

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**Persevering and Overcoming: The Mark of God's Saints**  
**Pastor Mike Brown – August 7, 2011**

**John 16:33**

*The Big Idea: Tribulation will come; the saints of God overcome in their perseverance.*

**Opening Prayer**

**Christ's Letter to 4Cs**

Recall that over the past several weeks Pastor Dave has been working through Christ's letters to His seven churches found in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. Last week, Dave, guided by the Holy Spirit, imagined Christ's letter to 4Cs:

To the angel in the church in Arvada write:

I know your works—your vision for the kingdom, your perseverance and your commitment to God's word. I know you love my children. But be warned! Be careful of allowing then thinking of the world to cloud your mind and thus wither your commitment to that which is right but hard. Make sure that you see beyond this realm and perceive life through my eyes. Prepare to handle well the changes that are about to come upon you. Be my church for this age and the age to come.

He who overcomes will leave his mark for the kingdom of God and be welcomed to my arms in the life to come. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

In the seven letters in Revelation, perseverance was a major theme. Again and again Jesus exhorted His churches to persevere.

**Tribulation**

We persevere because tribulation is a fact of this world. Listen to the words of Christ: *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33, ESV)

In this verse we have the foretelling of tribulation as a fact of life, the exhortation to have courage, which presupposes perseverance, and the great promise of hope in tribulation because Jesus has overcome the world.

**Perseverance**

It is easy to talk of tribulation, perseverance, and the hope of overcoming in the abstract sense; however, at this time I'd like to invite

- Kevin and Lynn Callison
- Susan Reichard
- Neil Bartell (representing he and Dara)
- Adam and Katie Kemp

on stage so that we might hear first-hand their stories of tribulation, perseverance, and hope in overcoming.

- What has been going on in your life?
- What has God been showing you about Himself or about you during this time of tribulation?
- *(How you found hope in overcoming?)*

- How can we pray for you and encourage you better?

## Overcoming

Let me close with just two quick points on living life in overcoming.

### Gospel Perspective

The first is to properly understand overcoming from the gospel perspective. Oswald Chambers puts it this way: *God does not give us overcoming life: He gives us life as we overcome.*<sup>1</sup>

We can easily mistake the gospel message as one in which perseverance leads to overcoming in the sense that the tribulations eventually pass and we live a life of bliss. This is simply not the gospel message. Paul puts it this way:

*“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”* (Romans 5:1–5, ESV)

Paul promises we will have peace with God, but not a peace as in a tribulation-free life. On the contrary, Paul tells us that our suffering produces endurance through our perseverance, which produces character—the character of Christ—which give us hope *in the midst of our suffering*. In this hope we find peace. Overcoming is not being free from tribulation, overcoming is the lifelong journey to let go of all things in which we put our hope that are not God. This is the direct work of the Holy Spirit in us as we persevere in tribulation.

### Community

The second point is this. We hear the stories of people like these among us and it can be easy, due to the significance of their stories, to assume we are generally free of tribulation. If you feel that way it is only because you have not seriously sought to obey the commands of Christ and had to confront yourself as you are. This interior battle—carrying our respective crosses daily—is the hardest tribulation through which we must persevere and find life with Christ in the overcoming.

And we can only persevere and overcome together. Christianity is not an individual affair. We persevere and overcome together, as one Body. We help each other without the burden of trying to fix each other. From the tribulation that is the bearing of our individual crosses we find space in our lives to simply be together, as saints struggling to persevere with Christ and through Him become like Him as we live a new life in the overcoming. Together we find hope in Christ.

#### \*\*\*\*\*OPTIONAL\*\*\*\*\*

When Job experienced terrible tribulation, the loss of all of his property and his ten children, three of his best friends came to him. We remember them for having their theology wrong; however, they did have a very important thing right...the idea of suffering together.

*“Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him. And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.”* (Job 2:11–13, ESV)

---

<sup>1</sup> Chambers, O. (1993). *My Utmost for His Highest : Selections for the Year* (NIV edition.). Westwood, NJ: Barbour and Co. August 2.

## **Communion**

As we go to the table, I'd like us to read Psalm 23 together.

*"The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." (Psalm 23:1–6, NIV)*

In this Psalm we see that God sets His table not in the green pastures or by the quiet waters, but in the valley of death in the presence of our enemies. God dines with us in the midst of our tribulations—in our tribulations we dine together as a community of believers with Christ at His table.

Before we partake of this table with each other, the great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us, and with Jesus. So, take a couple of minutes to reflect on the tribulations you heard from these members of our family and on the tribulation in your own life so that we might come together as one Body in our tribulation, perseverance, and life in the overcoming.

**\*\*\*\*\*silence\*\*\*\*\***

John 6:53-58

## **Offering Prayer**

## **Benediction**

Rev 1:9

We partake of the tribulation, the kingdom, the perseverance with Christ...together with each other.