

Overcoming Fear and Anxiety – Part II
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John 14:1-3
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Amen. Please turn with me in your Bible to John 14. We are continuing a message we began last week which we entitled ‘Overcoming Fear and Anxiety’. It is really the focus of what these first few verses of John 14 put before us. Amazing encouragement that the Lord Jesus Christ on the night before He was crucified, when His heart was surely troubled, had the most reason to be troubled of any person who has ever lived, by far the most reason, yet look at the compassion. He is concerned about the disciples. “Let not your hearts be troubled.” One of those things we need to discipline ourselves to do is just look carefully at the Scripture and marvel. Isn’t that amazing? You know, someone had said, “When you are in pain all you can think about is yourself,” and there is some truth to that. By grace you can get outside of yourself, but isn’t it amazing how when you are in pain nothing else matters? I mean when you are really in pain, and Jesus is in inner turmoil. I mean, there is a sense in which, He is not sinning like we do, there is a difference, but the same pressures that we feel He feels in a deeper way. And yet in the midst of that spiritual battle that is going on in His life, He is concerned about others because He is the one who is able to save us. He can take the burdens and carry them, and carry ours too.

We come to John 14:1-3, is what we’ve been focusing on, and we saw that what He basically does in this passage is He says, “Stop letting your troubles trouble you.” I said there were three points, and we’re going to get the second one finished today I think. We started into the second one last time. The first two points are: ‘*Stop Letting Your Troubles Trouble You*’, that’s what we looked at last time, and ‘*Start Putting Your Faith into Practice*’, and there are two sub-points under that second point. When you start putting your faith into practice, Jesus says, “Believe in God. Believe also in Me.” So He says, “Believe in God,” that’s part of what you need to do when you stop letting your troubles trouble you, is you need to put your faith into God and who He is. We talked about that last time.

This time what we want to look at is the specifics of what it means, the second command, the second part of this second point was that... There are three commands. The first command, “Stop letting your troubles trouble you. Do not let your heart be troubled.” Then the second and third commands come into one point in our sermon outline. ‘*Believe in God*’ – *Believe also in Jesus*’, two imperatives. So He said, “Believe in God.” What is the uniqueness, why did He say, “Believe

also in Me.”? I mean, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one God. “Believe in God,” was that not enough? Why did He add, “Believe also in Me.”? That is what we want to look at today because it is a very important point that will enrich our ability to stand firm in the midst of troubles, and trials, and not be overwhelmed with anxiety and fear. When we place our faith in God, and also in Jesus. Let’s read, we’ll read from Chapter 13, Verse 36, we’ll start reading there down to Chapter 14:6.

John 13:36-38 ~ Simon Peter *said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered, “Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later.” 37 Peter *said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.” 38 Jesus *answered, “Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.

John 14:1-6 ~ “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 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. 3 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. 4 And you know the way where I am going.” 5 Thomas *said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” 6 Jesus *said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

Let’s pray together.

Father, we ask now that Your Spirit might work in our hearts to apply Your word, will open the eyes of our understanding, bend our wills, break us before the glory of Your Son. We pray in His name, Amen.

Overcoming fear and anxiety, when life brings troubles, how do we stand up under the pressures, and the troubles that come upon us? I mentioned last time, you know Dr. Mack writes in that book, Courage: Fighting Fear with Fear, if you expected in the Christian life a life of ease, and comfort, and no troubles, you got on the wrong roller coaster. God doesn’t promise that. In fact, Jesus is going to say later this evening, with the disciples in John 16:33, He’s going to say, “In this world you will have tribulations. You are going to have tribulations in this world.” It is part and parcel of living in this fallen world. “But be of good cheer, I’ve overcome the world,” He says. The fact that you have tribulations is not to force its way, the troubles outside are not to force their way inside so that you become depressed,

and discouraged, and anxious, and fearful. He wants us to walk in victory over that. We walk through the tribulations, trusting in Him, and the Lord gives us the power then to overcome anxiety and fear.

Now we come again to the second point which is '*Start Putting Your Faith into Practice*'. Let me say one word about the first point just to set the context a little bit. He says, "Stop letting your troubles trouble you." We noted that the, "Do not let your heart be troubled," '*be troubled*' is in the Greek present tense, which means continuous action. The idea is Jesus says, "You are being troubled right now. I know your hearts and you guys are really struggling right now. Stop it." So by saying, '*do not*' with the present tense He is saying it is ongoing, "Stop it. Stop letting your heart be troubled." The idea is we are going to go through life, we're going to experience troubles, and the outside tribulation, the chaos around us, the confusion around us, the uncertainties that come upon us, the trials, the possibility of trials, the possibility of fearful circumstances. Those things come upon us and we're tempted to be troubled internally. The chaos outside, how easily it comes in our hearts. He says, "You have the power to stop that and you first of all have to realize that."

