

A Special Crisis Message from Pastor Marv

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Date: 05 April 2020

Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 0 0] This is Pastor Marv Wiseman. Thank you so much for joining with us once again for what we must consider an extraordinary kind of get-together, which certainly gives a different meaning to the term get-together than what we are used to in the past, does it not? I was just thinking, though, as I was preparing this material and getting the equipment and everything ready to go, there's got to be some really redeeming feature to this. And what, oh yes, that's of course, at least with this electronic measure, we don't have to worry about being six feet apart, do we?

We're quite confident that we are considerably more than six feet apart, so there shouldn't be any worry of anybody passing anything to anyone that they shouldn't. And we can be thankful that even though the radio waves will carry our voice, it won't carry any of the germs that might accompany it. So, okay, well, would you join with me, please, in a word of prayer? Father, we recognize that we are indeed living in troubling and difficult times, and we understand that lives have already been lost due to this terrible epidemic that we are facing. We do not know what the final toll will be, but we know that life is precious to you, and that our authorities and our first responders and medical personnel are doing all they can to lessen the impact and the lives that are lost due to this terrible affliction.

And our prayer for them is that they may be strengthened and encouraged in ways that only you can provide. We are so thankful for the training, for the equipment, for the skills, the dedication, and the sacrifices that so many of these are making, even as we speak, in order to care for the needs of those who are ill. And we ask a special portion of your grace upon them, and we know that you are capable of bringing light out of darkness and good out of evil, and we look to you to instill within humanity those qualities that can be commendable and honoring to you even in the time of great difficulty. Thank you for being in charge of our lives as believers in Christ, and thank you so much for having created the world that you have. Our apologies to you for its fallenness as a result of human behavior, and we recognize that we are all in Adam, but as all are in Adam, and all in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. And for that we will be eternally grateful. So we ask that you will take these feeble words today, offered electronically, and use them to encourage and strengthen and stabilize and enlighten each of us in accordance with what you know the need to exist in the hearts and minds of each and every one. Thank you for it in Christ's name. Amen.

Well, there are a number of things that we can do in connection with this pandemic that we are facing. You can pace the floor, and you can fret and stew, and you can charge God foolishly, and you can say, why us, God? And why me, God? And what did we do to deserve this? And all the rest of it. Or you can just simply relax and call to mind that tremendous passage that is a pattern for prayer for believers in this day and age, which we call the age of grace, or the administration of grace. And it is that which the Apostle Paul set forth in chapter 4 of Philippians. I know most grace people are familiar with it, perhaps of committed it to memory, but I'm going to read it to you once again to refresh your pure minds by way of repetition. And for any who may be listening and unfamiliar with the principle, I trust it'll be a blessing to them. And by the way, this is contrasted. This is contrasted with the principles of prayer that are found under the kingdom dispensation or the dispensation of Israel, as opposed to the dispensation of the grace of God. And for those who do not recognize or understand that there are differences between those, perhaps if you tune your ear and listen a little more carefully than you might otherwise, you may be able to pick up on something that we have found to be very enlightening, and I trust that you will too. Because this differs considerably from the prayer promises, for instance, that our Lord gave the apostles in the Gospels, and it's different from the prayer promises that are in the Old Testament, which are in keeping with those of the Gospels, because this is something that is prescribed for the body of Christ and the dispensation or the administration of grace, that is something brand new, really different, and it comes through an additional revelation, that the risen Christ gave to the apostle Paul after his encounter on the road to Damascus.

And in Philippians chapter 4, and just lifting out of, I may, verses 6 and 7, here's what we read. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

[5 : 47] There you have it. And that prayer promise, that prayer provision, for me personally, has provided more comfort, more solace, more satisfaction, less confusion than anything else that I have learned regarding prayer in all of the years that I have been a believer.

So I would admonish you to apply those principles that are found therein to your own life. And I do not plan to do so now, but should there be requests for it, I'd be glad to delineate, expound upon that on a later program as to exactly what we mean by the differences in the approach to prayer in this church age as opposed to the way it was previously. As I said, I won't go into that now, but I'd certainly be willing to if there is a request to do so.

