

## **John: Comfort**

**John 14:1-14**

**By Dr. Derek Thomas**

*April 6, 2003*

Turn with me, if you would, in your Bibles, to the gospel of John. We are in the upper room, and are following the words and actions of Jesus in these final hours before He is arrested and taken to be tried and crucified. He has just, in chapter 13, predicted and prophesied the betrayal of Judas Iscariot, and the denial of Simon Peter, two of His disciple band. And in that sense, then, it's not surprising that His next words are the words of the first verse of chapter 14, "Let not your heart be troubled." Let's hear the word of God.

Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in Me. 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. 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. And you know the way where I am going." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him. Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

*So far God's holy, inerrant word, may He add His blessing to the reading of it. Let's pray together. Our Father, as we come now to this extraordinary, well-known portion o Scripture, we pray that by Your Spirit You would make it*

*meaningful to us. Once again illumine Your word in our hearts for Jesus' sake, Amen.*

In 1553, Calvin was at the height of his power in Geneva, but in London, there was a young man, 19 years of age, named William Hunter. Edward VI had just died; his sister, Mary, Bloody Mary as she is called, had just come to the throne--staunch Roman Catholic that she was. And William Hunter had been discovered reading a copy of the English Bible, the Bible in English. He was arrested and taken to prison and he was to be there for about 18 months or so. He was given many opportunities to make some kind of recantation, but on the 26th of March, 1555, the 21 year-old William Hunter was led to a place in London known as Burntwood, and there he was chained to a pole to be burnt alive. His father and brother were in attendance. His brother recorded the event. His father urged him, spoke to him words of comfort, and the 21 year-old William said to his father, "God be with you, good father, and be of good comfort, when we shall all meet again and we shall be merry." And as the fires were lit, the father urged him to think on the passion of Jesus, and not to be afraid, and from the flames came the words of a 21 year-old young man, William Hunter, "I am not afraid, I am not afraid." And then those words from Acts 7, the words of Stephen, "Lord, receive my spirit."

Well, these disciples were fearful, and to some extent, they were fearful of their lives. They knew what was going on in Jerusalem. They'd heard Jesus predicting His own demise. They'd just heard words of Jesus predicting the betrayal of one and the denial of another of those among the disciple band, and they were afraid, understandably afraid. And Jesus says to them, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God" or perhaps, "You do believe in God; keep on believing in Me."

Now, this portion contains one of the most well known verses in the New Testament, I suppose. I've tried to think of the number of times I've quoted John 14:1 in times of stress or difficulty or trial. "Let not your hearts be troubled. Do not be afraid." And then again in verse 6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me." And it's almost impossible to read this narrative without these two verses, as it were, coming out and focusing themselves upon us.

But I want us to see these verses in the context of what Jesus is saying here in the upper room, and to find that actually a central theme emerging here, and that is that the way of comfort for the disciples of Jesus Christ is to know and realize that our Father in heaven cares for us--that we have a heavenly Father who cares for us. Now, in these 14 verses there are 11 of them that are the words of Jesus Himself, and on 12 occasions in these 11 verses, Jesus mentions the Father. It is, then, as one theologian has called this section, "The Father Sermon." Jesus is speaking to His disciples who are afraid, who are troubled, who are distressed, and He's saying to them, "Let not your hearts be troubled." This is Jesus' remedy for serious heart problems. This is Jesus the spiritual

cardiologist, if you like, pointing to heart trouble, and pointing to how that heart trouble can be alleviated.

There are two questions asked in this section, though there may have been more, for you get the impression in this discourse that John has simply selected some of the things that he could remember from the upper room, and he selects two questions; one by Phillip and one by Thomas, because they serve the purposes of his gospel. He writes this gospel in order that we might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that believing that we might have life in His name. And these two questions, from Phillip and Thomas, serve that end in a remarkable way.

### **I. Thomas' question. We don't know the way.**

I want us then to look the question of Thomas, and to see what Jesus is saying by way of response. "Do you see that I am the only way to the Father?" Jesus has just said, "And you know the way where I am going," and the question comes in verse 5, where Thomas says to Jesus, "Lord, we do not know where You are going." Thomas is often portrayed, and probably rightly so, as a pessimist, as someone who is by temperament gloomy and somewhat morose, perhaps. The kind of man who sees the glass is always half empty. "We do not know the way," he says. It's a lack of faith that brings him to ask these questions. It's alright for You to say You're going to the Father, but we don't know the way. We don't know the way to the Father. And Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. And no one comes to the Father but by Me." I am the way to the Father. I am the truth of the Father. I am the life that the Father bestows. He is true, in the sense, that the Old Testament, and this is peculiarly John; John uses this word true in contrast with the Old Testament, and Moses especially, in which the meaning was shadow, fleeting shadow, just a picture of the salvation that Jesus is going to bring. He is the true, the real, the substantial, the fulfillment, all that had been pictured in the Old Testament has come to fruition and flower now in Jesus Christ. He is the life, because the life of the Father is constantly present in the ministry and words of Jesus. He's enjoyed the Father's life from all eternity, and He is the only way to the Father.

