

“The Way, The Truth, The Life”

(Part 1)

John 14.1–6

^{13,21}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.” ²²The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking. ²³There was reclining on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. ²⁴So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, “Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking.” ²⁵He, leaning back thus on Jesus’ bosom, said to Him, “Lord, who is it?” ²⁶Jesus then answered, “That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.” So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, “What you do, do quickly.” ²⁸Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. ²⁹For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, “Buy the things we have need of for the feast”; or else, that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

³¹Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; ³²if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately. ³³Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ ³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

³⁶Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered, “Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later.” ³⁷Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.” ³⁸Jesus 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.”

^{14.1}“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In 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. ³If 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. ⁴And you know the way where I am going.” ⁵Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I AM the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” [NASB]

HOPE

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I. Introduction

September 20, and again we fall into the Gospel after a summer of Psalms... and once again as we jump into John, we find there is trouble in this town. True, we reenter the book at a new chapter. But we are returning to the same room. We are returning to the same room where Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, washed the disciples’ feet, and identified Judas Iscariot as the one who would betray Him.

Yes, we are reentering the room where Jesus said he would be going away very soon, and though the disciples could not come with him now, they would join him later. It is the same room where Peter presumed that he could die for Jesus before Jesus had died for Peter. And it is the room where Jesus had to give Peter the most disturbing news, that he would deny Jesus three times that very night.

You see then, this is a room full of trouble. At the same time, it is the room where Jesus comforts his disciples with such words as, “Do not let your heart be troubled.” And with such words as, ^{Jn14.27}“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” Those very words indicate there is trouble that must be comforted. I aim to show you that in this room there are Two Troubled Persons, Two Troubling Prospects, and One Untroubled Path. I trust it won’t trouble you *too* much to learn that I won’t do all that in one sermon.

II. Two Troubled Persons

A. *Troubled Savior*

We begin then, with Two Troubled Persons. While today we are focusing on 14.1–6, I have just read to you starting at 13.21, to repaint the room’s troubled image in your minds and hearts. I started at 13.21, “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.’” The first Troubled Person in the room, you see, is Jesus.

In the sermon on that passage (the 1st day of summer), I said we are tempted to think that since Jesus is God, and since Jesus knew He would arise from the dead, going to the cross was not all the trouble for him that it is cracked up to be. If you succumb to the temptation to think that, you declare yourself a heretic. That is to say, you declare that Jesus was not fully human, subject to full human suffering in our place.

Furthermore, you declare that Jesus was not born under the Law,^{Gal4.4} subject to all its demands, including infinite curse and wrath for any sin against the infinitely holy and sinless God. You declare that God is not really God, unchanging and eternal in His holiness and justice, rightly working vengeance against all our sins. And you declare that God does not love you enough to send His own Son to suffer *everything* you deserve to suffer, in order that He might give to you the eternal peace and joy with God that Jesus deserved.

Do you see that it is *good* for you that Jesus was *troubled*? Why, why, why was Jesus so troubled? You must pay attention and hear this very clearly. Jesus was *troubled* because *Jesus was near to God, under the Law as a Covenant of Works*. Okay, that takes a little explanation, and we have a very good place to start:

^{Gen1.1}In the beginning God... created the heavens and the earth. At the height of God’s creative work, He created man, male and female, after His image in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures. Adam and Eve were made knowing God, obeying God, and pure like God. When God took Adam and put him in the Garden of Eden (before God formed Eve from Adam’s rib), God entered into a Covenant of Works with Adam. This formal relationship included all of Adam’s descendants with Adam as their representative before God.

It was a *living* relationship. God promised Adam that if Adam obeyed God’s law, he would live forever, as would all his descendents. If Adam rebelled against God—if he sinned by breaking God’s law—then he would die, as would all his descendents. The Law as a Covenant of Works demanded—and still demands—three things from everyone who is under it. The three things are perfect holiness of nature, perfect righteousness of life, and complete satisfaction for sin. In the CoW, “the man who does them shall live by them.”^{Ro10.5}

You know what happened in that Covenant of Works relationship. Adam sinned. Adam disobeyed God. Adam became *unrighteous*. Even one single sin was enough to topple his record of perfect obedience once and for all. If from that point on, until today, Adam had offered God full obedience, he could never undo the fact that his record of perfect obedience was utterly destroyed by one sin. The covenant of works offered no Way back to a perfect record.

