

# Exalting Jesus Christ

## "Words to Keep Us Going"

### INTRODUCTION:

- I. Some two-thousand years ago a group of twelve men sat around a table pondering their uncertain future.
  - A. One of them was destined for death.
    1. He was Jesus of Nazareth – and in a matter of only a few hours, He will be arrested, dragged before one mockery of a trial after another, and finally sentenced to death.
    2. Before the sun sets again on this group of men, those left behind will be reeling from the shock of witnessing the horrific crucifixion of Jesus, their Lord.
  - B. We're told that when it was time to leave this room they sung a hymn – perhaps as a way of trying to lift their spirits.
    1. But before they ventured into the night toward a secluded garden on the hill of Olivet, one man – John – recorded the final words between Jesus as His disciples.
      - a. They were obviously bracing themselves to the reality of facing life without the One they loved and revered.

2. As we continue our series "Exalting Jesus Christ," we turn to the sixteenth chapter of the gospel of John, where these final words are recorded.
  3. And, as we focus on the last seventeen verses of this chapter, Jesus addressed four of their greatest concerns with four simple words on which they could hang their hopes.
  4. These are words that would keep them going – and "Words to Keep Us Going" during times of trouble and distress as well.
- I. Let there be no mistake about it, the Lord's disciples were filled with bewilderment and confusion.
- A. One look at verses sixteen through eighteen makes this perfectly clear.
1. Jesus said: **John 16:16** – *"A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father."*
  2. Now look at the disciples' reaction: **John 16:17-18** – *Then some of His disciples said among themselves, "What is this that He says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?" 18 They said therefore, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is saying."*

3. The Lord's greatest desire was to give these troubled and confused disciples hope – to lift their eyes from the tragedy of His imminent departure, to the glory of it all.
  4. But what can He say to achieve that seemingly impossible task?
- B. In his classic book *The Seven Laws of Teaching* – a book every teacher should have in their library – John Gregory speaks of what he calls "The Law of the Lesson."
1. That "law" is simply this: "The truth to be taught must be learned through truth already known."
  2. Centuries before Gregory discovered this principle, Jesus used it to instruct His disciples – starting with the known, and then taking them into the uncharted waters of the unknown.
  3. Notice how skillfully the Master Teacher does this, as He gives these men four words to keep them going.

**BODY:**

- I. In the upper room, Jesus has mentioned several times the impending sorrow and the inevitable persecutions these men would soon experience.
  - A. Now He wants to clarify that this isn't going to be the end of their relationship with Him.
    1. And so, He calls upon them to turn from the issue of sorrow to the first word that would keep them going – the word "joy."

- a. **John 16:19-20** – *Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, "Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'? 20 Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy."*
2. There was no escaping the fact that the disciples would go through incredible pain and sorrow.
3. But their grief would not last forever. To illustrate His point, Jesus draws on a well-known fact.
  - a. **John 16:21** – *"A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world."*
  - b. Every mother could certainly testify to the truthfulness of this analogy.
  - c. No matter how intense the labor may be, once that tiny priceless life is laid in your arms, the pain is forgotten.
4. The comparison that Jesus made is clear to see.

- a. **John 16:22** – *"Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you."*
5. Just as a violent thunderstorm can transform the desert into fields of wildflowers, so the sorrowful storm that will soon pass over these disciples will bloom in abundance with joy.
6. To assure His disciples, Jesus added:
  - a. **John 16:23-24** – *"And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. 24 Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."*
- B. The joy that Jesus promises is not a "here-today-gone-tomorrow" kind joy.
  1. The joy that will fill the hearts of these men – and that subsequently fills the hearts of every disciple of the Lord – is permanent and complete.
  2. We all go through dark valleys of uncertainty and fear – we've all experienced the sorrow of loss, some more than others.
  3. But just as it would be unnatural for a mother of a newborn to dwell in the pain of childbirth rather than rejoice over the baby in her arms, so it is with us.

