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SILVER STAR BIBLE SCHOOL 1994

IN THE UPPER ROOM

Speaker: Bro. John Ullman

Study #6

I Have Overcome the World

Reading: John 16:20-33

This is our very last class for Silver Star Bible School 1994 and some sobering yet joyful words which we have to contemplate in this final study. We would dearly have loved to have the time to have taken you right through from chapter 13 to chapter 17, but I'm sure you all appreciate, that in the course of one bible school, in view of the tremendous impact of the Lord's words, and the way in which they need to be very carefully considered and explained, as difficult as I have found that to do, it's not possible to go the full length, from chapter 13 to chapter 17. Nevertheless, we do hope to conclude with some thoughts on chapter 15, where we left off yesterday, and also to look at some of the main features in the 16th chapter, as He draws this section of the aspect of the Upper Room and leaving the Upper Room, and going into the garden of Gethsemane with the disciples. Because of course, with the end of chapter 16, we then find the Lord in the garden with the chosen, and we find that chapter 17, is one of the most beautiful and one of the most touching and moving prayers, that is found anywhere in scripture.

Perhaps it might be a good thing, if we just commenced this afternoon, with what is virtually the conclusion of this section, and that is chapter 17, by briefly summarizing it in this way. That in view of all that we have learnt from the Lord's words in chapters 13, 14 and 15, it is very interesting to note that in chapter 17, He first of all prays for Himself, which might appear on the surface of it, a little selfish but the thing is, the Lord had a personal, desperate, urgent need at this hour, and that is why He does that. So, He first of all, prays for Himself; when you examine the prayer you'll find that He next prays for the disciples, who were with him at that time, and then thirdly, He prays for all who will come into the truth, and are embodied into the body of Christ as a result of the work and the dedication of the apostles and the fellow disciples of that generation.

So that's chapter 17, and when we come back to chapter 15, we will recall that we made the comment concerning the world, and I particularly like to ask you to look at verse 19, we add a part of that verse, where the Lord says, 'but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you'. And it is very interesting to consider, and rather appalling really, that when the Lord speaks of the world, as we said yesterday, He speaks of it not as individual men and women, many of whom might be drawn out of the world and into Christ. When He speaks of the world He speaks of a collective

organization or system that is based entirely on the flesh for the purpose of pleasing the flesh, and it is ungodly in its basis and ungodly in its aims and ambitions. That is the world! But what is so tragic to read here in John chapter 15, and the early verses of chapter 16, is that the world of which He is initially speaking, is the world of the Jewish so called believers. You see, when you look up verse 19, the latter part of it, where the Lord says, 'therefore the world hateth you', we follow on the line of thought down to verse 25 where He says, 'but this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause', which links of course the words of verse 19 to verse 25, which is speaking of the Jewish nation (we'll have more to say about that in just a moment), and then in chapter 16 and verse 2 He says, 'they shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service'. And He isn't speaking of the world of Gentilism, which we have to combat today; He is speaking of the world and the spirit of evil in the world, that belongs in the world, that was in the heart of the Jewish nation at that time. The nation that was to crucify Him. We know of course, and we dealt with the fact, in chapter 14 and verse 30 that the Lord says, 'that He is now going out to meet the prince of this world. He says there, 'the prince of the world cometh and hath no hold over Me'.

Now the prince of the world that He had to meet was not the Pope of Rome, there was no such person at that time, nor was there his equivalent among the Gentiles. The prince of this world, who was going to meet the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God in open conflict, and putting to death, thus fulfilling Genesis 3 and verse 15 in a primary sense, that is the bruising of the heel of the woman, was to be none other than the powerful Jewish religious authorities and the leaders of the day. And so this is the world of which He speaks, 'the world will hate you'. What an incredible thing to think, but these were the descendants that has been brought out of Egypt and through the wilderness and are termed by Stephen 'the ecclesia in the wilderness'. These were the rightful inheritors of the word of God. These were (what are sometimes called today, the people of the book), these were the people who had been separated from the Gentiles in the world about them, to be a peculiar people under Yahweh their God. Where were they now? We have the Son of God describing them as the world. They had developed into a collective organization or system, that was the very antithesis of that which the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, taught them. And that is why they hated Him. So He says, 'the world hateth you', and when we get down to verse 25 here, we notice that He says, 'that this cometh to pass, that the Word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated Me without a cause', but you notice that the Lord describes here, the Law of Moses, as their law. Why does He do that? because it was not their law at all really. It was God's law and according to Paul in Romans, there was nothing wrong with that law. The law was holy and just and good; the only thing wrong with the law was that human nature and flesh could not keep that law, and therefore, salvation was to come by promise, and not by the keeping of law. But, nevertheless, that doesn't alter the fact that it was a divinely given and a divinely appointed law to the nation of Israel, and yet here, the Lord Jesus Christ refers to it as their law. You know why He does that? because they had perverted the truth. Because they had turned God's law into their law. Because they now read God's holy law, with their own ideas, their own views, their own opinions. They had even at this stage, their commentaries

