

Message #51

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John

2/3/2019

## JESUS AND THE UPPER ROOM DISCOURSE (Part 2):

### CONFRONTING FEAR

#### INTRO

English was one of my majors in college. In the course of my studies in English literature, I discovered that one of the characteristics of great writing was a Biblical understanding of life. Great writers tend to have a view of life that is consistent with reality and with a Biblical worldview. Not all great English writers have accepted the Biblical solution to the greatest challenges of life. But most of them have understood the issues.

One example of this is Ernest Hemingway. I enjoyed his writing in my earlier days. His lifestyle was by no means Christian. But he grappled with the important issues of life. He was significantly influenced in this by his upbringing in suburban Chicago, where he had evangelical Christian parents. Unfortunately he never embraced Christianity.

When I was in high school, I read John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. A few years ago, I got around to reading his *East of Eden*. At one point in the book, a character by the name of Cyrus Trask makes this observation (QUOTATION 1): **"...nearly all men are afraid, and they don't even know what causes their fear--- shadows, perplexities, dangers without name or numbers, fear of a faceless death.** (QUOTATION 2) **But if you can bring yourself to face not shadow but real death, described and recognizable, by bullet or saber, arrow or lance, then you need never be afraid again, at least not in the same way you were before.** (QUOTATION 3) **Then you will be a man set apart from other men, safe where other men may cry in terror."** (Cyrus Trask, *East of Eden*, Steinbeck, p. 27)

Fear is a reality of the human condition. At least eighty times in the Bible people are instructed not to fear. Fear is an issue in the passage before us this morning. We are going to consider what Jesus says about its causes and remedies. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Because of my hospitalization and complications, and a missionary speaker whom we had one Sunday before that, it has been a month since we have been in our study of the Gospel of John on Sunday mornings. We left off last time in John #13. Three or four years ago we did a detailed study of Chapters 13-17 of John, what is referred to as the Upper Room Discourse. It is a record of the conversation that Jesus had with His disciples during the Last Supper, the Passover that Jesus observed with His disciples the night before His arrest and crucifixion. The meal happened in what the Gospels describe as an upper room. Because we went over these chapters in considerable detail a few years ago, I am trying to summarize them now with roughly one message per chapter.

In #13 we saw that the disciples of Jesus were having an argument as they came together with Jesus about which of them was the greatest. What prompted that was a desire among the disciples to sit closest to Jesus during the meal. Jesus dealt with that situation by doing the job of a lowly servant and washing the feet of the disciples. He proceeded to explain that greatness in His kingdom means serving one another. He also explained that there was a traitor among them. The disciples seemed to have no clue that Judas Iscariot was the traitor. When Judas departed, the rest of the disciples thought that Jesus had sent him off to give money to the poor, or to buy something more for the feast. But Jesus wanted only true believers to be present for this last supper.

I.

So we come to the last paragraph of #13. We are going to consider THE CAUSES OF FEAR, as noted in #13 v. 36 through v. 1 of #14 and vv. 27-31 of #14. (PROJECTOR ON--- THE CAUSES OF FEAR) In v. 33 of #13 Jesus told His disciples that He was leaving them, and they could not come along. If you wish to follow along in the black Bibles under many of the chairs, turn to p. 900.

This leads to the conversation that begins in v. 36: **“Simon Peter said to him, ‘Lord, where are you going?’ Jesus answered him, ‘Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.’ Peter said to him, ‘Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.’ Jesus answered, ‘Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.’”**

The thought may have gone through Peter’s mind: “Are you saying that I am the traitor?” Peter may have suddenly had fear about himself and his own commitment. Jesus was clearly saying that Peter was going to deny Him that very evening.

All of the disciples were aware that tensions with the religious leadership were reaching a dangerous level. When Jesus announced a few days earlier that they were returning to Jerusalem, one of them, Thomas, declared that they should all go with Jesus and die with him. They realized that their lives were on the line.

So there was fear that came from that. There was also concern that Jesus was leaving them. They might be left without their leader. They might be left alone. Jesus adds in v. 1 of #14, **“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.”** “Hearts” in this verse is actually single in the original Greek. But the pronoun “your” is plural. So Jesus is speaking here not just to Peter but to the other disciples as well. They are all experiencing fear.

