

“LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED”

John 14.1-3

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Methinks you will find today's text from God's Word appropriate for the circumstance you find yourself in. Please turn to John's Gospel, chapter 14. Granted, the night before our Lord's crucifixion, the apostles were not facing a pandemic, unless you reckon the human condition of sinful depravity as the original and ultimate pandemic. But there was fear of the unknown, a sense of unease, and uncertainty that filled their hearts and minds that pushed out any comfort of peace.

I think you will soon recognize that their apprehensions were quite similar to what I suspect are your own valid concerns. Fixing your attention on John 14.1-3, please stand for the reading of God's Word. Hear the word of the Lord and be comforted:

- ¹ Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.
- ² In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.
- ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

A portion of what commentators frequently refer to as the Lord's Upper Room Discourse, the Apostle John here recording details we observe in no other Gospel account. Perhaps the Spirit of God allowed John to provide these details for us because of his intimacy with the Master. The betrayer Judas Iscariot has gone to finalize his nefarious plans, and the remaining eleven alarmed by the Lord's predictions without paying sufficient attention to everything He has said so far, we find in John 14.1-3 truly profound comfort for the Christian's soul, heart, and mind.

You and I both understand why *we* need comfort, but why would the remaining apostles have needed comfort? The Master had said He was going away,¹ that He would die,² that one of the Twelve was a traitor,³ that Peter would disown Him three times,⁴ that Satan was at work against all of them,⁵ and that all the disciples

¹ John 7.34; 8.21; 12.8, 35; 13.33

² John 12.32-33

³ John 13.21

⁴ John 13.38

⁵ Luke 22.31-32

would fall away.⁶ Therefore, we can begin to imagine how the cumulative weight of these revelations must have disturbed them.⁷

In like manner, you, too, could use some reassurance and comfort of mind, heart, and soul. After all, uncertainty is on the rise. Let us, therefore, review our Lord's remarks to His troubled men, whose confidence was waning, whose faith was wavering, and whose courage was dissipating.

We look at each verse, noting three directives by which the Lord Jesus Christ produced in His men (and in us) both comfort and confidence:

First, THE LORD'S DIRECTIVE PRESCRIPTION

John 14.1: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me."

At the outset, let me point out the irony on display here. The Lord Jesus Christ was hours away from His unjust arrest, His illegal trials, His brutal tortures, and finally His prophesied crucifixion for our sins. Yet He took the occasion of those final moments in the Upper Room to comfort His apostles when by all rights it was they who should have rallied to support and encourage Him. After all, He would be the One despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows who was acquainted with grief. No one would harm them, would persecute them, or would arrest them. Yet our wonderful Savior turned His attention to their heart conditions. Isn't He wonderful? This is the Savior they had. This is the Savior you have if you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

To be sure, there is precedent for such encouragement as we find in this verse. In the Old Testament, God's chosen servants and His people were encouraged not to be afraid, such as when entering the Promised Land⁸ or facing threats from their enemies.⁹ The psalmist repeatedly affirmed his unwavering trust in God.¹⁰ Isaac and Jeremiah likewise were encouraged not to be afraid.¹¹ Popular public figure Dennis Prager observes that the sentence God repeats more than any other in the Hebrew Scriptures is "Fear not."¹² Thus, by the Lord Jesus Christ so encouraging His men, He accomplished two things; He revealed their status as men who were of concern to God, as well as displaying His status as the God of comfort shown in the Old Testament. How are you different from the eleven? And how is the Lord Jesus Christ now any different than He was then? He is no respecter of men. His concern is for you, just as it was for them.

He began by saying, "Let not your heart be troubled." It needs to be pointed out once again that when His own heart was anticipating His passion that would culminate in His identification with us by bearing our sins and also His separation from His heavenly Father because of imputed sinfulness, He nevertheless concerned Himself with those eleven men's troubled hearts. In His own heart, He concerned Himself with the condition of

⁶ Matthew 26.31

⁷ John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, General Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1983), page 322.

