



"Unbelief seizes truth, grasps it roughly, silences its voice and twists it away from God's intended purpose."

—Os Guinness

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Overcoming Troubled Hearts (Part Two)

In Part One, we considered how fear, when combined with unbelief, can turn us aside from following our Savior [Jesus Christ](#) and endanger our chance to be included among God's firstfruits. In this vein, notice the total contrast of outcomes in [Revelation 21:7-8](#):

He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his [God](#), and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the [second death](#).

The fearful and the unbelieving are grouped with the abominable, killers, whoremongers, enchanters, pagans, and deceivers! Fear and unbelief are a deadly duo to our progress toward the [Kingdom of God](#), and as we see here, they can strike a fatal blow to our [hope](#) of eternal life. We cannot allow our troubled hearts to lead us away from God and His purpose for us.

Two vital elements will deliver us from the destructive fear and unbelief that are at the root of our troubled hearts.

The first element is [faith](#). We cannot say that we trust God and remain fearful at the same time. We have been called to have a relationship with God through belief or faith in Him ([Galatians 3:26](#); [Ephesians 3:12](#), 17; [II Timothy 3:15](#); [I Peter 1:5](#)). As Jesus points out in [John 14:1-11](#), to believe in God is to also believe in Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life." The whole of Christian life is to live by faith—or trust or reliance—on God. We have such a great and awesome God that there is no need for fear.

From the questions His disciples were asking in this passage, their hearts were clearly troubled by the uncertainty of what would happen to them. Uncertainty, ignorance, or a lack of spiritual understanding about God and His plan weaken our faith. This naturally results in troubled hearts. The disciples had troubled hearts because they lacked understanding of God's Word as it related to the sufferings of the Messiah. Though this is clearly taught in the Old Testament (for instance, in Psalm

22 and Isaiah 53), they had not yet grasped the necessity of [the crucifixion](#) to God's plan of salvation. They believed in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, but they were struggling with His repeated comments about His death and resurrection.

[Psalm 56:3](#) provides an answer to this problem: "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You." Notice the verse does not say "*if* I am afraid," but "*when*." There will be times fear will strike us, but we must quickly turn to God in faith, believing in the power and mercy of our Savior and that what He is allowing to happen to us is for our good now and in His Kingdom. The next verse reads, "In God (I will praise His Word), in God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?" ([Psalm 56:4](#)).

The apostle Paul urges, "Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one" ([Ephesians 6:16](#)). Fear is one of Satan's fiery darts. The shield of faith will extinguish it—and all the other kinds of troubles the Devil throws at us.

A second element that will help us overcome fear and unbelief is *love*. The apostle John writes in [I John 4:18](#): "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." There is but one perfect love, the love of God, whose love is in us, and "He who is in you is greater than he who is in [the world](#)" ([I John 4:4](#)).

In [John 13:34](#) and 15:12, Jesus gives us a new commandment, to love one another as He has loved us. The command that God's people love one another was, of course, not new (see [Leviticus 19:18](#); [Deuteronomy 6:5](#)). As an outworking of love for God, loving others is at the heart of God's law and expresses the last six of the Ten Commandments. So why does the Lord call this "a new commandment"?

"New" is the Greek *kainos*, which often denotes what is qualitatively new as compared to what has existed until now. That is, which is better: what is old or what is young or recent? *Kainos* describes what is new in the sense of "unused" or "fresh." So, while the idea of loving others was not new in the sense of "recent," it was new in the sense that no one had fully manifested God's love as had the Savior in such a sacrificial way—such love was unused.

In contrast to the practices of the self-righteous Pharisees, Jesus had come to fulfill the law and demonstrate its true meaning in both love to God and in love for others. The new commandment to love one another, then, is based on His example: "as I have loved you." The command is new because it is a special love for other believers based on the sacrificial example of Christ's love.

When tribulation comes upon us, we must realize that God will be testing our faith and love toward Him and each other. With faith in God—without which it is impossible to please Him ([Hebrews 11:6](#))—and with our hearts filled with His perfect love, we are equipped with the two elements we need to overcome the destructive fear and unbelief that cause troubled hearts.

Scripture exhorts us to be filled with the Spirit ([Ephesians 5:18](#)) and by using it to be filled with the fruit of the Spirit—the godly virtues listed in [Galatians 5:22-23](#). How do we know if we are "full of love" or "full of faith," for example? Consider a water-saturated sponge. If we put even slight pressure on the sponge, water runs out. We immediately know what fills the sponge.

The same is true with us. We can tell what fills us on the inside by what comes out under pressure. We need to ask ourselves, "Do our faith and love come out when under trial, or is it something else?"

Our hearts will continue to be troubled until we can overcome our fear and unbelief with godly faith and love.

- Clyde Finklea

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Fear and Love](#)

by David C. Grabbe

David Grabbe, focusing upon the topic of phobias or irrational fears, warns us that timidity and fearfulness may seriously hinder our spiritual lives, ultimately (if not repented of) making us candidates for the lake of fire. Paul counsels Timothy that stirring up God's Holy Spirit within us serves as an antidote against debilitating fear and timidity. Paradoxically, fear of God displaces baseless irrational fears. If we fear God, we do not have to fear anything else. A sound mind (filled with God's Holy Spirit — especially the fruit of love) banishes self-centered fear and torment. If we don't fear God, we will have the tendency to fear anything and everything else.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Fruit of the Spirit: Faithfulness](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Faithlessness is the essence of mankind's general character at the end of the age. However, faithfulness is to be a hallmark of a true Christian. How can we become more faithful? How can we be true to the course God has laid out for us?

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