You catch, of course, the exclusivity of what Jesus is saying here. There's no escaping it. He is the only way to the Father. There is no other mediator. There is no other way into the presence of the Father, to know the Father, to have life from the Father. He's the only way. Not Mohammed. Not the way of Buddhism. Not the way of Shintoism. Not the way of all the great sophisticated religions of the world; it's only through Jesus. Thomas A' Kempis, the author of the book, *The Imitation of Christ*, puts it this way, "Without the way, there is no going; and without the truth there is no knowing; and without the life there is no living." So in answer to Thomas' question, "How can I come to know the Father," the most important question we can ask, Jesus points to Himself and says, "It's only

through Me.” Unless you come through the Son by faith in the Son you cannot come to know the Father.

## **II. Phillip's question. Just show us the Father.**

But that leads to a second question, this time from Phillip. Not only is Jesus the way to the Father, but through Him we come to know the Father. Do you see, He says to Phillip, that I am the revelation of the Father? It's the question that Phillip puts in verse 8, and isn't it a disarming question, “Lord, show us the father and it is enough for us.” Lord, just show us the Father. Lord, just part the trappings of heaven and glory and give us a little glimpse of the Father. That's all we need. That's all we ask for. It comes from Phillip, quiet, deeply spiritual member of the disciple band, and yet Jesus receives Phillip's question with a sense of disappointment. “Have you been so long with Me? Have you been with Me for all this time, Phillip, and yet the penny hasn't dropped? Still you don't understand. He who has seen Me, has seen the Father. I and My Father are One.” What an extraordinary thing to say.

Look at what He goes on to say in verse 10. “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative but the Father abiding in Me does His work. I am in the Father; the Father is in Me.” Oh, you've got to read the notes for this evening's sermon. You know, in the bulletin. Extraordinary doctrine emerging out of the early Church called *perichoresis* or *circumincessio* -- the Son in the Father; the Father in the Son. It's a picture of communion and fellowship. It's like two people in love. Remember that? Gazing into one another's eyes and lost, as it were, as they concentrate all of their energies and beings as they just gaze at each other. That's the kind of picture that Jesus is using here. They have eye-to-eye contact - - face to face. No one knows the Father like the Son knows the Father, and no one knows the Son like the Father knows the Son. Do you remember what John said back in chapter 1, verse 18? This is how John puts it. “No man has seen God at any time, the only begotten God. God the one and only who is in the bosom of the Father. (John uses the word to exegete here.) He has exegeted Him; He has told us what the Father is like.

You know, parents, children can ask the most disarming questions. And they will ask you the question, “What is God like?” The best and most biblical answer you can give to that question is, “God is like Jesus.” God the Father is like Jesus because Jesus reveals what God is like. There is nothing that is in Jesus that isn't in God. How can we know the Father? Jesus makes Him known.

Now, Jesus spells that out with three simple statements that confirm the fact that through Him, we come to the Father. He says in verse 10, “I speak the Father's words.” It's interesting that in the rest of the section Jesus is reminding them of what He's already said. He's reminding them of some of the things He's said

before in His ministry with them. In John 5, He had spoken of what His relationship with the Father had been like. "I do the Father's works, He said. "I speak the Father's words," He said. It's as though He's employing the way in which Jesus had grown up with Joseph in the carpenter's shop. He had watched the way His earthly stepfather, Joseph, had worked with all of the tools of the trade, and can you imagine Jesus going in there and saying to Joseph, "What's this for? Show Me how to do what it is that you are doing." And Jesus is saying, "All the words that I speak, they are My Father's words."

I love that verse in Isaiah 50, when the prophet is picturing the coming of Jesus as the suffering servant of the Lord. He speaks of Him in this fashion, "The sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue as one being taught." As Jesus woke in the morning as a young boy, it's as though He's saying, "My first thought in the morning is, "What is My Father teaching Me?" He speaks as one who has learned perfectly in the years of apprenticeship. What He says echoes the Father's heart. "I speak the Father's words."

And not only the Father's words, but the Father's works. The signs in John's gospel, what are they? They are signs of what the Father is like. What is the Father's purpose in this world? To restore one who was blind so that he may see. To raise one who has died in order that he might live. To heal one that has been crippled in order that he might walk properly. It is, if I can borrow a word that has been on our lips and in our ears for the past two weeks, our Father is in the business of reconstruction—reconstructing a fallen and broken world. It's the heart of the heavenly Father that Jesus is making known. "I speak the Father's words; I do the Father's works."

