

Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled

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The Reality of Heaven

Jesus of Nazareth left no room for doubt as to the reality of heaven in His public teaching as reported by the gospel writers.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 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. 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. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. (John 14:1-4)

These words give positive assurance to the believing heart. If anybody in the world wants to know what Jesus of Nazareth thought about heaven, John 14:1-4 gives the answer! Surely if anyone who had ever lived on earth was in a position to know what heaven is like, where it is, and what to expect there, it would be the One who came down from heaven, the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth.

Realizing that human beings are so limited in their natural experience Jesus spoke a word of assurance: ". . . if it were not so, I would have told you." The believer by faith in the Son of God, and by His grace, can stand on the ground Jesus has given him: "In my Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you." These words have spoken peace to many a heart, even as the Lord Jesus meant that they should, when He began His message by saying, "Let not your heart be troubled." "I know whom I have believed," wrote Paul, "and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Timothy 1:12). The believer is committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. Every confidence he has is in Him.

The Christian feels that he can step out and tell the whole, wide world that heaven is real. He has the word of his Lord "If it were not so, I would have told you!" And so believers can join in to sing with others of like faith about another world, "far, far away."

Anyone who gives serious thought to the reality of heaven will be brought back to one central idea. Jesus Christ talked about heaven with all assurance. It is adequate for a Christian to know that heaven is where God is. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, ". . . Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." (Matthew 6:9) Wherever it is, God is there!

Anybody thinking about heaven will surely want to go there. Certainly he will want his loved ones to go to heaven.

It is worthy to note that people feel the same about hell. Many will say they don't know anything about it; they have no idea where or why it exists. But, they don't want their boys and girls to go to hell.

Jesus of Nazareth in His teaching left no room for doubt as to the reality of hell. He told the story of the rich man who went to hell, and pointed out that the rich man's concern in hell was that his five brothers still living on earth should be warned lest they too "come into this place of torment."

Jesus of Nazareth warned that certain conduct here on earth could result in a person being "cast into everlasting fire." (Matthew 18:8,9)

Jesus of Nazareth spoke more about hell than anyone else reported in the New Testament.

Despite the obscurity of the actual descriptions of heaven and hell, there are some aspects that have

clear meaning to anyone reading the Bible. Heaven is a place where God is: it is a place of light, where there is no pain and where fellowship with the Lord in love will be the nature of the blessedness prepared for all who believe in Him. Hell is a place of darkness, where there is torment, where there is no rest (Isaiah 57:20-21) and no relief from "solitary confinement."

It may be helpful to consider that any descriptions of heaven or hell given in the Bible are symbolic in character. The "gates of pearl," the "streets of gold," the "sea of glass," should be understood as indicating that heaven will be beautiful and precious. Also, speaking of God as Father, of Christ Jesus as the Son, of all believers as brethren, creates a picture of heaven as a home where the believer belongs and shares in mutual love which prevails as a blessing to all. Thus to speak of Christ as "the Bridegroom," the Church as "the Bride," and their coming together in eternal communion as "the Marriage of the Lamb" is the same sort of speech in using earthly terms to refer to heavenly realities. To say these beautiful terms are used as symbols does not in any way dim the splendor of heaven itself. However wonderful any symbol may be, the reality will always be more.

And we may soberly understand that however awful the symbolic descriptions of hell may seem, the actual reality is infinitely worse. We remember that Jesus of Nazareth taught that if any man wickedly acted in such a way as to be condemned to go there "it had been good for that man if he had not been born."

Jesus of Nazareth went on to say, ". . . the way ye know." Thomas questioned this. "We don't know where you are going, Lord, and how can we know the way, wherever it is?" The Lord answered in the famous utterance known among all believers:

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.
(John 14:6)

It is important to notice the way this is written: "I am the way" — *the* way, not a way or any way — *the* truth, *the* life. There is only one way and that is through Jesus Christ our Lord "No man cometh unto the Father, *but by me.* "

At that point, Philip spoke up. ". . . Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." (John 14:8) If the disciples could just see the Father, Philip felt that would be enough to content them. This request brought forth the amazing wonderful statement by Jesus Christ, expressing the relationship between the Father and the Son:

Jesus saith unto him. Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. (John 14:9,10)

Seeing Jesus Christ would not be so much a matter of seeing God the Judge of all the earth or the Creator of all living things, but rather of seeing God as the Father, sending His own Son to die for sinners. Jesus of Nazareth was actually indwelt by God: He was God. "He that hath seen me," Jesus of Nazareth, has actually seen God as Father.

