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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

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**He Has No Hold on Me**

**John 14:28-31**

**Prayer:** *Father, we just again, we thank you for this day, we thank you for this first Sunday of the month where we can come before you and offer praise and worship for what you've done for us on the cross. Father, we just again recognize the impossibility of us ever beginning to understand the whole of it. And so this morning we pray for your Holy Spirit's power and presence so that we might grab a little tiny piece of it and that you would give us the ability to grow in our knowledge of you and our ability therefor to love you even more. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, like I said, it's the first day of the month and this is the day that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples for the last time and celebrated a Passover supper with them. Matthew 26 says this, it says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for*

*this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."* And Jesus took the bread and the wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and blood, then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. And then he asked them to repeat this remembrance on a regular basis, and that's what we call the Lord's table and we celebrate it once a month, and we do that by first meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in his death on the cross then by examining ourselves, asking God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, by confessing our sins and then by participating in the elements. *John 6:53 says: So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Now we've been following the life of Jesus and we've now arrived at the end of the 14th chapter of the gospel of John, and just to recap, this is the chapter in which Jesus formally tells his disciples that their three-year discipleship program is coming to an end. He's already told them that he's going to be arrested and crucified and it is no way because he wants to be sensational or he's looking for some kind of sympathy, it's simply because what is

about to unfold is so far beyond the scope of their imagination that Jesus has to repeatedly tell them again and again and again that, listen, some really bad stuff is going to happen immediately, stuff that might make you think that things are simply spinning out of control, but I'm telling you ahead of time so that you know that that is not the case. In fact it says in *John 13:19* describing Jesus's own words, he says: *"I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am."* And unlike the vague prognostications of those pseudo-prophets that surrounded Jesus, Jesus was extremely specific about the details of what was going to take place. Scripture's already pointed out what he already told the disciples. This is before they even arrived at this room in Jerusalem. This is *Mark 10:32*, it says: *Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."*

You know for years growing up I had always heard the Easter story couched in terms of Jesus as victim. You know, we were told that Rome and the religious leaders had all conspired to arrest Jesus

and then they subjected him to a kangaroo court and against their own laws they -- they not only violated the laws, they did it -- had to do it at night in order to accomplish this nefarious deed, and then they went ahead and executed Jesus. And I appreciated the emotional impact of painting a picture of Jesus as a victim, but it completely flies in the face of Jesus's own words. Jesus knew precisely what was going to take place because he was sovereignly guiding all things including this final meeting that he was having with his disciples. And so he secures a room and now he's giving them his final teaching, I mean, he tells them that they're going to have to continue to trust in God as well as trusting in him, that he was leaving to prepare a place for them, that he was going to come back and when he came back he would take them with him and that even though he was no longer going to be with them physically, they would not only do great things, they would do even greater things in his absence. And then he told them he wasn't going to leave them alone but he was going to send them a helper in the form of the Holy Spirit who would help them remember and recall all that he had taught them these last three years. And so he goes on to say if you really understood my mission, if you really understood and you really do love me, you're going to understand the necessity of my leaving and you're going to rejoice with me. He concludes chapter 14 with four very pregnant verses. Let me just read you this, this is *John 14:28-31*. This is Jesus's words. He said, "You

*heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me. But he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me. "Come now; let us leave."*

There is so much in this passage that needs to be unpacked. And Jesus starts out, he starts out that acknowledging after three years, he understands and the disciples don't but they just don't get it. They still don't get it, they are in fact acting like little children. They're stuck on the fact that he's leaving them. But if they truly understood his heart and his mission, they, too, would be rejoicing in the successful conclusion of that mission. And so much of what Jesus is telling them now makes no sense or at best little sense to them, and Jesus knows that after he leaves, the Holy Spirit is going to come and he's going to make all of those words that he spoke to them then make sense. For now he's content to lay out the entire case ahead of time so that as it unfolds, the disciples are going to at least know that Jesus was never, never taken by surprise. I want to focus on what Jesus says next because it is so packed -- packed with meaning. This is what

he says in verse 30. He says: "*I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what the Father has commanded me. Come now; let us leave.*" In those two verses, Jesus tells the state of this world, the state of the savior of the world, and the state of those that he had come to save.

