

People of God, have you ever seen one of those TV shows or movies where the hero is captured by the villain? And from all perspectives it looks like the villain is going to win. So he breaks into monologue about how it was his cleverness and superior intellect that trapped the hero, and is going to give him the victory. And once he has done away with the hero, nothing will stop him from total global domination.

And he as he twists his handlebar mustache and rubbing his hands together gloating about his inevitable victory, little does he know that there just so happens to be some friendly rats that are gnawing at the ropes which bind the hero's hands. Soon he will be free to stop the villain and put an end to his diabolical and evil plans. And after he does, the villain of course always says something like, "Drats, defeated again." Or if it was Scooby Doo, the villain would say "And I would have gotten away with it too, if weren't for you pesky kids."

These kinds of stories always have the good guy win by a last-minute victory. But suppose the story is different. Suppose the rats don't get through the ropes fast enough. Suppose the calvary doesn't come and save the hero at the last minute. Suppose the hero dies. What then? Where is the victory and the triumph of the hero then? I mean, could we handle it if the bad guys won and get away with it?

This is the story of Christ, isn't it? The time has come for Jesus to be captured by the villains. And nobody will come to rescue him. In fact, all of his friends will abandon him. No legions of angels will be dispatched from heaven. Elijah won't come to deliver him. God will not take Jesus down from the cross. Jesus is going to die. After all the scheming and manipulating and rebellion of the Devil and his demonic rulers, they

finally got what they wanted. They wanted God dead. And so they killed Jesus. Jesus was crucified, pierced with a spear, and buried in tomb. And for everyone in the story, they thought the bad guys won.

But they didn't. Jesus came back to life. And when he came back to life, the disciples then discovered that there is deeper magic at play here that God kept secret from them. We soon find out that when the villain finally succeeds at killing the hero, the villain actually destroys his own diabolic plans for global domination. In trying to break God's bonds of control over the world, the devil actually broke the power of his own rule over the world. And instead, he established the reign and worldwide dominion of the Hero, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

CS Lewis tried to teach us about this deeper magic in the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. The villain, Queen Jadis knew of the deep magic which decreed that all traitors' lives are forfeited to her. But Aslan took the traitors place and died at her hand instead of Edmund. She thought this was her ultimately victory. But it wasn't it. Instead, it proved to be the beginning of the end of her reign. Aslan, after dying came back to life. And when Lucy and Susan were struggling to understand what it all meant, Aslan said:

"It means that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards."

This deeper magic is what Paul speaks about in 1 Cor.2, which he refers to as *the secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

The secret hidden wisdom of God is that when the Lord of Life dies, death itself starts working backwards. When the worst evil is inflicted upon the Him who is the most good, then evil unfolds upon itself and turns into the greatest good. When Jesus gives up all worldly desires to have global dominion, and concedes to the power of the rulers of this age to kill him, their rule is overthrown, and Christ's is established. The secret wisdom of God is, in Christ, "All sad things become untrue."

You see People of God, Jesus tried to reveal this deeper magic to his disciples. But they were not ready to receive his wisdom. This is something they could only receive by the Spirit. They did not know what he was talking about. They could not understand his figures of speech about him going away and coming back, and them not being able to follow him now, but they will be to later, and them being sad but then being filled joy. They didn't understand what he meant when he said that ruler of the world was cast out and the judgment of the world was about to happen. They didn't know that when he would be lifted up on a cross, he would draw all people to himself. And they especially didn't know how it all was to be like a woman who is in anguish when she goes into labor, but then she is filled with joy that a man has been born into the world. They didn't know that in the death of Him who is the Life, that the death of Death would occur.

But we now know these things, People of God. The Spirit of Christ has revealed them to us. We know the deeper magic from before the dawn of time. And this should give us great peace.

Jesus says in John 16:33 - **These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but take heart, I have overcome the world."**

This tribulation that the disciples will have refers mostly to the distress and affliction that falls upon them by their enemies who seek to kill them for being followers of Jesus. As Jesus testified in John 15 - the world will hate the disciples because the world hated Jesus first. And if the world persecuted Jesus, it will persecute his disciples too, he says. Jesus even says in John 16 that the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are offering service to God.

Now, this principle, that what happens to the Master will happen to the disciples, does not just apply in the negative aspects of tribulation and affliction. It also works the other way. That because of the disciples' relationship to Jesus they can expect to conquer through tribulation and affliction, just as Jesus did. As the Apostle Paul stated so wonderfully:

¹⁶So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,"

The word 'affliction' here in 2 Cor. 4, is the same word as 'tribulation' in John 16:33, and is the same as the word 'anguish' in John 16:21, where it refers to the birth pains a woman goes through before giving birth. The disciples' anguish, affliction, and tribulation that Jesus died will give way

to the joy that he is resurrected from the tomb. And likewise, the anguish and affliction and tribulation that the disciples will have in the world for being disciples of Jesus, prepares for them an eternal weight of glory. The pains of death and suffering are actually birth pains of glory and resurrection.

Jesus overcame the world by dying, and we must never forget that we also overcome the world by dying. Which is precisely what John has in mind in the book of Revelation. *“And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives even when faced with death.”*

In other words, we should not worry about the anguish of tribulation that comes upon us as a result of us being in Christ. Because here is where the deeper magic works. By faith in the resurrected and ascended Jesus, we are in Him in the Heavenly places, where Christ rules by this deeper magic.

