



"Worry often gives a small thing a big shadow."
—Swedish Proverb

10-Feb-17

Overcoming Troubled Hearts (Part One)

Without question, we live in a strife-ridden world, one torn by wars, by famine, by disease and sickness, by destructive natural disasters, by injustices and corrupt governments run by self-seeking politicians who act like spoiled children ([Isaiah 3:4](#)). Ours is a world polluted by demonic powers, and in this satanically-inspired culture, man perverts and distorts what is good and wholesome. In the process, people slide further and further away from [God](#).

As it was in Isaiah's day, evil is called good, and good evil; darkness is substituted for light and light for darkness; bitter is substituted for sweet and sweet for bitter ([Isaiah 5:20](#)). The root of the problem is that people have become wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight ([Isaiah 5:21](#)). We now live in a time when not only have we taken prayer out of the schools, but it is also against the law for a teacher or even a judge to have a copy of the Ten Commandments in his class or courtroom. Whether we are reading the daily paper, listening to the radio, or watching television, the news is filled with the fruits of discouragement and even despair.

In addition, the church of God has been scattered, and many of the brethren we loved and fellowshiped with have vanished from our lives. Too many

have given up the hope that was once in them, returning to [the world](#) and all its practices. Our trials and persecutions are intensifying. Our [faith](#) is being severely tried.

Any and all of these things can cause our hearts to be troubled.

With His betrayer dismissed ([John 13:30-31](#)), [the crucifixion](#) before Him, and His departure from this life near at hand, our Savior sought to encourage His disciples with some final instruction designed to provide help for troubled hearts. This element is marked out by Jesus' words in [John 14:1](#), 27:

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. . . . [Peace](#) I leave with you. My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

In view of the perplexed hearts of the disciples, these verses point us to two problems and two needs every disciple faces in his or her walk through the world toward God's Kingdom. The first problem is troubled hearts, but we should note up front that a troubled heart is really the result of a deeper problem that will be addressed later.

The first need is in Jesus' command, "Let not your heart be troubled." Underlying "troubled" is the Greek word *tarass*?. Literally, it means "to trouble or disturb by displacing someone or something from its normal state." In [John 5:7](#), we see this in physical terms, when the people were [waiting](#) for the still water of the pool of Bethesda to be agitated, stirred, disturbed in some way. Metaphorically, it means "to cause inward commotion, take away calmness of mind, and disturb one's equanimity." Thus, it suggests disquiet, restlessness, anxiety, or distress. A person who is spiritually troubled feels struck to his core with fear and dread.

We must not allow our English translation, "Let not your heart be troubled," to imply mere permissiveness. What Jesus said is more forceful: "Do not let your heart be troubled," or "You must not let your heart be troubled." He is actually commanding the cessation of our troubled hearts. "Stop being

troubled in heart!" In other words, we are to take steps to calm the agitation of our hearts. The disciples were troubled, and the Lord was calling on them to deal with their fears.

The second problem, the root of it, is fear coupled with unbelief. Here, we find the second need, but it is one that, when corrected, also becomes the solution. Consider [Matthew 19:16-22](#):

Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and mother,' and, 'You shall [love](#) your neighbor as yourself.'" The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

First, why did Jesus ask him, "Why do you call Me good?" His underlying question is, "Do you really believe that I am God in the flesh?" Apparently, the man did not, because if he had believed, he would have sacrificed everything to follow Him. Jesus knew that he really did not believe that he was the Son of God.

Second, what did Christ offer him? He offered him a place or position in the Kingdom of God—certainly the opportunity to be in the first resurrection—when He said, "If you want to be perfect, give up all you have and follow Me." It is the same opportunity that has been opened to us, going on to perfection ([Hebrews 6:1](#)). We, too, must be willing to give up everything to follow Him: our wealth, our position, our possessions, our families, and even our lives. Did Christ not say, "He who loses his life for My sake shall find it" ([Matthew 10:39](#))?

This example shows that the young man's fear of losing his security—which was in his possessions, his wealth, and not in God—coupled with his unbelief that [Jesus was God](#) in the flesh, caused him to have a troubled heart. It expressed itself as visible sorrow.

It is vital for us to understand that—even though we, like this man, may be trying to keep the commandments—destructive fear (as opposed to the fear of God) together with unbelief can turn us away from following [Jesus Christ](#) and cause us to lose our opportunity to be part of God's [firstfruits](#). This is why we must not let ourselves become overwhelmed by our emotions during unsettling times—why Jesus commands us to get a grip on our hearts and let His peace comfort us. For God is "the Father of mercies and God of all comfort" ([II Corinthians 1:3](#)).

- Clyde Finklea

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Be Anxious For Nothing](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Fear is a normal human emotion. People naturally worry about their own welfare and the welfare of their loved ones, even though our God and Savior tells us to be anxious about nothing. Fears are pervasive and have deep tentacles, making them seemingly impossible to shake off. Stress (other than the several kinds of eustress) describes the negative effects of fear or anxiety to our nervous system, opening us up to many diseases, some of which may become fatal. God wants us to temper our fears with a change of perspective, realizing He has promised to ultimately rescue the children of Jacob after He makes an end of the world's godless regimes. We need to have the depth of faith and knowledge of God to realize He is with us and will rescue us, providing we trust Him, making Him our dwelling place, living obediently according to His commands, loving Him, serving Him with willing sacrificial service, and calling upon Him in constant communicative prayer, which by doing we could conquer our myriad fears and anxieties by

changing our focus from earthly to heavenly things, growing continually in righteousness and godliness. We need to take everything to God in prayer, ensuring the peace of God will abound in our lives.

From the Archives: Featured Article

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by John W. Ritenbaugh

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