The very first thing that Jesus tells his disciples and us is the state of this world. He tells them by saying this: "*The prince of this world is coming.*" Now I've said this many, many times but again it bears repeating. I want you to understand that our reality of the world that we live in is only a tiny, tiny slice of a far greater reality that takes place all around us of a war that is taking place between two great kingdoms. There's a war going on between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. And I've said this many, many times, we are involved in a proxy war between two great superpowers and we find ourselves right in the center of it. You have to understand if you're going to understand this world that eons ago there was a war that took place and there wasn't a single human being involved in this war. It involved creatures that are way, way beyond our comprehension and it didn't take place on earth, it took place somewhere else. In fact it took place in heaven. This is what it says in *Revelation 12:7*, it says:

Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down -- that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. This is the guy that Jesus is referring to when he says: "The prince of this world is coming." This is the ancient serpent who fought that war in heaven who was hurled to earth where the war continues even to this day. You see, in one sentence Jesus sums up this great battle in the proxy war that's about to take place in the next few days after the meeting Jesus is going to have with his disciples. And Jesus is sitting them down and he's telling them the prince is indeed coming and the prince is coming for Jesus. You see, he had won his initial victory after having been thrown down to earth. And he won it taking the form of a serpent in the Garden of Eden. And there he took Adam and Eve who are the progenitors of the entire human race and he successfully tempted them into trading their perfection for a fallen nature like his. And herein lies the heart of the gospel. And you know if it sounds like a fairy tale, it's because basically all fairy tales are based on this absolute truth that almost sounds like a fairy tale. You see, there really was an evil prince who attempted to take over the entire world and there really was a good prince who came down to ransom and rescue that world at

the cost of his own life. The evil prince's name was Satan. The good prince's name was Lord Jesus Christ. You know, the word "gospel" means good news. And this is the good news: First you have to understand the bad news and the bad news is this, that ever since Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden, Satan has held mankind captive. He has captivated mankind and all of creation by corrupting it into an imperfection that marks his own. Something that -- that he and we share in common is that imperfection. And God describes it this way in *Romans 8:20*, it says: *For the creation was subjected to futility -- not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it -- in the hope that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage of corruption into the glorious freedom of God's children. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now.* You see, when God created the earth, it was a reflection of who he is. And who he is is transcendent flawlessness. I mean after all of creation was completed in *Genesis 1:31*, it says: *God saw all that he made, and it was very good.* Now for God to call something "very good" means that it is as transcendently flawless as he was. And so it was in the Garden of Eden. Before Adam and Eve met the serpent, you know the one who had been hurled down from heaven after losing that war in heaven? He was the one who told them that God was withholding from them the ability to be like God himself. And they bought his lie hook, line, and sinker. And in buying that lie and



what they did was they disobeyed the only command that they were given that they do not eat of the forbidden fruit. They have no idea they were being played for a sucker. They were being played for a sucker by the serpent who convinced them to commit treason against their creator. And the moment that that fruit touched their lips, their natures instantly changed. And they changed from the flawless perfection that God had called "very good" to a fallen, sinful nature just like that of the serpent. And what Adam and Eve did externally changed them forever internally. See, the perfection that they were created with, it was now gone. And what's worse is that they passed on this imperfection to their children. Every subsequent offspring of Adam and Eve inherited their fallenness. It included a nature that no longer sought God but instead now actively defied him. So Satan had won round one, there's no question about it, he won round one by making every one of God's image bearers to be like he was, fallen and imperfect. That's the bad news of the state of the world that Jesus came into.

