

Don't Let Your Heart Be Troubled (John 14.1)

I. JESUS' COMMAND TO NOT LET TROUBLE OVERCOME OUR HEART

- A. John 13-17 (often referred to as the Upper Room Discourse) are some of the most beautiful chapters in the whole of Scripture. In these chapters we are given a “behind the scenes” look at the instructions that Jesus gave to his disciples as they were about to face some of the greatest crises they would ever face.
- B. As Jesus prepared for his own death (these chapters take place the night before his crucifixion), he draws close to his disciples and shares with them truths that are intended to bring stability to their souls in the coming days. Jesus knew that the events of the next twenty-four hours (also, the events of the next several months and years) would create situational difficulty and pressure for the hearts of his followers in such a way that they would become overwhelmed or weighed down if not stabilized and oriented in the truth.
- C. One of the most difficult realities of walking through life in this fallen world is all the ways our hearts are prone to become weighed down with trouble. Many people in this world long for, hope for, and seek after some form of ‘peace’, but it is often illusive or unattainable, which leads many to give up hope that they may ever find any lasting peace or comfort in this life.
- D. Jesus begins the Upper Room Discourse with a profound command (exhortation) to his followers to not let their hearts become weighed down with trouble in the midst of facing the troubles of this world. This commandment is an invitation to walk in partnership with God’s grace, as Jesus promises to release the peace of God into the hearts of his followers.

‘Let not your hearts be troubled... ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. (John 14.1, 27)

- E. This commandment is a dynamic invitation and promise given by Jesus to increasingly experience the peace of God in our lives *in the face of* all of the places we will experience the pressing in of troubles and crisis in our lives.
- F. The fact that Jesus exhorts his disciples here necessitates that there is something he is inviting them into in partnership with him. There is an *implicit* promise of God’s grace tied to every commandment of the Scripture.
- G. The experience of being weighed down by the troubles of this world is common to all people. The message that Jesus taught his disciples in the Upper Room is intended to equip his followers to overcome (internally) in the midst of crisis (14.1), walk in mature joy (15.11), and is intended to protect our hearts from offense (16.1) throughout the hardships of this life.

II. A TROUBLED HEART

- A. To rightly understand the nature of Jesus’ exhortation and invitation, we must seek to understand what it means to have a “troubled heart”.
- B. Jesus is not saying that the disciples are not to feel deeply in the midst of the hardships of this life. He himself experienced deep sorrow, and it is said that his soul was troubled (John 11.33; 12.27; 13.21). Jesus’ troubled heart was rooted in his great love, not in unbelief.
- C. Rather, a troubled heart is becoming “overwhelmed” or “weighed down” by common emotions (or mindsets) that press in upon us as we walk through the difficulties of this life.

- D. To walk with a troubled heart is to possess unrenewed and worldly narratives that *see* the world (and our circumstances) in a certain way. This often leads to the experience of being weighed down by emotions such as fear, anxiety, shame, bitterness, or despair.
- E. When faced with difficult circumstances in our lives we possess certain reactions (behaviors, responses, beliefs, narratives, etc.) in our minds and hearts. These pathways are often shaped by our own selfishness, by our stories, and by the common cultural narratives of our own time (i.e., the spirit of the age).
- F. It is not difficult to look around and see the weight of difficulty pressing in on the hearts of people in our time. We do not have to look far to see the effects of “troubled hearts” as they are expressed throughout the world.
- G. Yet, many are less able to see the signposts of this in their own souls. Or, we see them but excuse ourselves as having a unique situation that is more difficult.
- H. When we are weighed down with these realities our hearts are much more prone to darkness. One of the reasons Jesus declares that he is teaching these truths to his disciples is in order that they will not be ‘offended’ (or fall away) as they walk through the pain and hardship of this life.

I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away (*stumbling, NASB*). (John 16.1)

- I. A troubled heart can become a ‘seedbed’ for increased offense. An offended heart is the seedbed for deception and stumbling.
- J. Jesus gave this command and spoke truths to his disciples that were intended to prepare them to flourish and thrive *in the midst of* many crises that they were to face shortly.

III. THE CONTEXT: THE MANY CRISES OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

- A. The Upper Room Discourse is given in the midst of a particular context, one in which the disciples were about to enter into a heightened experience of a many-sided crisis that would test them. In this crisis, their hearts would be pressed in upon, and the temptation to be weighed down under the weight of trouble would be great.
- B. These crises are common to Jesus’ followers throughout this age as we wait for him to return and make all things new.
- C. Two days before the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus had given his disciples an extensive teaching on what the times between his comings would be like. He narrated for them that these times would be marked by heightened difficulty (wars, societal unrest, famine, pestilence), persecution, and deception. The weight of these words would have still been resting upon his disciples in the Upper Room, and Jesus’ words of comfort and exhortation to them would serve also to stabilize their hearts through those crises.