To see that fear is a dominant, underlying emotion facing these disciples in this setting, skip down to the end of the chapter to v. 27. Jesus says, **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”** There it is. Some translations have “fearful.” Peace is the corrective to fear.

Jesus continues in vv. 28-31, **“You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.”**

Similar causes provoke our fear. Death is an enemy, even for us Christians. The Apostle Paul in the New Testament calls it an enemy. By virtue of faith in Christ, we can have a certain peace facing death and knowing our ultimate destination. But it is natural and human to have a certain fear about it, and the pain that may precede it.

Like the disciples of Jesus, we can also have personal enemies that cause a certain amount of stress and fear. We can have fears related to loneliness. In our congregation we have widows and widowers and people who are divorced and single. Because of situations in life, we can have psychological loneliness, even though we may have lots of people around us. In our minds we can think that no one understands

my situation. My challenges are unique. My physical health challenges, or my mental health challenges cause me fear.

II. A. 1.

In Chapter 14 Jesus speaks about THE REMEDIES FOR FEAR. (II. THE REMEDIES FOR FEAR) They seem to fall into two categories. The first category is THE PROMISES REGARDING JESUS. (II. THE REMEDIES... A. THE PROMISES...) I find three of them in vv. 1-15. The first one, described in vv. 1-6, is a promise related to a FUTURE HOME. (II. ... A. ... 1. FUTURE HOME)

Jesus tells the disciples in these first six verses, **“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.”** Thomas said to him, **‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way? Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on, you do know him and have seen him”**

Jesus is preparing a place for His followers. Notice first that there is physicality to this future home. This is not some ethereal, spiritual existence that merges us into some kind of spiritual oneness. Jesus is talking about a place. It has rooms. It has physical features. It is described in greater detail in Revelation #21.

The picture we might initially get from Jesus’ description is that this is an ongoing construction project. But does the God who created the universe in six days really need more than 2000 years to create a heavenly home? In v. 2 Jesus says that there are already many rooms in this house.

It seems more likely to me that Jesus is referring to His approaching death and resurrection. It is this event that will provide a way for the followers of Jesus to enter this heavenly home.

The background cultural picture for this description is the Jewish wedding practice of the first century. Typically a Jewish father would arrange a marriage for his son or daughter. There would be a ceremony where the young couple became engaged and promised their loyalty to each other. Although they were

legally bound at this point, it would be a year before the actual marriage took place. The groom would typically prepare rooms in his parents' home where the newlyweds would live. At a certain point, the groom would go out to claim his bride and bring her to his house.

The New Testament refers to the church as the bride of Christ. The promise for us Christians is that Jesus is going to return to earth to claim us at some point and bring us to our heavenly home.

One of my pastor friends had a daughter who became wayward at a certain point in life. Her mother and the pastor's wife died of cancer. The pastor moved here to Boulder City. The daughter was living in California. When she got her act together, she called her father and said, "Daddy, can I come home." She had never been to Boulder City. She had never seen her father's house. But because her father was there, that was home. So it is for us. One remedy for fear is knowing that our Father has a home waiting for us.

2.

A second remedy for fear, described in vv. 7-11, is ACCESS TO THE FATHER. (II. ... A. ... 2. ACCESS TO THE FATHER). Jesus continues in v. 7, **"If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do 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 with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever 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 authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.'"**

The twelve knew Jesus, and yet they did not really know Him. Their understanding of Jesus was incomplete until they witnessed His death and resurrection and ascension and coming of the Holy Spirit. Only then did they have a true picture of their leader, their Messiah.

Before the death and resurrection of Jesus, it was necessary for a true worshiper to approach God through priests and animal sacrifices. True worshipers were required to observe the Mosaic Law. But now worshipers have direct access to God the Father through faith in Jesus Christ. Thus it was that Jesus taught His followers to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven..." We can go direct to the Father through faith in Jesus.

3.

The third remedy that I find here is ACCESS TO POWER. (II. A. ... 3. ACCESS TO POWER) Jesus describes that in vv. 12-15. He says, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”**

The term “works” in John’s Gospel refers to miraculous deeds. The Book of Acts describes what happened to the first Christians after Jesus physically departed from the scene. There we see miraculous deeds accomplished, primarily at the hands of the apostles. Seldom do we see such miraculous things happen today, although sometimes they seem to occur in pioneering missionary ventures.