*1 John 5:19* it says: *We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.* Now I'm sure if you went out and approached the average person on the street and you said to them, "Hey, do you know that the whole world is under the control of the evil one?" They'd look at you like you have two heads. They don't get that at all. That may fly in China, it may

fly in Africa, it may fly in the Middle East, but we live in America, the home of the free. What do you mean we are enslaved? Well, the best way to keep control of the world is to have the world itself have no idea that it's enslaved. And here's how the enemy accomplished that. Like I said, God's nature is absolute perfection. So was Adam and Eve's before they fell. Satan succeeded in getting Adam and Eve to trade their perfect nature for his fallen nature by one simple act of disobedience. And when they became flawed, they couldn't help but produce offspring who were flawed as well. See, if you're going to pollute a stream, you better pollute it at the very top, at the very head at the start of it, at the wellspring because if you do that then it doesn't matter how far or how many miles downstream you get, every part of that stream will be polluted. And by polluting the stream of humanity right at its starting point, the prince of this world caused every single person born downstream of Adam to share in that pollution.

And God points out how devastating Adam's simple act of disobedience was by saying in *Romans 5:12*: *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.* Adam was the one man through whom sin entered the world. And because of Adam's fall we are born imperfect and therefore disqualified for heaven. But worse still, we are born now with natures that now

line up with the enemy who has enslaved us. You see, not only are we no longer qualified for heaven and for fellowship with God, we don't want it as well. We have no desire for it. And if you doubt that, just go out the door, go down the street, go down to Wal-Mart's parking lot, just gather the first ten people that you can find and say, "I want to tell you something. I want you to understand that all you need to do is put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will inherit eternal life and you will rule and reign with him forever." What kind of reaction do you think you're going to get? People are going to say you've got cooties. There's something wrong with you. Maybe they'll try to have you arrested, I don't know. The reason why is because the nature we've all inherited now loves this world. This is where our heart's affection lies, and we fear and loathe the kingdom of God. See, we are born sinners now by nature and our delight is not in God, it is in this fallen, sinful world that we have inherited from Adam. The gospel claims that every single person born is born already enslaved to their fallen natures, that God's perfection precludes any imperfect creature from fellowship with him. That's the bad news. But the good news is that God has done something unthinkable in order to address that. God became flesh. God chose to live his life out among us, but unlike Adam, he lived it out perfectly. It's something that no human being has ever done before. You know, one of the most extraordinary statements that

Jesus ever made was something he said in *John 8*, and he said it in response to the hostility he was feeling from all the religious leaders and he said in *John 8:46*: "*Which one of you convicts me of sin?*" He wasn't speaking of a single sin, he was saying any sin. And he was challenging his contemporaries. I mean, just think about this for a second. He challenged his contemporaries to find a single sin in his life. Imagine our politicians doing that? And how hard would that be? You know, and this is Jesus basically making this challenge and we know that only a madman or the sinless Son of God would ever make a statement like that. And we know Christ was no madman. He lived out his life perfectly and then he offered up that life on a cross as the substitute for our lives of sin.

That speaks to my second point. The first point is that the state of this world is one of enslavement to the prince of this world, Satan. The state of the Savior of the world is what Jesus is alluding to next, and that is his own state. Fast forward to this meeting Jesus has with his disciples and the statement that Jesus makes in verse 30, he says: "*I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me.*"

Well, there's a reason why Jesus and only Jesus can make that statement. And what he was saying implicitly is that anyone who has ever sinned is already under the power of the evil one. The

power that the prince of this world has doesn't come from himself though. In actuality, the power that Satan has comes from God's perfection. You know, Satan has another name. It's not as common as the one that we all remember but the other name that Satan has, among others, is "accuser." He's called the accuser of the brethren. You see, the power that Satan has over us is his ability to accuse us of falling short of the glory of God. And it's not as if God somehow has to answer to Satan about us and our shortcomings, it's that God answers to himself and to his own perfection and Satan, our accuser, is quite happy to demand an accounting for each of us around that whole issue of perfection. That's why God says in *1 Corinthians 15*, he says: *Now the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!* What God is saying there is that because we all sin, all of us are under a death penalty. We're all subject to death. God says in *Romans 6:23*: *The wages of sin is death.* And what he's talking about is not just sin but the power that sin has and the power that sin has is the law. Now for us the law is basically the ten commandments. And what God is saying is it has a power, but the only power that it has is the power to convict and condemn us. All it can do power wise is point out to us the perfection that we've come short of.