⁸ Deuteronomy 1.21, 29; 20.1, 3; Joshua 1.9

⁹ Second Kings 25.24; Isaiah 10.24

¹⁰ Psalm 27.1; 56.3-4

¹¹ Genesis 26.24; Jeremiah 1.8, Beale and Carson, pages 488-489.

¹² Dennis Prager, *The Rational Bible*, (Washington, DC: Regnery Faith, 2019), page 512.

their hearts. Thus, we can see His concern for His Own from that time to our own time. What a great heart He must have to be yet concerned for the hearts of others. How often in the past two weeks have you reflected on the Savior's concern for you, His blood-bought and blood-washed disciple? If you have not reflected on His concern for you, I would suggest you begin.

His words to those men also convey to us an understanding of each person's responsibility for your own heart. You and I are each responsible for the condition of our hearts, the very centers of our personalities. We see this in the following passages:

Proverbs 3.1-6: ¹ My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:
² For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.
³ Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:
⁴ So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.
⁵ Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Proverbs 20.9: "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?"

Though each of us is responsible for the condition of our own heart, it is clear that no one among us can cleanse his heart from sin. Such a remedy must come from outside, from Another, from the Savior, and by God's grace through faith.

This is why He ended this first statement by saying, "ye believe in God, believe also in me." Be they troubles of the heart that leave you unsettled and agitated, such as here, or sins that cannot otherwise be cleansed but by the shed blood of the Savior, the remedy to heart problems must and can only be faith in Christ. Not social isolation or self-quarantine. Not health care solutions. Certainly not psychological solutions or even prescription remedies. Though appropriate and responsible measures are unquestionably warranted, fears and concerns are ultimately spiritual matters that must be addressed by spiritual means. The Greek verb form of the word faith, translated twice here "believe," can be the Lord Jesus Christ declaring either the fact of faith or the requirement for faith with His two uses of the word. The apostles do believe in God, or they are directed to believe in God; they do believe in Christ, or they are directed to believe in Christ. Thus, hypothetically there are four different meanings for the statements being made and it is an educated guess as to what our Lord actually meant.

1. You believe in God, and you also believe in Me, #1.
2. I direct you to believe in God and demand that you believe in Me, #2.
3. You already believe in God; therefore, you are also directed to believe in Me, #3.
4. Finally, I insist that you believe in God since you believe in Me, #4.

Those are the options.¹³ This is a surprisingly challenging phrase to interpret.

¹³ **Ye believe ... believe also** (πιστευετελληψκαι πιστευετε ... Και πιστευετε [*pisteuete...kai pisteuete*]). So translated as present active indicative plural second person and present active imperative of πιστευω [*pisteuo*]. The form is the same. Both may be indicative (ye believe ... and ye believe), both may be imperative (believe ... and believe or believe also), the first may be indicative (ye believe) and the second imperative (believe also), the first may be imperative (keep on believing) and the second indicative (and ye do believe, this less likely). Probably both are imperatives (Mark 11:22), "keep on believing in God and in me." A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In The New Testament, Vol V*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1932), page 248.

If we take a step back and think about that situation so long ago, their troubled hearts, their fears, and their concerns, I think we can agree on our Lord's meaning for the words of comfort to those men and you and me. Faith is presently trusting someone to provide future deliverance, Hebrews 11.1:

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

The Savior comforted the troubled hearts of His men (and, by extension, He comforts us as well) by showing the reality that faith in Christ is faith in God. Faith in God is not true faith in God unless it is faith in Christ, with faith understood, in any case, to be trusting the Object of your faith, the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not always know why, how, or when, or by what means my heart's present distress will be resolved, and my future safety will be secured. However, by means of faith (seen here as believing in God *and* believing in Christ), I know Who will take care of me. And you do, too, if you know Christ as your Savior.