But do we see greater miracles accomplished today, or even in the Book of Acts, than what Jesus accomplished in His ministry? Peter and Paul each had incidents in which they raised someone from the dead. I don’t see such things happening today. Even in the Book of Acts, do we see someone walking on water or multiplying loaves and fishes or commanding the wind and the sea to be still?

So in what sense do we see the followers of Jesus accomplishing greater works than what Jesus did? It would seem to me that it has to do with the power of the gospel. On the Day of Pentecost Peter preached a sermon, the result of which was that 3000 souls were baptized. Never did we see such a spiritual response from the crowds which listened to Jesus. In our day an evangelist like Billy Graham has preached to a crowd of a million people at one time, and many have responded to the invitation to trust in Jesus.

Our passage promises that by praying in Jesus’ name we have access to this power. Praying in Jesus’ name seems to involve praying according to His revealed character and in accordance with His revealed will.

B.

Thus remedies in our passage which relate to promises regarding Jesus involve a future home, access to the Father, and access to power. In the remainder of the chapter remedies for fear include PROMISES REGARDING THE HOLY SPIRIT. (II. B. THE PROMISES REGARDING THE HOLY SPIRIT) I find three of them in vv. 16-26. The first of them, found in vv. 16-24, involves HIS INDWELLING. (II. B. THE PROMISES... 1. HIS INDWELLING)

According to vv. 16-24, Jesus says, **“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.’** Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, **‘Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?’** Jesus answered him, **‘If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.’**

There are many details that could be considered here, but the main point that I wish for you to see comes from v. 17. Jesus says that His disciples know the Holy Spirit. In one sense they do. Jesus sent them out with power to cast our demons and heal diseases. That power came from the Holy Spirit. Yet they did not really understand Him. That power was with them. But the Holy Spirit had not yet come to permanently dwell within them.

That all changed at Pentecost. In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God would come and go with some of the people of God. In Psalm 51 David asked that God would not take His Holy Spirit from Him. Such a prayer is no longer necessary for the people of God. For when we become Christians today, God’s Spirit comes to dwell within us permanently.

Thus it is that the Apostle Paul writes in Roman #8 (ROMANS 8:9), **“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.”** It is clear that every true Christian has the Spirit of God living within him or her.

Paul continues (ROMANS 8:10), **“But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (ROMANS 8:11) If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”**

In 1 Corinthians #6 v. 19, Paul, writing to Christians (1 CORINTHIANS 6:19), adds, **“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own...”** Thus it is that we Christians have the Holy Spirit living within us. According to the first chapter of Ephesians, this means that we have divine security. In the Book of Acts we see that the Holy Spirit gives boldness in proclaiming the gospel. The previously inept, hiding disciples become bold and confident. Their lives are transformed. (PROJECTOR OFF)

In Chapters 12-14 of 1 Corinthians we find that the Holy Spirit also provides spiritual gifts for His people. All of these blessings come from the Holy Spirit living within us. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a great remedy for fear.

2.

A further remedy for fear, described in vv. 25 & 26, is HIS TEACHING. (PROJECTOR ON--- II. .. B. ... 2. HIS TEACHING) Jesus says, **“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”** That promise had special relevance to the eleven apostles. From the four gospels we see that Jesus said a whole lot of things, many of which seemed to go right over the heads of the apostles at the time.

How could we expect Matthew and John and the sources for the Gospels of Mark and Luke to remember such detailed teaching with accuracy? The answer of secularists is that we cannot. They would argue that this was their best guess. The explanation of the Bible is the recorded claim of Jesus that the Holy Spirit would give the disciples supernatural ability to recall the things that Jesus said.

Also, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would teach them the significance of the things that they had seen and heard. The result of that promise is the New Testament epistles, which provide a divine interpretation of the story of Jesus. The rest of the New Testament is also the product of the Holy Spirit working through human authors.

The primary reference of Jesus about the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit is probably directed to the eleven remaining apostles. But there is a secondary application to all Christians. John seems to be talking about the Holy Spirit in his first epistle in #2 vv. 26-27. (1 JOHN 2:26) Warning about false teachers, he says, **“I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. (1 JOHN 2:27) But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone**



would teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie--- just as it has taught you, abide in him.” The Holy Spirit also has a teaching role with those Christians who came after the apostles. He enables us to understand spiritual truth. He illuminates our understanding of God’s Word.