Now I use this analogy all the time, I say the law is like those

signs you see at an amusement park, that says -- I'm sure you've seen them if you've gone to Disney World, it says you must be this tall to ride on this ride and it's got Goofy or Donald or one of those people standing there and it just shows you where you have to be in order to get on the ride. Now that sign, just to point out, the sign itself has absolutely zero power. It's only got the power to convict you or to exclude you and that's the only power that it has. And all a sign can tell you is that you don't qualify. That's its power, the power to disqualify. I mean, if you're 3 foot 11 and you need to be 4 feet, all that sign's going to tell you is that you don't make it. It can't give you that extra inch to qualify you; it can only tell you that you've fallen short. Well, the gospel tells us that the law, that is the ten commandments, serves to tell us that we've fallen short. I mean it tells us that we can't lie and we know that we lie and it tells us that we can't steal and we know that we steal, and it tells us not to covet and we know that we covet, and it tells us that above all we must worship the Lord our God and we know that we don't do that. But as believers, we know that Jesus Christ fulfilled all of the ten commandments and then on the cross he exchanged his righteousness for our sin. And by offering us -- by offering his righteousness instead of our own, he has actually given us what the law could never give us. He qualifies us as righteous before God not on the basis of our righteousness but on the basis of his. So

when Jesus says of his enemy "he has no hold on me," he's pointing out that because Christ was absolutely sinless, he could not only challenge his contemporaries to find him guilty of a single sin, he could also challenge Satan as well. Satan had no hold whatsoever on Jesus. But it wasn't for want of trying. And it wasn't for want of Jesus's willingness to be tried for us. You see, for Jesus to truly represent us as our high priest, he had to be subject to the very same temptations that we are subject to. *Hebrews 2 says: Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

See because of that, because Jesus needed to be subject to the same temptations that we are, King Jesus's time on earth, if you'll notice, it was bracketed. And it was bracketed at the very beginning and at the end with a confrontation with the prince of this world, and it centered on temptation. At the very beginning of Christ's public ministry, scripture says he was driven out into the desert for a confrontation with this serpent who had lost the war, been kicked out of heaven and was now on earth. This is *Matthew 4:1-11*, it says this: *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting*

forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command the angels concerning you', and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" I want you to notice here that Satan loves to quote scripture. He loves to quote scripture when it suits him. And Satan's use of the phrase "it is written" is an appeal to the authority of scripture. Notice how Jesus responds in verse 7. He appeals to the very same authority. Jesus said to him, "Again, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

See, Jesus went out into the desert in order to experience the very same temptations that we all experience but he did it successfully.



He went there to prove that the prince of the world had no hold on him. And first off he was tempted to consume, he was tempted to turn those stones into bread, and for us that temptation is to turn stones into dollars or popularity or power and then spend all of our life energy pursuing just that. Well, Jesus resists that temptation by going to the word of God and he says: *"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"* And secondly Jesus is tempted to protect himself. Satan says, whoa, throw yourself down. The angels are going to protect you. For us that temptation is just as real, it is to value myself above others and to seek my own protection at the cost of others. Jesus resisted that as well, and he did it again by going back to the scriptures. Again, *"It is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"* The third temptation was a temptation to self-exaltation and we, too, have within us, all of us, the desire to be our own little gods. Jesus once again resisted that temptation the way he resisted all the others. He did it by going back to the word of God. *"Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God and him only shall you serve.'"* Three times Jesus is tempted and three times he says, *"It is written," "It is written," "It is written."* We can't really begin to examine the depth of what actually took place here in the desert between the devil and Jesus Christ because we don't have the time. But just as a resource, Russell Moore's

book *Tempted and Tried*, a wonderful book that goes into a lot more depth than I can go in right here. But suffice to say, Jesus's response to all of those temptations was God and his word. And when the devil saw that he had no hold on Jesus, he left.