⁴Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. ⁵For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. ⁶And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed... ⁷Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. ⁹Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. ¹⁰And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another... ¹²because of lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. (Matt 24.4-12)

D. Eight common crises that the disciples were about to face:

1. **Devastating loss** — the disciples were about to lose their friend, their teacher, and the one whom they believed would restore God’s kingdom in the world. Jesus was to die a gruesome death at the hands of the Romans.
2. **Personal failure** — Jesus had told his disciples that they would all stumble that evening. They were to come face to face with their own inability and weakness. They would be tempted to be weighed down with shame and guilt.
3. **Betrayal** — one of their closest friends (Judas) would betray them by handing Jesus over to the Romans. Jesus declared that betrayal would mark the time between his comings (Matt 10.21; 24.10). Betrayal at the hand of a friend can lead us toward bitterness.
4. **Cultural and national unrest** — the time between the comings of Jesus will be marked by societal, cultural, and national unrest. Jesus declares that there will be actual wars and rumors of wars (likely speaking of the ‘threat’ of wars) that will cause real devastation and uncertainty for people.
5. **Persecution** — followers of Christ will be hated for the sake of his name (Matt 5.10-11; 10.22; John 15.18-23; 2 Tim 3.12).
6. **The delay of God’s promises** — navigating the disappointment of our own desires/longings as we wait for the promises of God to be fulfilled has the temptation to weigh down our hearts. Even John the Baptist was reminded to not become offended with the *manner* in which God was fulfilling his purposes (Matt 11.6)
7. **Unmet expectations** — unnamed and unexamined expectations can lead to a heart that is overcome with anger and bitterness (Jas 4.1-2).
8. **Hope deferred** — when we put our hope in things that do not materialize our hearts become “sick” (Prov 13.12)

IV. JESUS’ ANTIDOTE TO A TROUBLED HEART: BELIEVE IN GOD, BELIEVE ALSO IN ME

- A. The *means* of obeying the command of John 14.1 that Jesus gives is to **believe** the truth about God and about Jesus that is in alignment with his character, his heart, his plans, his promises, and his leadership.
- B. Jesus does *not* promise that we will overcome a troubled heart by telling us that he will keep us from difficult circumstances. Neither does he root a free heart by promising us that the things (or the people) troubling us will cease in this life.
- C. At the end of this section Jesus prays that his disciples be protected and kept *through* the hardships of this life, not removed from them.

¹⁵I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. (John 17.15-17)

- D. How then does Jesus invite us to experience peace instead of a weighed down heart? He does so by calling us to belief.

- E. Jesus declares that the opposite of a troubled heart is pursued by *the means of* aligning our minds and hearts to trust in him in the midst of the hardships of this life (belief, confident trust). When our hearts are troubled, we are to respond by aligning our minds to agree with God's truth. Over time our emotions are transformed as we behold the truth of God's word.

¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Cor 3.18)

- F. Paul exhorts the believers of Rome to not be conformed to the patterns of thinking that characterize the world and its ways. Rather, we are invited to pursue renewing our mind by God's grace as those who have been made to be the recipients of God's abundant mercy in Christ.

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind (Rom 12.1-2)

- G. The process of transformation is not *merely* about our minds (i.e., it is not about having the right answers, or even about having the right doctrine), but it does begin with *knowing* what God is like and who we are in Christ Jesus. We are transformed by partnering with God's grace in pursuing different ways of thinking, seeing, evaluating reality, and how we *see/engage* the world. Our emotions (our hearts) often follow where our minds go.
- H. Jesus desires to be our holy meditation. He desires that his person, character, plans, work, and relationship with us would be the foundation stone upon which our hearts are stabilized in the midst of the difficulties of this life.
- I. The primary way we pursue this is by *speaking* and *praying* the truths of the word of God consistently in our lives.

V. SUMMARIZING THE UPPER ROOM DISCOURSE: UNION WITH THE TRIUNE GOD

- A. The glory of the message of the Upper Room Discourse is that Jesus is declaring that his followers — those who have come to know him by faith — are invited to experience *in this life* a measure of deep and true communion with the Triune God. To be welcomed into this experience is to experience *eternal life*.

³And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17.3)

- B. Jesus declares that his people will not be left alone in this world without hope (14.18). Rather, he is going to lay down his life in order that he might prepare a place for them in the Father's house (14.2). Because of this, access to eternal life is *solely* and *exclusively* found through faith in him alone (14.6). Now, to all those who receive him by faith, he promises to send the gift of the Holy Spirit (14.16-17; 16.13-15).
- C. Jesus promises that his followers will be joined to him. Believers now participate in the same type of intimate union that he shares with the Father (John 14.20). This section reorients the life of a disciple around participating in the divine life (2 Pet 1.4) as the glorious center of our lives.

³His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1.3-4)

- D. To know God and experience his life (or, abide in his love) is the ultimate reality of the Christian life.