I would like you to open your Bible, if you would, please, and be prepared to follow along. We'll be starting with the Gospel of John, chapter 16 and verse 16. We will also be spending a little bit of time in Mark's Gospel, chapter 14. I think you will find these two passages to be very enlightening in connection with what's happening today. And let us read, if we may, John, chapter 16, and beginning with verse 16. Oh, by the way, let me insert this also. These events that we are discussing now and providing now from John 16 occurred the night that Jesus was betrayed.

This is within the setting of what is called the Last Supper. This is the upper room. This is the night that Jesus is betrayed. When John's Gospel chapters 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, part of 18, all of those chapters, all of that content will have transpired within the space of a matter of hours, perhaps 12 to 14 hours.

So this is one of the things that makes John's Gospel really radically different from the Synoptics, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in that John spends a lot more detail regarding the person of Christ, not so much with the discourses of Christ or the miracles as what the other Gospels do. So keep that in mind, if you would, please. The time frame that is involved here, the cross from the time we are reading now, the cross will be a matter of hours away.

[8 : 31] And verse 16, John 16 reads, Jesus is speaking and he says, Now, right away, that's going to evoke some questions, and it certainly did among the Apostles, because it sounds very puzzling. Jesus is telling these 12 men all gathered around there, all partaking of this Passover meal, and he tells them, a little while, you'll no longer see me. In other words, fellas, I'll be gone. And then, again, a little while, and you will see me. What is that all about? What it's about is this.

When you will no longer see me, it'll be because I'm dead, and I've been buried, and I've been placed in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. But then, again, in a little while, and you will see me. What is that?

That's after the resurrection, when he appears to them again. But at this time, at this point in time, when he said that, it made zero sense to them. They didn't understand at all what he was talking about.

And some of his disciples, in verse 17, therefore said to one another, What is this thing he is telling us? A little while, and you will not behold me? And again, a little while, and you will see me? And because I go to the Father? And so they were saying, What is this that he says? Can you just see Peter, and James, and John, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, sitting around, and with eyebrows raised, looking to each other, and saying, What's he talking about? What did he say? Oh, I don't know. What's he talking about?

Well, and the text says, Jesus knew that they wished to question him. And he said to them, Well, are you deliberating together about this, that I said a little while, and you will not behold me?

[10 : 37] And again, a little while, you will behold me? I can see the apostles nodding their heads. Yeah, yeah, yes, that's exactly what we were talking about. And then Jesus goes on to explain, and here's what he says. Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice.

Wow. Can you get two greater extremes than that? Somebody's weeping, and somebody's rejoicing? And then Jesus said, But your sorrow will be turned to joy. How is that? Well, it's simple. In the context, and looking back on it, having history and knowing what transpired, the weeping is going to turn into crucifixion and his death. And the joy that will come from it is when they see him alive again. Now he's going to give an illustration. And he gives a kind of a, what shall we call it, a kind of a parable? Well, it isn't actually a parable, but it's an illustration. And Jesus said in verse 21, Whenever a woman is in travail, she has sorrow, because her hour has come. But when she gives birth to the child, she remembers the anguish no more for joy that a child has been born into the world. In other words, a woman goes from one extreme to another when she is in intense labor to bring forth this baby. It is agonizing. But when it is over, there's a cause for great celebration and joy. And he is using the delivery and the birth of a woman's child to illustrate his death and his resurrection. And he goes on to say, Therefore you too now have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you. And in that day you will ask me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, he will give it to you in my name. And by the way, here is an insert of one of the principles that we were talking about, how radically different prayer principles are in the Gospels as opposed to in the dispensation of the grace of God. And in verse 24, he continues, Until now you have asked for nothing in my name, ask and you will receive, that your joy may be made full. These things I have spoken to you in figurative language. In other words, he hasn't been really straight up front with them. His words have been couched in enigmatic language that they were unable to grasp. Later, after the facts, it will make tremendous sense to them, but at this point in time, they're just not getting it. These things, verse 25, I have spoken to you in figurative language. An hour is coming when I will speak no more to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. In that day, you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf, for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father. I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world. I am leaving the world again, and going to the Father. Now, this makes no sense to them, whatever. As far as they're concerned,

