

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

717 North Stapley Drive, Mesa, AZ 85203 Phone: (480) 833-7500

Series:	Scripture Memory		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	119		Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	John 14:1-6		
Date:	October 8, 2023 (a.m.)		

THE CURE FOR TROUBLED HEARTS (Part II)

The opening words of John 14:1 are to be understood in light of Jesus' words of warning to Peter at the end of chapter 13. Tenney notes, "The counsel of 14:1 was doubtless the outcome of the attitude of the ten as they listened to Jesus' words of warning to Peter, and of the dismay that all of them felt when Jesus announced that He was about to leave them. If their leader and spokesman were soon to deny Jesus, how could they trust themselves? If Jesus were leaving them, would they not be helpless and friendless in the midst of a hostile city? Terror must have gripped them and have appeared on their pale faces and in their frightened eyes. Then Jesus gave to them another command: *Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me.* The first counsel was directed against disunity; this exhortation was a cure for fear."¹ None of us are free from being troubled by all sorts of things. We learn from John 13:21 that Jesus himself had been deeply troubled the Greek word is *tarassō* and is used in John 11:33 and 13:21 to describe the intense emotional distress that Jesus experienced. Boice points out: "It would not be necessary to make so much of this point if it were not that there is a kind of Pollyanna Christianity in our day that seeks to deny it. It is the kind of Christianity that pretends that there are no troubles for any truly surrendered child of God. This view of life takes Romans 8:28 to mean that only good things come into the life of one who truly loves God (*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him*), rather than seeing that the verse actually says that evil will indeed come but that God will nevertheless accomplish his own good purposes in spite of it. This view is unrealistic and uninformed, for evil does exist. Troubles do come. Death is an enemy. So, rather than denying these things, we must begin by a realistic recognition of them. Obviously, it was this that prompted Christ's saying, for it was clear to him that from a human viewpoint the disciples, to whom he was speaking, had cause for deep agitation."²

- I. **THE REASONS FOR THE DISCIPLES' CONDITION.** Their hearts were troubled. The language is figurative. The word rendered "troubled" literally means, "agitated as the water in a pool is by a tempest." Strong, especially painful feeling, such as anxiety, fear, sorrow, produces violent movement of the heart – and thus the agitation or troubling of the heart, comes naturally to signify, "the restless painful emotions which the mind experiences, when evil is experienced or anticipated." The disciples, at this time, were powerfully influenced by such emotions. They were anxious, sorrowful, fearful.³
- II. **THE CURE FOR HEART TROUBLE.** Jesus calls them to have faith in God *and* in Him. The same idea is found in John 12:44 where Jesus declared "Whoever believes in me is actually believing, not in me, but in Him who sent me." It is negatively put this way in 1 John 2:23, "Anyone who denies the Son does not possess the Father." B. B. Warfield informs us that "the English word *faith* came into the language under influence of the French, and is but a modification of the Latin *fides*, which is itself cognate with the Greek *pistis*. Its root meaning seems to be that of *binding*. Whatever we discover to be binding on us is the object of *faith*. The corresponding Germanic term, represented by the English word *believe* (and the German *glauben*), goes back to a root meaning *to be agreeable*