You know it's amazing how our thoughts, once we get on a track, you know you get a test that comes back, you have some bloodwork done and something is elevated, something is not right, so you have to come in for a CT Scan, or an MRI, or whatever it is, or just additional bloodwork and, "What is the concern?" "Well, it is just something we just want to check out." "Well, what are you concerned about?" "Well, it could be a number of things. It could be nothing, it could be this, it could be cancer." Isn't it amazing how if we let our minds go we're already thinking about, "I've got cancer, and I don't know how long I have to live. What am I going to do? And how am I going to break it to my family? I don't have enough life insurance." I mean all of these things start piling upon us, and a lot of those things are legitimate concerns. If I really have cancer, and if I'm dying, and certainly that could happen, none of us know if we have tomorrow.

Well there are certain things that we should prudently be concerned about, and the Lord understands that. There are troubles that come and we should think about those things, but the problem is we let those dominate our thinking so that we no longer do what God wants us to do. Because what can often happen is we become so preoccupied with our troubles that we are of no benefit to anyone else. Our troubles are troubling us then. Anxiety and fear are controlling us so that we're not honoring God. That is the problem and Jesus is saying, "You don't have to let that happen. You can stop." I love the Martyn Lloyd-Jones thing, I mention it often. I

think it is so helpful though, at least in just getting a hand on this. He says, “Our problem as Christians is that we listen to ourselves when we ought to be talking to ourselves.” That is when something happens, we start letting our thoughts run wild, and we listen to whatever our flesh, and just our own experience, and what somebody said, you know? It starts running in our minds and we start being controlled by all these thoughts, and Lloyd-Jones says, “Stop that, and start talking to yourself.” This is exactly what Jesus is saying to do. “Stop letting your troubles trouble you. Start believing in God. Start preaching the word of God to yourself.” So we are to stop letting our troubles trouble us, we are to put our faith in God, that’s what we talked about last time.

What does the Bible say about God? And we looked at that carefully last time. Three things we said, basically, God is sovereign, completely, He is good, He always does what is right and best. He is for us, He loves us, and He is wise. When you really believe God is sovereign, He is good, and He is wise, there is no reason for fear or anxiety. In fact, when we are being anxious, when we are being fearful to the point of letting it control us, when we’re allowing our thoughts to be consumed with fear and anxiety, we are functioning like an atheist. We are living like an atheist. We are living as if there is no God. Or at least a deist. We are living like, if we believe in God, it is a theoretical God that is not really involved in my life. Because if we really believe that God is who He says He is in the Bible, there is no reason for fear, no reason for anxiety. But Jesus didn’t stop with just that. That is enough. If you meditate on God’s sovereignty, and His goodness, and His wisdom, and you keep meditating on that, and when you start feeling anxious you come back to that, and you put your mind on, “He’s sovereign. If there is a cancer cell in my body, if it’s in my lymph nodes, or if it is wherever, God is sovereign over that. It can’t spread unless God allows it.” Just meditate on that, and it’s amazing how powerful that is, isn’t it? And He’s good, and He’s wise, He doesn’t let it happen and think, “Oh, man, I should have stopped those cells from developing.” He knows what He’s doing. That would be enough. We should never have fear and anxiety, but the wonder of it is, God has given us something even more in this passage.

Jesus says, “Believe in God. Believe also in Me.” I mean, the message I preached last week, the main theme and points of it could have been preached by a priest or synagogue leader 400 years before Christ. Think about that for a moment. I mean, I talked about Jesus, they wouldn’t have been able to do that, but I’m talking about the basic point of the message. It was from the Old Testament, God’s sovereignty manifests in the life of Joseph and Job, God’s goodness, His wisdom that we see in all of those different Old Testament passages. Jesus is telling them something at

this moment in history that is radical. He is saying, “Believe in God. Believe also in Me.” Now He’s not saying, “I’m separate from God in a sense,” no, He and the Father are one. He has made this point over, and over, and over. He is only doing what the Father wanted Him to do, but what He’s saying is that at this point in history, “Something radical that was latent in the Old Testament, that was anticipated with shadowing in the Old Testament, has now become incredibly clear in My ministry, in your lives, disciples,” and for us today.