Thus, the Savior comforted His men by essentially saying, “Trust Me.” To trust Him is to trust God. To truly trust God is to trust Him, as well. However, He is the principal Object of the Christian's faith, so it is best to recognize His intent as being to remind them that their hearts would be comforted, their fears assuaged, when they by faith cast all their cares on Him because He cares for them. Did Simon Peter eventually come to learn the lesson his Savior was here teaching? I think so, ultimately. First Peter 5.7 reads,

“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”

Next, THE LORD'S DIRECTIVE PLACE

John 14.2: “In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”

Remember that our text places the Lord and His men in the Upper Room. Following His washing of the apostle's feet, the Passover meal and the institution of the communion of the Lord's Supper, His startling announcement that one among them would betray Him, the dispatch of Judas Iscariot to conclude his preparations to betray the Son of God, His announcement that He was departing from them and that they could not at that time accompany Him, and His announcement that they (especially Peter) would deny Him, He made this statement. This verse was our Lord's comforting response to everything that troubled and concerned them. It is also His response to all that troubles and concerns you, if you are a believer in Christ:

“I go to prepare a place for you.”

Consider what we know, without doubt.

- There could be no doubt of their love for Him.
- There could be no doubt of their commitment to Him.
- There could be no doubt of their yearning for His presence with them.
- There could be no doubt that their hearts and minds were deeply troubled by the anticipation of future events while overlooking the Savior's promise that they would follow Him afterward, John 13.36.

Because the Lord Jesus Christ is the Comforter, and the Holy Spirit would soon be described as “Another Comforter,” He displayed Himself as the God of all comfort and comforted His beloved disciples.¹⁴

He began to comfort His eleven remaining apostles in John 14.1 when He said,

¹⁴ 2 Corinthians 1.3

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”

You will remember that He spoke to their heart since the heart is the seat of one’s personality, the place where deeply held convictions are held, and transformative decisions are made. How were they directed to address their heart’s trouble, since the responsibility is shown to be theirs? “Let not your heart be troubled.” Through their faith in God and Him. The just shall live by faith. So said God to Habakkuk about His people during times of great trial, Habakkuk 2.4, and so repeats the New Testament in Romans 1.17, Galatians 3.11, and Hebrews 10.38. The Savior commends to His people, to you and me, the faith way of living our lives, depending on and trusting in Him and His heavenly Father.

How does faith in Christ and faith in God ease one’s heart and replace angst and worry with peace and tranquility? Consider that you are a child of God, and you have a need, a worry, a concern, or some issue disturbing you. Can that not be likened to a youngster waking up in the morning with a severe case of “I am hungry, and I want to eat right now”? Whose problem is that to solve? It certainly is *not* the youngster’s problem to deal with, but his mommy’s. Does mommy solve her child’s hunger problems? Of course, she does. Though the kiddo feels the hunger and becomes distraught over the problem until he gets food into his tummy, it isn’t his problem to solve. It’s his mommy’s problem. So too with the child of God and the Savior and God. In a sense, you and I have no real problems. Our problems are God’s to solve; therefore, we must recognize that, we must hand them over to Him, and we can then enjoy the anticipation of how He will solve His problem to our heart’s delight.

To help ease their anxiety, notice how our Lord once more instilled hope into His apostles in verse 2:

“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”

Hope is the confident expectation of future blessing based on the promises of God or the Savior’s promise. Here our Lord Jesus Christ gave those men, and us, hope.

He began the verse by referring to “my Father’s house.” This is generally understood to be a reference to heaven, but why so? Such passages as Psalm 33.13-14 and Isaiah 63.15 refer to heaven as God’s habitation, giving us good reason for supposing the Savior was referring to heaven when He said “my Father’s house.”

He then declared that “In my Father’s house are many mansions,” the implication being that those residences are our future dwellings. The word translated “mansions” is used only one other place, later on in John 14.23, and properly signifies a “dwelling place.”¹⁵ Note, if you will, that at the time the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to His men in the Upper Room, these dwelling places in God’s habitation *already* existed, and that there were many of them. The implication to Christ’s apostles and us, of course, is that there was room for them, and there is room for us.