upon the law, the Torah. By their commentaries, their Jewish philosophers, who had written their ideas and their definitions, and their concepts of the law, which so utterly perverted it that the Son of God now refers to it as their law. Have things changed in human nature? Have things really changed in relation to these matters? Do we find that the truth today, even within the community of Christadelphians, that it's taught carefully and thoroughly, without any consideration of personal ideas, personal views, personal opinions? We know that in many parts of the ecclesial world today, the truth is corrupted. It has always been corrupted. In the days of Bro. Thomas and Bro. Roberts, they had to fight against the corruption of the truth. In the days of the apostles themselves, when we might think that ideally, it would have been perfect ecclesias throughout the then known world. We have the words of John in his epistle, where he speaks of certain brethren and he says, 'they went out from us because they were not of us'. And remember how in his third epistle he discusses the fact that a certain brother Diotrophes, who loved the preeminence, would not even receive John's disciples into the ecclesia. He threw them out of the ecclesia. Now, that was the case in apostolic times. How do we expect it to be any different in subsequent years of history? So therefore, when men pervert the truth of God's word, it becomes their law, it no longer is identifiable as God's law, because the understanding of it has become perverted.

And so, in verse 2 of this 16th chapter the Lord says, 'that they will put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service'. You can't imagine men's thinking processes becoming so perverted, that they would think that. Take one of John's apostles, put him to death and think that is a good thing. We've done God a service! You can't get any further away from the purity of the truth than that. But, that's what the Lord said. Now, John remembered these words and he remembered these instructions. If you keep a hand in John 15, 16 and come with me to the first epistle of John and chapter 2, you'll read with me today, words which I know you know very very well, but we are going to read them again in the context of what the Lord says in this 15th chapter. John says in the first epistle at chapter 2 and at verse 15 exactly what the Lord has warned us about in this 15th chapter. In verse 15 he says, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world' (the word there is the 'cosmos' which means 'the order or arrangement of things'). In other words, the world out there as a collective organization or system, that is based upon the flesh and is totally ungodly in its intentions. That's what he's referring to here, 'love not the systems of the world, neither things that are associated with the systems of the world) 'if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' WHY? Because in verse 16, 'all that is in the world', and it can be summarized in the threefold temptations that came to Eve, and has come to other godly men and women down through the ages of time. All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not out of the Father, but is out of the world'. (The word there being 'ick', but notice verse 17, 'And the world passeth away' (but literally that should be rendered 'and the world is passing away) And from that statement, brethren and sisters, we should take great courage. John is saying here in John's repetitious words given by the Lord, John is saying here, that day by day, week by week, month after month, year after year, the world (while not knowing it) is in the process of passing away. The world is passing away and the lust thereof, but, 'he that doeth the will of

God abideth forever'. Now, there's the difference. We watch the world about us. We look at their thinking, their mode of expression, their aims, their objectives; the whole concept of what the world stands for, and we're able to stand aside from that and see that it is all passing away, and that it will all come to a final, dreadful end, when the Lord's feet stand upon the Mount of Olives, and when the whole earth erupts with earthquakes, volcanoes, tidal waves and the judgment of God will be upon the earth. Where the words of Isaiah will be fulfilled that the 'slain of Yahweh shall in that day be from one end of the earth even unto the other; then, those that survive those judgments will learn some sense. And the world, as a collective organization or system of ungodliness, will then completely pass away, when righteousness is established upon the earth in the kingdom age.

