

Comfort for Troubled Hearts (John 14:1–11)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (4/17/2022)

Introduction

1. Dr. R. C. Sproul opens his commentary on John 14 by citing recent polls that asked professing Christians to identify their favorite chapter of the Bible. Two chapters seemed to vie for the top spot: 1 Corinthians 13, the famous love chapter, and John 14 because of the comfort it affords to the reader.
2. Chapter and verse divisions are of late addition and are often arbitrary. Christ's final discourse with His disciples begins with John 13:31 and that part of the discourse continues until 14:31 when Jesus said, "*Rise, let us go from here.*" Parts of the final discourse were given as they traveled through the streets of Jerusalem. John 18:1 supports this view.
3. The first part of the upper-room discourse was given to comfort the hearts of His faithful disciples who were experiencing growing concern over Jesus' revelation that His soul was troubled because His hour had come (12:27) and that He was going away (13:33). Peter verbalized their alarm by asking: "*Where are you going?*" and "*Why cannot I follow you now?*" (vv. 36, 37). Peter's faith was about to shatter. So would that of the other disciples.
4. Even in Jesus' final hour, He left us an example of selfless service in the will of God. Due to the nature of what He was about to suffer, it would have been a normal human response and very appropriate for Jesus to have sought emotional and spiritual support for Himself. Instead, He forgot Himself and focused on His followers, giving them comfort and support. At the same time, He needed to expose and correct their sinful unbelief.

I. An Admonition to Counter Troubled Hearts

1. The issue at hand was *troubled* hearts due to growing fear and uncertainty on account of Jesus' revelation of His impending death at the hands of the Jews.
 - a. The source of their distress was clearly given by John; however, this raises somewhat of an issue. In 13:21 John informed us that Jesus Himself was troubled. It is the same word used in 14:1. *Troubled* means acute mental distress or turbulence. John cites three occurrences of Jesus' being troubled (John 11:33; 12:27; 13:21). By these examples, we understand that it is not a sin to be troubled, but why would Jesus admonish His followers not to be troubled?

When Jesus revealed His betrayal to His disciples, they were greatly troubled (Matthew 26:22). This revelation was then compounded by His word of departure (John 13:33). Peter expressed what all felt and sought to assure Jesus of their loyalty, even to death. Imagine, then, the shock Peter experienced on hearing he would deny Jesus that very night.
 - b. Jesus' troubled heart was not the consequence of fear but His response to the unbelief and hardness of heart of those around Him. He knew sovereignly what God was doing and how His will was being carried out in their circumstances. He was also distressed by the failure of people to respond in a godly way to what they did not understand.
 - c. As Jesus faced His darkest hour and knowing His final glorious end in it, He submitted obediently to the will of God (12:27). And in this very distressful hour, He would not forsake those He called to follow Him. In their fear and anxiety, He lovingly exhorted them, "*Let not your hearts be troubled.*"
2. The *heart* is a reference to the entire person—mind, emotion and will. It is the seat of our being, the core of our life. We are commanded to guard it carefully (Proverbs 4:23).

II. A Promise to Counter Troubled Hearts

1. The remedy for the distress in their hearts was *full trust* in God and Christ. They must learn to fully *trust* Him.
 - a. The Greek language behind this admonition needs a little explanation because the grammatical form of the indicative and imperative moods in the present tense are the same. Is this phrase a command or an exhortation? Of four possibilities of interpretation, the imperative/imperative (“Trust in God; trust in Me”) is best and is reflected in all the early Latin translations.

More importantly, this phrase clearly links Jesus and God as appropriate objects of faith. In other words, Jesus asks for the same trust that one would expect of God. If Jesus is not God, He is blaspheming. Here is another proof His divinity.
 - b. A troubled heart in one who is naturally self-focused is more likely than not to be sinful because it reveals *unbelief*, being fearful and uncertain of personal security. A troubled heart is not sinful when it is not centered on self, such as Jesus experienced, but a lack of trust in the disciples would be sin. Thus, In effect, Jesus told His disciples what Paul admonished the sailors caught in the deadly storm: “*So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told*” (Acts 27:25).
2. As Jesus faced His darkest hour, His heart was turned to comfort His trembling followers, assuring them that He was leaving to prepare a place for them in His Father’s house. Their trust in Him and what He promised would enable them to take heart and rejoice even in difficult circumstances.
 - a. His departure was for their benefit. He was not deserting them. He, the Heavenly Bridegroom assuring His bride at the betrothal, was going away to prepare a *place* for her His Father’s house. Then He would return to take her unto Himself. The *Father’s house* is a reference to heaven.
 - b. Jesus also assured the disciples that *He* was the way home. He was not just showing the way nor was He one of many ways. He was the *only* way; a fact has been a singular source of conflict with this politically correct age.
3. The one thing that evidences and marks the full trust that one has in the Lord’s promise is *joy*, even in the midst of their difficult circumstances. Paul gives us a great example this.
 - a. Paul was in prison when he wrote his letter to the Philippians (Philippians 2:27–29). Paul followed this with an exhortation: “*Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord*” (3:1; 4:4–7).
 - b. The evidence of trusting the Lord is rejoicing in all circumstances, good and desperate (Romans 5:2–5, 11).

Lessons

How are we to show that we trust in the Father and the Son? It is by our rejoicing.

1. Our primary objective for rejoicing is the Lord Himself (Philippians 4:4–6).
2. We must also rejoice as we face various trials and difficulties (John 16:20, 22).
3. We must rejoice when we are persecuted for being a Christ follower (Matthew 7:11, 12).
4. We rejoice as we are comforted by the knowledge of our place in heaven (Luke 10:20).
5. We rejoice in the truth that we are His glorious bride (Revelation 19:7, 8).