He then said, “if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you.” Thus, they, and we, can rely on His character. They, and we, can trust His integrity. It was not His intention to spring surprises on them, or us or trick them, or us, in any way. If they were surprised by anything that befell Him or them, it was not because they were not told numerous times. It was because they did not have the ears to hear what He plainly said to them.

The verse concludes, “I go to prepare a place for you.” To be sure, that which they were most troubled about, His departure, was going to take place. There was no denying that. There was no stopping that. He is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” Revelation 13.8. However, His departure was not the end by any means. His crucifixion was not the end of anything. It was the foundational event upon which an entirely new chapter in God’s dealings with mankind is based. That said, what He specifically pointed out to His men was

¹⁵ Carson, page 489.

that He would in some way prepare for them a dwelling place that already existed. He would get it ready for them, and us, as well.

In part, that is why the Savior left His men to do what He had to do in laying down His life for our sins. Interesting, is it not that the Savior did not seek to comfort them with theology? People are hardly ever comforted by theology or by anything else that is conceptual or abstract. What moves us, and what drove them, was His intensely personal promise to them, as He looked them in the eye in that Upper Room and promised that He was leaving them to do something *for* them. He was leaving them to prepare for each of them a dwelling place in God's habitation, in heaven, in God's house. Each of them, and each of us who know Christ, know as a result of His words that one of the things my Savior is doing for me while He is gone is preparing the place where He has for me to live forever in the eternal state, in the next life, when I die and go to heaven.

Finally, THE LORD'S DIRECTIVE PROMISE

John 14.3: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also."

Four phrases for us to consider in this verse:

The verse begins with the first half of our Lord's first-class conditional statement:

"And if I go and prepare a place for you."

Keeping in mind that the Savior has only recently impressed upon His apostles that one of them would betray Him, that He would soon leave them, and that they could not (at least not immediately) be with Him, He said at the end of verse 2, "I go to prepare a place for you." Then, without any discernible hesitation, He said, "And if I go and prepare a place for you."

Allow me to make four observations relative to this phrase:

First, He remarked once more that He was going. From the time of Moses down to the present, we understand the importance to Jewish people of God's presence with them. Sadly, most Jewish people took God's presence for granted over the centuries until the glory of God departed just before Jerusalem's fall to the Babylonians. Then they wickedly substituted their possession of God's Law as a poor substitute for God's actual presence. When the Savior's ministry began, His disciples had the extraordinary privilege of God's real presence in their midst for 3½ years, but now He is leaving. They thought this was a great tragedy for them, but it had to be done.

Second, He remarked that He was going to prepare. If your mind reaches up to heaven as the place where the Lord Jesus Christ must go to prepare a place for His own, you are mistaken. The actual place where the Lord Jesus Christ had to go to prepare a place for them was the cross of Calvary. That is where He dealt with their sins, which kept them out of heaven. That is where He bore on His own body the sins of others. That is where He suffered, and bled, and died for the remission of sins. That is where He suffered the estrangement of God when He became sin for us who knew no sin. His disciples did not grasp that then. All they knew was that they would lose His company for some season (how long they did not know, for what reason they could not then comprehend).

Third, He went to prepare a place. Wherever this place is, God's house is there and individual rooms in God's house already existed, referred to in John 14.2 as "mansions." Though not explicitly pointed out here, we can confidently assert that this place is heaven, specifically in heaven, it is "new Jerusalem." Revelation 3.12 informs us of "new Jerusalem," presently located in heaven, that it is the city of God, and that it will in the

future be brought down out of heaven. In Revelation 21.2, we read John's observation of what I take to be the place referred to in John 14.2-3 coming down from heaven:

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

Noteworthy is the ending of the first phrase of John 14.3,

"And if I go to and prepare a place for you."