And in verses 12-14, "I display the Father's glory. The essence of who God is. The transcendence of His being what makes Him God, I display all of that," Jesus is saying. He said it before in chapter 13, and He's repeating it now. He goes on to say something quite extraordinary. And He says in verse 12, "And greater works than these shall you do because I go to the Father." I do these works displaying the Father's glory, but when I go to the Father greater things will be revealed. Yes, think of the day of Pentecost when 3,000 souls were converted in one day from all over the known world they had gathered—Parthians and Medes and Elamites and dwellers in Mesopotamia—think of it. Apart from when Jesus was a baby, He had never left Israel. He had never left the land of Judah - Palestine. Yes, it was smaller than Mississippi. He'd never been to California. He'd never been to Siberia. He'd never been to Iraq or Syria or Iran or Egypt as an adult. And as He goes to the Father, greater works of the Father's heart will be made manifest through His disciples through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

What Jesus is saying? "I'm telling you what the Father is like. My whole business is to introduce you to the Father." Jesus is saying that when you come to know Jesus Christ, you come to know the Father. He wants to take us by His hand and lead us and introduce us to His Father in heaven and say to His Father in

heaven, "Let me introduce John to you. Let me introduce Jane to you. Let me introduce Phillip to you. Let me introduce Mary to you."

There's a wonderful, wonderful picture in the second volume of Ian Murray's biography of Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones. And Dr. Marjorie Blackey, who is the physician to the Queen, is introducing Lloyd-Jones, the preacher, to Her Majesty the Queen, and if you can ever get that second volume biography just look at that picture and look at the expressions on the Queen's face; on Marjorie Blackey's face; on Lloyd-Jones' face as he is being introduced to Her Majesty. And Jesus is saying to Phillip and the rest of the disciples, "When you come to know Me, I am introducing you to the very heart of My Father in heaven."

### **III. Who is Jesus to you?**

Do you know that's the test of whether you are a Christian or not, isn't that so? What does the Father mean to you? When you find yourselves in trouble, when you find yourselves in distress, when you find yourselves overtaken by all kinds of trials, do you run to God and say, "My Father in heaven." And you know Him and He knows you.

There are two consequences. One, the possibility that you might miss this. He says to Phillip, "Have I been so long with you and still you haven't got it? The possibility that you may be within the precincts of those who believe and still not know the Father, and Jesus is saying to you, "Come to Me; believe in Me; and trust in Me. Because I am the way, and the life, and no one comes to the Father but by Me." The possibility that you may miss it. And secondly, and finally, Jesus says to them, "I don't want you to be troubled. Let not your hearts be troubled." It's fascinating. The same word is used here as has been used of Jesus' trouble. Jesus isn't speaking here of perhaps sinful trouble—what we do with our trouble may become sinful, but the trouble itself is part of the lot of living in a fallen world, and Jesus Himself in 11:33, 12:27, 13:21, says His own heart, His own Spirit is troubled.

Homer Lee Howie said to me a few weeks ago something I had entirely missed. Here's the theologian. Can't tell you how many commentaries in John I'd read, but I'd missed it. He said to me, "The reason why we don't have to be troubled is because Jesus has been troubled for us." It was so simple and I'd missed it. The reason why we don't have to be troubled is because He has walked in to the trouble for us. He's taken that trouble on His own heart and He's taken that trouble on His own soul so that we need not be troubled. And He says that the way out of trouble, whether it's the trouble of water and mud that has ruined your home and destroyed some of your most precious possessions—and you can identify with that now for yourself—that trouble that's on your heart and in your soul. Jesus says the way out of that trouble is to come to know a Father in heaven who cares for you, who cares enough to send Jesus to die for you, to go

the cross for you, to walk into the fires of trouble for you. "Where I am, there you will be also," He says. "Because in My Father's house are many dwelling places, and where I am, there you will be also."

Where is Jesus tonight? He's at God's right hand gazing into the loving eyes of His Father. And Jesus says that's where I'm going to bring you, to the same point that I am that you may gaze into the Father's eyes. And as Augustine says, "I see the depths, but I cannot see the bottom." There was a minister in the eighteenth century, a product of the Great Awakening and the preaching of George Whitfield, one of the so-called Clapham Sect, a man by the name of Henry Veen, a man important in gospel missions and the propagation of the gospel throughout the world. He retired and came to live in Huddersfield near where his son was and he was ill, dying, and it was said of him when he was told that he was dying that the prospect made him so jubilant and high spirited that his doctor said that his joy at dying kept him alive for another two weeks. The joy of dying kept him alive for another two weeks! Isn't that an extraordinary thing? And that's what Jesus is saying. You have no need to be troubled because I will come again and I will receive you unto Myself that where I am, there you may be also." Let's pray together.