If it takes a million pounds of thrust for a rocket to lift you to the moon, don’t bother trying if you can only put up 999,999 pounds. You’ll miss the moon by a lot of miles, and plummet back to the earth. Oops, you forgot your parachute. Tough. Your reentry will be very hot and very fiery. Did I mention that Adam stood and fell as the representative for all his descendants, including you and me? If I didn’t, the Apostle Paul did, when he said,^{Ro3.10} “It is written, ‘There is none righteous, not even one.’”

Adam became unrighteous, and Adam became *unholy*. His sin did not consist only of reaching out his hand and taking the forbidden fruit that his deceived wife gave him. Adam’s sin was a sin of his *will*. He was not deceived. He *purposefully* and *knowingly* took the fruit and ate. His whole will and affections became corrupt. He *wanted* and *willed* to disobey God.

Furthermore, Adam’s mind became dark; his knowledge of God became limited and unreliable. Now you know where “senior moments” come from. Additionally, Adam no longer had knowledge of God as *friend*. Now, God was someone to hide from... if possible. It wasn’t. Did I mention that Adam stood and fell as the representative for all his descendants, including you and me? If I didn’t, the Apostle Paul did, when he said,^{Ro3.11} “There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; ¹²all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.”

Did I mention the CoW offers no Way of reconciliation with God? If I didn’t, God himself did. “In the day you eat the fruit I forbade you, you shall surely die.”^{Ge2.17} And Paul did,^{Ro6.23} “For the wages of sin is death.” Death is so utterly contrary to the very nature of the Living God, there can be no closing the gap, no reconciliation by itself. And the CoW provided no bridge. What can the dead have to do with the living?

The Law as a Covenant of Works demanded—and still demands—three things from everyone who is under it. The three things are perfect holiness of nature, perfect righteousness of life, and complete satisfaction for sin. Represented by Adam, neither you nor I can offer anything like perfect holiness of nature. We are conceived corrupt; none of us came out of the womb seeking after God. Represented by Adam, neither you nor I can offer anything like righteousness of life. Not only do we disobey God—sin against Him—daily in thought, word, and deed, but we are born guilty in the sin of Adam our representative.

And, neither you nor I can offer any satisfaction for sin whatsoever. A single sin against an infinite God requires infinite payment of debt. Since we are not infinite creatures, we must pay the infinity in terms of eternity. We can never finish paying the debt; we can never finish making satisfaction for our sin. Hell is eternal.

Take a breath. Remember? Jesus, in that upper room with his disciples, was *troubled*. Why was Jesus *troubled*? Jesus was troubled. Why? Jesus was troubled because He had undertaken to be a Surety for us, under the Law as a Covenant of Works. In perfect harmony with his Father’s will, Jesus had agreed from

all eternity to come and make satisfaction to the demands of the Law on account of our sins—every single sin that every elect soul would ever commit. Jesus came to make satisfaction to the Law’s punishment for every tiny bit of our complete corruption. Jesus was troubled in that room, because the time for making final payment was coming on the heels of the morning.

In a very few hours, Jesus would be separated from the love of his Father, forsaken by Him. But Jesus would be very near to God in the place of us lawbreakers, under the covenant of works. All the fury and wrath of God’s severe judgment against our sins would rain down upon his Son. Jesus would be condemned by the lawmen of Jerusalem, crucified as a criminal guilty of the most heinous treason.

Jesus would complete the satisfaction of the Law for sin—our sin—and declare it complete with the words, “It is finished.”^{Jn19.30} Jesus would implore his Father to behold Jesus’ own holiness and righteousness transferred to you and me with the words, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they are doing.”^{Lk23.34} And God listened to his Son.

Jesus was *troubled* when he knew that his intimate friend Judas would betray him, for now, at last, His hour had come. Jesus’ hour had come, to fulfill all righteousness of the Law as a Covenant of Works^{Mt3.15} in the stead of his disciples.