Along with John 14.2, this is the second time in rapid succession that it is mentioned that this place will be prepared by the Savior "for you," meaning His apostles initially, and by application His disciples (those who have trusted Him and who follow Him). The implication is that this place prepared for them, and us is geographically separated from where they were and from where we are. Of course, if we are correct and it is heaven, then it is geographically distant from where we now are. It is also something more than a different state of existence, like some fourth dimension. Heaven, where the "new Jerusalem" is presently located, the place where our mansions are being prepared, is outside the physical universe. Let me quickly read portions of several verses that suggest this:

Second Chronicles 18.18: Micaiah "saw the Lord sitting upon His throne."

Psalms 11.4: "The LORD *is* in His holy temple, the LORD's throne *is* in heaven."

Psalms 47.8: "God sitteth upon the throne of His holiness."

Psalms 103.19: "The LORD hath prepared His throne in the heavens."

Isaiah 66.1: "Thus says the LORD, The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool."

And in Matthew 5.34, the Lord Jesus declared, "Heaven...is God's throne."

The next phrase is "I will come again," partly completing the first-class conditional sentence. Is it not remarkable that this phrase does not read, "I will send for you," or "I will summon you"? This is not a task our blessed Savior assigns to someone else, be it an angel or another man. No, He will do this Himself. This is a most obvious reference to the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is clearly established that the Lord Jesus Christ will come again. The question that remains is which aspect of our Lord's Second Coming does He refer to here?

It is in the third phrase of John 14.3 that we learn which aspect of the Lord Jesus Christ's Second Coming He refers to, continuing to complete the conditional sentence:

"I will come again, and receive you unto myself."

Notice that the Lord indicates that He will come and "receive you unto myself" rather than come to be with them. This is suggestive of the Rapture and not the Revelation of Jesus Christ. It is when the Rapture is rightly understood to take place *before* the physical Second Coming of Christ in power and great glory that we are comforted by the indwelling Spirit of God, that we anticipate our Savior's coming to receive us to Himself and from the Holy Spirit's care of us, the marriage of the Lamb and His bride, the Judgment Seat of Christ, following by our arrival with Him at His Second Coming and the establishing of His millennial kingdom:

"that where I am, *there* ye may be also."

If you are appropriately concerned about this present pandemic assaulting the human race, or have concerns about your safety and your future because of it, you would be well served by resorting to John 14.1-3 as a good start to resolving your anxiety, your worry, your trouble of heart. Away with the nonsense of medicating to dull one's thinking and inducing a chemical fog. Spiritual problems are best dealt with by spiritual remedies and someone with a troubled heart is best counseled to flee to the comfort of the Savior, taking stock of what He has done, what He is doing, and greatly anticipating His presence. Rather, let us learn what these men learned from that frightening episode so long ago. Let us learn from James, the half-brother of our Lord, from the Apostle Peter, and from the old Apostle John:

James 1.2-4: ² My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;
 ³ Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.
 ⁴ But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

First Peter 5.10: “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle *you*.”

First John 4.17-18: ¹⁷ Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.
 ¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

Circumstances can frighten anyone, but the child of God has a remedy to apply to concerns of the mind, terrors of the heart, and the destiny of the soul. What the Savior said to those eleven men 2,000 years ago has perfect application to our present distress. Notice that the Savior did not address the *circumstances* those men faced at all. He made no mention of circumstances. Instead, He directed their attention to Him and called them to exercise faith in Him. The same remedy is prescribed for you.

Of course, if you are not a believer in Christ, that remedy is not available to you, but it soon can be. More problematic for you than any present circumstance, is the condition of your soul and your eternal destiny. However, the One who gives His children comfort in dire circumstances is the same One who forgives the sins of unbelievers who turn from their sins to trust Him. Then, the remedy that is our comfort becomes the remedy that is also yours.

If you are lost, your primary concern should be the pandemic of sin, which is a more significant threat to your eternal well-being than the pandemic of the CCP Virus. Come to Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and then He will comfort you through any circumstance of life you will ever face.