Well, it's now three years later, it's now on the eve of the cross and guess who's back? There's one statement that Satan made during the desert temptation that bears on our text this morning though. And it's better stated in Luke's gospel account of the very same thing. Remember Satan had taken Jesus up to the highest point and then he shows Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world in space and time and then he says this in *Luke 4:6*, he says: "*To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.*" If you want proof that the prince of the world really is who he says he is or who Jesus says he is, this is it. You hear what he says? He says: "*To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.*" He said that directly to Christ. If it was untrue, he wouldn't have said it to Christ. You know, there's no better explanation for the state of the world than that one right there. You know, we say we're going to hell in a hand basket but the problem is we've been going to hell in a hand basket since day one because hell is the province of the prince of this

world.

As the elders begin to distribute the bread, I want us to take a few moments and just consider, put your mind at what was going on during this temptation in the desert, just consider what Jesus is going through for us. Then fast forward to this meeting that he has with his disciples and he's getting ready to take on the greatest monster the human race will ever face. Again, *1 John 5:19* says: *The whole world is under the control of the evil one.* And Jesus knows this is a battle that's going to cost him his life and he is willing because he loves us literally to death.

And as the bread is being distributed, I want to give you the warning about communion itself from *1 Corinthians 11:28*. It says: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* And I repeat this warning each month and basically what I'm trying to tell you is that communion is extremely serious business, and to enter into it in an unworthy manner is to literally court disaster. And so I tell folks, if

you're not absolutely confident that you're a child of the King, if you're -- if you have a sin issue and you feel God is calling you to deal with it, deal with it first. If you first need to be reconciled with your brother and sister before you bring your sacrifice to the altar, deal with that first. Just pass the elements on. Nobody's going to look at you strangely. They may indeed think that you're wise. But on the other hand I want to also state the fact that we can make the mistake of thinking that unless we're spotlessly perfect we are unworthy to receive communion. That, too, is a mistake. The devil loves to have us go off either end of this. You see, being a child of the King doesn't mean that we don't sin and it doesn't mean that we never fail. What it means is that we recognize that salvation is a gift that no one is ever capable of earning by being good. As Dane Ortlund puts it, *"In the kingdom of God the only thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do."* This also means that when we do fail we are aware of the fact that we sinned, and the reason for that is simple, God's Holy Spirit lives inside us, God's Spirit is convicting us and so we grieve as children who know that we have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse us. God says: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* So being a child of the King doesn't mean that we are without sin. What it means is

this, that when we sin, we understand we now have an advocate with the Father, someone who is speaking there on our behalf. 1 John 2:1 says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* And because we have Jesus's righteousness and not our own, we are now free to eat from his table. So if you love your Lord, do not deny yourself the privilege that Jesus purchased for you. You know, he lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserved to die in our place. And he did that so we could be made worthy of heaven. So consider the love of Jesus. Hebrews 12 says he was: *The founder of perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* The cross, he despised and the shame, he despised. But for joy, Jesus died. And the joy that was set before Jesus was the glory of God and the ransom and rescue of you and me, of his sheep. Take a moment and just dwell on that love, the love that loved us to death.

1 Corinthians 11:23 says this: *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* So take, and eat.

Jesus said: *"For the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me. Come now; let us leave."* Like I said, in those two sentences Jesus tells us the state of this world, the state of the Savior of this world, and the state of those he had come to save. Now the state of this world is that we are at war. It is a proxy war between the powers of light and the powers of darkness and we human beings are right in the middle charged with living our lives in a way that honors the King of the kingdom of light. The state of the Savior of the world is this, well, the king is meeting with his disciples for the last time and he's telling them something they probably don't even begin to understand. He says the prince of this world is coming. But even as Jesus is speaking these words, preparations are being made to arrest, to try and to execute him, again, none of which was a surprise to Jesus. Jesus knew that wicked prince was already gathering his soldiers. There would be Pontius Pilate and the religious leaders and soldiers of Rome itself and none of them realized that they were actually working for the prince of this world. But Jesus knew precisely who they were and that they were already on their way. And finally only Jesus truly knew the state of those he had come to save. You see, he knew that the primary weapon the enemy had was our fallenness, our guilt, our imperfection, that it disqualified all of us from the kingdom of