Jesus is speaking in riddles. The disciples said, and this is kind of cute, because they're letting on, like, oh, we got it now. We got it. They didn't get it at all. They didn't get it at all. I guess they probably just didn't want to show their ignorance. His disciples says, oh, lo, now you are speaking plainly, and you are not using a figure of speech. Now, we know that you know all things, and have no need for anyone to question you. By this we believe that you came from God. And Jesus answered them, Do you now believe?

Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken to you, that in me, you may have peace. In the world, you have tribulation. But take courage, I have overcome the world. Look at that. Did you see what he's saying? I have overcome the world. How?

What did he do to have overcome the world? And it's spoken in past tense. I have overcome the world.

[15 : 54] And then, when they say earlier in the chapter that they get it, and Jesus asks them, Do you now believe? Their response to that is, Oh, yes, yes, we believe. We get it. We know they didn't. How do we know they didn't get it? How do we know they didn't really understand at all what he was saying?

All right. Come back to a parallel passage in Mark's Gospel, chapter 14. And here, we'll begin reading with verse 22, and it will shed light on the John passage. Mark's Gospel, chapter 14, and verse 22. When they were eating, he took some bread. After a blessing, he broke it, gave it to them, and said, Take, eat. This is my body. He took a cup. When he had given thanks, gave to them. They all drank from it. He said, This is my blood of the covenant, which is to be shed on behalf of many.

I say to you, I shall never drink of this fruit of vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. And singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives, and Jesus said to them, You will all fall away. Now, follow this closely. Remember, what we just read in John's Gospel, before we came to this in Mark, taking place in the same time frame, within mere minutes of each other.

And we are pursuing this concept as to what degree they understood what he was talking about. And then he says in verse 28, in Mark chapter 14, and verse, well, let's read verse 27. And Jesus said to them, You will all fall away. He's addressing the apostles face to face, telling them they will all fall away. What do you mean? What do you mean we'll fall away? What are you talking about?

Because it is written, I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.

[18 : 15] Jesus might as well have been speaking a foreign language. They aren't picking up on this at all, but they obviously don't want to let on that they aren't getting it. And Peter said to him, verse 29, this is classic. Peter said to him, Even though all may fall away, yet I will not. And they don't even understand what the occasion would be that might cause them to fall away. And Jesus said to him, Truly I say to you, that you yourself, this very night, before a cock crows twice, shall three times deny me, But Peter kept saying insistently, Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you.

And look at the rest of the verse. And they all were saying the same thing too. Did they get it? Of course not. And when this came to pass, what was going to happen?

They will all forsake him and flee. And Peter will follow from afar off, and he will enter the courtyard of the high priest, and he will warm himself there by the enemy's fire. And he will deny three different times that he even knew the Lord. And do you know how much time is going to transpire from the time Jesus told him he would do that until the time he actually did it? Hours.

Mere hours. This promise, this commitment was made by Peter probably somewhere around, probably somewhere around nine, between nine and eleven o'clock at night, the night before his betrayal. And when they leave the upper room, they are going to go out, go down the deep defile, which is the valley of Jehoshaphat, also the, the, I can't think of the name of the valley now. It's, it's the deep defile that separates the Mount of Olives from the city of Jerusalem, the Kidron, the Kidron Valley, and the Kidron Brook. And they're going to go across it and then up the other side to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus will pray to his father and the disciples will fall asleep. And it will be there that the temple police and those accompanying them will come and make the arrest and take Jesus. It'll still be dark. It'll be the middle of the night.

And they're doing this at this odd hour because they want to be well away from the public. They know that if they try to arrest Jesus because of his popularity in, in, like in the marketplace or in the public in Jerusalem, that would cause a big riot. So they want to do this on the sly.