And so, when the world persecutes us, when the world increases in its hostility towards us, we should not fear. We should not become all doom and gloom and think that the villains are winning. In fact, we ought to rejoice that we are found worthy to suffer for the sake of the Name of Christ. And we also ought to rejoice because it is proof of the New Birth of the world that will come as a result of our affliction and tribulation, just as it did for Jesus.

Remember, the pain of affliction is a birth pain. And if we die by being faithful to Jesus, our own death is our resurrection. And just when the world thinks that they are protecting and establishing their rule in the

world by killing Christians, it is then we actually enter into our reign over the earth from Heaven, with Christ.

For John in Rev. 20 says, *“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: even the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

In other words, judgment, or the authority to judge and rule had been given to the souls of them that were beheaded for their witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and so they sat on thrones and reigned with Christ for a 1000 years! They were beheaded for their witness of Jesus, and were immediately placed on thrones in Heaven to rule with Christ.

Tell me people of God, with the Deeper Magic in play, why anything should rob us of our peace and joy in the Lord on earth? If the worst thing that could happen to us is turned into our greatest gift and privilege, why let your peace be stolen from you? Why should we ever fear death, if Christ promises to resurrect us? Why allow our hearts to be sad that the world is winning, when in fact they are losing!?

Christ established his heavenly rule over the world by dying at the hands of the enemy. And we must follow in his way. The persecution and tribulation and affliction that we have in the world, likewise, take us to thrones in Heaven to reign with Jesus. Death is swallowed up by victory. The tomb is womb. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. Whatever might look like death, defeat, or failure for the Christian, isn't. It is our victory and triumph.

For John says in 1 John 5 – *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.*

And yet, we still need to be on guard about the deceitfulness of sin in our own hearts and minds, and also be on guard against the subtlety of Satan, who would seek to rob us of this peace that Christ gives us. And here is how Satan does it. He makes us think that although Jesus turns the worst kinds of evils against us into the greatest good, he doesn't actually care to help us in lesser afflictions and tribulations. He knows he can't make us doubt the big truth, so he subverts the big truth by making us doubt His faithfulness on the smaller issues.

What peace does Jesus give you when you are short on money, and you can't pay the bills on time? What peace does Jesus offer you when your friends are against you? What peace does Jesus give you when you are falsely accused of something, or when you are misunderstood? What peace does Jesus give you when your marriage is on the rocks? What peace does Jesus give you when your kids walk away from the faith? What peace does Jesus give when inflation is rising, and you are concerned about how you are going to feed your family? What peace does Jesus give when you feel like you are all alone with nobody to help? What peace does Jesus give when you are depressed, and sad, and filled with anger? What peace does Jesus give when your family has very specific needs and nobody seems to care or understand?

Now, here is how the deception works itself out. You first begin to doubt that Jesus even cares about those situations at all, because you think that He only cares about the big things, like life and death situations. And so you don't seek peace from Jesus in Heaven. Instead, you begin to seek comfort and peace in other earthly things that are not Christ. And in time these things will drive you away from Christ entirely. And eventually,

after you realize that those things don't provide the comfort or peace you were looking for, and your heart becomes more hardened by sin, and your mind had become more led astray by deception, you get to a point where you just have to try to numb the pain. No point in even going to Christ in prayer. You have to self medicate. And you do that by various ways, most of which will pull you away from your community and your responsibilities, and your love for Christ.

And so, it starts out innocently enough, by binge watching Netflix, or playing too many video games, or endless scrolling on the internet. Then maybe it progresses to you drinking too much alcohol, or maybe you even start doing drugs, or you get involved in sexual immorality, or porn. Or maybe you don't go that direction, and instead you invest too much of your time in other things that you think are more worthwhile, but are still actually destroying your soul and your family. Like, spending way too much time at work, because you don't want to deal with the situation at home. Or you spend way too much time watching or playing sports, or you invest way too much time, money, and energy into your car, or your own physical appearance, or whatever.

There are a host of other things that people give themselves over to for immediate comfort and peace, or to numb them from the affliction and tribulation that comes to them from the world. All of which become destructive idols. And it happens people of God, because we entertained the false belief that Christ's peace was only for the worst case scenario, and not for anything else.

If Christ is your peace in the midst of our ultimate affliction and tribulation in the world, then he is our peace in any and every lesser afflictions and tribulations as well. This is the principle of from the

greater to the lesser. If Christ's peace is for us in the midst of death, then his peace is for us in any other affliction as well.

This is why Paul says in 2 Cor. 1 – *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in the midst of any affliction, with the comfort with which we are comforted by God.”*

People of God, Christ is ascended into heaven, there to rule over all things on your behalf. Psalm 73:25-26 says,

Whom have I in heaven but you?

And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

²⁶*My flesh and my heart may fail,*

but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Do not allow the tribulations, and afflictions, and troubles of this world get you down. You have one who is in heaven. Desire Him above all earthly things, and He will strengthen your heart. Meditate upon the deeper magic that Christ uses to rule the world for the sake of you, His people. He is constantly making all bad things become untrue. He is constantly turning death into resurrection. He is constantly turning defeat into victory. He turns depression into joy, sadness into song, gloom into gladness.

But he does this for those who find their heart's treasure in him who is in heaven. If you do not place your heart and trust and faith where he is, then the bad guys win, and that's it. But if Christ is your comfort and peace in the midst of any and every affliction you have in the world, then he it all into victory and triumph. For this is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Amen.