heaven. And it gave the prince of this world what he must have thought was an unbeatable edge. And now his only hope is that Jesus himself would somehow go through the horror of the cross in a way that was less than perfect. And if so, then the sacrifice would have been less than perfect and Jesus would have stayed dead and buried in the ground. That's why the universe held its breath for three days as Christ lay in the tomb. That's why Paul says in *1 Corinthians 15: And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who had fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.* But you see, Jesus alone knew the prince of this world had nothing, nothing on him. He knew something that the disciples barely understood, that this whole monstrous deed that Jesus was anticipating, being flogged and beaten and stripped and hung on a cross, rejected by earth and rejected by heaven itself, that it was all designed by God for a purpose that Jesus stated right there to his disciples: *"So that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me."*

As the elders begin distributing the cup, again consider Jesus who was about to publicly declare to a watching universe that God so loved the world that he would willingly give up his only begotten Son to ransom and rescue his sheep. And I have no idea whose pain

was greater, the Son who became sin for us and therefore had to be forsaken by his Father or the Father who had to watch while the apple of his eye descended into the cesspool that becoming sin for us represented. I don't know which one was worse, but I do know *John 3:16* which says: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." You see, here's the bottom line. Jesus went to the cross so that we could stand before the prince of this world and say to him, "You have no hold on me." You see, when we by faith accept the lordship of Christ and are born again, we, too, become flawless and perfect again, not because we are without sin but because the sins we have committed are no longer held against us. God put it this way in *Colossians 2:13*, he said: *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.* So when the prince of the world comes to accuse us, we have the ultimate response. It's very simple. It's my sins which are many have been paid for in full on the cross by my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Take a few moments to just consider the height, the breadth, the width and the depth of the love of God in Christ.



*1 Corinthians 11:25* says this: *In the same manner he also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."* So take, and drink.

This is the part that we call head, hearts and feet. This is the part where we try to give some practical application to what it means to remember the Lord Jesus Christ. And I can't get into the practicalities without addressing Tuesday because it's an event that everybody is anticipating, most of us with some form of dread, I think. And I've said whether it's going to be Hillary or Donald, my first response to either of them is God help us. You know there's two ways to view this. There's one way to view it that says it's the press, it's the corrupt system, it's how all of these things conspire to give us these limited choices. Whatever it is, it is the world at its worst. Or we can say God rules. 2

*Chronicles 20* says this: *"O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might so that none is able to withstand you."* You see, I think we have this terrible questions and the question is not so much what are we afraid of, I think a better question is: What are we clinging to? What is it that we are clinging to? I mean, will life become harder for Christians?

That's kind of the question behind all the other questions that I think causes us so much unrest. And the answer to the question of will life get harder for Christians is another question, it's: Does it matter? I mean, really, does it matter? Let me just ask you a quick question. Who are the most persecuted people on the face of the earth? Just shout out if you -- take a guess. What nation? North Korea. North Korea is the most persecuted nation on earth. We know that without a doubt. Let me just read to you briefly an article in the *Christian Post*. Says this, it says: Several persecution watchdog groups, such as British-based human rights advocacy organization Christian Solidarity Worldwide, have revealed many details of what believers in the North suffer. A report earlier in September highlighted that some followers of Christ had been crushed under steamrollers while others were hung on a cross over fires in what is but a small sampling of the brutalities they face. *International Christian Concern* added that in some ways, life for Christians in North Korea, where the practice of religion is against the law, is as bad or worse than many people can imagine it, with believers hunted down, imprisoned and murdered. Still, as Eric Foley of *Voice of the Martyrs* said, Christians in the North are actually praying for Westerners rather than for themselves.

