

The Solution to a Troubled Heart

Scripture: John 14:1-6

Code: P24

The Solution to a Troubled Heart **John MacArthur** ([Click here for the audio series](#))

Those were dark hours that night before the Lord was betrayed, abused, tortured, and ultimately crucified. In a very short time the world of the eleven disciples was going to collapse into unbelievable chaos. Jesus, for whom they had forsaken all, was leaving. Their beloved Master, whom they loved more than life, the One whom they had been willing to die for, was going away. Their sun was about to set at midday, and their whole world was going to fall in all around them. In fact, the pains had already begun. The ramifications of all that Jesus had told them must have staggered their minds, and by John 14 they were undoubtedly bewildered, perplexed, confused, and filled with anxiety. If you have ever lost a close loved one, you know what this kind of permanent separation is like. You can only imagine the feeling of losing One who was perfect, whose fellowship was so pure, whose love was so flawless. It must have been an excruciating, horrifying pain.

And so in the beginning of chapter 14 Jesus anticipates the sorrow of their already breaking hearts, and He gives them comfort upon comfort. As we read Jesus' words in the first six verses we discover how deeply He cared for His disciples. He was about to be nailed to a cross, and He knew full well that He would soon bear the sins of all who would ever believe, be cursed with the curse of God, be forsaken by His own Father, and be spit on and mocked by evil men. Any other man in that situation would have been in such a state of uncontrollable agitation that he would never have been able to focus his attention on the needs of others, but Jesus is different.

Martin Luther called this passage "the best and most comforting sermon that the Lord Christ delivered on earth, a treasure and a jewel not to be purchased with the world's goods." These verses become the foundation for comfort, not only for these disciples but also for us. If you ever get to the point in your life where you think you've run out of escapes and there aren't any more places where you can rest, you'll find a tremendously soft, downy pillow in John 14:1-6:

"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going."

Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?"

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."

Here is Jesus Christ, fully divine but nevertheless totally human, anticipating the most horrible kind of experience, yet completely unconcerned at this point about His own experience, and wholly absorbed

in the needs of His eleven friends. Surely already feeling the weight of the awful load of sin that He was about to bear, realizing that He was about to taste the bitter cup of death for sinners, He nevertheless took a primary interest in the sorrows and the fears of His apostles. As John wrote in 13:1, "Having loved His own...He loved them to the end."

If there is a single, central message in Jesus' words, it is that the basis of comfort is simple, trusting faith. If you're discontent, worried, anxious, bewildered, perplexed, confused, agitated, or otherwise in need of comfort, the reason is that you don't trust Him like you should. If you really trust Christ, what do you have to worry about? The reason the disciples were so stirred up is that they had begun to focus on their problems, and they didn't seem to be able to put their trust in Christ. So in these verses He reminds them of the importance of trusting Him.

"Do not let your heart be troubled," in the original Greek literally means, "stop letting your hearts be troubled." He knew that they were already troubled. In fact, they were probably terrified. They had been fully convinced that He was the Messiah, but the only real concept they ever had of the Messiah was as an illustrious conqueror, a kind of a super hero, a sovereign, ruling king. Their hopes had risen even higher just a week before this, when Jesus had come riding into Jerusalem and everyone had thrown palm branches down and worshiped Him.

But even in the midst of that, Jesus had begun to talk about His dying (John 12:23-33). How could they reconcile that with His Messianism? And what about them? What kind of way was this to treat them? They had forsaken all and followed Him, and now He was going to forsake them. Not only that, but he was also going to leave them in the midst of enemies who hated Him and them. Nothing seemed to fit. What good was a Messiah who was going to die? Why would He get their hopes up, and then leave them hated by all men? And where were their resources going to come from? In addition, they had been informed by the Lord Himself that one of their own group would be the instrument of betrayal, and even that Peter--who was on the surface the strongest of all of them--would deny Him three times that very night. Everything seemed to be coming to an unbelievable climax!

Yet even though they were wavering, their love for Him was undiminished. Perhaps in the midst of their fears they were hoping against hope that He would do something to reverse what must have seemed to them like an impossible situation. Jesus, who could read their hearts like a billboard, knew exactly what they were thinking. He was touched with the feelings of their infirmities, and, in a sense, He shared their sorrows and their hurts. They couldn't feel His pain, but He could feel theirs.

Just as Isaiah had prophesied, "In all their affliction He was afflicted" (Isaiah 63:9). And, "The Lord...anointed [Him] to bring good news to the afflicted; ...to bind up the brokenhearted, ...[and] to comfort all who mourn" (61:1-2). He indeed knew "how to sustain the weary one with a word" (50:4). Interestingly, all the time He was comforting them, He knew that they would scatter and forsake Him later that same night. Here's the agonizing Shepherd facing the cross, yet comforting the sheep who are going to be scattered and forsaken. "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me" (v. 1).

We Can Trust His Presence

What He's really saying is, "You can trust My presence." Jesus puts Himself on an equal plane with God: "Believe in God, believe also in Me." In the Greek, that expression could be either imperative or indicative; both forms are the same word. In other words, He might be saying, "You should believe in God and also in Me" (imperative), or, "You believe in God, and you believe in Me" (indicative). There is no distinction in the original.