*Our Father in heaven, we thank you for Your word, familiar as it is to us, write it again upon our hearts and give us a blessing we pray as we gaze into our Father's eyes. For Jesus' sake, Amen.*

## **A Guide to the Evening Service**

### Thoughts on Worship

Without submission to the Lord Jesus Christ, there can be no relationship with the Father and no participation in the covenant. Without the Lord's presence through the person of God the Holy Spirit in the hearts of his submitted people, a service of worship finds no acceptance with God. Worship must not become enraptured with the worshiper's ambitions or experience. It must move beyond mere deism or even theism in its statements about God and praises to God. It must not be content with sentimentalism that overemphasizes or misrepresents the fullness of his character. Overall it must see the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and focus on God through the covenant established in the Incarnate Word. In this way, worship that is anything less than Christocentric within the framework of Divine Triunity may be something, but it is certainly not "Christian." (Timothy J. Ralston)

### The Themes of the Service

Tonight's passage in the Gospel of John continues in the Upper Room. It focuses on the words of Jesus in the Upper Room that our hearts not be troubled. The

comforts of Christ to His people will be our focus tonight.

The Psalm, Hymns and Spiritual Songs

### **We Come, O Christ, to You**

Our opening hymn is one of Margaret Clarkson's. It speaks of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. That no one comes to the Father but by Jesus Christ.

### **Beneath the Cross of Jesus**

Another hymn, well known to our congregation and written by Elizabeth Cecelia Douglas Clephane in 1868. It “express the experiences, the hopes and the longings of a young Christian lately released. Written on the very edge of life, with the better land fully in view of faith, they seem to us footsteps printed on the sands of time, where these sands touch the ocean of Eternity. These footprints of one whom the Good Shepherd led through the wilderness into rest, may, with God's blessing, contribute to comfort and direct succeeding pilgrims.”

### **From All That Dwell below the Skies (Psalm 117)**

“The classic of English doxologies,” a paraphrase of Psalm 117 by Isaac Watts, is a song that all our children should know. We'll sing its first stanza before the children's devotional tonight.

### **God Will Take Care of You**

The words to this hymn were written 99 years ago (in 1904) on a Sunday afternoon by a preacher's wife, Civilla D. Martin. When her husband came home that evening, he sat down at the organ and composed the tune! It has been a favorite of many ever since. It seems appropriate to sing it this evening as we consider the words of comfort and cheer that Jesus speaks to His increasingly frightened disciples in the Upper Room.

### **The Sermon**

In the midst of the most sublime reassurance of Jesus' love for His own, there is uttered one of the most remarkable statements that Jesus ever gave: ‘Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?’ (John 14:10 ESV). Jesus is ‘in’ the Father; the Father is ‘in’ the Son! It gave rise to a doctrine. One of its exponents was John of Damascus (c. 674-749), and the doctrine is variously known as *perichoresis*, or *circumincessio*. In writing of the way the Son relates to the Father, he spoke of ‘the *perichoresis* of the subsistencies in one another’ (*Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 4:xviii). What does it mean? Let's take the word *perichoresis* first: *peri* – ‘around’ and *choreo* – ‘I dwell’. Crudely imagined, it



means that the Son and the Father (the same is true of the Holy Spirit) occupy the same space. Where One is, the Other is. They co-inhere in each other. They are constantly moving towards each other, around each other, through each other. They occupy the same throne. All of this from the words Jesus expresses here! The point? In the context of John 14 it is this: that we can trust the Son's word because He speaks from the most intimate fellowship with the Father in heaven. No one knows the Father like the Son. His knowledge of the Father is inexhaustible.

Remember, you can listen to today's sermons and many others right on your computer. You can do this by visiting the First Presbyterian media site at <http://resources.christianity.com/fpcjackson/> or just click on the Life Audio link on the library page of the church's web site. If you have any difficulty please email Jonathan Stuckert at [jstuckert@fpcjackson.org](mailto:jstuckert@fpcjackson.org)

©2013 First Presbyterian Church.

*This transcribed message has been lightly edited and formatted for the Web site. No attempt has been made, however, to alter the basic extemporaneous delivery style, or to produce a grammatically accurate, publication-ready manuscript conforming to an established style template.*

*Should there be questions regarding grammar or theological content, the reader should presume any website error to be with the webmaster/transcriber/editor rather than with the original speaker. For full copyright, reproduction and permission information, please visit the First Presbyterian Church Copyright, Reproduction & Permission statement.*

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

#### **Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine***

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, **subscriptions are free**. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).