In other words, these men were to understand all that Jesus of Nazareth had done before their very eyes, all the miracles He had worked, all the deeds performed on behalf of others, all that was said, were all done as they were worked by the mighty processes of God at work within His own Son. "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake." (John 14:11)

The works performed by Jesus of Nazareth were and are from God. In the last analysis, this is the best proof, the ground for our faith.

Greater Works

This was followed by a truly amazing statement, which is hard to understand even today.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. (John 14:12)

These words express a profound truth. God will work in and through the believers. This could well be the source of the power manifested in great evangelistic meetings, so blessed with countless men and women coming to find Christ as Saviour. Such may well be the *greater works* done, after Calvary and the Resurrection have made them possible!

"Ask In My Name"

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. (John 14:13,14)

Here Jesus tells in unmistakable terms that if believers ask anything in His name, that is, in accordance with His will, He will do whatever is so asked.

This was by way of encouraging the disciples to pray for guidance and blessing that they might find themselves in the will of God, and do the "greater works" He had predicted they would do.

Jesus of Nazareth then continued His teaching by indicating the way of answered prayer: "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments." (verses 14-15) This word *keep* means to cherish, heed, and follow after: it means to guard the commandments carefully lest they be broken.

The Holy Spirit

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. (John 14:16-18)

The words *another Comforter* imply that Jesus of Nazareth Himself was a Comforter; and the Holy Spirit is to be another such person, bringing God's blessing to our hearts. The word for "Comforter" in the Greek is *paraclete*, which means *someone called alongside of*. This is exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ had done during the days of His ministry on earth and what the Holy Spirit does for believers now. He actually watches over them, and when they need special care, He is there to meet that need. He will wipe the tears from their eyes and ease their hurts.

Since He is always with them, they are never alone. What a wonderful provision the Lord Jesus promised for each one of His people when He told His disciples He would ask the Father to send another Comforter!

Jesus of Nazareth next speaks to the ". . . Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it

seeth him not, neither knoweth him . . ." (verse 17) The world cannot receive the Spirit of God because ". . . it seeth him not, neither knoweth him . . ." In other words the world does not understand about the Spirit, and because of this lack of understanding and of esteem, the world cannot receive Him.

This is an amazing truth. Actually the Holy Spirit can come to a man who has sinned, to a person who is weak or wayward, or to someone who is ignorant of the truth. There is only one condition required of a believer, he must understand who the Holy Spirit is and treat Him for what He is. If any person will honor Him and allow Him entrance, He will come into his heart. Enthroned there, He will show the believer the things that will strengthen his faith and incline his heart to obey the will of the Father. When our Lord Jesus Christ was here, He called men unto Himself, saying, "Follow Me," and then He guided them along the way. So even now the Holy Spirit will guide believers in the things of the Lord, and will comfort and strengthen them daily as they live and serve.

This whole truth of the continuing companionship of the Holy Spirit is confirmed in a promise which is precious to many believers: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." (verse 18) The under-lying thought of the words, in the original, are "I will not leave you to be orphans." Anyone who is without a family knows how special this promise is.

After this Jesus of Nazareth discussed in some detail the close identification of believers with Himself. "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also." (verse 19) Here is the blessing of eternal life: life here on earth in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and life everlasting in that glorious place He has prepared for us. To be forever with the Lord is the joy of the Gospel.

What a marvelous thing it is to become a Christian! The sinner believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, and receives Him into his heart. God then adopts the believer as one of His children and sends the Holy Spirit, who makes the Father's will clear and leads the believer into the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (verse 21) In these simple words Jesus describes the frame of heart and mind prevailing in the believer.

The Way of Peace

How often someone expresses a longing desire for peace in the midst of this troubled world! Those who are without the love of God and the indwelling grace of Christ Jesus through the Spirit, are beside themselves with worry and fear.

The word of the Lord speaks of assurance and comfort:

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

It certainly is never easy, even for a Christian, to live in this troubled world. The Lord Jesus Himself was a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He knew what it was to shed tears. Many events in the world today are disturbing, and there are many burdens which seem, at times, very heavy. Nowhere in the Word of God is it promised that burdens will cease, but there is the promise that the Lord will supply strength and grace to bear the burdens as believers grow closer and closer to Him.

So many people *speak* of peace nowadays, but so few people seem to *have* peace of heart. The word "peace" is on almost every tongue, it is only possible to learn its true meaning as a person has some

measure of it. The depth of peace a person has depends upon how deeply that one is yielding to the Holy Spirit. Many people seem to think "the peace of God" is something reserved for a far-distant future. They do not understand what it means to have peace of heart right now, today, this moment.