(represented by our English *life*), and seems to present the object of belief as something which we *esteem* – which we have *estimated* or *weighed* and *approved*. The notion of *constraint* is perhaps less prominent in *belief* than in *faith*, its place being taken in *belief* by that of *approval*. We *believe* in what we find worthy of our confidence; we *have faith* in what compels our confidence. But it would be easy to press this too far, and it is likely that the two terms *faith*, *belief* really express much the same idea. In the natural use of language, therefore, which is normally controlled by what we call etymology, that is, by the intrinsic connotation of the terms, when we say *faith*, *belief*, our minds are preoccupied with the grounds of the conviction expressed: we are speaking of a mental act or state to which we feel constrained by considerations objective to ourselves, or at least to the act or state in question. The conception embodied in the terms *belief*, *faith* in other words, is not that of an arbitrary act of the subject's; it is that of a mental state or act which is determined by sufficient reasons . . . that is to say, with respect to belief, it is a mental recognition of what is before the mind, as objectively true and real, and therefore depends on the evidence and cannot arise apart from it. It is, therefore, impossible that belief should be the produce of a volition; volitions look to the future and represent our desires; beliefs look to the present and represent our findings."⁴ There are three main constructions of the verb *pisteuō* in John's writings: 1. The construction normally used to indicate belief in a fact or in a person's word. This is found twenty-one times; 2. The construction where the verb occurs without any expressed object and is normally translated by the simple word *believe*, as in Jn. 1:50. This is found thirty times; 3. The construction where the preposition *in* follows the verb. The Greek word literally means *into*, and the phrase often expresses what Bishop Westcott called *faith-union with Christ*, belief *into* Him. This construction occurs thirty-seven times.⁵ D. A. Carson rightly says that the language used here "assumes a formidably high Christology, for they link Jesus with the Father as an appropriate object of faith. For thoughtful readers of the Gospel, however, the link is almost inevitable. If Jesus invariably speaks the words of God and performs the acts of God (5:19ff.), should he not be trusted like God? If *he* tells his followers not to let their hearts be troubled, must it not be because he has ample and justifiable reason?"⁶ Jesus tells his troubled disciples to place their trust explicitly in Him.

CONCLUSION: One very widespread notion is the assumption that all the various religions actually believe in the same God, they simply use different names in reference to the Supreme Being. In addition to this misconception is the equally false presumption that simply acknowledging the idea that God exists constitutes *belief* in God. "Belief in God," says Clouser, "is a wholehearted love for God that commits the believer's entire being to God in unconditional trust."⁷ J. Gresham Machen made this important observation, "It is perfectly true, of course, that faith in a person is more than acceptance of a creed, but the Bible is quite right in holding that it *always* involves acceptance of a creed. Confidence in a person is more than intellectual assent to a series of propositions about the person, but it *always* involves those propositions, and becomes impossible the moment they are denied. It is quite impossible to trust a person about whom one assents to propositions that make the person untrustworthy, or fails to assent to propositions that make him trustworthy. Assent to certain propositions is not the whole of faith, but it is an absolutely necessary element in faith. So assent to certain propositions about God is not all of faith in God, but it is necessary to faith in God; and Christian faith, in particular, though it is more than assent to a creed, is absolutely impossible without assent to a creed. One cannot trust a God whom one holds with the mind to be either non-existent or untrustworthy."⁸ One of the major difficulties that we encounter in our society (and within the rank and file of contemporary evangelicalism) is the growing popularity of mysticism. Among other things, mysticism (especially the type that is around today) exalts experience at the expense of thought. Feelings are what mysticism pursues. But this is not the Biblical way.⁹ Machen correctly warned, "In particular, those who discard theology in the interest of experience are inclined to make use of a personal way of talking and thinking about God to which they have no right."¹⁰

ENDNOTES

¹M. C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* (Eerdmans, 1948), p. 212.

²J. M. Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary IV* (Baker Books, 1985), p. 1058.

³John Brown, *Discourses and Sayings of Our Lord III* (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1990), p. 5.

⁴B. B. Warfield, "On Faith In Its Psychological Aspect," *Biblical and Theological Studies* (rpt. P&R, 1968), pp. 375, 377.

⁵cf. H. K. Moulton, *The Challenge of The Concordance* (Bagster & Sons, 1977), p. 171.

⁶D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans, 1991), p. 488.

⁷R. Clouser, *Knowing With the Heart: Religious Experience and Belief In God* (IVP, 1999), p. 19.

⁸J. G. Machen, *What is Faith?* (rpt. Eerdmans, 1979), p. 48.

⁹Richard Cimino and Don Lattin, in their highly acclaimed work *Shopping for Faith: American Religion in the New Millennium* (Jossey-Boss, 1998) documented how widespread this tendency is in much of modern evangelicalism, "These congregations are marked by flexibility. Services may have no fixed order, and they can be held in afternoons or on Saturday. The sermons are more a source of teaching than preaching. They focus on practical matters, such as family concerns and personal growth, not doctrine, sometimes mixing psychotherapeutic concept with biblical teaching. They often emphasize religious experience. They seek to feel God's love, not understand church theology – a theme that plays well with the decreasing importance of denominational doctrine among baby boomers," p. 57.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 36.