There is a radical disjuncture difference between Old Testament faith and New Testament faith. Now let me be clear about that. The Old Testament saints were saved by hoping in the same Messiah. They were saved the same way we are, and the hope of the Messiah is from the very beginning, from Genesis 3 all the way through the Old Testament, but the clarity with which we see the Messiah, that is radically different. The Old Testament we have shadows, and we have types, and when we come to the New Testament, when the word became flesh, it is like the lights, it’s like if we had all these lights dimmed down at night and we could barely see in the shadows, you would know there is somebody up there walking on the platform, but if they shine the lights on them, they you would see who it was. That’s what it was like. The Old Testament Messiah is there and people were hoping in that Messiah, but when Jesus comes, when John the Baptist begins preaching, “He is here. There is one here who is so great, He is greater than I. He existed before me. I’m not worthy to untie His sandal,” and when he said, “Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,” the lights were on. And what Jesus is saying here in John 14:1, “Believe also in Me,” is echoing that same reality.

In fact, I would say it this way, if you think about these two sub-points, you know, ‘*Stop Letting Your Troubles Trouble You*’, the first big point last week. ‘*Start Putting Your Faith into Practice*’ is the second major point. ‘*Start Putting Your Faith in God into Practice*’. That’s what we looked at last time. ‘*Start Putting Your Faith in Christ into Practice*’, this time.

1) Start Putting Your Faith in Christ into Practice:

If you think about those two points, ‘*Start Putting Your Faith in God into Practice*’, that was really about the Old Testament revelation is more, what we were looking at is more weight upon the providence of God. That is that God governs all things to His appointed purpose. That He is sovereign, that He is good, that He is governing all things to His desired plan. Really what Jesus is saying, when He says, “Believe in Me,” what He is saying I think then is that the emphasis

has shifted, the balance is now on the presence of God. When He says, “Believe in Me,” what He is saying is, “What you are trusting in now is not just to believe in God, but to trust in the providence of God. Place your faith upon the providence of God.” Now He is saying, “Place your faith in the presence of God.” He is God with us, Emmanuel. That’s what we’re going to look at this morning. The implications of that statement, “Believe also in Me. Trust also in Me.” You know, I want to call your attention to the repetition of the word ‘believe’ in Verse 1.

John 14:1 ~ “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

He could have said, “Believe in God and also in Me,” couldn’t He? The same meaning basically. One verb with two objects, but He doesn’t say, “Believe in God and also in Me,” He says, “Believe in God. Believe also in Me,” which emphasizes the importance of faith. Faith is the essential thing in overcoming fear and anxiety. Faith is the essential thing in all of human life. It is a present tense Greek verb just like the verb “***Do not let your heart be troubled;***... This is also present tense in both places, ‘believe’, ongoing, continuous action. I want to say a word about the nature of faith as a preliminary, before we get back into looking at what we’re to put our trust in about Jesus, and the presence of God. Before we get that, I want to look at what putting your trust in God really means. What is the nature of faith?

The word ‘*pisteuo*’ in Greek, comes from a word which means ‘*to be persuaded, to persuade, to persuade to some opinion of something*’, but really to understand the biblical word ‘*faith*’ we don’t need just to look at the Greek word, we need to look at the Old Testament word for faith, and belief. So often, almost always, the New Testament authors are thinking in terms of Old Testament categories. The concept of righteousness comes from the Old Testament, so they use the Greek word, but they are thinking in the Old Testament concept because they are Jews. The same with faith, and it is important because the word ‘*faith*’ in the Hebrew mindset is very different than how we think of it in the western world. Faith in the western world is something that implies the possibility of something. You believe in something, it is the possibility of it, you hope it to be true. That’s how people think about faith, if you think about it. That is just faith, blind faith. “Well that is just your faith. That’s my faith. It’s just what I hope to be true. I’m not sure of it.” The biblical concept of faith, and this is very important, the biblical concept of faith is one of absolute certainty. The Hebrew word for ‘*believe*’ is a word which means ‘*to be certain*’.

In fact, the word comes from a word, from the base meaning of it, *'firmness, solidness'*. And so the idea when you believe is, you are trusting in, you are relying upon, you are certain of these things. So to overcome fear and anxiety, what you need is things that you are certain of, not things that you hope are true, and this is very important. You want to build, you want to fight fear with fear, you want to fight fire with fire. When tribulation comes, when troubles come, the way you are going to overcome them is fighting them in the right way, and you don't put your faith into things that you hope to be true, you put your faith into things you know to be true.