So with those thoughts in mind, let's look again at John chapter 15 and some of these closing verses. In verse 20, remember that the Lord says, 'Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also'. Now these words become very significant, 'the servant is not greater than his lord'. The Lord here means that disciples of Christ, may not expect to receive from the world, any better treatment than the Lord Himself received. We asked the question the other day, Should we expect an armchair ride into the kingdom of God? And we can answer that by asking another question, did the Lord Jesus Christ receive that kind of treatment, before He came to the triumph of victory, and the glory of divine nature, as a reward for His faithfulness? **THERE ARE NO ARMCHAIR RIDES INTO THE KINGDOM.** There's a constant struggle to develop the Christ-like character, to develop in our lives the principles of godliness, and to strive to help to strengthen and encourage and comfort one another in these things. And so the Lord is quite open about these things, He says 'the world will persecute you'. It doesn't have to be a literal persecution, with spears and knives and guns. The world will constantly provide for the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ; a ready source of discouragement, of opposition, of enticement to join the world in its ungodly ways. It may cause despondency; it will bring trial; it will bring various forms of tribulation; it will do anything and everything to undermine the faith and the faithfulness of the Lord's true friends, His disciples and His followers. And in that regard we must exercise extreme care, because you notice that He says there, 'if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also'. What does He mean by that? Well, the word 'kept' there is the word 'tereo' which is basically a military term, and it means to 'watch over, to keep an eye upon, to guard, and to observe attentively', just as a sentry would have to do if he was placed in guard over a particular military installation. So, what He means is as it's rendered for example in the 20th century New Testament, where they render it 'if they have laid My teaching to heart, they will lay yours to heart too'. You see how we are required to show ourselves in our true colours, where our true loyalties really lie? We saw yesterday that the Lord lead us to a state of point where we find that ultimately whatever happens, we have to make a choice between the world and between Christ. Between the ways of the flesh and their ambitions and desires, and the sacrificial aspect of the life in Christ. So He is saying here that if we openly and gladly manifest the teaching of Christ, then in that regard the world will observe us and see what our real values are, and they will react accordingly.

And in verse 21 He emphasizes the reason while the world does not take kindly to the Word of God. Firstly, because it would interfere with their systems of operation, but in verse 21, He also says, 'But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me'. THEY KNOW NOT, so the Lord is telling us that the cause of opposition to God's Word is ignorance. The cause of opposition to God's Word is ignorance. And let us not think, brethren and sisters, that all that ignorance concerning the true purpose of God in Christ, is to be found in the world. And it's because of that, that we read of such situations as we described just a moment ago, when even in apostolic times, when the apostles themselves had the gift of the Holy Spirit, when the ecclesias had Spirit-gifted elders, John still wrote that they 'went out from us because they were not of us'. And even within ecclesial life, we have always to confront in ourselves first of all, the greatest enemy that we have, and that is not simply 'sin', it is 'the source of sin' which is the nature that we bare. And as long as we have this nature, we are going to have to struggle against it, and we're going to have to allow the Word of God to subvert that nature to perform the will of God. So, therefore, in verse 25, He speaks of the Jews and what they do with their law.

And so from there, we go along to chapter 16, and in the early part of chapter 16, the Lord continues His warning to the disciples. He tells them in verse 7 also, 'that it is expedient for you that I go away.' There are various reasons for that, one is that as we sometimes hear the expression 'we have to learn to stand on our own two feet', while the Lord was there in the midst of these eleven men, and the other disciples who were still in evidence at that time, they always had the Lord personally to fall back upon in time of need. But you see, it was expedient that He go away from them, that they learn to do Christ's thinking in their own minds, that they learn to face the issues of life and say to themselves, 'what would the Lord do in a situation like this?'. And then take to themselves the mind of Christ, impart His thinking in their own mind, and act accordingly. In other words, they had to become manifestations of Christ as Christ was a manifestation of the Father. And they would not do that to the fullest extent while He was personally there in their midst, but in addition to that, He does also tell them, 'for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you'. This was the power of the Holy Spirit that would be given to the apostles and which they would convey to other believers of that generation, and as we learn from scripture, only the apostles had the ability to convey those gifts on. No one else could do it, so that in the generation following the apostles, that gift died out, and it was no longer necessary or really needed because by then, the words of Paul from 1 Corinthians chapter 13 would have become a reality when he says that, 'when that which is complete shall come' (with that he means the completed Holy Scriptures which was to finish with the book of Revelation), 'when that which is complete is come, then that which is in parts (that is the various gifts which all had to come together) 'the various parts', He says, 'shall be done away'. And so today we do not have the literal presence or guidance of the Holy Spirit within ourselves. We still have God's presence, (let's not forget that); we still have the angels of God to help us and to assist us where it is needful, and God's angels still observe us, each and every one, and they observe the ecclesias and the decisions made by ecclesias. The standards of ecclesias whether they are good, bad or indifferent