[21 : 18] And that's exactly why they conspired with Judas for the betrayal at this strategic time. So they could take him, arrest him in the middle of the night when all of Jerusalem was sleeping.

And by the time people woke up, Jesus would be in their custody and they would have a trial underway with the execution plan. So it's all part of their neat little scheme.

And all of this is transpiring within a space of a few hours. So Jesus says to Peter, this very night, Peter, before the cock crows twice. How about that? When does a cock usually crow?

Well, from what I understand, although I'm not a bona fide farm boy, but I know enough about cocks crowing and farm life to know that that rooster usually starts making some noise around daylight, maybe even a little before it's daylight. And he lets go with his cock-a-doodle-doo.

And Jesus said, you're going to hear the cock crow twice, for you deny me three times. And the text tells us that when the cock crew, Peter remembered what Jesus said, and he went out and he wept bitterly. I think that's in Luke's gospel that we haven't time to turn to now.

[22 : 38] So all of this is taking place that very night within a matter of hours. Now, if we please could come back to John's gospel where we were earlier, chapter 16, we want to focus on something that I think is very insightful.

And it happens to be the last verse of the chapter, chapter 16 and verse 33. Jesus said, these things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace.

In the world you have tribulation. And the reason we have tribulation in the world is because that's what the world's made of.

It is a world of trouble and sorrow and conflict and disease and death and viruses and thorns and thistles and everything that goes with it.

But take courage, he says, I have overcome the world. Well, now, one might think in terms of the death, burial and triumphant resurrection of Christ as having overcome the world.

[23 : 49] But that hasn't happened here. Not in this text. Actually, the arrest hasn't even taken place at the time Jesus said that. And he didn't say, by the way, I will overcome the world.

He said, I have overcome the world. And how is it that he could say that? How is it that he could utter that in the past tense? It's quite simple.

In the plan and program of God, there is no past, present or future tense. There is only the eternal now.

And this is exactly how and on the same basis that Christ could be spoken of as having been the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world.

This is about perspective. It is God's perspective, Christ's perspective, as opposed to the human perspective. And as far as the humans are concerned, we would agree that Christ did overcome the world by his death on the cross and paying for the sins of the world of humanity.

[24 : 53] But that hadn't occurred yet. And yet Jesus speaks of it as if it had already occurred. And in the mind of God, it certainly has. And the reason for that is because God has a perspective that is full and complete, as opposed to our perspective, which is very piecemeal and lacking.

And while we're talking about perspective, if you are interested in a further examination of that, you can go to our website at gracebiblespringfield.com and look under the listing for Christianity Clarified.

And you could go to volume, I believe it's volume 23, where we begin explaining about the origin of pain and the perspective that pain involves and comes with it and so on.

And if you are interested, there are 48 volumes of Christianity Clarified posted at our webpage.

And they consist of nearly 1,000 segments, each of which is only three and a half minutes in length. But it's volumes 23, 24, and 25, I believe it is, that deals with the problem of perspective and how that perspective changes everything.

[26 : 27] That is so very important. So let's go to the scriptures then for an example of how our human perspective contrasts with God's perspective.

And in doing so, we will find the only real basis for comfort, serenity, confidence, and spiritual relaxation.

It is truly something to behold that should be enjoyed by every believer. But sadly, it escapes so many, even believers, because even as believers, they tend to be more caught up in what man says than what they are about what God says.

And a perfect example of this is our Lord's commitment here in John chapter 16, assuring the apostles they have reason to be of good cheer because he has overcome the world.

It's a done deal. It's already finished. What we need to be able to do is to relax in what we know is the promise of that deliverance, even though in time and space history, in accordance with our world, it has not yet occurred.

[27 : 46] Can you not take any comfort or assurance in the fact that it is done and over with and that God is to be trusted? And as we said last week, for those who read the Bible at the end of the Bible, the book of the Revelation, it makes it quite clear who actually wins.

So in the meantime, what then, pray tell me, once we know what the final outcome is going to be, what's the point of fretting and stewing and pacing the floor, worrying, anxiety-filled, and all the rest of it?