Let me give you an example. I mean, the world counsels us that we should put our faith in ourselves. You know, you have a fear of flying, for instance, if you go to a secular counselor, they might help you, "What you really need to do is think positive thoughts. You need to feel better about yourself. I mean, you thinking bad things are going to happen to you. You just need to feel better about yourself. You have a self-esteem problem," something you never have Jesus being concerned about. Jesus was never concerned about someone having too little self-esteem because He knows what is in the heart of man, and He knows that nobody, *nobody* has too little self-esteem. You say, "Well, I know people who that just are always talking bad about themselves." They are talking bad about themselves because they esteem themselves so highly. The reason they are talking bad about themselves in front of you is they want you to tell them they are not that bad. They are looking for some strokes. They think that they are so important, they want to dominate the conversation in telling you how discouraged they are. Now they may really be disappointed, the person may think, "I wish I was more beautiful." This is a girl talking. "I wish I was more attractive." And what they are really thinking in their heart is, "I ought to be. It's not fair that I'm not so attractive. It's not right. Don't you agree with me? God has let me down." Do you see what I'm saying? It's really self-esteem, and so when someone commits suicide, it is the greatest act of self-realization, self-authentication, self-importance. So the problem is never lacking self-esteem, the problem is we need to die to ourselves. The irony is that when you esteem yourself, yeah you are miserable. So don't put your trust in yourself.

So back to the story, "You are afraid of flying, so you need to feel better about yourself." Now think about this for a moment, how does that really help you when you are getting on an airplane? This is also from Dr. Mack's book, by the way, Chapter 2. Maybe not Chapter 2, some chapter in there. He says, "You know it doesn't do you any good to have good self-esteem if the plane goes down." "I really feel good about myself," [makes crashing sound]. It didn't protect you at all, so why would you put your faith in something that can't protect you? What you do

is you put your faith in the things you know to be true. You ground your faith in God, and the way you overcome the fear of flying truly, is you know that God is the one that is holding that plane up in the air, and if God wants the plane to go down, you're not going to fight Him over it. He knows best, because you believe in His sovereignty, and His goodness, and that's how you come to overcome it. If you keep meditating on those things enough, you will overcome it. Now it has to be a reliance upon certainty. That is what I want you to see. So you work on those certain truths about who God is. Start putting your faith into practice, putting your faith in God and His providence. "I know that He is good, I know that He is sovereign, I know that He's wise," and you think about it, and you meditate on it, and you remember it, and you remind yourself of it, and you preach to yourself that, but there is something more wonderful now that we want to look at that you also need to be certain of.

Not only are you to be certain of the providence of God, you are also to be certain of the presence of God. "Believe also in Me. Place your faith also in Me." There are two sub-points I want us to consider our thoughts around today, two points for the rest of the message. Jesus is saying, "If you look at Me, and you think about all that I have said, and all that I have done, and you place your faith in Me, what you will understand is that in your circumstances, disciples, no matter where you are, you will know that God is with you in the moment." He is here with us. That's what we learn. And secondly, the second point is '*He is Taking Action*'. '*He is with Me*' and '*He is Taking Action*'.

A) He is With Me:

Now this is really extraordinary. It would be enough to know that God is sovereign and governing things from a distance, but that He is really in control. It is not like He's from a distance, and He might let something accidentally happen. That is not what the Bible teaches, His providence doesn't allow that. Nothing ever accidentally happens in God's economy, right? That would be enough, but it is not enough in a sense. God says, "I want you to know more," and so what He did in Jesus is He comes into our circumstances, He comes into our difficulties, and He is with us. This was the new thing that became so clear. It had been anticipated in the Old Testament, but I mentioned earlier, the shadows of the Old Testament, and the lights being thrown on in the New.

Let me just take a minute to tell you about the shadow, even way back in Genesis. I want you to see how the certainty of God, you can rest on this truth that God is with you, that He cares about you, and every time you are in a circumstance where

you are overwhelmed with fear, you can know, if your faith is in Jesus Christ, that God is with you in that moment. He is with you, understanding what you are going through, and supporting you. He is not from a distance, He is right there with you. Let me show you this from Genesis 1 and 2. You don't have to turn there, just listen and think about this. These are the very first chapters of the Bible. What is God like? Why are there two creation accounts? Have you thought about that question? You know, Genesis 1, there are the six days of creation. The first three verses of Chapter 2 really should be in Chapter 1, the seventh day He rested. Genesis 1:1- Genesis 2:3, the seven days of creation. Then you have, in Chapter 2, Verse 4, a retelling of the sixth day of creation where God creates man, and then He creates woman, remember? Why is that? Well one of the things that you have going on in Genesis 1, and the first three verses of Chapter 2 is you have the name of God that is used continually in Genesis 1, is the name Elohim. And you'll see it translated into English, '*God*'. God said, God saw, God said, "Let there be light and there was light. God saw the light that He had made and behold it was good." God said, God saw, God said, God saw—God.

Then Chapter 2, Verse 4, what is the idea in Chapter 1? The idea is the transcendent majesty of God. The God of the universe is a God who speaks and it happens. In fact, the name '*God*' there in all those Hebrew references in Genesis 1 is actually a plural noun. Literally, when they were first reading their Bibles, they would have said, "It says, '*Gods* said...'" They had in their verbs though, they had singular and plural distinctions in their verbs. We have this in some of our verbs, but not all of them. You see it easily in the being verbs. Like if I said, "He is, they are," right? Singular, he goes with the is verb. The plural, they goes with the are.