I believe, however, that what Jesus was actually saying is, "You believe in God, even though you can't see Him. You also believe in Me. Keep believing. Your faith in Me must not be diminished just because you will not see Me. I will still be present with you." He wanted the disciples to understand that even though He was leaving them physically, His presence would be with them spiritually. He would be leaving, but they had and would always have access to God.

Deuteronomy 31:6 says, "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you." Such faith in the omnipresence of Jehovah was a basic tenet of the Jewish faith. Although they had never seen His form, all Jewish people believed implicitly that God was always present. Their history was proof of His eternal care and protection. They had full faith in an invisible God! Putting Himself on the same level as God, Jesus urged the disciples to trust Him even when He was not physically present.

John 14:1 has often been misapplied to make it seem that Jesus was speaking of saving faith. But He was not saying they should believe in Him in order to be saved; they already believed in Him. He used a linear verb form, meaning, "Keep on trusting Me. Keep on trusting Me just as you are trusting God, even though I will not be visible."

Let's face it, the disciples' faith was typified by Thomas. After the resurrection, he heard that Christ was alive and had appeared to others. Thomas's response was, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). Later, that was exactly the ground upon which Christ met Thomas. And when he saw for himself, he believed. The other disciples were not much different. They believed what they saw, and no more. That is the lowest level of faith.

In John 20:29, after Jesus showed Thomas the nail prints in His hands, He said, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." What He was trying to get across was that His visible presence was not nearly as significant as an understanding of His spiritual presence. He is there, laboring on our behalf, even when we cannot see Him. It is a theme that colored everything He taught them: "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst" (Matthew 18:20). "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

Peter finally understood. Years later, he wrote in 1 Peter 1:8, speaking of Christ, "Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory." I have never seen Jesus Christ, but there is no one in existence in whom I believe more than I believe in Him. He is alive; He is real; I know Him; I sense

His presence. You will never convince me that He's not alive. The Spirit of God witnesses in my heart continually that Jesus Christ lives! And although I can't see Him, I trust Him.

We live with conflict, disappointment, and pain. We all experience hours of deep tragedy and times of severe trial, but He is with us. Whatever your trouble, whatever mess you are in, whatever anxiety or perplexity you have, just remember, the Lord Himself is there. In a way, it is better than if He were visible, because He is not hindered by the limitations of a physical body. He can be wherever we need Him. While He was here on earth, He could be in only one place at a time. Now He is available to all believers everywhere.

We Can Trust His Promises

In addition to that reassurance, He gives them some wonderful promises. "In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you" (v.2). That last phrase is filled with significance. He wanted them to know that He was not out to trick them, and He would not allow them to be deceived. They had many presuppositions and misconceptions that needed to be corrected, but their hope of eternity in heaven with Him was not one of those misconceptions. They had believed, for example, that the Messiah would be a conquering monarch, and He taught them that first He must be a suffering servant. Now, for the record, He wanted to reassure them that their expectation of eternity in His kingdom was not a vain hope.

In fact, His leaving would be only to bring the fulfillment of that expectation to fruition: "I go to prepare a place for you." Can you imagine how it must have comforted them to realize for the first time why He was leaving? He wasn't going just to get away from them. He was going to get things ready for them!

It is important to note that He refers to heaven as "My Father's house." His favorite name for God was "My Father." Jesus, who had dwelt forever in the bosom of the Father, came forth so that He could reveal the Father and what the Father had been through all eternity. Now He would be glorified by death, and He was going back to full glory with the Father again in the Father's house. In the New Testament, heaven is often called a country (emphasizing its vastness); a city (because of the large number of its inhabitants); a kingdom (because of its structure and order); and paradise (because of its beauty). But my favorite expression for heaven is this: "My father's house." I remember as a child, if I went to visit relatives, or to camp, or away from home for any reason, it was an indescribable feeling of goodness to go back to my Father's house. Even after I grew up and went to college, it was wonderful to have the opportunity to go home. There I was welcome. I was accepted. I was free to be myself. I could just go right in, throw my coat off, kick off my shoes, flop into a chair, and relax. It was as much my home as my father's.

Heaven is like that. Going home to heaven will not be like going into a giant, unfamiliar palace. We will be going home. It is our Father's house, but we are residents there, not guests. It's home, not some place where we're uncomfortable. It's home like home has never been.

The King James Version translates this verse, "In my Father's house are many mansions." That has given many people the wrong idea for years. Many of our songs about heaven reflect the

misconception that it is full of big mansions. Some seem to think that when you arrive in heaven you'll be greeted by a heavenly real estate man, who will hand out little maps with instructions on how to get to the right mansion. And Peter will be at the gate with a golf cart to take you to your mansion. But "dwelling places" is more accurate than mansions. In Jesus' culture, when a son is married, he seldom left his father's house. Instead, he would simply add another wing to the existing structure. If the father had more than one son, he would attach a new wing to the house for each son's new family. The new wings would enclose a patio in the center, with the different families living around it. That is the kind of arrangement Jesus was referring to. He was not talking about tenement rooms or mansions over the hillside, but rather a dwelling place that encompasses the complete family of God. We will dwell with God, not down the street from Him. We'll have the same patio.