3.

Besides His teaching work and His indwelling work, our verses also speak about a work in our lives that I have labeled HIS ADVOCACY. (II. THE... B. .... 3. HIS ADVOCACY) This is found in v. 16 and v. 26. In these two verses our ESV translation describes the Holy Spirit as our “Helper.” The actual Greek word is *parakletos*. (PARAKLETOS) *Kletos* comes from the Greek verb *kaleo*, which means “to call.” *Para* means “beside.” So literally the term means “one called beside” In classical Greek, the term was used of lawyers. The best translation of *parakletos*, in my opinion, is “advocate.” The term “helper” often has a connotation implying an inferior ability or position. In the trades, one may speak of an electrician’s helper. There is no inferiority involved with the Holy Spirit. He is God, and His is our advocate.  
(PROJECTOR OFF)

Years ago there was a missionary who was working with a tribal group in Africa to translate the Bible into their language. He came to this passage in John’s Gospel and got stuck on this word. He wasn’t quite sure what word to use that would communicate the correct idea.

Then one day he was sitting in on a legal proceeding that happened in his village. He heard a term repeated several times with which he was unfamiliar. The term was *nasenga maquashi*. After the meeting, he asked the village chief if *nasenga maquashi* was a name or an official title. He answered “no” to both questions. The chief explained that it referred to the job of a man whose duty was to have the interests of the people of the village at heart. When someone was in need, he was to come to their side and help that person.

It was then that the missionary remembered that in one part of this legal proceeding a man had come with an elderly woman who had been mistreated by someone else The man had pled her case before the village chief. The man was the *nasenga maquashi*. Thus the missionary had the word he needed to describe the *Parakletos* in John 14 vv. 16 & 26.

The Holy Spirit is our *nasenga maquashi*. He instructs not just the court. He instructs us. Verse 26 says, **“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, he will teach you all things...”**

The fact that the Holy Spirit is “another Advocate” implies that Jesus was also an advocate. Indeed He also came beside the disciples as their friend. He taught them much. He also defended them against the religious authorities who might have arrested them. He defended them when they were criticized for eating with hands that were not ritually washed and when they ate grain in the fields on the Sabbath.

In 1 John #2 v. 1 (PROJECTOR ON--- 1 JOHN 2:1) the same Apostle John writes to fellow Christians, **“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have a *parakletos*--- an ‘Advocate’---with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous...”** So the picture is that we Christians have two advocates. We have Jesus Christ who is at the right hand of God the Father. He defends us Christians in the heavenly court. When we sin, we are guilty before a holy God. But “the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin,” as the first chapter of 1 John puts it. Jesus Christ defends us before God the Father.

On earth we have the Holy Spirit as our Advocate. He helps us and teaches us. Romans 8:26 & 27 (ROMANS 8:26) tell us, **“Likewise the Spirit also helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. (ROMANS 8:27) And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.** Jesus knew the trials and fears that His disciples would face. He knew that future Christians would need divine help. He knew that we would need two advocates, and we have them. Jesus Christ is defending us in heaven. On earth, the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Triune Godhead, is present within each of us, if we have trusted in Jesus as our Savior. (PROJECTOR OFF) He is a divine person. He is God who dwells within us, who teaches us and who serves as our advocate. He is the remedy for our fears.

Oswald Chambers was a British chaplain and devotional writer in the early 1900s. He wrote (IT IS THE...), **“It is the most natural thing in the world to be scared, and the clearest evidence that God’s grace is at work in our hearts when we do not get into panics.... (THE REMARKABLE...) The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else.”** (Oswald Chambers, *The Highest Good*)

Peter at the beginning of our passage was the disciple who was expressing fear. Jesus warned Peter that he would deny Jesus three times that very evening. Imagine the fear that Peter may have experienced, especially when He did deny his master. Was there any hope for him? Of course, he went on to act as the leader among the eleven disciples.

Consider the encouragement that he left all of us at the end of his first epistle. (1 PETER 5:7) In #5 v. 7 he writes, “**...cast all your anxieties on him [God], because he cares for you.**” Such is the confidence that we all can have in an often fearful world.