It's like '*Gods is*' is the way it is in Genesis 1. Are you following what I'm saying? Gods plural with singular verbs, and the idea is he's talking about a singular God who somehow has a plurality about Him. The Trinity, I think, is even right there. But beyond that, there's also the majestic plural. All the Gods of the universe really are one God, and this one God is so great that He spoke and it came to be. He speaks, and so the idea is Elohim is transcendent. Elohim is all-powerful. Elohim does all of His will exactly as He wants, and when He does it, the other refrain, "It was good, it was good, it was good, it was very good." So you see in Genesis 1 something of the providence of God. Look at who God is. He governs everything to His appointed purposes and it is wonderful (Chapter 2, Verse 4). And the Lord God put man in the garden which He had made. And the Lord God, and the Lord God... The Lord God saw that it was not good for man to be alone. And the Lord God took a rib from the man's chest and made it into a woman. And the Lord God brought the woman to the man. And the Lord God, and the Lord God,

and the Lord God, and the Lord God (Yahweh Elohim). Yahweh is the personal name of God, that the God who is transcendent and majestic is also a God who is personal. It's like He gives us His nickname. It's not really His nickname, it's His personal name. When Moses said, "Who are you?" He says, "I am that I am (Yahweh)." This is the name Yahweh. It means *I am that I am*. This is who I am.

So in Genesis 1, the transcendent majesty of God, Genesis 2, the immanence and nearness of God, there it is. This is the God who takes the dust of the earth, forms it into a man, and breathes on that which He has formed. The clay that He has formed, He breathes into it the breath of life. Do you see all that intimacy? In the first two chapters of the Bible, God is transcendent and He's immanent, but then they sin, and they're separated from God, and the immanence and the nearness is lost. They're in the dark, and so God begins to work out His plan of redemption, and He tells them, "What's going to have to happen is I'm going to have to come," and He tells them that throughout the Old Testament.

Basically in the Old Testament, you see the major on His holiness, His majesty, His transcendence. He's governing everything. That's what we talked about last week. You don't need to fear, because God is transcendent, He's holy, and He's governing everything. But when Jesus comes on the scene, He wants you to know this: "I'm going to be with you every step of the way all your life." This is the wonder of who God is. He is a God who comes into time and space, and is with us. The name Immanuel means God with us.

So when He says, "Believe in Me," He says, "Look at Me and you know who I am. I am God, but I am with you." He's made clear in His ministry, in His teaching, in His acts of power, that He truly is God, and John has made this so clear for us in his Gospel, that the Man Christ Jesus is very God of very God. He is the great I am. In fact, in this exchange that we've had, just before this, we know when Jesus predicted His betrayal just a few moments before the verses that we're reading now, in John 13:18, when He says, "I don't speak of all of you. Not all of you are clean. I know the ones I have chosen, but that the scripture may be fulfilled, he who eats My bread has lifted his heel against Me." He said, "From now on, I'm telling you before it comes to pass (Verse 19) so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am." He's reminding them right then when He predicts that Judas is going to betray Him, "When you look back on this and you remember that I predicted this before it happened, you will know that I am." That's a refrain throughout this wonderful book.

In John 8:24, He tells the Jews there that, “Unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins.” Verse 28 repeats the same thing. In Verse 58, remember when they are getting ready to throw stones at Him? Why did they throw stones at Him? Because He said, “Before Abraham was, I am.” He claimed to be God. He claimed to be the great *I am* of Exodus 3:14. When Moses said, “What is Your name?” He said, “I am that I am, therefore, tell them I am sent you.” Jesus is claiming that. Twenty-one times in the book of John you have on the lips of Jesus, “Ego eimi.” *Ego* in Greek means I. *Eimi* means I am. “I Myself am.” It’s, “I am. I am the bread of life. I am the Light of the world. I am the door of the sheep. I am the Good Shepherd. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way, the truth, and the life.” We just read that in John 14:6. He is *I am*, and yet He’s truly with us. John’s message is not just that the *I am* manifested Himself visibly. He said the *I am* manifested Himself in flesh.

John 1:14 ~ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,...

He came to live as true man. The passage we read from Hebrews earlier, in fact, turn back to that passage for a moment. In fact, if you turn over to Hebrews 4:15, we’ll look at it first. He says:

Hebrews 4:15 ~ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

He uses a double negative. “We don’t have a high priest who cannot sympathize.” In other words, we have a high priest who can sympathize. He feels what we feel. That’s what we saw in Chapter 2, the passage we read from Hebrews 2:9 to Hebrews 2:18, that He suffered.