and so therefore, the words of Psalm 34 now apply, when David said there that 'the angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that love Him, and delivereth them'. There is no need for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit today for miraculous purposes. We don't need that, we have the revealed complete will of God in the Holy Scriptures. We do not need any special miraculous powers; all we need to do is to get our minds buried in the Word of God, so that we, as best as we are able, become the word made flesh, following the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But also remember those wonderful words of David in Psalm 34, 'that the angel of Yahweh does encamp around about them that fear Him, and delivereth them' and no doubt all of us have had experiences in our own lives where we know that that has been the case.

And so therefore, we have these wonderful words of promise that shall come. Now, when we come a little further, and we find that here in this 16th chapter, we find that in verses 16 to 24, the apostles are comforted in these final words, with words to tell them that though they shall know sorrow, their sorrow shall be turned into joy, and this is the great final concept of the Lord's message to the disciples at this particular time. You'll notice just before we look at that, you'll notice that in verse 15, He makes this wonderful, beautiful statement when He says, 'all things that the Father hath, are Mine'. That's an awesome statement, isn't it? ALL THINGS THAT THE FATHER HATH, ARE MINE; it's a breathtaking statement. Really and truly breathtaking because they are words that show, that true oneness and unity with the Father, is a very real thing, and we are called upon to share in those things. Remember in chapter 17 and verse 22, in His prayer, the Lord prayed to His Father, 'the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one even as We are one', and those words take us right back to John chapter 1 and verse 14, that we contemplated earlier in the week, 'that the Word was made Flesh and tabernacled among us and we beheld His glory', and that's the glory that the Lord is talking about in verse 22. 'The glory that Thou gavest Me', we can paraphrase it, 'the glory which Thou gavest Me, which was Thy Word, I have given them, that they may be one, even as We are one.' And they are great words of comfort; there is nothing in this world that could take that away from any of us. NOTHING! There is no power; there is no force; there is no system that the world could devise, whether it be political, papal or anything else, that can take that away from us. No one can take it away; there is not a soul on the face of this earth that can take that away from anyone of us, except for one person and that is ourselves. If we prove faithless to the great and precious promises that the Lord has delivered into our care, it depends upon us. God has done everything possible for our eternal redemption and our eternal salvation, and if we lose that great prize, there will be only one person at fault. It won't be God; it won't be the Lord Jesus Christ; it won't be the Word of truth; it will lie with ourselves. So, every challenge in life, brethren and sisters, that the Lord presents to us, comes home to us personally.

So now, in verses 16 to 24, as we said, He shows them how that the gloom that they feel as this moment, will eventually turn to joy. In verse 16 He says, 'A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father.' He speaks there of His absence in death for three days in the tomb, but He also speaks of His resurrection. When He is raised from the dead, these eleven men

are going to see things all of a sudden, with a clarity that has alluded them up to that point. But in verse 17 you'll note, 'then said some of His disciples among themselves, 'what is this that He saith unto us?' 'A little while and ye shall not see Me, and again, a little while and ye shall see Me, and because I go to the Father'. See, they're struggling in their minds to come to grips with these very profound things, that we have been struggling to come to grips with, during the course of this week. These words are very profound; they're not idle chatter; they're words relating to life and death and they are words from the One who was, the Word made Flesh, but they would understand in due time.