You should you hear that and say, what? What -- they're praying

for us? I want to go back to that book *The Insanity of God* which I think every one of us should be required reading, but *The Insanity of God* was written by a man who examined and spoke to over 800 persecuted believers, people who went through unbelievably horrible things, terrifically awful circumstances where they lost sometimes their lives, often times their property, often times their health, they were imprisoned, they were often naked and alone and starving because of their love for Christ, and yet he uses the title "*The Insanity of God*" to describe the fact that those people, the ones who undergo all of this persecution think they're blessed and we're the ones that need prayer. As they said, you know, they've got Christ. We've got Wal-Mart. Who do you think's got the better deal? See, they think they're the ones that are blessed. It says this: One defector remarked: "You pray for us? We pray for you. You have so much. You put your faith in your money and your freedom. In North Korea we have neither money nor freedom but we have Christ and we have found He is sufficient." You know, one of the great things that happens in persecution is you start to find out that Christ is sufficient. You start having to give away all of these things that have propped you up, things that are not real, things that are flimsy, things that don't really exist and are blown away by the winds of persecution. That's not so bad. And as I've said many, many times, persecution in the United States is nothing compared to what persecution in the rest of the world is.

But I want to offer again Nik Ripken's thoughts on persecution and our response to it. I've read this before. It bears repetition. He's speaking about his wife here. He says: "Ruth and I have seldom encountered a mature believer living in persecution who asked us to pray that their persecution would cease. We have never heard that request. Rather, believers in persecution ask us to pray that 'they would be faithful and obedient through their persecution and suffering.' That is a radically different prayer. Why is it that millions of the global followers of Jesus who actively practice their faith live in environments where persecution is the norm? The first and most basic answer is that these people have given their lives to Jesus. The second answer is that they have determined in their heart that they will not keep Jesus to themselves. Having found faith in Christ, they have such a passion for Jesus that they must share the good news of his sacrificial love and forgiveness with their families, their friends, and their neighbors. By doing that, these believers are choosing to be persecuted." What they're trying to say is these people who are undergoing the most severe types of persecution you can imagine have a sense of the presence of Christ that is so near, so real, so dear, so lovely, so unbelievably pleasurable, if I can use that word, that nothing is worth giving it up, and so they would never trade their place, as terrible as it is, for ours. They have no interest in it. That speaks to the sufficiency of

Christ that I think we've barely begun to taste.

And finally in response to persecution Ripken says this, he says: "What it means -- about persecution -- is that for most believers, persecution is completely avoidable. If someone simply leaves Jesus alone, doesn't seek him or follow him, then persecution simply will not happen. Beyond that, even if someone becomes a follower of Jesus, persecution will likely not happen if the faith is kept private and personal. If a person is silent about their faith in Jesus, the chance of being persecuted is very small. So if our goal is reducing persecution, that task is easily achieved. First, just leave Jesus alone. Second, if you do happen to find Him, just keep Him to yourself. Persecution stops immediately where there is no faith and where there is no witness. The reason for persecution, then, is that people keep finding Jesus and then they refuse to keep him to themselves."

See folks, there really is a war going on. And I don't think we begin to realize the privilege that we have. We have the light. We work for the kingdom of light. The kingdom of darkness is right outside those doors waiting to devour all of those people in this world and yet we have the understanding and the knowledge and the power of the Holy Spirit to give us the ability to push back not with our power but with his. We have the opportunity to avoid

persecution. It's not going to be bad at all. Just keep your mouth shut. Nobody's going to say a thing. If what is guiding our fears about this election is that things might get tough for us, people might start coming down on the church, coming down on Christ and his followers, we need to take a lesson from those followers that the rest of the world sees as under persecution. We need to understand the privilege we've been given and decide, are you going to expand that privilege to those people in that world who are going to hell or are you going to keep it to yourself? That's our question. Let's pray.

*Father, we just come before you this morning and again, we just thank you for the incredible gift we have received in the lordship of Jesus Christ and the understanding of his sacrifice and the presence of his Holy Spirit. And Lord, personally it doesn't matter whether it's Hill or whether it's Donald. You are still going to rule and reign on the throne. And Lord, whatever comes out of this will be for the benefit of your church and for us, and so I pray that you would give us courage, I pray that you would give us wisdom, I pray that you would give us the fortitude to press forward, seeing even more urgency in the decision to go share that incredible blessing that we have with our friends, with our relatives, with our family, with even strangers. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*