN CONTROL”—but more, He has made PROVISION for us for when we experience hardship, feelings of abandonment by God, and all that goes with those things. He has provided the HS. The HS works both directly and works through Christ's people. So, let us both draw upon the Spirit—and be channels of the Spirit to work through us—to help those in need as only Christians who are being led by the HS can.