Notice in verse 18, 'They said therefore, what is this that He saith, A little while? We cannot tell what He saith?' Well, now friend, we do not understand His words. The disciples were confused and it was because they were confused, that the Lord's words to be uttered later that night, would be fulfilled that very night, when He quoted from the prophecy of Zechariah, and said 'the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad'. And that's what was going to happen to them. Here they are expressing their undying loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and yet the prophecy says, 'the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad, in other words, the ecclesia, little ecclesia that we might determine of that time, would be in a state of disunity and disarray and all because they were confused and did not clearly see. And please don't anyone tell me that anything has changed. When we have problems in ecclesial life today; when we have difficulties that cause chaos in ecclesias, it is because of these words, WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND HIS WORDS. It is because brethren become confused or they desire willingly to remain in a state of ignorance concerning the issues confronting an ecclesia. But, whatever it is, they do not clearly see the truth as it is required of them. And that was the problem here, and that is why they're going to be scattered that night, we've perhaps not thought about that; we've sometimes wondered why was it that in the Lord's direst hour, when if ever He needed a little group of men to stand by Him to the bitter end, it was then and that was the very time that they let Him down. It was because they were confused and because they didn't know how to handle the situation, and they didn't realize what was happening and what was going on about them. You see what a powerful lesson that is, brethren and sisters, and how we should take that to heart and see that whatever happens, we must understand the teaching of the Word of God and of the Son of God. We must understand the concept of the truth to show us that which is right and that which is wrong; the things that we should uphold and maintain uncompromisingly and the things that we should repudiate and reject; where the line of demarcation comes in between the world and between Christ. These are the issues of life and death, but you see He restores them to their correct balance as best as He is able, at this particular time. A great bewilderment for them!

In the words of verse 20, when He says 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy'. You see, they would weep and lament when they saw their Master and their Lord and their Teacher nailed up in utter humiliation upon a tree, upon a stake. Nailed up before all the world, and they didn't know and they didn't realize that the hour of His greatest humiliation, was the hour of His greatest glory! They didn't

know that then, but they would know that later and they would write about it, as we find in the epistles that were to follow. They would be in that state that they would weep and lament and for a while they would think that all their hopes were gone. Everything was finished! and then at the same time, the world would rejoice! We dealt with this fellow, this Messiah. We put Him to death upon the stake, we got rid of Him, His mouth is silenced. And all this rabble that follow and misguided fools that they are, they will soon be dissipated throughout the province of Judeah, and we'll have no more of this stupid following of this so-called Jesus Christ. It'll all be gone and over!

At the end of verse 20, the Lord says 'your sorrow shall be turned into joy', but this will be in various ways. Primarily, their sorrow would be turned into joy when they saw and recognized the resurrected Christ. You see, it says in the scripture, 'they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy', exactly fulfilling these words. They departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, so their fear and doubts were turned to joy, but it would be an even greater joy, brethren and sisters, you look at these beautiful words that we have here in verse 21.

'A woman', says the Lord, 'when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world'. A woman in travail, what's He telling them? This was a figure for the apostles themselves; 'ye now, therefore, have sorrow' He says, but look, 'remember a woman in travail', He's telling them that they would give birth. These men at this moment, were in a state of puzzled bewilderment not knowing where they were or what was going to happen. The Lord says, 'you're like a woman in travail, you are going to give birth; you are going to bring to spiritual birth, those who will respond to your preaching'. Note that in chapter 17 and verse 20, and although the travail might bring much pain and suffering upon them, yet the resultant birth, when it would become a reality, as when a woman brings forth 'great joy', so He says a woman when she is in travail 'hath sorrow' because of the difficulties experienced in the birth and the giving of birth. But, you see, the Shepherd was to be taken; the sheep were to be smitten and to be scattered. He doesn't try to hide from them, their coming hour of deep anguish and distress, but what He tells them in this most beautiful analogy, is that good will come out of the suffering. He tells them in verse 21 that 'the pain and anxiety which is experienced by a woman in travail, is really the birth pangs of a new life'. And what was going to come out of all this would be the renewed conviction of these eleven men. They're going forth to spread the Word; the birth, the birth of the truth in the resurrected Christ, and remember that on the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to the Jewish nation, the one true gospel for the very first time, in the name of the risen Christ. And there is the power in the gospel, that Christ rose from the dead. And so, there is a very wonderful extension of Old Testament ideas here. In Isaiah 53 and verse 11 we read that 'He', speaking of Christ, 'shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied', and so the Lord through His death would bring forth seed, and those who had caused those 'births' to take place, would be the apostles themselves.