There will be enough room for everyone. There will be no overcrowding, no one turned away, no "No Vacancy" signs. Revelation 21:16 says, "The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal." Heaven, prepared uniquely for the redeemed to inhabit in glorified bodies, will be laid out like a cube.

Fifteen hundred miles squared is two and a quarter million square miles. An area that size would cover almost half the continental United States. To give a point of reference, London is 140 square miles. If only the ground floor of heaven were populated at the same ratio as London, it could hold a hundred thousand million people in their unglorified bodies, and still have plenty of room to spare. Fifteen hundred miles cubed is 3,375,000,000 cubic miles, a volume larger than most of us can conceive.

Heaven is large, but fellowship in heaven is intimate. In Revelation 21:2-3, John wrote, "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His peoples, and God Himself will be among them.'" He is there, among His people dwelling with them in unbroken and unhindered fellowship.

John goes on, "And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away" (v.4). The Father takes care of all the hurts and the needs of the children in His house. There is no sense of need, no wanting anything, and no negative emotion. I already feel bound to heaven. My Father is there; my Savior is there; my home is there; my name is there; my life is there; my affections are there; my heart is there; my inheritance is there; and my citizenship is there. Sometimes I wonder what I'm doing here!

Heaven will be an indescribable beautiful and glorious place. Imagine what it must be like--Jesus Christ, who created the universe in a week, has been laboring for two millennia preparing heaven to be the habitation of His people. Revelation 21:18-22 describes it:

The material of the wall is jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper;

the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth, the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple.

John goes on to write of how the glory of God will illuminate the city. Imagine the purest, brightest light flashing through the jewels in the walls of that fabulous city. Its gates are never shut (v.25), yet nothing defiling can enter it. What a city it will be! With transparent gold, diamond walls, and light from the Lamb's glory forming a spectacle of dazzling beauty. And the Lord Jesus is preparing it especially for His own.

"If it were not so, I would have told you" (John 14:2). He's saying, "Trust my promises! I've always told you the truth." He continues, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (v. 3). What a reassurance this must have been to those frightened disciples that dark night! As surely as He was leaving, He would return again, in person, to receive them personally into the place He would prepare for them.

We can have complete confidence that He is coming back, although we do not know when. In fact, Jesus is eager to return and claim His own. In John 17:24, He prays to the Father, "I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory." Jesus wants us with Him as much as we want to be with Him.

He is coming back. That subject is on the lips of Christians all over the world. It always has been, but today there seems to be a heightened awareness, a deepening anticipation that Jesus could well come in this generation. In fact, He could come today. But even if He does not, we know He will someday. He desires it as much as we do.

We Can Trust His Person

The disciples must have been completely bewildered when Jesus, speaking of His departure, added, "And you know the way where I am going" (v. 4). Up to this point, they had completely resisted any idea of His leaving at all. Now they weren't certain of anything. Thomas probably spoke for the rest, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" (v. 5).

Thomas was saying, "Our knowledge stops at death. How can we go to the Father unless we die? You're going to die and go somewhere, but we don't know what's going on after death. We don't have any maps on how to get to the Father after You die." It was a good question.

Jesus' response is profound: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (v. 6). In other words, "You don't need to know how get there. I'm coming to get you." It is a reaffirmation of all He had just promised them. It's a beautiful promise. Have you ever been driving in an unfamiliar town, and stopped to ask directions? If your experience is like mine, you've probably had someone give you a complex set of directions that you could not possibly understand. How much better it would be for the person to say, "Follow me; I'll take you there."

That is what Jesus does; He doesn't show us the direction to the Father's house, He carries us there. That is why death for the Christian is such a glorious experience. Whether we die or He takes us in the rapture, we know we can trust Him to take us to the Father's house.

Augustus Toplady, who wrote "Rock of Ages," died in London at the age of 38. When death drew near he said, "It is my dying vow that these great and glorious truths which the Lord in rich mercy has given me to believe and enabled me to preach are now brought into practical and heartfelt experience. They are the very joy and support of my soul. The comfort flowing from them carries me far above the things of time and sin." Then he said, "Had I wings like a dove I would fly away to the bosom of God and be at rest." About an hour before he died he seemed to awaken from a gentle slumber, and his last words were, "Oh! What delight! Who can fathom the joys of heaven! I know it cannot be long now until my Savior will come for me." And then bursting into a flood of tears he said, "All is light, light, light, light, the brightness of His own glory. Oh come Lord Jesus, come. Come quickly!" And he closed his eyes.

"Trust Me," Jesus says. "You don't need a map; I'm the way, the truth, and the life. I am the way to the Father. I am the truth, whether in this world or the world to come. I am the life that is eternal." Christ is everything a man needs. Everything that Adam lost we may regain in Jesus Christ. We can trust His presence, His promises, and His person, for He is the way, the truth, and the life. I know of no greater comfort in all the world than that.

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