To be at peace does not mean the cessation of all activity, but rather peace is the elimination of discord and discontent. There are no conflicts when the peace of God rules in heart and head.

Peace is not a matter of everybody being exactly alike. Nor is peace the total absence of danger. But a person can have peace in the midst of danger! When the Christian commits himself in his trust into the watch-care of his Heavenly Father he can have complete confidence. When he yields himself in what he does in obedience to the guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit he will not be contentious. Such a one can have peace.

It can be further noted that peace is not complete freedom from frustration. There will be things a person cannot do and possessions which he cannot have. But even under such circumstances of frustration, it is possible to have perfect peace of heart.

The full meaning of this statement of Jesus of Nazareth is suggested by the phrase "my peace" and the further statement "not as the world giveth, give I unto you." How could the world give anything like the "peace of God which passeth understanding?"

The world considers "peace" as being the state of having everything one could desire. But is that it? To have one's own way in everything? Too many of the world's own children have found out, to their sorrow, that such is far from peace!

And certainly this is not the way peace comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. "My peace I give unto you." *My peace?* Remember that this is what He said immediately before going to the Garden of Gethsemane. Remember how Jesus Christ went into the Garden, and prayed until He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. Remember that He lay on His face and prayed to His Father with a deeply burdened heart. His soul was exceedingly troubled, nigh even unto death. He, the sinless One, was facing the experience of taking upon Himself the sins of the world! And He who knew what was to come in that Garden, the agony of prayer, said to the waiting disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

The Peace of God

This is peace that comes when all has been yielded to the will of God. The believer yields everything to God, and in turn, God takes care of him. Yield into His gracious care everything which bothers and causes heartache. Let Him have His way: let Him solve the problem; and the soul will be quiet and at peace. *This is the peace of God!* And truly, it does pass all human understanding.

How could Jesus of Nazareth have such peace, just before Calvary? Perhaps full understanding is not possible, but in part the truth is indicated in Hebrews 12:2: ". . . for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." The peace Jesus of Nazareth had was grounded in the promise that His Father would keep Him even through death. And this is the kind of peace the believer can have. God can give believers a peace that is free from the world and all its problems, fears and burdens. Christians want the fellowship of God. They want to live in His presence and be pleasing in His sight. He can achieve this peace in their hearts and lives as they yield themselves to Him. He assures them that He will forever keep them and forever live within them through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The world can go its own way. Christians are free from its power and influence. They have a peace within, which the world cannot give and can never take

away.

Jesus knew this joyful experience to the full.

Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father for my Father is greater than I. (John 14:28)

Jesus of Nazareth was telling them not only of the suffering unto death which lay ahead: His arrest by the soldiers after the betrayal, the shame and humiliation at their hands, the cross with its agony, and His death; but also of the glorious resurrection morning, and victory! He also was trying to make clear to these men, whose eyes were still darkened by the tragic suffering He must endure, that if they really cared about Him, they would be glad that this process was under way and would rejoice because through all this grief He was going to the Father. Being with the Father forever with no future prospect of separation was a prospect of joy so wonderful it made any suffering seem bearable.

Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence. (John 14:30, 31)

There comes a time in the affairs of men when there is nothing more to be said. There may even be the feeling that Satan seems to have control of the circumstances. A person living in his own home, where he might expect peace and joy, instead finds hard, difficult situations in his own family. Even here the hand of man seems raised against him. Perhaps another will face envy and malice in his place of business, or a threat to his interests because of his stand for Christ. These things could be inspired by Satan, and the devil may be expected to find delight in bringing dishonor upon the name of God through this Christian. The Bible reveals that he is constantly striving to thwart the purposes of God in the life of a believer.

The sure defense of the Christian is to wait quietly and trust. Let Satan go on, for whereas all he can do is destroy the body, God can raise the dead.

Jesus understood exactly why He was submitting to Satan's actions. "But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do . . ." He was going straight to the trial, the false accusations, the spitting and shame, the unjust condemnation, and the agonizing death by crucifixion. This is what Jesus of Nazareth *accepted* that the world might know that He loved the Father. The testimony to His love for His Father was expressed in accepting sorrow, pain, and death such as no man has ever known. Loving the Father meant the full performance of the Father's will in His life and death and resurrection!

Jesus of Nazareth ended this period of instruction with a ringing call to action, to face whatever would come in the will of God: ". . . Arise, let us go hence." Forward to face the suffering and death, forward to demonstrate that He loved God: this was the course of action Jesus of Nazareth took with power and peace in His heart. This is the peace the Lord Jesus Christ offers to believers today, every day, as they walk in this world with their trust and confidence fully in Him.