So He says in verse 22, 'Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you', and that positive statement expresses the conviction of faith. You see, when men and

women are totally persuaded concerning the reality of the resurrection of Christ; when the conviction is real and absolute, and remains so, no man can shatter or destroy that faith. It is a beautiful and a wonderful thing, and the firm conviction that the Lord Jesus Christ lives, is a conviction that becomes the driving force, spurring the believer onward toward the kingdom. And so it is with us; we're no different; we're all the same from the days of the apostles down; it is the conviction of the resurrected Christ. We know He came forth from the tomb. We know that He ascended into heaven, and now sits at the right hand of the Father, from whence we await His return to the earth, at any time now, knowing that all signs of the times indicate that the scene is set for the coming of the Son of God. So you see, He's telling them that their grief would soon be dissipated, but their joy, NEVER! Their grief would not last forever, but their joy certainly would; a joy that would come to them, through the power of the Word dwelling in them. The power of the Word operating upon them and through them into others, as they put forth the power of the Word of God, that they could indeed be recognized by people in the world, that they had been with Jesus, as it says in the book of the Acts of the apostles.

And so, in verse 25, the Lord tells them that some of the things He had spoken to them in this discourse, had not been easy to understand. You'll notice in verse 25 He says, 'these things have I spoken unto you in proverbs; but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father'. Now, we're told that this can be understood as meaning, 'all this I have spoken to you in veiled language'; that's what we meant a little earlier, that many of the Lord's words are not easily understood. And as the disciples themselves found, and here is a case in point, they had to concentrate intently, with a spiritual mind, to understand spiritual words. So we must be prepared to exercise our minds upon the things that the Lord has revealed unto us.

And so, in verse 27, He says, 'For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God'. 'The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me', and you know, the word there is the word 'phileo'. The Father will have the same warm and tender and loving affection for you, that you are to have for one another, that is in addition, of course, to the 'agape' love which the Father shows toward us. So the wonderful principle is, brethren and sisters, that love begets love. And so, if we love the Father and the Son, He will surely love us as well, when we acknowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ came forth from the Father.

But, notice now in verse 29, 'His disciples said unto Him, Lo, now speakest Thou plainly, and speakest no proverb', and they felt confident that they understood what He was saying. The R.S.V. renders it 'Ah, now you are speaking plainly'. But, was He? Did they really understand those things? Did they appreciate that that very night that the Shepherd would be taken and the flock would be scattered? Were they aware of that? They did not really have that true comprehension as yet; at best it can be said that they were putting a very limited construction on what the Lord said. But they certainly did not discern the true depth of His words, and that attitude will always represent a danger to the Lord's disciples. To think what the Word teaches, and yet not really know; to speak without thinking carefully about what we are saying; to make unwise judgments

without a mature understanding of what the principles of the Word require. It is easy to make unwise decisions and to form unwise policies that may lead to disaster. We must exercise care, as these brethren knew and discovered all too soon, that they should do.

And so, in verse 30 we find the Lord says, or rather that the disciples are saying, 'Now are we sure that Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask Thee: by this we believe that Thou camest forth from God', and yet, for that bold statement, brethren and sisters, they were still groping their way earnestly toward the full light of the truth. Those words in verse 30, certainly represent a beautiful and a simple confession of something which had become obvious to their minds, that had now become receptive to divine ideas, but the depth and power of their understanding, is still in question, because they still do not have that essential quality of total conviction. When the Lord was taken and they knew He was going to be put to death, and then they stood afar off, and they saw His body hanging upon the tree, and the last breathe drawn, and He says 'it is finished', and He dies; what did they think?

The Lord knew how their minds would work at that time, and so in verse 31 He says to them, 'Do ye now believe?' Do ye? It's as though He says, 'I appreciate your words; they're words of conviction and they're words of love for Me, and they're words of loyalty, but do you really believe the things that I have been telling you, by the fact that you really understand what I've been saying?' You see, the Lord examines their faith, and it's an interesting thing that every brother and every sister will find that experience, that the Lord will examine our faith, and when we make our claims of loyalty and so forth, He will examine those claims. And so, therefore, He launches this question in their minds, do ye now believe? And He calls upon them to consider the question very, very carefully. No wonder the apostle Paul says in the second of Corinthians chapter 13 and at verse 5, 'Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith', and that was to an ecclesia that actually questioned in that chapter, his right to call himself an apostle. So he says to the Corinthians there, 'Don't worry about me; I know where I stand. You examine yourselves to see if you be in the faith'. And that's a very searching question isn't it? Both from the Lord here, 'do ye now believe' and from the apostle Paul, 'examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith'. The question is a searching one, and it demands constant examination. Certainly, the question from the Lord was very tenderly and sympathetically asked, but it still requires an answer.