B. Troubled Disciples

I said there were two troubled persons in that room. Jesus was one. The other was the disciples. As a body, they were troubled. “Why?” you might ask. Why were they, who had received God’s grace, *troubled*? Why were they, who were in the very same room with the Lord of Glory, the Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of the universe, *troubled*? Why were they, who knew Jesus to be the Messiah (“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God”^{Mt16.16}), *troubled*? Why were they, who were no longer under the Law as a Covenant of Works but were under the Covenant of Grace with the Law as a rule of life, *troubled*?

Jesus was *troubled*, because Jesus was near God, under the Law as a Covenant of Works *in their place saving them from the Law as a CoW*. Why then were *they* troubled? They were *troubled*, His disciples were *troubled*, because they were about to feel *far* from God, under the Law as a rule of life in the CoG.

Jesus was going away! That is very, very troubling, when to you “Life” means that Jesus is *near*! When you depend upon Jesus for any true sense of comfort, it is troubling when Jesus seems far away. So Jesus sets about comforting them. Here He is, facing the Law as a CoW in *all* its severity, and does He seek comfort for himself? No, he comforts his disciples.^{Jn14.1} “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.” They were tempted not to believe in God. For centuries and millennia, God had told them this day was coming. Yes, His words had been veiled. But now it would all become clear.

All the history from Adam to Noah to Abraham to Moses to David to Malachi to John the Baptist... it all pointed to Jesus. All the promises God gave through the prophets—promises of judgment and promises of forgiveness—would be satisfied in Jesus. And the blessing of Jesus’ satisfaction would be transferred to you who trust in Him. To believe in God is to trust in Jesus, and to believe in Jesus is to trust in God. You cannot have one without the other.^{Col2:9NKJ} “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; ¹⁰and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”

The disciples loved Jesus who had first loved them. No wonder they were troubled at his talk of departure. But He knew that they knew that He didn’t do anything for nothing. He uses this argument to comfort their troubled hearts.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.”

As if to say, “Do you think I am just going to tidy up your room, and then sit around until eternity looking at how nice your room looks? Do you think I’m worried that if I come get you, you’ll just come and mess up the room I’ve straightened up for you? No! If I go to all the trouble of making your room nice, if I go to all the trouble to make sure that *you* will have entrance to your room, then I’m *certainly* going to come get you so you can enjoy it, and so I can enjoy you enjoying it!”

We may not always be interested in having other people in our houses. We may be afraid they’ll just mess up our rooms. But Jesus is *very* interested in having you in his house. You will not mess up his house. In fact, if he’s preparing a place for you, his house will not be complete without you. He *wants* you there, and He died to *get* you there.

Is Jesus preparing a place for you? How might you know? Here are a few ways: firstly, believe in God, believe also in Jesus. That means believe and trust in what He said. Believe His words through the psalmist: ^{Ps23.6}“Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

Secondly, those for whom He is preparing a place *desire* to be with Him where He is. That is why the disciples were troubled. They were loved by Jesus and they loved Jesus and they knew the only way anything could be right in life was to be *with* Jesus. Do you desire to be where He is? Can you say with the psalmist, ^{Ps27.4}“One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD and to meditate in His temple”? If so, then rest assured that He *is* preparing a room for you.

Thirdly, do you trust in Him as the *only* way for you to be brought to where He is? Perhaps it should not be a surprise that we are not going to get to that point until next week. I mean the point that Jesus is THE way, THE truth, and THE life. But you may start asking the question now in preparation for next week... or in preparation for next minute. After all, Christ may be pleased to return before next week. You’ll need to have an answer before He comes. Do you trust in Him as the *only* way for you to be brought to where He is? Or are you finding other ways to substitute for the happiness of being near Jesus? Prosperity? Toys? Friendships? Tools? Family? Pets? Clear answers to perplexities in providence? Does the happiness of being near Jesus rank up there with the happiness of having these things?

III. Two Troubling Prospects

A. One

Two troubled persons in that upper room: Jesus, and his disciples. This brings me near to the conclusion for this week. And the conclusion is this. I am grateful that in God’s providence we did not get beyond this today, for I am about to declare something to you that will give you plenty to digest through the entire remainder of this week. I am speaking of Two Troubling Prospects.