- a. The only reason people remain in a perpetual state of anguish and sorrow over a past experience is because they continue to dwell on it.
  - b. The Lord didn't want His disciples to dwell on the past, but on the glorious future that awaits us all – heaven.
  - c. Because, it's there that we will be reunited with Him, and with those whom we've lost.
4. The psalmist puts it this way: **Psalm 30:5b** – *Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.*
  5. Knowing that there will be a tomorrow can help us endure even the darkest of nights.
- II. However, these disciples still had to contend with a reality they found difficult to accept – they wouldn't have Jesus around to talk with.
- A. And so, Jesus turns to the subject of prayer – a subject He's already mentioned several times during this same evening.
1. Jesus clarified their concerns about access to the Father in heaven by showing that it's possible because of God's "love" – the second word that would keep these disciples going.
    - a. **John 16:25-26** – *"These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you*

*plainly about the Father. 26 In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you. . ."*

2. Jesus wanted His disciples to know that a time is coming when they will have direct access to the Father.
  - a. They will be able to ask the Father for the things they need most by asking in His name – in the name of Jesus.
  - b. By the way, praying in the name of Jesus is something they would be able to do.
  - c. This isn't something the disciples would be required to say at the end of every prayer – but rather something they will do every time they pray.
  - d. They will pray in the name of Jesus.
3. And what makes this new, direct access to the Father possible? Again, the answer is summed up in the word "love."
  - a. **John 16:27** – ". . . for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God."
  - b. The Father loves hearing from those who love Jesus, and who believe that He came from the Father – and that means He loves hearing from us as well.

4. And the reason why prayer will be so important in the lives of the disciples is simply this:
    - a. **John 16:28** – *"I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father."*
    - b. In other words, Jesus said "I'm going back home. So rather than have Me around to answer all your needs, in the future you will be able to ask the Father yourselves."
  5. And, sure enough, the disciples finally understood.
    - a. **John 16:29** – *His disciples said to Him, "See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech!"*
    - b. How wonderful it must have been for them when the light finally clicked on in their minds.
    - c. Jesus isn't leaving them alone – He will not only send the Holy Spirit as a comforter, but will give them direct access to the Father in heaven.
    - d. Direct access to the God in heaven was once a function exclusively reserved for the priests.
    - e. But now access to the Father is possible because of God's love – He loves those who love and obey His Son.
- B. Being assured of God's love does wonders to keep us going during troubled and uncertain times.



1. His love and acceptance supplies us with an unlimited supply of encouragement.
2. And what makes the love of God and the love of Christ so wonderful is that it will always be there.
  - a. **Romans 8:35-39** – *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*  
*38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
3. Knowing that nothing separates us from the love of God, gives us another assurance.
4. We have the assurance of knowing that the Father will always be there to hear and answer our prayers – as long as we truly love His Son and never allow our faith in Him to falter.

III. And that brings us to the third word Jesus gave to encourage His disciples – the word "faith."

A. At this point in their relationship with Jesus, it's clear that the Lord's disciples had a very limited amount of knowledge and understanding.

1. They were only able to grasp a small portion of what Jesus was telling them.

2. However, now more than ever, they needed to have a faith that could reach beyond what they could grasp.

3. And so, when the disciples tried to assure Jesus that they understood, the Lord challenged their faith.

a. The disciples told the Lord: **John 16:30-31** – *"Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God." 31 Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?"*

B. Our faith in the Lord is directly influenced by our growth in knowledge – in our knowledge and understanding of spiritual truths.

1. In the days ahead, the disciples' knowledge would come together.

a. One by one, the pieces of the puzzle would begin to fall into place as the Holy Spirit does His work of enlightening these men.

b. And as their knowledge and understanding grows, so will their faith.

2. Faith and knowledge are often connected in the Scriptures.
  - a. **Ephesians 4:11-13** – *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. . .*
  - b. **2 Peter 1:5-7** – *But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.*
3. Perhaps this is the reason why a deep faith is lacking in so many who call themselves Christians.
  - a. There is no depth of faith because there is no depth of knowledge.
  - b. Unfortunately, you will never get all the knowledge and understanding of spiritual truths by coming to Bible classes and worship – even if you never missed a single class or sermon.

- c. The only way one can achieve knowledge is by spending time immersed in the Word of God – by opening your Bibles and reading and meditating on those truths.
  - d. This is why I've said time and time again that we all need to spend at least 30 minutes every day reading our Bibles – reading all alone in a quiet place where we can read and meditate without interruption.
4. Perhaps the question Jesus asked His disciples in verse 31 will challenge us as well. "Do you now believe?"
- a. Do you truly believe in Jesus, in His deity and Godhood?
  - b. Do you believe in Jesus enough to trust completely in all His promises?
  - c. Do you really believe that you will join Him in heaven someday?
5. If you have ever doubted the depth of your faith, I can absolutely guarantee you that the reason is because you have stopped reading your Bible.
6. Faith and knowledge are inseparable.