Hebrews 2:14 ~ Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

Hebrews 2:17 ~ Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest...

Jesus has experienced everything that He experienced so that He can relate to us and be a merciful and faithful high priest. That's mind blowing. No matter what you're going through, Jesus understands. Isn't it wonderful when you have a friend, if you're really struggling with someone, and you have someone say, "I understand what you're going through," and they really do? That's a rare thing, isn't it? So often when we go through tragic circumstances, painful circumstances, haven't you felt the longing? "I wish somebody understood what I'm going through right now." Maybe it's not a tragedy. Maybe it's an emotional upset that you're dealing with, just some difficult emotional things you're going through in your life, and there's just nobody that knows exactly what I'm going through. How we long for someone to say, "I know how you feel."

The Lord Jesus Christ, no matter what circumstance you or I ever find ourselves in, no matter how bleak or how bad or even how light it might seem—you know how sometimes you get through something and you think, "That really wasn't that bad, but I sure felt terrible. Why was I crying so much about that?" No matter what circumstance you ever will face, Jesus Christ can come to you and say, "I know what you're going through," and He knows it. "I know how you feel. I know what it is to feel afraid." He never sinned in being afraid, but He knows what it's like to be afraid. He knows what it's like to be troubled. Three times in John's Gospel already he's told us Jesus was troubled, before Jesus says, "Don't let your hearts be troubled." In John 11:32, Mary falls down before Him and says, "Jesus, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

Now, think about that. If I were Jesus at this point, I think I would have thought, "Well hey, do you forget who I am? I'm going to fix all this. Just calm down. Stop crying." But do you know what Jesus did? Jesus, when He saw her weeping, and the Jews who were with her, weeping, He was deeply moved in Spirit and was troubled. He felt with her what she was going through. Why waste Your time doing that, Lord Jesus? You know what You're going to do. He came to experience what we've experienced. He didn't bypass the feeling. He went through it. He immersed Himself in the moment, and then later we read the shortest verse in the Bible: "He wept." He was troubled and He wept. He thought through all the implications of what had happened, and He experienced, and He thought about the brokenness that death brings, and He mourned over it. And so when you are bereaved, you have a Savior who knows what it's like to be bereaved and who knows it far better than you, because He knows the ugliness of death with greater clarity, He who is life Himself. He knows the uncertainty of the future and the anxiety of that.

Now, this is something that's mysterious. When we come to the full deity of Christ and the full humanity of Christ, we find ourselves at points where we're just unable to plumb the depths completely. Let me just be clear about that. But I think when we look at what the Bible says about the Lord Jesus is that it says that when He laid aside, though He existed in the form of God, He didn't regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself. What did He do? He didn't empty Himself of His deity. He still remained God. There's a sense in which He still upheld all things by the word of His power, but He emptied Himself of His prerogatives as God, and there are moments where I think He's using His omniscience, and there are moments when He's not. And there are moments when He's not, so that He can understand what it's like not to know what's going to happen. I'll give you an example in John 12, another one of the times He's troubled. We saw this when we were looking at that statement in Verse 27:

John 12:27 ~ "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'?"

His soul becomes troubled in a moment and the hour comes upon Him. When you read it carefully, what happens before that is remember there are some Greeks that come to Philip, and they say, "We'd like to see Jesus." They're Gentiles. Jesus is always ministering to Jews, but there are some Gentiles who come to Jerusalem and they want to see Jesus, and so Philip tells Andrew, and Andrew and Philip go and tell Jesus. And when Jesus hears it, He doesn't say anything about, "Bring them on in." We don't hear anything about how He responds to them, to those Greeks that want to see Him. I mean, I'm sure they get to hear what He says, but He didn't go and say, "Hey, I'm glad you guys came. Welcome to Jerusalem." He says in Verse 23, hearing them say that, "The Greeks have come and they want to see You," He says:

John 12:23 ~ "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone;..."

This was the signal that means that the cross is right there. "When the Greeks come to you," the Father's let Him know. "When the Gentiles come to You, then You know it's time." He didn't wake up that morning thinking, "Today's the day the Greeks are going to come." Now, He could have in His omniscience, but I think He's living as true Man, and so that's why He's troubled by it. He's living as a man dependent upon the Father. He's saying every moment, how does He live His life? "Whatever I see the Father doing, that I do."

He could have done it all on His own, but He didn't. He came to live as true Man in dependence upon the Father. So He knows what it's like to not know when. Even later He says, "Only the Father knows the day or the hour when I return." There's something in the economy of the Godhead where this sense of dependence, the Son of God, the eternal Son of God, when He becomes Man, experiences this with us. So you say you don't know what's going to happen in your future. None of us know, do we?