Notice the words in verse 32, 'Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone'. Now, the Lord is saying, 'Do you really think that you fully believe? Be careful of the claims you make! You may feel that you are committed to My cause, but you have not yet reached a stage of development in the truth, says the Lord to these eleven men, where you have made a total commitment to your Lord and Master. Where you are not only prepared to die for your Lord, but to die with an understanding and a brilliant conception of why you are dying for Me'. They would have laid down their lives for Him there and then, had the need been so, but they would have done so in ignorance of the reason and the purpose of their own sacrifice. But by the end of their lives it was not so. Their maturity and

their understanding-they went back over the things that the Lord had taught them, they went back over, and over and over; they examined the words of their Master, and so they examined the words of scripture that He had taught them as well. So in Acts chapter 1 we find the ecclesia beginning to assemble and beginning to form, and to do so upon sound scriptural principles. But it took time and the Lord is saying, do not claim a commitment to Me, unless you are prepared to fully give it. Be careful concerning the claims you make. The Lord is telling them here, 'In a few hours, you will be shown up in your weaknesses in your faith'. So hear how careful we must always be, and to see that our commitment to Christ is total and we know and understand what He is saying to us. And the way in which He will provide us, with a strength and a comfort and an encouragement, that we cannot draw upon elsewhere, other than from our God and from His Son.

And so the Lord says here, 'ye shall be scattered, every man to his own', when that great hour came, they would be thinking of nothing else except self preservation. That's the great problem that we all have, brethren and sisters, it's the great thing that comes between us all, time and again, between us and the truth. SELF PRESERVATION or self need, and sometimes it becomes self-ish-ness. And yet, if the words of our Lord are upon us and are deep within us, then we shall not leave Him alone. He says here, 'you shall leave Me alone', and later these disciples would recall with chilling accuracy, the prophetic word of God being fulfilled that night. That night would never leave their minds, never leave their memories as long as they lived. Psalm 22 and verse 11, 'trouble is near; for there is none to help', that's the Lord in His greatest hour of extremity. Who stood there with Him? NO ONE! 'Trouble is near ; for there is none to help'. Another passage, Psalm 69 at verse 20, 'I looked for some to take pity, but there was none.' They would remember that. They would remember that. And we must try and cast our minds back to the times when perhaps, we may have betrayed the Lord in some way. And to desire that those weaknesses on our part, being made of the same material and substance as these eleven wonderful men, who were to grow into and be numbered among the greatest men that ever lived on the face of the earth, in spiritual terms. So much so that the Lord promised them, that in the age of the kingdom, each of them would sit upon a throne, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Some of the most honoured and elevated positions in the whole of the kingdom of God, HE KNEW WHAT THE WORD COULD DO TO THEM, and you know, brethren and sisters, He knows exactly what the Word can do to us. That's why we've been called to the truth, because God knows and the Son knows, that there is a power in that Word to develop us to a point of total commitment to our Lord. To a selfless life of dedication to the things of the truth, that we might indeed, serve Him in spirit and in truth. And yet, when the Lord stood alone at that time, when He had not a friend to stand with Him, although He says here, 'yet I am not alone because the Father is with Me' (what a tremendous lesson that is) that no matter how difficult things become in life, no matter how tough things become, no matter how hard the going gets, the Father is always there and He is always ready to bless and to extend the arm of compassion and blessing; to strengthen to comfort to encourage. But, picture the Lord alone there, with everyone having left Him, which He knew was going to happen; did that deter Him from His objective? did that deter from His aim? did He flee in the hour of His greatest trial?