IV. Finally, Jesus addresses the disciple's concern about being separated from Him, by reassuring them with the word "peace."

A. Sooner or later, every believer in Jesus Christ will have their faith tested.

1. But that's not anything we should fear.

a. **James 1:2-4** – *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

2. And sometimes the testing of our faith will come from those we love most.

a. **Matthew 10:34-39** – *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. 35 For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; 36 and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' 37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me*

*And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."*

b. Jesus Christ demands absolute loyalty – even when it means we find ourselves at odds with our own family.

- c. Therefore, because the Lord expects this kind of devotion from His disciples, we will not always be able to live in peace with those around us.
  - d. That's what Jesus meant when He said, *"I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."*
- B. However, there is a kind of peace that the Lord guarantees everyone who would follow Him.
- 1. This peace can be found even in the midst of persecutions
    - a. **John 16:32-33** – *"Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. 33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*
  - 2. The reason we can find peace in the midst of persecution is simply because our peace doesn't come from the world.
    - a. *"In the world you will have tribulation."* (v. 33)
  - 3. Our peace comes from being in Christ.
    - a. *"In Me you may have peace."* (v. 33)
  - 4. Nothing brings us peace of mind – nothing guarantees us freedom from fear – other than knowing we are in Christ.

- a. Knowing we have *"put on"* Christ when we were baptized into Christ for the remission of our sins.
  - b. Knowing we are able to enjoy an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior simply because we have obeyed the gospel – and because of that, we are *"in Him."*
5. What do we have to fear from the world, knowing that Jesus has overcome the world – has overcome the demonic powers at work in the world – through His death, burial, resurrection and ascension into heaven to sit at the right hand of God.
6. That's the Lord we serve. That's the Lord who is on our side.  
That's the Lord who is our helper.
- a. **Hebrews 13:5-6** – *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"*
7. Add to all that the fact that we can also bring all our concerns to our Father in heaven, praying through Jesus Christ, and just look at the peace we have.
- a. **Philippians 4:6-7** – *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God,*

*which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

## **CONCLUSION:**

- I. If we could put ourselves in the disciples' sandals, we probably would have walked very slowly toward Gethsemane that night.
  - A. Our thoughts would have naturally sorted themselves into two overall impressions of all Jesus had told us.
    1. First, His life may not be long, but His death is no mistake.
    2. And second, my life may not be easy, but I can go on if my life is accompanied by *joy, love, faith* and *peace*.
    3. Four simple words, but words that can keep us going even during the darkest hours of our life.
  - B. The words *joy, love, faith* and *peace* truly are simple words, and yet they are deeply significant for you and I as Christians.
    1. They keep us going.
    2. But more than that, they are also words that played a significant role in bringing us to Christ in the first place.
      - a. Before we came to Christ, we lived empty lives – lives where we tried our best to find joy and satisfaction in the world.
        - (1). Unfortunately, the world couldn't bring us lasting joy.



- b. That's when we heard about the love of God – the fact that He loved us so much that He would give His only Begotten Son to die for our sins, so that we could finally be free from worry.
  - c. We turned to Jesus Christ in faith – a faith that motivated us to not only believe in Him, but to repent of all the wrong we've done in the past, and a faith that motivated us to confess Him before others, and to be buried with Him in baptism for the remission of our sins.
  - d. And now that we are a child of God – a true disciple of Jesus Christ – we have a peace that the world cannot know. It's a peace that only comes to those who are in Christ.
- C. Have you done the things I just described?
- 1. Have you sought joy that can only come from trusting in the love of God? And has the knowledge of that love produced faith in you? And have you acted on that faith to find the peace that comes from obeying the gospel of Christ – the peace that comes from knowing you are "in Christ"?
    - a. If not, you can do all that at this moment – coming to Christ in faith, repentance, confession and baptism – and be added by the Lord to His church, where you will truly be in Christ.
  - 2. And to those of us who are Christians, have you remained faithful to the Lord – experiencing the joy that comes from knowing the

love of God, and having an obedient faith that brings you peace of mind?

- a. If not, then you can also experience all these wonderful things again by simply coming back to Christ in faith and repentance, confessing your sins to God, and being cleansed once more by the blood of Christ.