I remember hearing someone talk about this image that if you really think about it, we don't think this way that often, because mostly every day we get up, we do the same thing, basically. The kids go to school, do their school work, whatever. We go to work, we eat the meals that we eat, and we think about going to the grocery store. There are just certain things we do, right? There's a birthday coming up. All these things, right? But then something happens. Tragedy strikes and everything changes. And you didn't see it until the moment it happened. Think about that. The moment before tragedy strikes, you had no idea it was coming. Someone has used this image. It's kind of like we're walking through life and there is a great veil that is right before our nose, and the veil separates the future from the present, and we don't know what's on the other side of that veil, and that is reality.

Having good self-esteem and thinking kind thoughts about yourself isn't going to help you cope with that. The reality is that you have to trust the God who is controlling the future. That's His providence. But you have something more wonderful than that. You have a Savior who's walking with you who understands exactly what you're experiencing. He knows what it's like to be completely dependent upon His Father for His direction for that day. He knows what it's like to know not exactly what tomorrow's going to hold. "I'm going to do what the Father gives Me to do. What the Father gives Me to do, I'm going to do."

He knows what it's like to be betrayed. I mentioned earlier he showed that He's the *I am* by prophesying of Judas' betrayal, Verse 19:

John 13:19 ~ ...so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He. 20 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me." 21 When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me."

He has known, because He has known this part of the plan. And of course, as I said, this is a mystery of how it all works together, but according to Verse 2, He knew that Judas already had it in his heart to betray Him. In Verse 11, He said, “Not all of you are clean.” In Verse 17 and 18, He says it again. But here in Verse 21, it’s like it overwhelms Him. The fact that He’s being betrayed by one of His own troubles Him. So if you are betrayed, the person that you have poured your life into, the person that you have invested your heart into, you feel like you’ve given of yourself so much and they betray you—it can happen in a marriage. Someone has said that divorce is more painful than losing your spouse to death. It’s hard to compare, but in one sense, I understand that if you’re talking about the betrayal, the violation of the covenant, when hatred comes up from what should have been love, when you’ve loved and the person hates you, how do you deal with that? Well, you can look to a Savior who can say to you, “I understand what you’re going through.” The wonder of it is that we not only have a God who knows what’s happening on the other side of the veil, but we have a God who comes with us in the boat.

I mean, we’re in the boat. We don’t know where we’re going, and He comes and He gets in the boat with us. That’s exactly what happened in John 6. This is one of the times Jesus said, “I am,” one of the absolute statements. Remember in John 6 when Jesus sends the disciples on ahead after He feeds the 5,000? He walks down to the boat with them at the Sea of Galilee, sees them off, and then He goes up onto the mountain to pray. They’re out on the lake, the Sea of Galilee, and the storm winds blow up, and the waves are crashing, and we have the other accounts from the other Gospels that they’re scared to death. And then they see Jesus walking on the water, and they don’t know who He is at first, and He says, in English it says, “It is I.” In the Greek it says, “Ego eimi.” (I am.) Suddenly the storm calms and He gets in the boat, and suddenly they’re where they were going.

He comes into your storm and He is willing to get in the boat with you, but the wonder of it is that the one who gets in the boat with you is the great *I am*. He’s the one who holds the future. He’s the one who is completely in control of everything that is happening to you, and yet He comes to walk through the valley with you. The reason He does is because the object of God from the very beginning in Genesis 2 was to know us and love us. It doesn’t make sense that a transcendent God who’s so majestic that He could speak the worlds into being, and yet He would want to stoop down to breathe on man and make him alive, and want to walk with man in the cool of the day, but that is the reality of the God of the Bible.

So Jesus says, “When you’re tempted to be anxious, when you’re tempted to be overwhelmed with fear, what you need to remember is you need to place your trust in Me. I am a God who is ready to meet you in the moment. Even if you don’t feel My presence,” which often we don’t when the storm clouds are raging, we don’t feel His presence, but He is faithful to His word. This is where you place your faith in what you know to be true. Jesus has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” He says to them a little bit later in this chapter, “I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you.” Through the Holy Spirit He comes and makes His abode with us now. He is God with us, and He is God who is not only with us, but He takes action. He’s a God who does what is necessary. The emphasis on action in the verse is, “I’m going. I’m going to prepare a place. I’m going, going and preparing.” Four times it says He’s going.

John 14:2 ~ ...I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3 ~ If I go and prepare a place for you,...

John 14:4 ~ And you know the way where I am going.” 5 Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?”