I declare to you that there are, when you boil it all down, *two and only two things in all the world that can cause your heart to be troubled*. That is right. I believe you won’t find an exception to this. There are, ultimately, only two troubling prospects in the world. I will demonstrate this more fully next week. But for now let me tell you: One of the only two troubling prospects is this: *To be near God when you are under the Law as a Covenant of Works*. If you do not believe in Jesus, all the troubles in your life, all the troubling waves battering and flooding your heart, they all come down to this: You are near to God, and you are under the Law as a Covenant of Works.

Was Jesus, the Son of God, troubled when He was going to satisfy the Law’s demand for our sins? Well what does that say about you, when you can never, ever satisfy the Law’s demand for even one of your sins! You’ll be working off your debt for just one sin for all eternity! How many eternities of satisfaction have you heaped upon your bill? And what about the fact that you simply cannot offer to God a life of perfect obedience, let alone a life of perfect holiness?

God demands a very great deal from you if you are still under the law as a covenant of works. You have no righteousness acceptable to God. You have no holiness acceptable to God. And God requires an infinite satisfaction for your sin that will take you eternity to pay and still never complete.

Everything in your life that troubles you, does so on account of this trouble. Empty purposelessness filling your soul? Sure, you’ve realized that all your accomplishments will mean nothing at the judgment seat of Christ. Hopeless about all the injustice in your nation? Yes, you dread finding out what *real* justice looks like in the case of your own flagrant disrespect for the Law of the Most High God. Depressed, disconsolate, or devastated by the loveless and self-centered brokenness in your relationships? Have you ventured to consider that you cannot love until you are loved with the infinitely faithful love of Christ?

Now, won’t you fly to Jesus immediately and receive the complete and perfect righteousness, holiness, and satisfaction He has so freely offered to *you* as a bounty of His faithful love? His loving arms are wide open to you.

B. Two

One troubling prospect is to be near to God when you are under the Law as a Covenant of Works. The other troubling prospect—the *only* other troubling prospect—is to feel *far* from God when you are under the Law as a rule of life, when you are under the Covenant of Grace.

If you believe in Jesus, then you have been delivered out of your relationship to God through the first Adam... and into relationship with God through the last Adam, Jesus Christ. You have been delivered from terrifying peril into total protection. Jesus has given to God complete and perfect righteousness, holiness, and satisfaction for your sins. He has done this for you. You will never fathom the suffering He underwent to give you life, happiness, and a room in His Father’s house. With all his heart, he desired to do this for you. He suffered so you could receive the Law in safety. He died so you could follow his precepts with delight. There is a growing compulsion in you to love the Law of Christ, for in it you see His holiness. In obeying it, you taste His sweetness.

You know you cannot live without Jesus. The thought of being far from him is like the thought of being lost in a remote wilderness with no sign of a trail. And yet, how quickly we who are His beloved find other things on which to lavish our love. Then we wonder why we seem to be wandering without Jesus. Clear communication in the office takes precedence over even a moment of quiet communion with Christ. Confiding in friends becomes more urgent than reclining on the breast of the Friend who sticks closer than a brother.^{Jn13.23;Pr18.24} Right election returns compel our passion more than the return of the Lord our Righteousness.^{Jer23.6} Hobbies and health command more interest than hearing God speak.

And we find ourselves *troubled*. We profess to be under the CoG, but we snuggle up closer to marketing gurus than to the Mediator of the Covenant. We find ourselves *troubled*, because we feel far from Him. And something in us still wants to think we can find our happiness in consuming a substitute that can never love us as He has loved us. *We must have Christ.*

I know that in a sermon I am sent to “Comfort, comfort My people, says the Lord.”^{Is40.1} Your comfort is Jesus Christ, and none other. Be comforted to know that He knows your discomfort... and He is not far from you. He is preparing a place for you, and He is the Way for you. He is the Un-Troubled Path. Come back next week to hear more. For now, however, if you believe in Jesus, then take great comfort in being *troubled* if He feels far from you. For if you are troubled that Jesus feels far from you, then you can be sure He is very, very near to you as your Surety in the Covenant of Grace.