What's the point in that? And when we relax and are at ease with this, it doesn't mean we don't care. And it doesn't mean that we do not involve ourselves to address the issues and do whatever we can to alleviate human pain and suffering.

It's just that we need to take ultimate comfort and confidence in the fact that it's all going to work out just like God says it is. There will be disappointment in the meanwhile.

There will be pain in the meanwhile. There will be all kinds of calamity and adversity that will come in the meanwhile. But looking ahead to the greater picture and the final outcome, and that's the only thing that really matters anyway.

[29 : 09] It's how this whole thing is going to play out. And we as believers are in a win-win position. So what I'm telling you is don't deny your pain, your sorrow, your heartache now, but in the midst of it all, recognize that it really is going to be as God wants it to be in the end.

And how good is that? Of course, there will be a price to pay in the meanwhile getting there. We're paying it now. We're paying it now through death, disease, disappointment, adversity, and all the rest of it.

But when you know the end game and you have confidence in the end game, that makes the present suffering. Puts it in an entirely different context.

I well remember a statement that my first wife Barbara made, and many of you know her. This was years ago. This was before I retired from Greece the first time.

It must have been about the year 2000, something like that. We were all having a Bible class, and it was an elective class. It was a nine o'clock hour, and we were using Larry Crabb's book as a basis for our study.

[30 : 23] And the subject was based upon Ruth and Naomi and their situation. And it's found in the book of Ruth, and we were dealing with that, and we were using Larry Crabb's book.

And it was a great experience. And I well remember a statement that Barbara made. She said, you know, when we are going through a time of real difficulty and real despair, if we only knew, if we only had some way of knowing that there was some redeeming feature to this, that somehow or another there was going to be a right come out of this wrong, that something good was going to come out of this bad, then it would make enduring it and bearing up under it all the more different.

But it's the not knowing that really gets to us. And we say to ourselves, how can anything good possibly come out of this?

How can this possibly turn around for anybody's good? How can God be glorified in this? How can this be a positive when it's got negativity written all over it?

And, of course, we all concurred. And, you know, this was exactly the sentiment. This was exactly the sentiment that Naomi had when she returned with her daughter-in-law, Ruth, from the land of Moab.

[31 : 58] They had gone to Moab, recall, because there was a famine in Israel. So they crossed over the border, went over into the land of Moab, which was a completely pagan nation. And while they were there, Naomi's husband, Elimelech, died.

And her two boys, Malon and Killian, they both passed away and left her with two daughters-in-law, and Orpah and Ruth.

And this woman was grief-stricken. Here she'd lost her husband. She'd lost both sons. She was in a foreign country. And all she had were these two daughters-in-law.

And one of them was going to stay there in the land of Moab. And Naomi told Ruth to stay there also, because that was her homeland, and she belonged there with her people.

And Ruth uttered those tremendous words, those moving words. You can read it in the little book of Ruth in the Old Testament.

[33 : 10] And Ruth appealed to her mother-in-law, and she said, Please, don't make me leave you. I want to cling to you. Your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God.

And whither you lodge, I will lodge. And whither you go, I will go. And that was a tacit commitment to Judaism.

That was a kind of conversion statement, if you will, from paganism to Judaism. And Naomi accepted her, and they traveled there together, and they went back to the land of Israel.

And when they got back to Bethlehem, where they were from, people started noticing that Naomi had returned. Naomi, it's so good to see you. And all of the friends and relatives came out and greeted Naomi.

And she said, Naomi, it's great to see you. And she said, Don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara. My name is Mara.

[34 : 19] What is this all about? What does Mara mean? Mara is the Hebrew word for bitter. And she said, God has dealt bitterly with me.

Call me Mara. And here, this dear lady was so grief-stricken, so depressed, she was convinced that God had dealt bitterly with her, that God was probably angry with her, that God had it in for her son.

After all, he allowed her husband to die. He allowed her two sons to die. Where is God when you really need him? And what do I have to show for it?