He continues to emphasize going, going, going. He’s going to do what needs to be done. He’s going to the cross, and His cross work is going too, when He comes and gets in the boat with you, He has the riches of heaven with Him, because He went. He doesn’t come just as someone who can relate. That is wonderful. He can relate. How precious it is, but He comes as someone with His arms full of blessing and treasure because of what He’s accomplished. He went. He did the cross work. He has brought now full access to the throne of God. He has brought full unrestricted access to the grace of God. The riches of His grace are lavished on us (Ephesians 1:6-7). We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). He went and He’s prepared a place.

It’s interesting, and we’re going to talk more about heaven, that’s the third point, next time. But *prepared a place*, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again. I’m going to prepare a place. He repeats that twice. *Prepare a place* twice. The word *prepare* means to make ready, to do all that is necessary. We have a Savior who feels what we feel, who gets in the boat with us, who has all the resources of heaven at His disposal, and who has done everything necessary to get us home.

The idea here is the word *prepared* comes from a concept in the ancient near east where they would prepare the way for the king. John the Baptist quotes this, saying, "I'm preparing the way for the Messiah," quoting Isaiah 40:3. The idea is the ancient oriental king, an ancient near eastern king, would come, his procession would come only after the way had been prepared. He would send people ahead to clear the way, make the way clear and safe, and then the king would come through. And He says, "What I'm doing is I'm going to the Father to make the way clear and safe for you."

A friend of mine, a guy that used to attend this church, Larry Harrison, Larry and Mary, a wonderful couple that were a part of our church for a number of years, Larry is in the Secret Service, and I've talked to him a little bit about what he does. He's been with the President a number of times, different presidential candidates he's had to watch out for. He says whenever the President is going to go somewhere, usually it's not known where he's going. Have you noticed that? He'll be in Atlanta and you didn't know it. The President's motorcade is going through Atlanta. Well, they don't tell everybody, but everybody in the Secret Service and everybody that needs to know, knows. In fact, Larry said they come a couple days early and they prepare the way. They scope everything out, they make sure that everything's safe, and then the President when he comes, he is protected. That's an image of what Jesus has done for us. He's saying that, "I have made it safe for you as a sinner to come into the very house of God to live with Him forever. I have made the way. I have prepared the way. I have done everything that is necessary."

Now, the emphasis in the passage is on the actual arrival. You know, you have a dwelling place in God's house. I've prepared it. But the argument is from the greater to the lesser. If I have prepared that part of the path, does it not also follow that I've prepared the whole way? It would be like the Secret Service making sure that the last part of the motorcade was clear, "But wait, we didn't cover the first ten miles. That's where the terrorists struck." No, He's saying He's prepared everything. From the moment He places His grace upon you and brings you to Himself, He has prepared the way for you to get straight to your place in heaven, and that avenue is made clear, and there's nothing that can stop it from happening. He hasn't forgotten any detail.

In fact, this is part of what I think he's saying in Ephesians 2:10. After he talks about our being saved by grace through faith, he says, "For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which He has prepared (same word) beforehand that we should walk in them." God has laid out your whole life, and every trial that you go through is a good work that He's prepared

for you. He's done everything necessary. He's brought all the resources, and He's going to walk with you through it. And Jesus says when you're tempted to anxiety and fear, think about the fact and put your trust in, activate your faith, believe in God, remind yourself of the truth of who He is in His providence, and then put your confidence in My presence. And if you do that, your heart's not going to be troubled, because if the Lord Jesus Christ comes and gets in the boat, He calms the sea.

When you remember that He's there no matter what's happening around you—and circumstances may go from bad to worse around us, but when He's with us and in the boat, there's peace and there's joy, and the wonder of it is when you focus upon Him, what happens is this is why He's doing such a great work—even through our trials and tribulations, even through our suffering, there's something about those things that helps me to look to Him. I remember, “Wait a minute, yes,” and it makes me even more sure of my place there. “Yes, You are with me and I'm more sure today after going through this trial than I was yesterday, that I'm almost home, and that nothing can stop that.” So the Lord says the way to overcome fear and anxiety is stop letting your troubles trouble you and start putting your faith into practice.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer...

Father, we thank You for the wonder of who You are—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—Triune God, so wonderful, so glorious. We acknowledge our faltering faith, our weakness. Forgive us, Lord, for our unbelief. We say with the man who needed to be healed, “Lord, we do believe. Help our unbelief.” Help us to rest our assurance more firmly than ever upon the truth of who You are and what You've done.

We pray for those that are here that have not even yet today given themselves to You, that are trying to make it through this life without full surrender to a Savior who will save them and walk with them. Grant them eyes to see and ears to hear, to place their faith completely in the finished work of Jesus Christ upon the cross, that in His suffering, in His agony, He paid for the sins of everyone who would ever believe, and His resurrection declares it to be a glorious victory. Father, we pray that You would help us to walk by faith and not by sight, and we pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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