did He turn away, did He shrink back from it? did He beg God to find some other way to save the human race, after having given three and a half years into this ministry, after having given a lifetime of perfect obedience to His God, being careful that He might struggle against the flesh and overcome it and the evil propensities of the nature, overcoming it at every turn, every turn, every turn? He had never once let His Father down, would He now at this last moment, now to decide to pack it all in and give it up? It must have been terrible for Him to be there alone, although He knew He had the Father with Him; He needed a friend! His friends have deserted Him, but the Lord has told them, 'your joy shall be full'. They would return, they would return chastened of their weakness, as we do to our God, time and time again. We return to Him chastened by our weaknesses and our awareness of them. And so, these men would grow in the truth; they would develop in the truth and they would become worthy of the kingdom of God. And so, we must struggle and strive ourselves, brethren and sisters, to follow their steps as well as that of the Lord, although He is the perfect example to follow. Think of these eleven men; think of their anguish; think of their heartfelt horror at betraying their Lord and leaving Him at this time, leaving Him alone, but think of the way in which they came together after the resurrection and after they watch Him ascend into heaven, as recounted in Acts chapter 1. They stood there on the Mount of Olives with Him, and they looked up and watched Him taken up from them, into the heavens until He disappeared from their sight. And then they turned and looked at each other and said, 'Now, back to Jerusalem and on with the work; on with the commission that the Lord has given us. We cannot look back, we cannot turn back; we must go on and serve the Lord in the commission that He has given to us'. They must have all had the same spirit, the same feelings and be motivated by the same power that comes from our conception of the reality of the risen Christ.

And so at the end of the chapter He says, 'these things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace'. But, they were not to get peace at that time, other than an inner peace which results from a firm conviction of the power of the truth. They were going to have problems with the world, who was going to persecute them and make things very difficult for them, and so the Lord says to them, 'in the world ye shall have tribulation' and that word 'thlipsis' is a word which means 'pressure'. In the world your faith will come under pressure, but Paul says, in Acts chapter 14 and at verse 22, 'we must through much pressure, the same word, enter into the kingdom of God', and where he uses the word 'must' there, it means exactly that. He is saying 'the basis of our inheritance into the kingdom of God, is to have our faith placed under pressure'. He says, we must through much pressure, to enter into the kingdom of God, and He's saying this no other way, brethren and sisters, our faith must be put to the test, with the pressures of life, both from within our own nature and the environment about us, and that faith is going to remain bright and shiny, and it's got to survive, because when that faith is put under pressure, and it survives, it takes us a step further toward the kingdom of God. But, the Lord ultimately has said, let us not forget in verse 33, 'in Me ye might have peace'. Let's forget about the problems with the world about us; let's not be too deeply depressed and surrounded by the problems of the world and the difficulties of everyday life, remember that the Lord promises us 'peace', and though in the world we will have pressure upon our faith, His final words are incredible when He says, 'but be of

good cheer'. BE OF GOOD CHEER, why shouldn't we be of good cheer? The Lord uses this expression on numerous occasions to encourage those who are down cast. The last time He used it in scripture was to the apostle Paul, in Acts 23 and verse 11, when He said ' Be of good cheer, Paul, for as thou has testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must ye also be a witness at Rome'. Be of good cheer Paul, and He says, 'be of good cheer' to every disciple, in every age and every generation. Be of good cheer; don't let the world get you down. Don't let your own weaknesses get you down. Don't let the problems of life destroy your faith or undermine your hope of the kingdom that is to come. Be of good cheer, and to that He adds, 'I have overcome the world'. I have overcome the world; these were the words of a man who was walking out to His death. I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD! and that's exactly how He saw it. His death would be His triumph. The hour of shame would also be the hour of His glory. His death would not be a death of failure and defeat, but a death of victory. And because He gained the victory, brethren and sisters, we can be of 'good cheer' because He has overcome the world and He has opened up for us, the way to life eternal and a glorious inheritance that is beyond human comprehension, to ever come to grips with it at this present time. We do not understand divine nature because we do not have it. We understand some of the things associated with it, but the full glory of it and the full wonder of it, to imagine ourselves clothed upon with a life that will live through all eternity, in a nature that can never die, of course, we must not lose hope. We must not let our faith be weakened, that we must be exactly as the Lord says, we must be of good cheer in all the affairs of life. Be of good cheer, knowing and having absolute confidence, that the One who died for us and gave His life for us, HAS OVERCOME THE WORLD, and opened up a way to eternal life and eternal glory, for all those who continue to abide in Him.