I just have this daughter-in-law, Ruth, and that's all. And little did she know that Ruth was going to marry Boaz.

And Boaz and Ruth would have a child. And he would have a child.

[35 : 22] And on down the line, a couple of generations later, there would be a man by the name of Jesse, who would have eight sons.

And one of them would be named David. David the shepherd lad. David the king. And he is going to be, of course, a direct descendant of Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the Messiah.

And poor Naomi, bless her heart. She had no idea that God was working behind the scenes. And what good can possibly come out of this?

I'll tell you what good can possibly come out of that. I'll tell you, Naomi. The good that can come out of all of your calamity and adversity is Jesus.

He's the good that came out of that. And out of what he did and who he was, we all have cause for rejoicing. Well, so much that we don't know, I tell you.

[36 : 36] Perspective is everything. The reason perspective is so valuable is because we tend to act in accordance with it.

Perspective is the way we see ourselves and the world. And that's what determines our attitude and our actions that stem from our attitude and our agenda.

It all comes from our perspective, the way we see things. That is what we are about and what we want to do and why we want to do it. And while all of us have a perspective, it is critical to realize that it's so terribly limited.

It's because we don't have the ability to factor in all the ingredients of reality that would allow us to have a complete perspective, because we don't even know what they are.

We all should readily recognize that components that would provide a complete and full perspective are simply unknown to us.

[37 : 43] This is one of the things that makes us human. But God does have a full and complete perspective. And this is one of the things that makes God God.

This God, who has the full perspective, wants us as humans to know that he does. And what is more, he wants us to know what his perspective is.

This is a major reason he has given us the Bible. Knowing God's perspective then becomes the basis for our having peace and tranquility, even in a tumultuous world.

And this world, described as fallen and broken, stumbles around with fallen, broken people engaging in a frantic search for happiness, and they don't have a clue.

Well, we have no reason for not having a clue, because God has given us his perspective, and it's found in his word. And tie this in, if you will, when Jesus says, I have overcome the world.

[38 : 57] It was as good as done. So I want to leave you with a hymn. And no, you can relax, because I'm not going to sing it, but I am going to read the lyrics to you.

And it is one that I remember hearing Stu Hamlin sing years ago when I was working with WEEC, and I was one of the announcers on the air.

And I remember spinning those old 33 and a third vinyl platters. And one of them was an album by Stu Hamlin. I don't know if you know anything about Stu Hamlin or not, but he was a radio personality in Los Angeles, big name, kind of like a cowboy background, and famous for his drinking and carousing and everything.

And a young man by the name of Billy Graham came to Los Angeles in 1948. And old alcoholic Stu Hamlin somehow made his way to that crusade and found Christ as his Savior.

It completely changed his life. And he wrote a number of hymns, and he sang a number of hymns. And he didn't write this one. Someone by the name of Allison Cross wrote it, but Stu Hamlin sung it.

[40 : 15] And I well remember him singing it. And I thought, boy, there's a ton of great theology in that. And it really ties in with what we're talking about and the pandemic and all the virus and the uncertainties and the deaths that are caused and all the rest of it.

And the lyrics go like this. I don't know about tomorrow. I just live for day to day. I don't borrow from the sunshine, for its skies may turn to gray.

I don't worry or the future. I don't worry or the future. I don't worry or the future. For I know what Jesus said. And today I'll walk beside him. For he knows what lies ahead.

Many things about tomorrow. I don't seem to understand. But I know who holds tomorrow. And I know who holds my hand.

Every step is getting brighter as the golden stairs I climb. Every hurdle's getting lighter.
Every cloud is silver-lined.

[41 : 26] There the sun is always shining. There no tear will dim the eye. At the ending of the rainbow.

Where the mountains touch the sky. Many things about tomorrow. I don't seem to understand. But I know who holds tomorrow.

And I know who holds my hand. Is there anything that matters more? God bless you.

Hope you can join us next week. Unless we're here, there, or in the air. Thanks, Ash.
Amen.

Thank you. Amen. You guys. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[42 : 28] Amen. Amen. Amen.